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**A DELICATE BALANCING ACT:
AN INVESTIGATION OF
VOLUNTEER USE AND
STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES
IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES**

B CASSELDEN

DInfoSci

2016

Volume 1 of 2

**A DELICATE BALANCING ACT:
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IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES**

B CASSELDEN

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of
the requirements of the University of
Northumbria at Newcastle for the degree
of Professional Doctorate of Information
Sciences

Research undertaken in the i-School,
Department of Computing and
Information Sciences, Northumbria
University

October 2016
Volume 1 of 2

Abstract

This research aims to investigate current volunteer use in public libraries in England. Volunteer use is not a new phenomenon, and has been an integral part of public library provision for many years. However recent Government policies, together with greater financial austerity, have resulted in a change in public service delivery. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of volunteers involved within the public library service, and the growth of community run libraries, resulting in much public and professional concern.

An interpretivist research approach was used to investigate stakeholder opinions regarding volunteer use, and involved a two phase process. Initially a Delphi survey explored attitudes of 15 English public library service managers, followed by in-depth investigation of two case study library authorities, located in the North-East of England. Surveys, interviews and focus groups, helped to build a rich picture of volunteer use amongst the groups of stakeholders.

Findings clearly indicated that volunteer use has moved from additionality to replacement of staff, and is increasingly being used by local authorities as a solution to budget reductions required as a result of economic austerity. A hybrid approach to library service provision has developed, using a combination of paid staff and volunteers, which indicates a fundamental culture shift within public libraries.

Research results identified concerns relating to the long term viability of a hybrid approach, and how this impacted on the wider community in terms of service provision. Key concerns were raised concerning advocacy, sensitivity, the fragility of relationships, and the provision of an accountable and high quality service.

Formal and informal control mechanisms need to be employed by library service managers to ensure that they reap the benefits of volunteer use, thereby avoiding social exclusion, clarifying stakeholder boundaries, and delivering a high quality accountable service. Training library managers in new volunteer management skills, and adopting a volunteer relationship management approach may help to ensure that this new arrangement is mutually beneficial for all concerned.

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Acknowledgements

This research area was chosen initially as I have always had a deep rooted passion for what public libraries stand for, having worked as a public library assistant many years ago, and more recently having a close relative who has dedicated much of her working life to the pursuit of providing a public library service.

Recent austerity measures have clearly challenged public libraries and the way in which they operate, particularly with regard to the use of volunteers. My research attempts to understand the differing viewpoints relating to this sensitive phenomenon, and provide suggestions as to how these challenges can be tackled in a mutually beneficial way.

This research has at times been hard to progress, and would not have happened without the help and support of a number of key players, who I would like to thank for their time, enthusiasm and professionalism. I am grateful to the Society of Chief Librarians for first publicising my research and enabling me to reach out to a variety of public library authority managers. I would also like to thank the library managers, frontline staff and volunteers who participated, in what is a very difficult time for their services. Their passion and dedication shone through and was very much appreciated. I would also like to thank the users of these library services who agreed to complete my survey, and clearly demonstrated that they loved their public library service.

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Author's declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee in January 2012.

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 56,239 words

Name: Bidy Casselden

Signature:

List of acronyms

ACE	Arts Council England
CAB	Citizens Advice Bureaux
CILIP	Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
CIPFA	Chartered Institute for Public Finance and accountancy
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DCMS	Department for Culture Media and Sport
EU	European Union
FTE	Full time equivalent
LSM	Library service managers
MLAC	Museums Libraries and Archives Council
NLGN	New Local Government Network
PLAM	Public Library Authority Manager
UK	United Kingdom
VML	Volunteer managed libraries
WRVS	Women's Royal Voluntary Service

1. Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Context for research

Libraries have been part of our cultural fabric since the 17th century, enshrined in law following the 1850 Public Library Act in England (McMenemy, 2009). However, commentators argue that an, 'impending cultural catastrophe' looms resulting from public spending cuts, and a drive by the current Government towards localism (McSmith, 2011). An overriding theme of the 2010-2015 Coalition and current Conservative governments has been that of Localism and the Big Society, although the latter concept has more recently been less prevalent as a guiding force (Civil Exchange, 2015a). The recent election of a Conservative majority government in 2015 means that such an ideology is likely to be pushed further, and will no doubt mirror the thinking of policy influencers such as Downey et al. (2010) who argue that public services reform has not been radical and

'given the need to make major financial savings and empower public service providers to find and deliver the solutions, it seems urgent to get on with it' (Downey et al., 2010 p. 20).

The English library landscape is an ever changing phenomenon, and the use of volunteers within service delivery is increasingly becoming the norm for many local authorities within England (CILIP, 2012a). However, CILIP (The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals) has expressed concern regarding the use of volunteers for job substitution, as a way of reducing public costs (CILIP, 2012c), warning that such a move will cause library services to suffer, and is ultimately unsustainable.

The Chartered Institute for Public Finance and accountancy (CIPFA), in it's latest public library survey, noted a continued significant decline in staff levels as a result of financial stringency, as opposed to a 100% increase in volunteer numbers in public libraries from 2009-2010. (Patterson, 2014) This research aims to examine what volunteer use actually means for a public library service, and explores the issues that surround such usage in order to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon.

By examining the perspectives of key stakeholders involved with public library service delivery, the research will assist in providing a clearer picture of the challenges involved with a hybrid delivery model, and suggest possible solutions and ways forward for library service managers.

1.2 Aim and Objectives

The following aim and objectives are proposed for this research:

1.2.1 Aim

To investigate modern volunteer use in public libraries in England.

1.2.3 Objectives

- To identify the challenges (political/economic) faced by modern public libraries
- To establish past and present practice regarding the use of volunteers in public libraries
- To investigate what Library Managers see as the key issues for use of volunteers in library service provision
- To explore viewpoints of library volunteers – considering motivations for volunteering, degree of volunteering, and issues that arise from volunteering.
- To consider staff attitudes towards volunteers and their use in service provision
- To explore opinions of library users on the use of volunteers for library service provision
- To determine the variables that result in successful library service provision using volunteers
- As a result of the former, establish areas of good practice and possible ways forward.

1.3 Research parameters

This research focussed on experiences of English public libraries as it is reported that cuts have been deepest in this region compared to the other regions of the United Kingdom (UK) (Wainwright et al., 2016). It was hoped that examining within this scope would help to illustrate issues that could be applied to other parts of the UK.

1.3 Sections of the dissertation

The Dissertation will comprise the following sections, starting with chapter two which considers the background literature covering the subject of public libraries and volunteer use.

Chapter three describes and justifies the methodological approach adopted. A qualitative approach was adopted which consisted of two phases of research, and involved the use of an initial Delphi Study, followed by case study analysis using the interviews, surveys and focus groups to fully interrogate the stakeholders involved.

Chapter four provides results and analysis from the Delphi Study, consisting of an overview of library manager opinion regarding volunteer use in public libraries. Chapter five continues with description and analysis of the second phase of research resulting from the two case studies, and triangulates the findings fully. A discussion of the analysis drawing on all the previous research and theory is presented in chapter six.

Finally, chapter seven provides a conclusion which seeks to examine the original objectives and discusses the key recommendations arising from the research, in addition to future directions of study and research.

2. Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

'The public library service in England is at a crossroads. For 150 years, library services have been run by local government, with oversight from central government. Libraries already deliver a wide range of facilities and services within local communities, and, given sharply reducing budgets, and changing needs, there are keen concerns about continuing to provide these vital functions' (Sieghart, 2014a)

The library landscape is changing (CILIP, 2012a), fuelled by a combination of politics, and austerity. This review of literature will examine current challenges for public library service provision, focussing on the value and use of public libraries. The underlying political background will be examined, in addition to the concepts of community engagement, social capital, the Big Society and Localism. Volunteering will be explored further, particularly why people volunteer, and the benefits and barriers to volunteering, in addition to volunteer management and how volunteering manifests itself in the public library arena. In 2012, the DCMS Committee investigated library closures, and concluded that many local library authorities were in danger of failing their statutory duty of providing, a 'comprehensive and efficient library service' due to knee-jerk reactions to local authority cuts, and stressed the need to consider a new approach to the role of the Secretary of State in ensuring this statutory duty was adhered to.

'Local authorities are under considerable financial pressure at present and have to make budgetary decisions swiftly. The provision of a library service is a statutory duty, but a number of councils have drawn up plans that fail to comply with the requirement to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' service.....Councils which have transferred the running of libraries to community volunteers must, however, continue to give them the necessary support, otherwise they may well wither on the vine and therefore be viewed as closures by stealth.....Enthusiasm over the scope for volunteers, and for new models of provision, is fine, but—given the importance of library services—a systematic look at the impact of funding cuts and re-organisation is needed to assess the durability of such changes over time' (Culture Media and Sport Committee, 2012 p.3).

A key theme that arises from the Localism agenda (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2011), and indeed the aforementioned DCMS committee (Culture

Media and Sport Committee, 2012) is the valuable role that volunteers have in the future running of a public library service. Although volunteering in public libraries is not a new phenomenon (volunteers being used to add value to a library service, hence value-added) (Museums Libraries and Archives Council, 2011a), it is highly topical and moving at a fast pace, with many library authorities exploring new ways of using volunteers. Increased use of volunteers in public libraries has been documented by a variety of commentators (May, 2011, Anstice, 2012, Page, 2010, Hill, 2010) over the past few years, including the replacement of professional staff and the introduction of libraries run entirely by volunteers (community managed libraries).

CIPFA figures demonstrate that public library staff numbers are still decreasing at a fast pace: FTE staff numbers reduced by 5% in 2013/14, and by almost a quarter (22%) during the past 5 years (CIPFA, 2014). In the same period there has been a 100% increase in volunteers in public libraries, such that their numbers are greater than paid staff (35,813 volunteers as opposed to 20,302 staff), however one must be aware that many volunteers work for small fragments of time (CIPFA, 2014).

This move from additionality (or value-added) to replacement of staff, by volunteers in public libraries, is considered by Davies (2013) as clear evidence that the tide is turning with regard to the mixed methods for public library service delivery. May (2013 p.10) identifies that staff concerns relating to the impact of increased volunteer use on service quality and professional jobs, in addition to the future of the public library service, were clearly evident in a recent CILIP member survey. Indeed, Nichols et al. (2015) argue the replacement of employees with volunteers in leisure services has become a rather large 'elephant in the room'.

In 2012 CILIP updated its policy statement (CILIP, 2012c) on the use of volunteers in public libraries, and clearly stated that although volunteers were viewed as highly valuable with regard to the additional support they could provide, their role should not extend to core service delivery or replacing paid staff in specialist roles. However, recent guidance

from the Government regarding volunteer-managed community libraries indicates a firm preference for this method of delivery as opposed to libraries staffed by paid professionals (Gov.uk, 2013), and resulted in CILIP calling for ministerial clarification regarding the government's commitment to statutory public library services (CILIP, 2013), in addition to clarification from the DCMS (Culture Media and Sport Committee, 2012).

Anstice (2014) considers that public library services delivery is therefore changing to a mixed model of service delivery,

'volunteer libraries have changed the story of library cuts from that of pure black and white (closed or open) to that of varying shades of grey... a mixed model'.

2.2 The value of public libraries

A number of commentators extol the virtues of a freely available public library service, seeing it as a 'beacon of civilisation, a mark of what we as a country stand for.' (Lott, 2011). McMenemy (2009) states that although UK public libraries stemmed from a societal desire to control the leisure pursuits of working class people, they now provide an impartial accessible space that serves to enrich the cultural fabric of the nation and inform citizens. In addition, Halpin et al. (2013) stress the crucial role that libraries have to play within the fabric of communities and the lives of people.

An 'information literate community relies on the public library to act as a gateway to responsible and accurate information, and that need is as vital as it always has been.' (McMenemy, 2009 p.200)

This view is further supported by CILIP, who argue that 'they [public libraries] stand for intellectual freedom, democratic engagement, community cohesion, social justice and equality of opportunity.' (CILIP, 2010 p.1)

The Carnegie Trust (2014) recently demonstrated the positive benefits of libraries on community wellbeing on a variety of levels, regarding economic, social, educational and cultural aspects. Public libraries have a vital role in the formation of human capital, in addition to maintaining wellbeing, community cohesion and social inclusivity (Arts Council England, 2014).

Indeed many stress that the role of the public library is even more important in times of recession, acting as 'recession sanctuaries,' (Jackson 2009 cited in Rooney-Browne, 2009 p.342) by 'playing a vital role in helping individuals and communities survive the economic downturn and successfully communicating their role as an essential public service' (Rooney-Browne, 2009 p.348). Lee (2014) argues that, in an increasingly digitally dominated society, 'the need for free neutral access to digital knowledge.....in keeping the gate to knowledge open' is even more vital.

The power of public libraries exists in the fact that 'even while they may be low down the priority list of some local authorities, many people actually care about their existence' (McMenemy, 2009 p.559). The evidence for this is clearly demonstrated by the actions of local communities when library closures are announced , including occupation, blogs, use of famous celebrities and many other strategies (see Defend the 10's efforts to save Lambeth Libraries (Defend the 10 Campaign, 2016) and Save Doncaster Libraries' blog (Save Doncaster Libraries, 2016)

This is further backed up by the findings of MLAC who discovered that 90% of the UK adult population viewed public libraries as important or essential to their local community (Museums Libraries and Archives Council, 2010b) This raises the concept of *existence value* for a public library service, whereby, 'many who do not physically use public libraries also profit from their existence' (Usherwood, 2007p.105). This concept will be revisited during the analysis section of this dissertation.

However, Pateman and Vincent (2010) consider the lack of clear vision nationally about what the role of libraries in modern society actually is, and argue that a regional approach to planning and developing library services is required cutting across boundaries, that involves the use of partnerships, co-location, co-production and above all, taking risks where necessary. Winterson also acknowledges this confusion regarding the library's role and argues that a clear distinction needs to be made between the concepts of libraries, leisure and culture, and the importance of what she describes as 'these people's palaces

of books where everyone can go from early in the morning til late at night' (Winterson, 2012). Pateman and Williment (2013p.59) consider that although the public profess to knowing a public library is, 'many people also have an outdated and sometimes negative image of a boring institution filled with dusty books and even dustier staff', which may be to the detriment of furthering the existence of public libraries.

The Arts Council Chief Executive's response to the research project entitled, Envisioning the Library of the Future, (Arts Council England, 2012), discusses four priorities for 21st century public libraries: Their place as the hub of the community, making the most of digital technology and creative media; ensuring libraries are resilient and sustainable; and delivering the right skills for those that work in libraries (Davey, 2013).

Hence, 'public libraries are at a pivotal point. They are much loved and expected to continue offering the same services as they have for many years, but they are also expected to respond to big changes in how people live their lives' (Davey, 2013 p.2).

Usherwood (2007) warns that a commercial model of public library service provision is flawed as it will work against those who are less privileged society. This sentiment is also supported by Arts Council England (2014) who stress the long-term positive outcomes of public libraries relating to the development of human capital, well-being, social belonging and cohesive communities. In addition, they argue that 'attempting to derive a realistic and accurate monetary valuation for this is akin to the search for the Holy Grail' (Arts Council England, 2014p.50).

2.3 Reductions in public library usage

Grindlay and Morris (2004 p.611) identify the reasons for reductions in book issues from public libraries since the 1980s, which broadly fall into two categories: The first being due to a reduction in public spending initiated by the Coalition government, and the second being a change in values and behaviour on the part of the general public.

'Perhaps more significant for borrowing is the fact that book funds and opening hours have both suffered' (Muir and Douglas, 2001; Audit Commission (2002, cited in Grindlay

and Morris, 2004 p. 623). Other leisure activities are now competing with public library use, but more importantly 'many people have switched from borrowing to buying books' (Audit Commission, 2002, cited in Grindlay and Morris, 2004 p.623).

During the past 4 years CIPFA figures on visits to library premises in Great Britain are reported as showing a decrease of 15%, and active borrowers reducing by 23.5% in the same period (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2016b). Decreased use of the library was linked to users having less time, getting books from elsewhere, the growth of e-books, and preference of other activities as a leisure pursuit, in addition to increased work demands (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2016b).

However, it is also important to consider that public libraries are not just about book loans (Pateman and Vincent, 2010 p. 143), indeed, digital engagement has nearly doubled in the past six years (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2014 p.34) although numbers are still quite low at 14.2%. Libraries have a role to play that extends beyond the physical confines of the building now incorporating an online dimension, which further challenges the measurement of use and value to the local community of such phenomena, as discussed in the Sieghart (2014b p.5) review of public libraries in England, who reminds the reader that, 'libraries are....a golden thread throughout our lives'.

In response to the decline in usage, the now defunct MLAC examined the concept of community engagement as a mechanism for encouraging more people to actively use public libraries. The New Labour Government introduced the 1999 Local Government Act (Goulding, 2009a) which included Best Value, and the use of strategic partnerships, followed by a white paper, Strong and Prosperous Communities, that included a move 'to devolve power to communities and give local people a greater say over local public services,' (Goulding, 2009a p.38) thereby enhancing citizenship and service delivery. This culminated in the Community Libraries Programme in 2006 (Museums Libraries and Archives Council, 2011a p.7).

The concept of community engagement will be considered in greater detail later in this chapter, but first it is useful to examine the political background that underpins recent policy initiatives.

2.4 The Political Background

When one examines the political sphere in which public libraries operate, it is clear that this influences their existence and purpose.

'The adoption of free market economic policies and the goal of reducing public expenditure, to be achieved partly through rate capping, (has) meant that many local authorities had to reconsider their budgets and spending priorities' (Makin and Craven, 1999).

Mirroring Keynesian economics, Pateman and Vincent (2010) consider the 'Boom and Bust' librarianship of the past 40 years in the UK, ranging from the boom of community librarianship in the 1970s, to the bust of the Thatcherite policies of the 1980s, to the boom of New Labour's social inclusion agenda during the 1990s, to the bust of reduction in public spending from the 2010-15 Coalition government and the recently elected Conservative majority government .

The influence of politics on the public library sector has been well documented by Usherwood (1993, cited in McMenemy, 2009), who confirms that the party affiliation of an elected member can be closely related to how they view a library service.

Pateman and Vincent (2010 p.142) agree, arguing that public libraries are not politically neutral as they 'carry political 'loads'. Indeed one can see such actions by the responses of library authorities to the current cuts, and the choices that have been made (Arts Council England, 2013a).

Considering this further, McMenemy (2009 p.1) discusses the impact of neo-liberalism on public librarianship, and that it is 'the belief that ultimately the market and the individual within the market should have primacy'. He suggests that the resultant drive towards internal competition amongst services, emanating from a bidding culture, income

generation, league tables and viewing citizens as consumers has resulted in a vacuum of ideas (McMenemy, 2009) and a challenging situation.

The adoption of neo-liberalist ideology for both the 2010-2015 Coalition and current Conservative governments is clearly seen in their responses to policy making. They have been keen to cut public spending, and remove the bureaucracy of central government through increased localism (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2011).

'Cameronian Conservatism....seeks a shift from state to social action by breaking state monopolies, allowing charities, social enterprises and companies to provide public services, devolving power to neighbourhoods and making government more accountable' (Mycock and Tonge, 2011 p.56).

Key drivers of the 2010-2015 Coalition and Conservative Governments are Localism and the Big Society, although the latter concept has more recently been less prevalent as a guiding force (Civil Exchange, 2015a). These concepts will be explored later in the chapter, however initially it is useful to consider community engagement, which was an important feature of the 1997-2010 New Labour Government.

2.5 Community engagement

Community engagement was very much a key feature of New Labour Government policy of 1997-2010, and worked towards greater involvement of the community in decision making.

'It is about the community identifying needs and working in equal partnerships to address these. Libraries can take these opportunities to deliver on key targets and agendas; to widen participation contributing to community cohesion; or to increase active citizenship and thereby increase use of library services' (MLA 2006 in Museums Libraries and Archives Council (2011a p.11)).

The benefits of community engagement can be viewed as multiple. Research into 29 examples of community managed libraries, whereby volunteers were used to support service delivery, demonstrated a variety of strengths from using this approach. The key factors were improvements in access and provision, and economic and social benefits through a strategic rather than reactionary approach (Museums Libraries and Archives Council, 2011b).

Partnership working is viewed as a key factor in advancing the economic, social and environmental health of a local community (Goulding, 2009a p.42), in addition to enhancing local planning and engagement. Common characteristics for success are identified as 'public sector...support, co-location, enterprise, open transfer of ownership, specialist staff support and a clear sense of social purpose'(Museums Libraries and Archives Council, 2011b p.9).

Boyle and Harris (2009, cited in Pateman and Williment, 2013 p.9) consider the concept of co-production, whereby there exists 'an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours'. For Pateman and Vincent (2010) this relationship should be at the very core of public service provision, enabling equality, sustainability and a shift in the balance of power.

Challenges and issues resulting from such practices essentially revolve around the 1964 Public Libraries Act and the importance of continuing a core service, de-professionalisation, the scale and timeframe of the changes proposed, and the effect of localism. The latter refers to the fact that community engagement may vary according to the community it originates from, and social demographics can affect the ability of a community to effectively engage (Museums Libraries and Archives Council, 2011b).

This concern is echoed by CILIP, who warn that deprived communities do not have the necessary social capital to provide services (Hall, 2011). However, where such partnerships have worked, they have provided the potential to enrich the community with voice and choice (Pateman and Vincent, 2010).

An interesting development of partnership working is considered by Mulgan (2012, cited in Clarence and Gabriel, 2014 p.21) exploring the concept of a relational state, which

'heralds a shift away from the delivery model that dominated public services in the post-second world war era. It is no longer about public services being done to, or for, somebody, but rather with them. It is about putting relations at the heart of what governments do, with all the radical reshaping of public services that this demands'.

Clarence and Gabriel (2014) suggest that social action, which includes volunteering, is a mechanism for facilitating the relational state. However they stress the need for a culture change in public services if this new shift in power relationships is to be achieved, and identify the challenges relating to quality, risk management, accountability and the discomfort this situation can cause initially, if boundaries are not clearly identified (Clarence and Gabriel, 2014).

Downey et al. (2010) see such devolution in public libraries as helping to create social value, although benefits relating to, 'saving large amounts of money on over-skilled paid staff, poor use of space and unnecessary stock' (Downey et al., 2010 p.16) somewhat taint the positive spin that they initially argue.

2.6 Social capital

A related and useful concept to consider at this stage is that of social capital,

'the connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trust worthiness that arise from them' (Putnam, 2000 p.19).

Putnam argues that the features of modern society have resulted in a reduction in civic engagement, which is not good for society. Social capital has a number of benefits for Putnam (2000) resulting in improved neighbourhoods and economic prosperity, thereby creating a healthy functioning democracy (Aldridge et al., 2002).

Griffis and Johnson (2014) examined the contribution of public libraries to the social capital of a community, and concluded that regular public library use had the potential to increase social capital among members of a community. However, they also identified that in rural public libraries existing social networks, particularly among those who are more socially advantaged, could have a detrimental effect on these potential benefits. Urban libraries are perceived to be more successful at generating social capital, as such

areas may lack the other mechanisms required to achieve such a panacea (Griffis and Johnson, 2014). Putnam (2000) considers that engagement has a number of positive economic and social benefits including collective problem solving, community development, and the improvement of health and well-being of individuals and the wider community.

Scott (2011) sees libraries as the physical place helping to strengthen communities, and play a key role in community building. They are an inclusive third space (Scott, 2011) which is a true indicator of a democratic society, and should be viewed as a critical stakeholder in a community.

Volunteering is perceived by Aldridge et al. (2002) to be a way of stimulating social capital at a micro level, however Putnam (2000) argues that creating, or re-creating social capital is not a straight forward task. Social capital can unfortunately perpetuate the social dominance of one class over another, and act as 'a resource that binds people together within a group much more than between people of different groups' (Bourdieu, 1980, 1986 cited in Griffis and Johnson, 2014 p.97). In addition social capital can create a situation where people are excluded from networks (Portes, 1998, cited in Griffis and Johnson, 2014) and public libraries may unintentionally create this (Griffis and Johnson, 2014).

The analysis and discussion chapter will aim to identify whether such challenges are evident in the case study authorities examined as part of this research.

2.7 Localism and the Big Society

In direct contrast to community engagement, the 2010-2015 Coalition Government introduced the concept of Localism. Localism can be viewed as enabling 'people and their locally elected representatives to achieve their own ambitions. This is the essence of the Big Society' (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2011 p.2).

The concept of Localism, and the resulting civic engagement, is not new. Putnam (2000) discussed the idea of social capital almost two decades ago. He argues that because the

creation of social capital is challenging, it requires both individual and institution changes in order to facilitate true civic engagement (Putnam, 2000).

The Big Society is therefore an integral part of the mix required for the advancement of the wider Localism agenda (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2011).

It is concerned with,

'putting more power in people's hands - a massive transfer of power from Whitehall to local communities (thereby resulting in) people encouraged and enabled to play a more active role in society' (The Conservative Party, 2013).

The Big Society, initially the idea of Phillip Blond (Kisby, 2010) can be viewed as a key driver of government policy, particularly during the Coalition Government, and the early period of the succeeding Conservative Government.

'Its core themes...(being) empowering communities, redistributing power and promoting a culture of volunteering' (Kisby, 2010 p.484).

'People come together to solve problems and improve life for themselves and the communities; a society in which the leading force for progress is social responsibility, not state control' (The Conservative Party, 2010, cited in Museums Libraries and Archives Council, 2010a p.1).

The Big Society rests on the premise that public services are outdated in terms of how they are organised, and as a result have poor service standards. (Minister for Government Policy, 2011). The current Conservative Government state that this view is not 'based on ideology, however...(but) driven by an ideal of people power - a belief that people know better than politicians' (Minister for Government Policy, 2011).

There exists a broad spectrum of opinion as to the merits of the Big Society, and how it should be enabled. There are many benefits of pursuing a Big Society agenda, and key areas include, citizen involvement, the belief that everyone has assets, building and strengthening social networks, using local knowledge and transforming the welfare state (New Economics Foundation, 2013).

Devolution of public services, and the encouragement of local communities taking over services, is viewed by Downey et al (2012) as creating increased social value whilst also saving public money.

Some commentators however, are sceptical as to the underlying motives for such an approach (Reed, 2011), arguing that what the 2010-2015 Coalition Government set in motion was simply aimed at breaking up public services. Mycock and Tonge (2011 p.56) further suggest that 'it (Big Society) is a smoke screen for public service cuts through the promotion of volunteers as a cut-price alternative to state provision'. The manifesto of the current Conservative Government re-states their commitment to the concept of the Big Society (The Conservative Party, 2015).

In contrast, the New Local Government Network (NLGN), an independent think tank considering the transformation of public services and a keen advocate of localism, explains that

'if it is to emerge at all, the Big Society will grow out of local action and initiative, not prime ministerial speeches and central programmes. The concept is by its nature, social, local and community based' (Keohane et al., 2011).

The NLGN sees a key role for public institutions and local government in the formation and nurturing of the Big Society, in addition to ensuring an equal distribution of community action, and avoidance of regional equality (Keohane et al., 2011). Key indicators of the Big Society being belonging, volunteering and civic participation (Keohane et al., 2011). CILIP, in addition, stress that public libraries could be key in delivering the big society agenda although the part they would play in doing this has not been entirely clear (CILIP, 2011).

Sceptics worry that such policy is arguably a continuation of Thatcherism, with a focus on the role of the individual, rather than a reliance on the state.

'Big Society is really aimed at mobilising individuals and communities to do more to look after themselves, to compensate for the impending massive cut-backs in public services' (Williamson, 2010 p.44).

Williamson (2010) explains that such an individualistic policy can be viewed as unlikely to succeed without reliance on additional redistributive policy, aimed at reducing inequality. Indeed, the Civil Exchange, a think tank looking at how civil society and government can work together, argues that the Big Society gap has meant that gross inequalities still exist, such that the 'more affluent have the most power, get the best outcomes from public services and are more socially active' (Civil Exchange, 2015a).

Others suggest that there is very little difference between the concepts and outcomes of community engagement and Big Society, except for the fact that the former appears to view the state as the driving force, and explicitly considers the need for tackling inequality in society.

According to Kisby (2010) the view of an active citizen is that of a philanthropist and volunteer, rather than a politically literate citizen through community engagement, within the context of a Big Society. Kisby (2010 p.486) observes how the responsible citizen did not 'represent a significant break with New Labour in this regard so much as a continuation, albeit with greater intensity, especially, perhaps, in the context of the country's dire financial position'.

However he argues that a redistributive state is essential, otherwise the inequalities in certain sectors of society will impede the success of the Big Society, as identified earlier in this section (Civil Exchange, 2015a).

This view is similar to that of the NLGN which suggests 'rather than the state stepping back in the coming years, it requires a new model of local community leadership, a mind-set of community involvement rather than state expenditure' (Keohane et al., 2011 p.107). The state indeed has a role in supporting the development of the Big Society, particularly where social assets are fewer. 'These areas will need to receive extra support if we are not to see a widening gap between communities in this country' (Keohane et al., 2011 p.107).

Other concerns identified with the success of a Big Society include the issue of ‘citizen overload’, with people neither having the time or desire to play their part (Mycock and Tonge, 2011). There is a danger that existing volunteering initiatives are likely to be impacted upon negatively, with 25% of our population already engaged in voluntary activity (DCLG Citizenship survey 2009 in Mycock and Tonge, 2011). Cuts in public services also impact negatively on volunteering opportunities available (Anon, 2011a). Sceptics warn that the Big Society is simply outsourcing existing public services, leading to poorer working conditions, reduced service quality and privatisation (Reed, 2011).

2.7.1 The future of the Big Society

A recent audit of Big Society performance so far concluded the following.

‘The Big Society has failed to deliver against its original goals. Attempts to create social action, to empower communities and to open up public services, with some positive exceptions, have not worked. The Big Society has not reached those who need it most we are more divided than before’ (Sloccock in Civil Exchange, 2015a p.4).

The audit argues that although social action has been stimulated, failure is due to a number of key factors: The failure of using a market-based consumer driven model to increase competition and choice in public services, a centralised political system which contained power in the hands of a few, and an emerging Big Society gap.

This latter phenomenon means that ‘the least affluent individuals and communities have the least sense of empowerment, the worst experiences of public services and the lowest levels of social action and voluntary sector infrastructure’ (Civil Exchange, 2015a p.8). In addition, Government has failed to develop strong partnerships with the voluntary sector, and the private sector has failed to engage with promoting social well-being. The audit espouses a ‘good’ Big Society and quotes the Governor of the Bank of England who states,

‘we simply cannot take the capitalist system, which produces such plenty and so many solutions, for granted. Prosperity requires not just investment in economic capital, but investment in social capital’ (Civil Exchange, 2015a p.61).

Other commentators such as Parker (2015) suggest that the lack of public funding to support the Big Society and a lack of policy, have culminated in the initiative simply not working. He considers the idea of a 'Commons' rather than a Big Society whereby people are asked to,

'do more of the things they care about, recognising more social and civic action generally has a knock-on benefit for government in the form of enhanced social capital, reduced isolation and the unexpected benefits that flow from enabling social innovation'(Parker, 2015 p.73).

Such a notion is more aligned with community engagement and the relational state (Clarence and Gabriel, 2014), and resulting from a mix of democratic republicanism and libertarian socialism (Parker, 2015) and dependent on a society where educational and economic security are key drivers.

2.8 Volunteers

Volunteering is not a new concept for public libraries (Museums Libraries and Archives Council, 2011a), and is described as,

'Formal volunteering – giving unpaid help through groups, clubs or organisations: Informal volunteering – giving unpaid help as an individual to people who are not relatives: Employer supported volunteering - volunteering undertaken by employees that is enabled by employers / companies' (Cabinet Office, 2015 p.6).

Volunteers are a key feature of the Big Society, with 69% of people in England volunteering at least once a year, and 47% of people volunteering (formally and informally) at least once a month in 2014-2015. However when one examines formal volunteering alone, this figure declines to 27%, which implies less participation than originally suggested (Cabinet Office, 2015).

A key policy message of the 2010-2015 Coalition Government's Decentralisation and Localism Bill (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2011) emphasised the importance of volunteers, social enterprises, charities and other voluntary and community groups (Museums Libraries and Archives Council, 2010a), and the current Conservative

manifesto places similar emphasis on the importance of volunteers (The Conservative Party, 2015) .

Rochester et al. (2012) detail three paradigms of volunteering that exist within society and provide a complex model of volunteering beset with fuzzy boundaries: the dominant non-profit paradigm, the civil society paradigm, and the serious leisure paradigm. The non-profit paradigm views volunteer motivation as being predominantly altruistic, and exists within a social welfare context, provided for by large well-structured organisations, with clearly defined roles and management procedures. The civil society paradigm considered by Lyons et al (1998, cited in Rochester et al., 2012) sees volunteering more as a self-help and mutual aid vehicle, which arises from grass roots activity in a community, and goes beyond social welfare expanding to other forms of social policy, where volunteers are taking on leadership and operational roles. The final paradigm, whereby volunteers take on a variety of roles, in a variety of organisations, motivated by a pure enthusiasm for the activity, is volunteering as serious leisure. The discussion chapter will revisit these paradigms and see how they relate to the results gathered.

Paine et al. (2010) outline the four principles that have been established by the Government and third sector in England, deemed fundamental to volunteering: It is a choice made freely, diverse and open to all, mutually beneficial, and volunteer contributions are recognised. They also usefully examine the differing conceptual interpretations of volunteering, through the lenses of work, philanthropy, activism, leisure, care and participation, and learning, and how a multi-lens approach is vital for considering the phenomenon in its own right (Paine et al., 2010) In a similar vein, Brodie et al. (2009) discuss the idea of a spectrum related to individual, social and public participation, and the importance of 'multiple contexts' when analysing participatory activities.

A more generic term that builds upon the Big Society concept, is that of social action, which relates to 'a practical action in the service of others' (Hicks-Pattison et al., 2014 p.6), and includes formal and informal volunteering within this term. The routes by which

social action impacts upon public services is usefully displayed in a logic map, which attempts to quantify the value of such actions at 23.9 billion pounds. Such action is perceived to be multi-faceted, and having even greater future potential (Hicks-Pattison et al., 2014).

2.8.1 Reasons for volunteering

Research on why people volunteer relates predominantly to social and practical reasons (Locke, 2008), rather than self-focussed and instrumental factors, or factors relating to reciprocity. However Merrell (2000, cited in Hardill and Baines, 2011 p.396) argues that 'people volunteer for a complex mix of altruistic and self-interested reasons and that volunteers are both 'givers' and 'takers'.

Rochester (2006, cited in Brodie et al., 2009) considers motivations for volunteering and highlights four key explanations for volunteering. These relate to socio-economic factors, such that volunteering is more prevalent amongst those from more mobile educational and social backgrounds; opportunity of access; historical and cultural factors, related to a person's religious background for example; and individual motivation, closely related to their personality.

Hardill and Baines (2009, cited in Hardill and Baines, 2011) draw on cultural theory to consider the motives and patterns for volunteering: hierarchy (giving alms), and fatalism (getting by), which have a high degree of social regulation; and individualism (getting on), and egalitarianism (giving to each other), which have a lower degree of social regulation.

More recently Nichols et al. (2015) have examined the asset transfer of a variety of leisure facilities to volunteer management, and argue that motivations for the maintenance of a facility initially are often related to a volunteer's own self-interest, rather than broader notions of wider community good.

2.8.2 Benefits of volunteering

Volunteering therefore, in practice, helps to build a cohesive and connected society, and seeks to combat social exclusion, through benefits such as,

‘access to social networks, opportunities for empowerment, opportunities to learn and develop skills, improved physical and mental and the chance to experience the satisfaction of making a contribution’ (Kearney, 2003 p.47).

However recent research (Locke, 2008) has identified a number of common traits amongst those more likely to volunteer in society, including being female, more active in a faith, employees, from the 16-24 or over 55 age groups, and from the West Midlands and South West regions of the UK. Such inequalities are also identified by Musick and Wilson (2008, cited in Brodie et al., 2009 p.29) who warn of importance of social linkages whereby the ‘well-resourced with further education, higher incomes and wider social networks are more likely to hear about opportunities for participation, and tend to be asked’.

The benefits of volunteering more specifically with regard to the public library service will be discussed in greater detail in section 2.9.1.

2.8.3 Barriers to volunteering

Barriers to volunteering generally relate predominantly to time, bureaucracy, risk and inability (Locke, 2008). Brodie et al. (2009) classify the participatory barriers as being related to institutional, psychological and practical aspects. The National Council for Voluntary organisations (NCVO) agrees that time is the single most popular reason given for being unable to contribute towards volunteering, closely followed by a lack of awareness regarding volunteering opportunities (National Council for Voluntary Organisations, 2015).

Interestingly, issues to do with safety and financial security are more prevalent reasons for non-participation for those deemed at risk of social exclusion (Teasdale, 2008).

'For people on low incomes, the incidental expenses of providing food and other services to people in need....decent clothing, or the costs of transportation can make all the difference between volunteering and no volunteering' (Reitsma-Street et al., 2000, cited in Brodie et al., 2009 p.30).

Kearney (2003 p.48) outlines the requirement to 'deal with the fact that volunteering is not yet a socially inclusive activity'. The perception that all volunteers are the usual suspects, being retired, middle-class (Scottish Libraries and Information Council, 2015) and part of the establishment, 'with high levels of skills, confidence and social capital' (Nichols et al., 2015 p.83) can mean that 'the clichéd image of an 'old do-gooder' volunteer can deter certain groups' (Marta and Pozzi, 2008, cited in Brodie et al., 2009 p.30). This further perpetuates the lack of diversity, and can be divisive rather than building trust (Kearney, 2003), thereby resulting in groups of volunteers in control prioritising their own agenda above those of the wider community (Nichols et al., 2015). Smith (2002) notes a predominance of this type of volunteer in the heritage industry, which in many ways has much similarity with libraries. As Zimmeck (2000 p.28) suggests 'volunteers are a peculiar group of people, not entirely representative of the population as a whole'.

2.8.4 Volunteer management

One key topic that arose from much of the volunteer literature, related to the concept of volunteer management, that is the 'recruiting, co-ordinating, leading, supporting, administering and organising volunteers and/or having responsibility for strategic planning for volunteering' (Brewis et al., 2010 p.13). Gay (2000b, cited in Hardill and Baines, 2011 p.55) observes the growth of volunteer management as a profession, and the specific skills set required for successful management, including co-ordinating and developing volunteers, leadership, representation and campaigning.

This move towards greater formalisation and professionalisation of volunteer management has increased in recent years (Cunningham, 1999, cited in Lynch and Smith, 2010), and organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB) display the key features of such organisation, including 'large numbers of trained and skilled volunteers organised at local

and regional level.....supported by a small, centrally located professional staff' (Brewis, 2013).

Zimmeck (2000) explains that formalisation and professionalisation have been facilitated using standards, practices and procedures. However, such a model enshrined in bureaucratic austerity, does not sit well with what he describes as the home grown collectivist democratic model of existence more commonly associated with voluntary organisation.

'The "bureaucratic model" regards managing volunteers as the means to an end, the "home grown" model regards it, in effect, as both means and end' (Zimmeck, 2000).

Holmes (2004 p.75) explores the challenge of having two paradigms in which to consider volunteers,

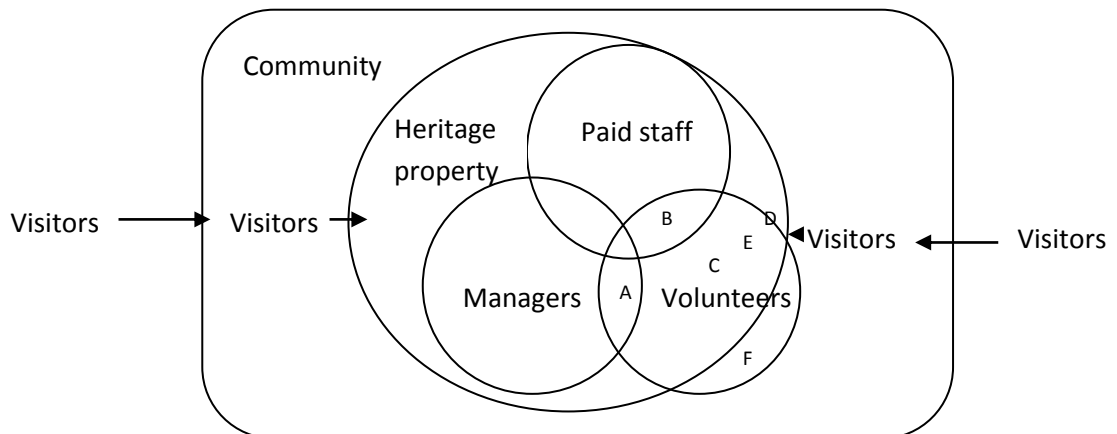
'the economic model analyses volunteers as filling the gaps in provision between the private and public sectors....the leisure model considers the act of volunteering to constitute a leisure experience'.

As a consequence, procedures introduced by the organisation to manage volunteers may be viewed with suspicion by the volunteers, depending on which paradigm the latter see themselves to be within. Hager and Brudney (2004) warn that too much of a similarity with paid employment management practices can potentially diminish the volunteer experience and drive potential volunteers away.

A useful conceptual model of the interrelationships that contribute to the volunteer experience, considers how this impacts on the successful management of volunteers in heritage attractions, and is displayed in figure 1 on the following page. This model formed the basis of stakeholder choices in phase 2 of the research, and will be revisited in section 3.9.3.

Figure 1. Volunteering interrelationships in heritage attractions (Smith, 2002 p.12)

The operating environment



Inter-relationships

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| A Volunteer to manager | D Volunteer to visitors |
| B Volunteer to paid staff | E Volunteer to property |
| C Between volunteers | F Volunteer to community |

Successful volunteer management is all the more challenging when one considers it 'remains an undervalued function even within some quite high income organisations' (Brewis et al., 2010 p.9). Brewis et al. (2010) also warn that the skills set required for managers of volunteers is currently lacking in terms of what is required, plus the requirement for adequate financial resource in order to manage effectively is paramount (Bourgett, Dickie and Restall 2002 in Holmes, 2004). However, Holmes (2004) suggests that ensuring volunteers are fulfilling the service priorities through careful management, can work successfully in tandem with volunteers perceiving themselves engaged with a leisure activity. Although this arose from heritage sector research, one can argue that many similarities exist with the library sector, especially relating to local history and other specialisms.

Taylor et al. (2006) stress the importance of the psychological contract in building a positive employment relationship with volunteers, relating to,

'a cognitive state that is subjective and interpretative and refers to the development and maintenance of the relationship between the individual and the organisation' (Taylor et al., 2006 p.126)

They suggest that this can help shape volunteer effort, and maintain long term loyalty of volunteers in an organisation, thereby acting as a means of control. They also detail the detrimental effect that poor volunteer management practices can have on retaining long term volunteering. Bussell and Forbes (2007 p.17) conclude that a relationship marketing paradigm is highly appropriate to the volunteers as it facilitates their long term commitment, by helping to develop an 'enduring bond between the organization (sic) and the volunteer, moving, the potential volunteer up the ladder of loyalty to becoming an advocate for the organization (sic)'.

2.9 Volunteer use in public libraries

Within the past few years the increased public library use of volunteers has been documented by a variety of commentators, including the replacement of professional staff, and libraries run entirely by volunteers (May, 2011, Anstice, 2012, Page, 2010, Hill, 2010).

In addition the roles that such volunteers are undertaking is also changing, a recent Unison survey of library staff (Davies, 2013) detailed that 45% of respondents stated that volunteers were used to do jobs previously done by paid staff. Goulding (2006) observes that so far, many public libraries have adopted a highly reactive approach to this latter phenomenon, and the increasingly political nature of this situation has been identified by a number of commentators including Pateman and Vincent (2010), McMenemy (2009), Nichols et al. (2015), Hawkins (2011) and Usherwood (2007).

Nichols et al. (2015) highlight the fact that volunteers have the potential to feel coerced into the role if their efforts are to ensure that a leisure facility remains open, which can serve to diminish the benefits of volunteering. The benefits and problems of volunteer use in public libraries will be considered further in the next section of this chapter.

2.9.1 Benefits of volunteer use in public libraries

The benefits of public libraries using volunteers has been well considered by the now defunct Museums Libraries and Archives Council (2011a), with a clear model (Figure 2) used to clarify the inter-relationship of the benefits to the service, the volunteers themselves and the community in which they operate.

Figure 2. Connecting service to the community



(Museums Libraries and Archives Council, 2011a p.47)

Not only does the library service have the potential to gain capacity and resource, and access to a range of community voices, but in addition the volunteers can gain skills and well-being, and feel part of the wider community, which in turn creates networks with the local community. This then facilitates community engagement. In addition, use of volunteers supports social mixing (Arts Council England, 2014) thereby leading to increased trust among people, and the creation of social capital.

2.9.2 Problems of volunteer use in public libraries

In contrast, there are a number of negative aspects relating to volunteer use in public libraries. These include loss of professional librarian skills, especially when cost cutting is a concern, in addition to staff losing their jobs to be replaced by volunteers (Anstice, 2012). CILIP policy on use of volunteers in public libraries clearly states that although it

supports the use of volunteers for supplementation, it is not the case for job substitution (CILIP, 2012c).

Social demographics mean that there is inevitably likely to be variation in the willingness for certain communities to take part in volunteering (Anstice, 2012). The baby boomer generation has been argued as requiring innovative volunteering opportunities that may differ from previous generations, creating possible challenges for volunteer opportunity providers (Williamson et al., 2010). In addition the capacity of a community to rise to the volunteering effort is a key concern, particularly by those communities from disadvantaged areas (Arts Council England, 2013c), and yet ironically may be those most in need of a library service and the benefits to community it brings (Arts Council England, 2013b).

Volunteers are also not without a financial cost, they have to be recruited, selected and trained adequately, in addition to legal checks, in order to ensure that quality is maintained and mistakes are avoided (Anstice, 2012). Anstice (2012) also suggests that use of volunteers can result in double taxation, in that the community still has to fund the libraries that are not supported by volunteers.

Hager and Brudney (2004) warn of the challenges that ensue when volunteers are badly managed, thereby resulting in poor standards of service quality, low organisational reputation, and a less rewarding volunteer experience.

'There is a dearth of research and discussion on the 'employment' and management of volunteer workers,' (Lynch and Smith, 2010 p.81) with a greater concentration on the motivation of volunteers rather than their management, yet increasingly there has been a move towards greater formalisation and professionalisation of volunteer management in recent years (Cunningham 1999 in Lynch and Smith, 2010 p.82).

Hill (2010) sees over-reliance on volunteers for public library service provision as flawed, and that without professional staff, there is a likelihood that standards will drop. These

concerns are mirrored by CILIP (2012) who stress the importance of proper planning based on strategy and local needs analysis, when considering reductions.

The loss of skilled staff reduces,

'the capacity of services to innovate and change, to shape services to the needs of local communities, deal with complex enquiries and work in partnership with a whole host of organisations' (The Guardian, 2012 p.6).

More generally Goodall (2000) considers the term professionalism, which he equates with 'good..... seen as a positive thing' and relating to areas to do with competence, efficiency and effectiveness. He argues that professionalism ensures the maintenance of status for a profession through limited entry, and the associated guarding of knowledge through formalities.

It is important to note that not everyone is suited to being a library volunteer, which impacts on the service, such that 'ineffective volunteers can take a toll on the employee workforce and lead to negative personal and organizational outcomes' (Wandersman and Alderman, 1993, cited in Rogelberg et al., 2010 p.435).

Poor relationships between paid staff and volunteer staff can also result in increased stress and dissatisfaction on both sides. Wandersman and Alderman (1993, cited in Rogelberg et al., 2010 p. 425) identify that the use of volunteers can cause additional stress for paid employees, due to personality clashes, volunteers not pulling their weight, lack of communication, disagreement over how to handle certain situations and negative volunteer attitudes towards paid staff. They conclude that an active volunteer management programme may help to alleviate some of the issues.

'The greatest challenge for volunteer-involving organisations would appear to be achieving the balance between the informality that complements the characteristics of volunteer management and the need for formality' (Lynch and Smith, 2010 p.93).

Grossman and Furano (2002, cited in Hager and Brudney, 2004) consider three crucial elements to successful volunteer use; careful screening of volunteers, adequate training and their continued management.

It is also important to note that,

'no matter how well intentioned volunteers are, unless there is an infrastructure in place to support and direct their efforts, they will remain ineffective at best or, worse, become disenchanted and withdraw, potentially damaging recipients of services in the process' (Hager and Brudney, 2004 p.3)

Arts Council England (2013b) discuss the need for proper planning of any move to volunteer use in a library service, stressing the importance of meaningful consultation with all stakeholders (including staff) in order to gain 'buy-in', and avoid paid staff feeling devalued, through a partnership approach.

Wilson (2012) in his review of volunteer research, acknowledges the challenges of conflicting interests and potential short-term commitment of volunteers, in addition to a number of social factors that affect the propensity of an individual to volunteer or not.

An additional issue relates to possible confusion on the part of library users regarding distinguishing volunteers from paid staff, and as a result, their perceptions of service quality (Wandersman and Alderman,1993, cited in Rogelberg et al., 2010).

2.10 Future developments

The Future Libraries Programme was established by the 2010-2015 Coalition Government to consider new ways to further the role of the Big Society in library provision. Ten projects were selected which considered issues such as efficiency savings, alternative governance, and the sharing of library services across authorities, including use of volunteers (Museums Libraries and Archives Council, 2011a, Future Libraries Programme Project Team, 2011). Reports from the findings of the first round of the Future Libraries Programme concluded that such initiatives would not work fully without a lot of initial work, relationship building, and time, and should not be viewed as 'a quick fix to stop closures' (Anon, 2011b p.10). Final analysis of this programme identified four emerging themes with regard to library reform and change, in order to deal with the challenges facing public libraries: Shared services across library boundaries, review of the location and distribution of service points, new provider models and delivery, and divesting library assets and

services to community ownership/management (Future Libraries Programme Project Team, 2011).

Arts Council research into future libraries concluded that although there was a continued need for a public library service, they expected 'to see a shift from a service provided to a community to one in which local people are more active and involved in its design and delivery' (Davey, 2013 p.4). There is a brief mention of volunteers and their potential for adding capacity and new skills to a service, and the fact that this is a growing trend, however they are also keen to stress that there are a variety of approaches depending on circumstances. Public libraries need to encourage more future-proof and innovative ways of working, in order to remain resilient and sustainable.

Harvey (2016 p.18) concludes that, with an increased move to austerity in public service provision,

'new ways of working will become ever more important over the coming years, as the funding environment becomes increasingly difficult. The cuts are far from over, with the core grant to councils expected to halve over the current Spending Review period. Local government and cultural institutions alike will need to negotiate new relationships'.

Although concerning, he claims that such developments could also be an opportunity, 'creating the scope for new institutional models, new relationships, and potential new income streams'.

2.10.1 Sieghart Review

The Sieghart Review (Sieghart, 2014b) considered the future of public library provision, acknowledging the lack of outcome from previous library reviews, and the ignorance on the part of policy makers regarding what public libraries actually do.

Its key recommendations relate to the further development of digital initiatives, the provision of a strategic framework and, through a visionary taskforce, and the improvement and revitalising of library services in order to enhance community involvement. The review clearly identifies a key role for volunteers in future libraries arguing that 'community managed or community-supported libraries can present a

creative way to manage resources and help support the professional library workforce' (Sieghart, 2014b p.23).

Such involvement is viewed as helping to better reflect the needs of the local community, and thereby enhance community engagement and ownership. An interesting point relating to the long term viability of volunteer run libraries is raised, however there is acknowledgement that 'plainly not one library model fits all situations' (Sieghart, 2014b).

2.11 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has explored the literature surrounding volunteer use in public libraries. The value of public libraries has been identified, together with current usage of libraries. The political background in which public libraries exist has been identified, together with policy initiatives that relate to increasing community involvement. In particular community engagement, the Big Society and the relational state have been explored as concepts, in addition to volunteering more generally, and within the public library arena.

It is evident that volunteer use in public libraries, particularly for job replacement is a relatively new phenomenon and although there is literature exploring value-added volunteer use in the library and heritage sector, there is a lack of literature exploring the use of volunteers for job replacement in the library sector. In addition, the exploration of stakeholders' views towards this phenomenon by researchers is lacking, as is solutions and ways forward.

There needs to be clear articulation that the 'Big Society is not about abdicating responsibility. Volunteering needs to be managed. It is not to displace experience and skill but to build community action with the library as a key resource for others' (Dolan, 2010 p.9).

3. Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the methodology adopted for this research. The interpretivist paradigm is considered, together with a social domains perspective (see section 3.3), thereby forming a qualitative approach. Research methods chosen are explained and justified, together with data collection methods and ethical considerations.

3.2 Interpretivist approach

This research adopts an interpretivist approach, in that meanings are socially and historically constructed, and therefore are particularly well suited to the subject area of libraries. Initial discussion of paradigm is vital as it provides ‘an understanding of the intention behind the action’ (Pickard, 2007 p.13) and contextualises the research approach adopted.

The interpretivist paradigm, that is ‘the net that contains the researcher’s epistemological, ontological and methodological premises’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011 p.13) considers reality to be ‘multiple, constructed and holistic’ (Pickard, 2013 p.12). For King and Horrocks (2010 p.11) interpretivism is a broad term, ‘but can be encapsulated in concerns around how the social world is experienced and understood’.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) aptly describe the approach in the context of a patchwork quilt maker, the

‘interpretative bricoleur (that) understands research is an interactive process shaped by one’s personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity and those of the people in the setting’ (2011 p.5).

Such an approach therefore aims to interpret social reality from a subjective viewpoint (Corbetta, 2011), what Creswell outlines to be a ‘personal lens that is situated in a specific socio-political moment’ (2003 p.182). The resulting interpretations or meanings are ‘varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than

narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas' (Cresswell, 2003 p.8). These 'multiple realities or different interpretations' are further discussed by King and Horrocks (2010 p.10).

Because public libraries are a social construct, bound in a complex political and social world that is still evolving, adoption of an interpretivist approach allowed the researcher to explore the volunteer use in a manner that enabled individual voices to be heard and recognised, whilst also uncovering the reality that is constructed firstly by individuals within the research, then by the wider group.

3.3 Social Domains

This research is enshrined in a social domains perspective, whereby 'analysis is based on a view of social reality as interlinked social domains, rather than uniform relationships or processes. The domains (psychobiography, situated activity, social settings, and social context resources) have their own (internal) characteristics, but are highly intermeshed' (Layder, 2013 p.104).

Layder (1997 p.36) identifies that social relations, power and practices are the 'ligatures that draw together the domains, and constitute their connective tissue'. Therefore, the research aimed to examine the phenomenon of volunteer use from different vantage points relating to personal feelings, the organisation, power and control, and contextual elements which were interwoven and interdependent on each other.

3.4 Qualitative Approach

This research used a qualitative methodology, which arose naturally from the interpretivist paradigm adopted (Pickard, 2013 p.13). A qualitative methodology means 'the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives, (i.e. the multiple meanings of individual experiences, meanings socially and historically constructed, with an intent of developing a theory or pattern)' (Cresswell, 2003 p.18).

Gorman and Clayton (2005 p.5) describe qualitative research, and outline the following key features:

- Findings are contextual, in that data are gathered in a natural setting.
- Qualitative research involves description: the researcher attempts to express and interpret the reality that they investigate.
- The researcher focusses on the context and process to better understand the area being investigated.
- The process involves participation such that the researcher seeks to fully understand what people believe and feel, and how events are interpreted.
- The researcher explains happenings through evidence collected as part of their research, in order to create a full picture of what is happening through an inductive method.
- 'Rich pictures' may be provided in order to allow for transferability of findings based on contextual applicability.

In terms of the last feature, Pickard also adds, 'rich description' allows for the findings to be transferred to other settings based on similarity rather than assumed 'sameness' (Pickard, 2013 p.20).

In addition, the relationship between the researcher and subject is such that the investigation may indeed influence the research situation (Guba 1981 in Gorman and Clayton, 2005) and must be acknowledged, what Corbetta describes as a psychological involvement (2011). The emergent nature of interpretivist inquiry is such that not all salient issues can be identified at the outset and it is likely that, as the research progresses, further issues and questions will emerge (Cresswell, 2003). 'The research design must therefore be 'played by ear'; it must unfold, cascade, roll, emerge' (Lincoln and Guba 1985 in Pickard, 2013 p.14).

By using a qualitative approach, it was possible to further explore,

'the meaning for the participants of particular forms of social behaviour, and how episodes or chains of interaction build up over time and the manner in which they both affect, and are influenced by, social settings and context' (Layder, 2013 p.92).

As a result, an initial research model was developed that allowed for the iterative nature of the research process, in addition to providing a framework for planning and development.

3.5 Grounded theory

A grounded theory approach was adopted for this research, whereby 'theory developed from analysing empirical material or from studying a field or process' (Flick, 2014 p.538).

This approach 'forces the researcher to permanently reflect on the whole research process and on particular steps in the light of other steps' (Flick, 2014 p.139).

The grounded theory approach allows for the use of varied methods and data in order to understand the phenomenon (Flick, 2014). As a result, this particular research used a multi-faceted approach with regard to the data collection methods used. (Further detail on grounded theory coding technique are detailed later in the chapter in section 3.9.7.1)

3.6 Quantitative research

A quantitative approach, which 'assumes the objective reality of social facts' (Gorman and Clayton 2008 in Pickard, 2007 p.13) was discounted for this research. Pickard (2007 p.9) argues that such a positivist approach would aim to 'predict what comes next.....being in a position to control what happens'.

Flick (2014 p.13) identifies that the limitations of a quantitative approach can be used as a premise for justifying the use of a qualitative approach. 'The ideals of objectivity of sources and their findings are largely disenchanting' (Flick, 2014 p.14) and despite methodological control, the influence of social and cultural factors in research findings is difficult to avoid. A qualitative approach that aimed to ensure research objects were 'represented in their entirety in their everyday context' (Flick, 2014 p.15), rather than

breaking them down into single variables, allowed findings to be based on contextual applicability (Pickard, 2007 p.14).

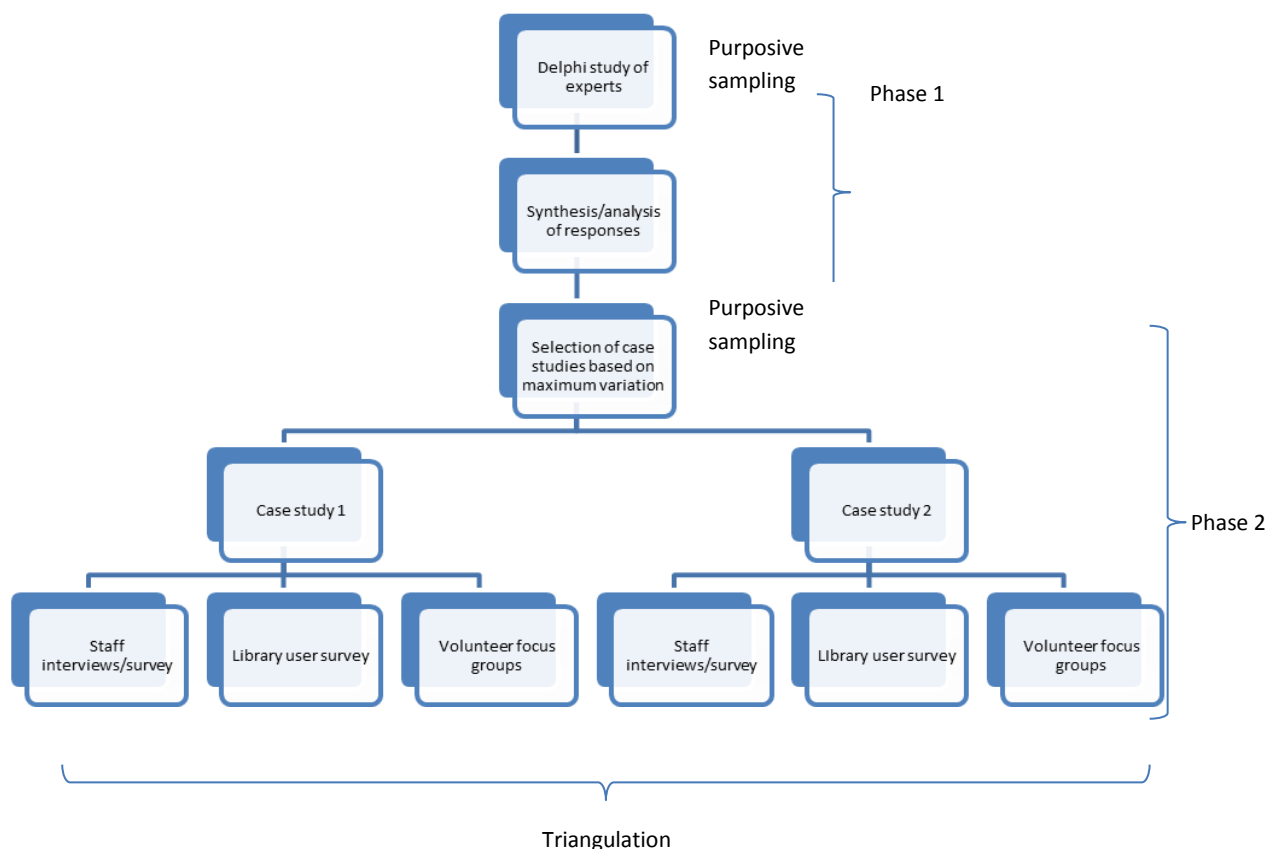
3.7 Research Methods

The research comprised two stages each utilising different research methods; Phase 1 applying a Delphi Study, and Phase 2 focussing on two case study library authorities. Phase 1 of the research was conducted with a sample of 15 public library managers based in England. Professional perceptions were explored, and potential ways forward were considered. The survey also sought to consider if there was consensual opinion regarding the topic, or differing viewpoints that existed.

Phase 2 of the research focussed on the examination of 2 case study library authorities, and used the original Delphi participants who expressed an interest in taking research involvement further as a useful starting point. Discussion of how the final case studies were selected will be considered later in this chapter.

Figure 3 on the next page shows the structure of the entire research study. Flick (2014 p.401) suggests that in order 'to make the most out of using grounded theory methodology, you should consider a strategy that can accommodate several forms of data'.

Figure 3. Structure of research project



3.8 Phase 1: Delphi Study

3.8.1 Introduction

Phase 1 of the research took place during the summer of 2012/13, and aimed to investigate how library authorities in England were currently using volunteers from a Library Service manager perspective, in addition to exploring Public Library Authority Manager (PLAM) views on volunteer use.

As such they were initially invited to take part in a Delphi Study via e-mail. It was hoped that this would therefore, ‘obtain the most reliable consensus of opinion of a group of experts...by a series of intensive questionnaires interspersed with controlled opinion feedback’ (Dalkey and Helmer 1963 in Pickard 2007 p.125). In addition, this research helped to plug the gaps in the literature identified in chapter 2.

'Delphi may be characterized as a method for structuring a group communication process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem' (Linstone and Turoff, 2002 p.3).

A Delphi approach is particularly useful for 'studying a problem or phenomenon when there is incomplete knowledge, the landscape is largely unknown, or there is limited consensus amongst groups' (Kezar and Maxey, 2016 p.144), therefore as the public library environment is changing rapidly, and becoming increasingly complex, the approach was deemed helpful for obtaining a clear and detailed picture of the situation.

PLAMs were contacted initially through the Society of Chief Librarians, applying what is termed 'judgement sampling' (Corbetta, 2011 p.222), whereby participants are chosen on the basis of some characteristics that are highly significant to the questions being asked. The Society of Chief Librarians is primarily comprised of PLAMs, who have a strategic overview of service provision, including use of volunteers.

As such, they were in a unique position to provide the detail necessary for the first phase of this research. Judgement sampling is one of the many possible approaches to purposive sampling (Gorman and Clayton, 2005), and aimed to provide a rich and varied picture of the current situation, in order to establish as clear a consensus as possible (Cape, 2004, cited in Pickard, 2013). A total of 15 PLAMs responded to the initial contact (out of 151 library authorities in England (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2015c)), and these formed the basis of the Delphi study. Full details of the research were included in the initial call, so that all participants were fully informed of the role of the research, and what would be required of them as respondents (Pickard, 2013).

The 15 English library authorities were diverse in terms of their location, size and political complexion, and will be examined in greater depth in the analysis chapter.

As the Delphi Study ensured anonymity from other participants, it was envisaged that this would encourage open and honest answers to what could possibly be a politically sensitive topic (Pickard, 2013).

Clearly this anonymity is compromised to some extent when the group of 'experts' are already known to each other, but membership of the Delphi Study was not revealed and at no point during the stages of synthesis were comments attributed to a particular individual. It is important to add that respondents chose to take part in this research and as such may have had particular views on volunteer use, therefore any results must be viewed in this context. There may have been an element of bias in their opinions, although it is important to note that the 15 PLAMs comprised both North and South of England library authorities, urban and rural areas, and different political complexions of authority, with varied use of volunteers from both ends of the spectrum (See section 4.2 for further detail of authorities selected).

The use of a Delphi Study also helped to build a relationship of trust between the researcher and participants, as the latter were required to commit time and energy to this survey (Pickard, 2007), in addition phase 2 participants were selected from this initial Delphi survey.

3.8.2 Data Collection

A questionnaire (see Appendix A for a sample copy) was emailed to the 15 participating PLAMs, this being the 'only acceptable form of data collection within traditional Delphi method' (Pickard, 2013 p.151). Written responses to specific questions provided the audit trail of interpretation which was necessary as the researcher synthesised the responses and ideas as they developed during the subsequent rounds.

A series of open questions concerning motivations for using volunteers, and issues surrounding their use were asked initially, that attempted to answer the original research aim/objectives and consider the key issues that required further investigation following the literature review (see section 2.11):

- The number of volunteers in their library authority
- How they used Library volunteers
- How they currently recruited, selected and trained library volunteers
- What they perceived to be the value of using library volunteers
- What they viewed to be the benefits of using volunteers for the Library service, paid staff, volunteers and the wider community
- What they viewed to be the issues surrounding the use of library volunteers
- How volunteers worked with paid staff
- What their view was of a formalised policy regarding volunteers
- The future of library volunteers
- Any other issues

After round one all responses were collated, summarised and sent out to respondents for validation and further comment. The second and third rounds of the Delphi Study summarised findings, and attempted to probe deeper into emerging themes, clarify any uncertainties, and gain consensus of opinion where appropriate. This 'allowed the panel maximum opportunity to contribute their thoughts and ideas' (Pickard, 2007 p.128). The final summary report of the findings was disseminated to all respondents (see Appendix B for final summary report).

3.8.3 Data analysis

The Delphi study data was analysed as the research was gathered, using Excel spreadsheets to amalgamate data, in addition to the creation of end of round summary reports to collate and explore further all panel responses that arose during the survey. The findings were then triangulated with phase 2 results to gain a richer picture of volunteer use perspectives.

3.9 Phase 2 research: Case studies

3.9.1 Introduction

Phase 2 of the research took place during the summer of 2013/14, and comprised in depth analysis of two case study public library authorities based in the North-East of England. This phase of research took key issues and concepts arising from the Delphi study, and explored them in greater depth.

The human and procedural side of volunteer use was investigated thoroughly, this time exploring opinions of all stakeholders involved in the process, including Library service managers, volunteer co-ordinators, frontline staff, volunteers and library users. The potential for professional bias acknowledged during phase 1 (section 3.8.1) was diluted during this phase by drawing on opinions of volunteers, and library users, in addition to frontline staff, in order to gain a broader picture of the situation.

3.9.2 Case study approach

A case study can be defined as,

'an in-depth investigation of a discrete entity (which may be a single setting, subject, collection or event) on the assumption that it is possible to derive knowledge of the wider phenomenon from the intensive investigation of a specific instance or case' (Becker 1970 in Gorman and Clayton 2005 p.47).

As the research aimed to establish a better understanding of the complexities and realities of using volunteers in public libraries from multiple viewpoints, the case study approach was highly suitable.

'The purpose of research requires holistic, in depth investigation of a phenomenon or situation from the perspective of all stakeholders involved' (Pickard, 2007 p.93) (See Fig 1). As a consequence Layder (2013 p.31) observes that 'settings are gathering points for a diversity of social and psychological influences'. In addition, as case studies provide 'a three-dimensional picture and...illustrate relationships, micro-political issues and patterns of influences in a particular context' (Bell, 1999 p.12), the politically charged issue of using volunteers in the current economically stringent climate could be investigated fully. Such

variables may have been obscured in a large scale survey, and were better identified through the specific concentration of a case study. (Bell, 1999 p.11)

There has been some criticism regarding the value of examining single events (Bell, 1999 p.11). The selection of two cases for this research, that varied in terms of their context (political, social and geographical) and approach, helped to ensure validity. In addition, Yin (2014 p.64) considers that the 'analytic benefits from having two (or more) cases may be substantial'.

Silverman (2005, cited in Corbin and Strauss, 2008) asserts that 5 strategies increase the validity of qualitative findings, including the use of multiple case studies to test finding, and mixed methods. Such consideration of two separate cases enabled a deeper insight into the factors at play, thereby enhancing reliability of the data, through diversity of results (Gorman and Clayton, 2005). Cresswell (1998, cited in Corbin and Strauss, 2008 p.299) proposes several procedures for trustworthiness in case studies, of which the following were adopted in phase 2 of this research, and will be discussed in more detail later:

- Triangulation
- Clarify researcher bias
- Rich picture
- Member checks

The advantage of using multiple sources of evidence when conducting a case study is considered by Yin (2014 p.121) who explains that 'by developing convergent evidence, data triangulation helps to strengthen the construct validity of your case study'.

The two case study authorities were selected by the researcher on the basis of previous contacts developed during the phase 1 Delphi study, in addition to the purposeful selection of two English Metropolitan Boroughs that exhibited different approaches to volunteer use, thereby maximising the potential for a variety of stakeholder viewpoints. Both authorities were accessible to the researcher, and willing to allow access to the variety of stakeholder required for full analysis to take place.

3.9.3 Stakeholder perspectives

Phase 2 of the research collected data from four types of stakeholders in each case, in order to gain a balanced and full picture of the issues at play (See Fig 1):

- Library Service Managers at the case study authority responsible for the running of the library service, in addition to library managers responsible for the coordination of volunteers (latterly termed library managers)
- Paid staff working at a variety of levels in the library service, predominantly frontline staff
- Volunteers working in the library
- Users of the library service

The first two sets of stakeholder groups were relatively easy to reach, data from library managers (eight staff in total) was collected using semi-structured interviews. Frontline library staff were surveyed using an online questionnaire. A simple researcher administered questionnaire was used to collect the views of library users in an agreed case study library. The volunteers were surveyed by means of a focus group, with four focus groups being carried out with a variety of types of volunteers from both case study authorities (LA1 and LA2). Mixed data collection methods were used which were tailored to the stakeholder group being questioned, and justification for individual instruments will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter.

3.9.4 Interviews

The basic objective of the one-to-one interview, 'remains that of grasping the subject's perspective' (Corbetta, 2011 p.264), and it is a tool that is used frequently in the information and library research arena (Pickard, 2007 p.171).

One could argue that the complexity of this research topic meant that use of such a tool was inevitable in that it is commonly 'used when we are seeking qualitative, descriptive

in-depth data that is specific to the individual and when the nature of the data is too complicated to be asked and answered easily' (Pickard, 2007 p.172).

Semi-structured interviews with library managers were conducted (see Appendix C) ,as time was limited, and a basic framework helped to simplify subsequent analysis of the data (Bell, 1999). A semi-structured interview which included 'a set of prepared, mostly open-ended questions' (Flick, 2014 p.197), allowed flexibility on the part of the interviewer and respondent such that relevant areas were covered but additional themes could still arise as a result of the interaction (Corbetta, 2011).

The benefits of interviews are well documented (Bell, 1999, Pickard, 2007, Gorman and Clayton, 2005, Cresswell, 2003), however key points include their immediacy, adaptability, opportunity to explore to topic, personal contact (especially if there is sensitive data), speed at providing rich data, and non-verbal communication (useful for contentious topics). Rubin and Rubin (2012, cited in Flick, 2014 p.208) also identify the 'importance of trust between the interviewer and interviewee', which can be argued was vital in this particular research in view of the politically charged situation, and because the library managers acted as gatekeepers ensuring contact with the other stakeholders. A gatekeeper in this instance meaning the key person within an organisation who can be utilised to 'introduce the researcher(s) and make contacts for them' (Flick, 2014 p.315).

On the negative side, interviews can be costly in terms of time and commitment (Bell, 1999), have the potential to lose anonymity, and are sometimes too personal.

There is also the problem of bias on the part of the interviewer and the interviewee (Gorman and Clayton, 2005). In addition, analysis of interviews can also be problematic (Bell, 1999). Regarding bias, King and Horrocks (2010 p.126) introduce the term reflexivity whereby a researcher acknowledges their immersion in the 'politics and practices of the social world'.

'This realisation brings about the unavoidable acceptance that doing social research is an active and interactive process engaged in by individual subjects, with emotions and theoretical and political commitments' (King and Horrocks, 2010 p.126).

Therefore such subjectivity should not be seen as a hindrance, but rather 'a resource that can be developed in ways that augment and intensify social research' (King and Horrocks, 2010 p.126).

Prior to conducting the interview, respondents were offered anonymity, and required to sign a consent form, having been informed about the research via an information sheet (See Appendix D for copies of the information sheet and consent form). This information was used for a variety of respondents during stage 2.

Pickard (2007) stresses the importance of recording ones' interviews (written, and audio), and verifying ones' transcripts to ensure an accurate representation of what was said, thereby reducing potential bias on the part of the interviewer, and improving analysis. Therefore, all interviews were recorded and transcribed fully, then emailed to the interviewee for comment and amendment where appropriate (see Appendix E for example of transcript). Langdridge (2004, cited in King and Horrocks, 2010) argues that researcher administered transcription is in fact the first step towards analysing the data, allowing greater familiarity with the data gathered. To aid such analysis, the researcher transcribed all interviews conducted, including contextual elements, such as tone of voice and pauses in speech.

Interviews have obvious benefits over group discussion techniques, which were not chosen for this particular stakeholder. Group discussions may have resulted in dominance of discussion by specific individuals, taking discussion off track, and the possibility that some topics were too sensitive to discuss in a group setting (Gorman and Clayton, 2005).

Staff interviews focused on the following questions, and sought to understand further the issues arising from the literature review and the Delphi Study:

- How library volunteers were currently used, including their roles and responsibilities.
- The number of library volunteers used.
- How library volunteers were recruited, selected and trained.
- What the value was of library volunteers to the service.
- The benefits of library volunteers to the different sets of stakeholders: Staff, service, volunteers, community.
- The problems of using library volunteers to the different sets of stakeholders: Staff, service, volunteers, community.
- The future of using library volunteers.
- Any other issues.

3.9.5 Survey

Frontline library staff were surveyed using an online questionnaire (using SNAP software available through Northumbria University) (see Appendix F for details of the questions asked). A questionnaire according to Pickard (2007 p.183) is 'the single most popular data collection tool in any research', and has the benefit of being 'a relatively cheap and quick way of obtaining information' (Bell, 1999 p.14). The questionnaire link was emailed to all staff at one of the case study library authorities, using the library service manager as the initial link.

As one case study library authority experienced further financial cuts to its service during the progress of this research, it was not possible to survey general library staff at this authority, as deemed too sensitive by the gatekeeper (PLAM). As the importance of keeping good relations to ensure participation was paramount, the gatekeeper's wishes were respected. The gatekeeper was vital to the success of this research, and had 'the authority to grant or deny permission to access potential participants and...the ability to facilitate such access' (King and Horrocks, 2010 p.31). Flick (2014) acknowledges that such a reliance on an individual can have drawbacks, in that they may enable access to a

specially chosen group of people, based on their own agenda. However, as the researcher was operating outside the case study organisations, the gatekeeper was a valuable way of gaining access to them.

Questions focused on similar areas to the library managers' questions but from a less strategic perspective, examining some of the day-to-day working issues that arose. Library users were also surveyed, using a researcher administered questionnaire in one of the case study libraries, following consultation with the library service manager (See appendix G for a copy of the user survey). As mentioned earlier, financial cuts to one of the case study library authorities meant that a user survey only took place in one case study library authority. For both surveys, convenience sampling, 'based on the researcher's ease of access to the sample' (Pickard, 2007 p.63) was carried out. Using a researcher administered technique in this instance enabled a higher response rate (Pickard, 2007), and was conducted after permission has been granted by the host library. Questions were developed from issues arising from the literature review, and Delphi Study and particularly focused on:

- User awareness of volunteers in the library service.
- What they thought volunteers did – roles and responsibilities.
- The benefits of using library volunteers to the different sets of stakeholders: Service, staff, volunteers and the community.
- The problems of using library volunteers to the different sets of stakeholders: Service, staff, volunteers and the community.
- The future of library volunteers.
- Whether they had ever considered being a library volunteer themselves.
- How should roles of paid library staff and volunteer library workers differ.
- If they were in charge of the library service and had to save money, what would they do.
- Should volunteers replace paid staff.

It is important to note that,

'All data gathering instruments should be piloted to test how long it takes recipients to complete them, to check all questions and instructions are clear, and to enable you to remove any items that do not yield usable data' (Bell, 1999 p.127).

As a consequence, all research instruments were tested with a small sample of library staff and users prior to their being publicly delivered. No changes were suggested from the piloting.

3.9.6 Focus groups

Volunteer perspectives were examined through the use of four focus groups (two at each case study library authority), which aimed to consider similar questions to the previous respondents, in order to gain an alternative viewpoint (See Appendix H for a copy of focus group questions).

A focus group is defined by Kitzinger and Barbour (1999, cited in Flick, 2014 p.250) as, 'any group discussion....as long as the researcher is actively encouraging of, and attentive to, the group interaction'.

The benefit of using focus groups was that it enabled the generation of discussion amongst participants, thereby revealing meanings (Lunt and Livingstone 1996, cited in Flick, 2014) and 'offering a wealth of opportunities for generating valuable insights' (King and Horrocks, 2010 p.78). In addition, Flick (2014) observes that a focus group can help to weed out extreme views, thereby providing checks and balances, in addition to being low cost and rich in data.

Such advantages can also work against the researcher, particularly in relation to the dominance of key members of the group (Flick, 2014). This was mitigated in part by careful planning of the focus group delivery and questions (King and Horrocks, 2010).

Data gathering potential was also enhanced by considering *who* was selected as a focus group participant for the research, such that pre-existing groups of 6-10 volunteers were selected via the PLAM as gatekeeper. King and Horrocks (2010 p.67) stress that,

'recruiting people who already have a relationship (with other members of the focus group) can offer a level of confidence in the group's ability to discuss and interact', thereby ensuring an even richer data gathering potential.

All focus groups were duly audio recorded, and transcribed, with all participants' responses anonymised (See Appendix I for an example of a focus group transcript). Member checking with focus group participants was used to establish that the transcription was accurate.

3.9.7 Data analysis

Triangulation, that is 'the convergence of data collected from different sources, to determine the consistency of a finding' (Yin, 2014 p.241) , helps to improve the 'scope, depth and consistency in methodological proceedings and this puts findings on a more solid foundation' (Flick, 2014 p.184).

Triangulation of the research results enabled the emergence of a rich picture of the current situation, and is viewed by Gorman and Clayton (2005 p.126) as, 'one of the best ways of addressing weaknesses in any single research method'. As Layder (2013 p.91) observes, 'the use of multiple strategies, sources and methods works towards enhancing the reliability, validity and generality of findings'.

Analysis of the questionnaire data from the user and staff surveys was conducted using a combination of SNAP survey analysis tools, and Excel spreadsheets (see Appendix J for an example of spreadsheet analysis). Interview and focus group data was analysed using the constant comparative analysis method (Strauss 1987, cited in Pickard 2007).

This method involves,

'taking one piece of data and comparing it with all others that may be similar or different in order to develop conceptualizations of the possible relations between various pieces of data' (Pickard, 2007 p.241).

By asking questions to make sense of the data, incidents were compared with other incidents to examine the similarities and differences (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

In order for this analysis to take place, concepts and themes were gathered from the raw data, using a process of coding, that is, 'tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive of inferential information compiled during the study' (Miles & Huberman, 1994, cited in Gorman & Clayton, 2005 p.211).

This is a key component of grounded theory research, and was very much part of this particular analytical approach (Flick, 2014 p.402).

3.9.7.1 Grounded theory coding

Flick (2014 p.403) outlines that 'coding is a process which includes at least three steps (or ways of coding) with different aims. The three stages of coding in this research included open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) .

The first stage of coding aimed to provide a list of codes and categories relating to the textual data from the surveys, interviews and focus groups (Flick, 2014) (See Appendix K for example of coded data using the comment facility in MS Word). Axial coding comprised the second stage of analysis, which considered the relations between the codes and categories, and aimed to 'clarify the relations among a phenomenon, its causes and consequences, its context, and the strategies of those who are involved' (Flick, 2014 p.408).

A combination of assigning codes as comments to the transcripts in word, followed by organising the codes in Excel spreadsheets (See appendix L for an example of how codes were transferred from the word document to Excel spreadsheet) helped to identify patterns and instances of codes and resulting themes, and allowed linkages to specific references within the data. Additional visual representation of the codes and themes in paper format, using post-it notes, allowed the researcher to fully engage with the data and identify overriding themes and patterns (See Appendix M for example of visual representation). This final step was selective coding, and attempted to 'elaborate the development and integration of it (the data) in comparison to other groups, and focusses potential core concepts or core variables' (Flick, 2014 p.408) thereby creating theory from

the data. In addition, a number of cross-cutting themes were established from the data (see Appendix N of cross-cutting themes).

Data analysis used the mechanisms commonly employed by the qualitative analysis software, NVIVO. Use of this software was discounted in order to allow the researcher to more fully immerse themselves in the data, and work with it at a more detailed level. As only two case studies were being considered, this meant that the data collected was manageable using MS Word, MS Excel and manual visual representation.

3.10 Ethics

'Research ethics is about being clear about the nature of the agreement you have entered into with your research subjects or contacts...getting the informed consent of those you are going to interview, question, observe or take materials from' (Bell, 1999 p.39).

All research participants were briefed from the outset so that they fully understood the purpose of the research, their role in it, and the use the resulting data would be put to. Such informed consent (Pickard, 2007) was vital to achieving an ethically sound research project. Interview and focus group participants in addition completed an informed consent form before taking part. Library users and staff completed a question regarding informed consent at the start of their questionnaire.

As the topic had the potential to be politically sensitive, it was vital that anonymity was assured to all interview and focus group participants, in addition to the library staff and user questionnaires. No library authority names, or personal names were used in the research, and the use of previously mentioned, member checking (Pickard, 2007), aimed to ensure that interpretation of the data from interviews and focus groups was accurate and reflected participant views. This research adhered to the Northumbria University Ethics policy and guidance, and ethics approval was sought using the online University Ethics tool, and the project duly registered following Faculty procedures. All data was kept secure during the research process in line with Northumbria University policies (King and Horrocks, 2010).

3.11 Limitations

There were a number of key limitations related to this research project, particularly with regard to researcher bias, and the political nature of the topic.

The bias of the researcher was perhaps inevitable, specifically where interviewing subjects (Bell, 1999) and, therefore member validation was used to ensure that interpretation of what was stated was accurate. In addition, data analysis drew on appropriate theory to add meaning and relevance to findings.

Simons (1984, cited in King and Horrocks, 2010 p.121) considers the democratic principle that 'data (collected) is the property of the interviewee', therefore all interview and focus group transcripts were made available to participants for checking prior to analysis. This allowed for the correction of misinterpretations on the part of the researcher, and enabled participants to remove comments that they might have felt uncomfortable with.

Bryman (2012 p.391) suggests that such respondent or member validation aims to,

'seek confirmation that the respondent's findings and impressions are congruent with the views of those on whom the research was conducted'.

However there is a danger that such a system can result in defensiveness on the part of the participants, or in direct contrast, it may be that the participants display a reluctance to criticise the findings due to the relationship that has developed with the researcher during the focus group or interview (Bloor, 1997, cited in Bryman, 2012). Triangulation of multiple datasets attempted to ensure that this issue was mitigated.

The topic of volunteer use in public libraries is not only highly topical, but also is fraught with emotion for many of those involved with the process. The researcher was careful to work sensitively with the library authorities to ensure that stakeholders were not unduly alarmed, upset or antagonised. A number of concessions were made throughout the research to enable buy-in from the case study authorities, and ensure an amicable research situation.

3.12 Summary

In summary this chapter has considered the methodological blueprint for this research. An interpretivist paradigm was chosen, which utilised a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. This has been viewed from a social domains perspective.

The research methods involved 2 phases of research, phase 1 being a three stage Delphi study, and phase 2 being two case studies (See Fig 3).

Data collection methods were multiple in order to allow for a range of stakeholder viewpoints from varying social domains, and to allow for triangulation thereby enhancing the validity of the data obtained.

Data analysis used a constant comparative method, and was carried out within the jurisdiction of Northumbria University's research ethics policies and procedures.

4. Chapter 4: Phase 1 Delphi Study results and analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter details the results and analysis of data from the phase 1 research. Phase 1 research data was collected during the summer of 2012/13, and aimed to investigate how library authorities in England were currently using volunteers from a PLAM perspective, including their associated views and opinions (See Appendix A for details of initial round questions). PLAMs were initially invited to take part in a Delphi Study via e-mail, and 3 rounds of questions were posed in order to ‘obtain the most reliable consensus of opinion of a group of experts...by a series of intensive questionnaires interspersed with controlled opinion feedback’ (Dalkey and Helmer, 1963, cited in Pickard, 2007 p.125).

4.2 Library Authorities chosen

Before the Delphi study results are discussed, it is useful to consider the diversity of the 15 English library authorities represented. Roughly half the library authorities were based in the North of England, with the other half based in the South. Four authorities were Unitary districts, five were Metropolitan districts, and the remainder two tier counties. Total electorate in the authorities in 2012 ranged from 80,338 to a maximum figure of 852,476; area of the authorities in hectares ranged from a minimum of 6,441 to 803,761. As a consequence, the variation in volunteer numbers was influenced by authority size. (The Local Government Boundary Commission for England, 2012)

According to Delphi respondents the number of volunteers working in the library services surveyed ranged from 17 to 850 in number (although it is likely that these figures have increased significantly since the Delphi being undertaken). Interestingly this largely tallies with the size of authority in that the smallest number is from the authority with the smallest electorate, and the largest from one of the largest authorities in the sample.

The modal figure regarding volunteers was about 100 per library authority, although there were three authorities where this number was much higher. With regard to the past 5-10 years the majority of respondents stated their number of volunteers has increased, and roughly half of all respondents stated that use of volunteers was set to increase significantly in the next 5-10 years.

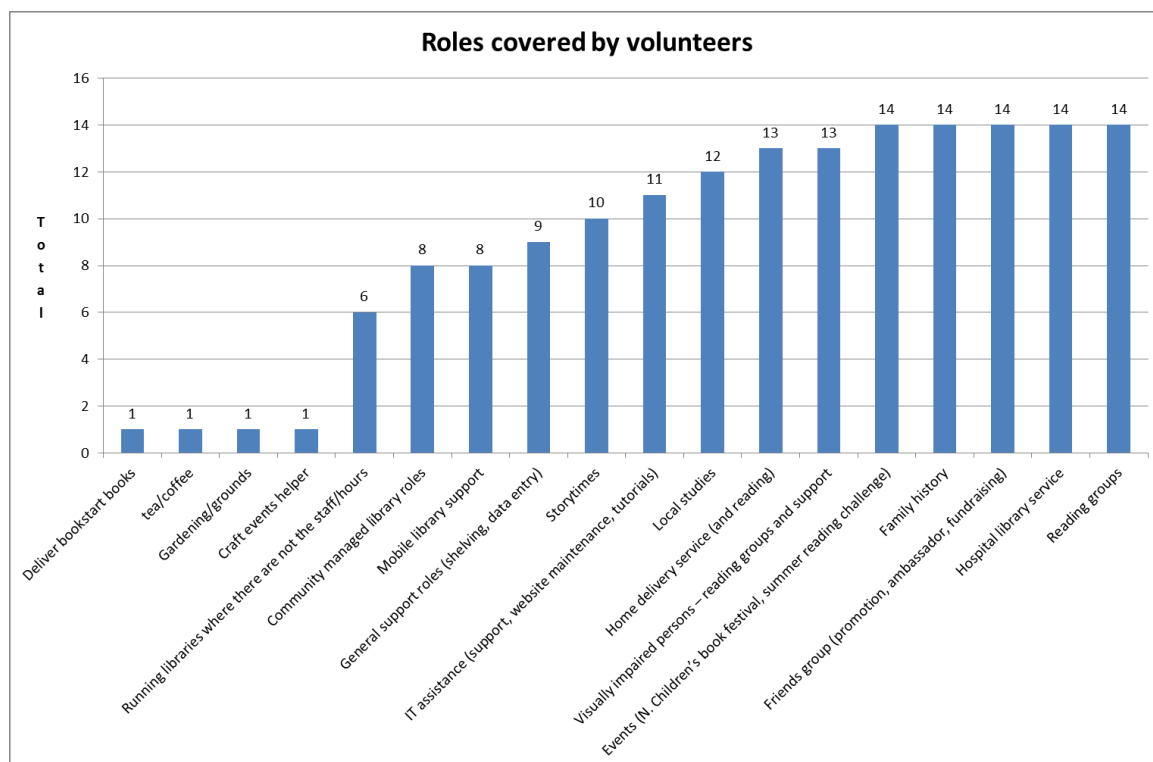
As Maxwell identifies,

‘the use of numbers is a legitimate and valuable strategy for qualitative researchers when it is used as a complement to an overall process orientation to the research...(and) does not inherently make the research a mixed method study’ (2010 p.480).

Hence the use of basic statistics helps the reader to ‘correctly characterise the diversity of actions, perceptions, or beliefs in the setting or group studied’ (Maxwell, 2010 p.478).

4.3 Roles covered by volunteers

Figure 4. Volunteer roles



The roles of volunteers were extremely diverse, ranging from specific role definitions to more generic areas that volunteers assist with. Roles relating to home library services,

story time and assistance with computers were relatively well established. As has already been discussed, volunteering is not a new concept for public libraries (Museums Libraries and Archives Council, 2011a) and is very much part of their normal functioning.

Half of respondents agreed that the range of volunteer roles had increased greatly in the past 5-10 years, particularly those related to the augmenting and adding of value to library services, and supplementary tasks that included IT support, and shelving. It is likely that this increase stems from the community engagement agenda of the previous New Labour Government.

In terms of the future, there was less of a consensus regarding volunteer roles, although a third of respondents did admit that volunteers may have to do work currently undertaken by paid staff if budgets further decreased and libraries were to remain open. This pragmatic realisation is viewed by some respondents as inevitable, if there is to be a library service at all.

There was some caution however regarding the quality, and inclusiveness of a service delivered by volunteers. Such a change in volunteer roles from additionality to replacement is documented in a recent survey of library staff members undertaken by Unison (Davies, 2013). The survey noted that although 92% of respondents agreed with the premise that volunteers should not be used to replace staff, 45% of respondents detailed that volunteers were now being used to do jobs previously done by paid staff (Davies, 2013).

When Delphi respondents were probed further about the distinction between paid staff and volunteer roles in a library there was a consensus of opinion concerning the need for there to be a clear division, which would help avoid confusion and work towards the benefit of the users and the service provided. Such an arrangement required flexibility and mutual respect on the part of paid staff and volunteers, and a clear understanding of roles. There was concern from one respondent that such a situation was unworkable, although they did not indicate why this was.

These opinions largely mirror what CILIP advocates. A policy statement (Local Government Association, 2012) on the use of volunteers in public libraries indicated a clear emphasis on the role of volunteers in a supportive rather than substituting role. In addition CILIP's response to the Government Select Committee report into public library closures (CILIP, 2012b), argued for further research into the, 'actual value added or damage done to library services through the use of volunteers before (being) accepted as a legitimate means of library support' (Winterson, 2012 p.7).

4.4 Volunteer management

Recruitment, selection and training of volunteers was reported as being a formalised process by the majority of respondents, with a variety of measures used to recruit volunteers including technology, word of mouth, former staff, leaflets and posters. This aligns with the move towards greater formalisation and professionalisation of volunteer management in recent years (Cunningham, 1999, cited in Lynch and Smith, 2010).

Use of intermediaries, such as volunteer organisations and schools, in addition to other local groups and networks also assisted with the recruitment process for some respondents. In addition, half of respondents mentioned they had, or were planning to have in the near future, a member of staff with specific responsibility for volunteers based within the library service, or the wider local authority. The importance of training volunteers and investing money in their development was also seen as important. Weighted ranking of the main components of a volunteer training strategy considered induction, and an agreed line manager, as the key factors in ensuring the effective use of volunteers.

The use of a formal written policy for volunteers was seen by the majority of respondents as vital to ensure clarity with regard to roles and responsibilities, and adherence to service priorities. Gay (2000b, cited in Hardill and Baines, 2011) details the growth of volunteer management as a profession, and the specific skills set required for successful

management, which includes co-ordinating and developing volunteers, leadership, representation and campaigning.

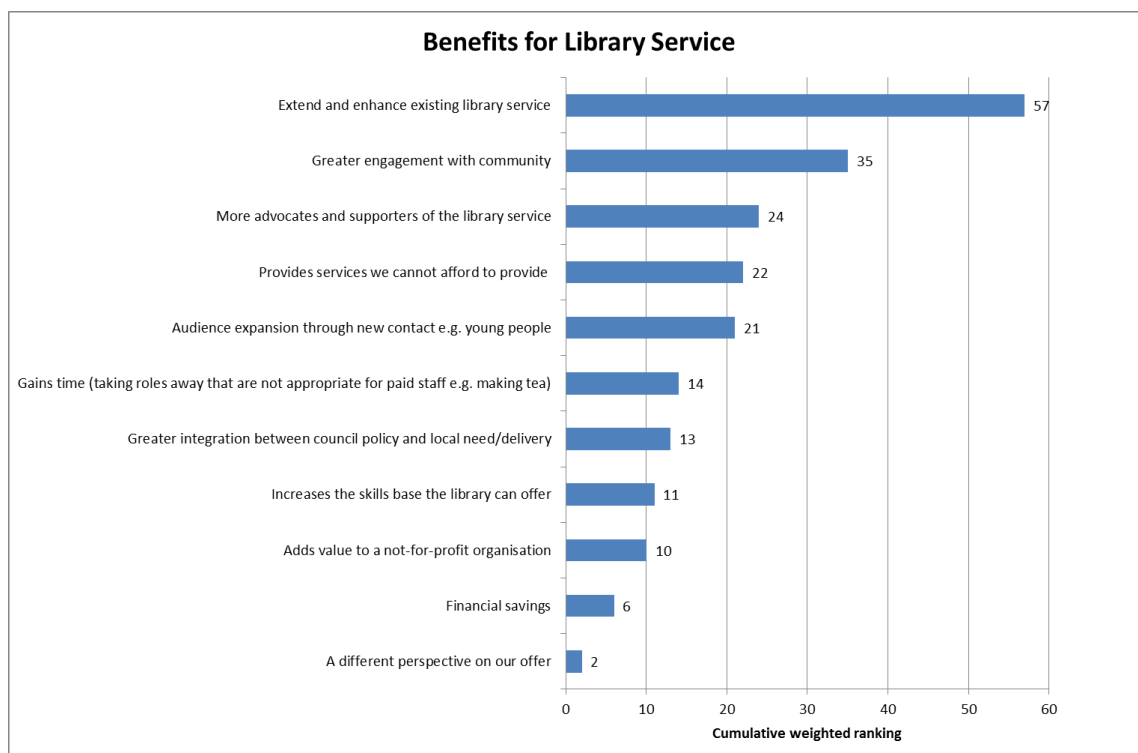
4.5 Volunteer benefits and issues

The remaining analysis of the Delphi Study concerns the benefits and issues of using volunteers identified by respondents, relating to perceived key stakeholder perspectives: library users, the wider community, library service staff, volunteers and the library service itself. In addition, the later rounds of the Delphi survey asked respondents to rank benefits and issues, and most popular concepts will be discussed in further detail.

A weighted ranking was applied to the results, such that where respondents ranked an issue as most important, it was given 5 points as opposed to where they ranked an issue least important, and it was given 1 point. The cumulative total of such weighting gave each issue an overall ranking score that indicated the overall importance of the issue for all respondents, and thereby enabled comparison in graphical format.

4.5.1 Benefits of volunteer use

Figure 5. Benefits of Volunteer Use for the Library Service



A key finding from assessing the perceived benefits of volunteers to stakeholders is the clear inter-relationship between the different sets of stakeholders, although the focus differs slightly for each set of stakeholders. The key benefits to a library service identified by the respondents were predominantly to do with service enhancement and extension, in addition to enabling the service to more fully engage with the local community as volunteers. Such initiatives were viewed as potentially a way to get new blood into the library service and expand the potential audience of library users, for example the use of young people in reading challenge initiatives.

As might be expected library service benefits often translate into the other stakeholder benefits, and there were strong links between the different sets of stakeholder benefits. Regarding staff benefits, volunteers were seen to help support staff in their working, thus enabling them to concentrate on the more valuable key roles appropriate to their skills and expertise, thereby taking on tasks that help to enhance the service provided further. Exposure to a more diverse set of people through use of volunteers was seen as a key

benefit to the working of paid staff. When respondents considered the library users, another clear connection between the benefits of stakeholders emerged, with service enhancement, and better access to staff receiving high ranking.

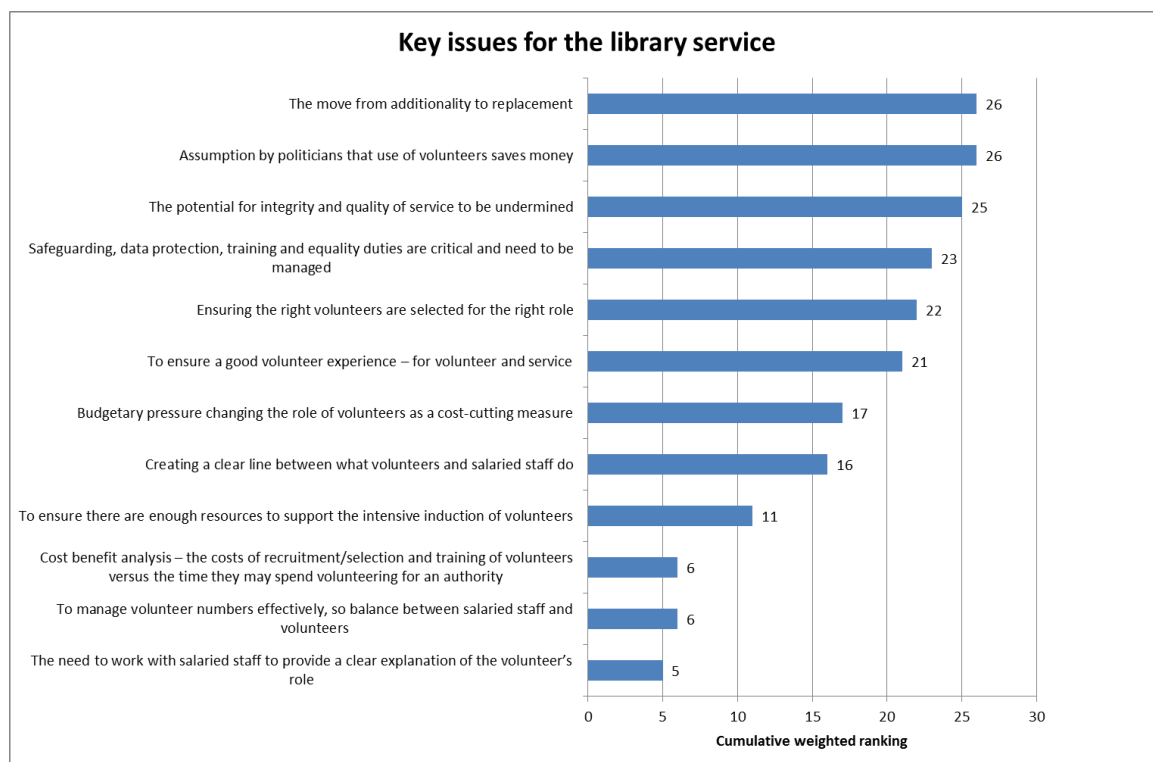
For volunteers the benefits were viewed as primarily a personal function, yet also about the wider community they exist within. Giving something back, helping the community, fulfilment, work experience and enabling social contact are proposed, however one can argue that such individual acts also may contribute to a wider community benefit.

In order to establish the benefits for an individual in volunteering one must examine the motivations for volunteering. Merrell (2000, cited in Hardill and Baines, 2011 p.396) considers that 'people volunteer for a complex mix of altruistic and self-interested reasons and that volunteers are both *givers* and *takers*'. Hardill and Baines (2009, cited in Hardill and Baines, 2011) draw on cultural theory to consider the motives and patterns for volunteering: hierarchy (giving alms), and fatalism (getting by), which have a high degree of social regulation; and individualism (getting on), and egalitarianism (giving to each other), which have a lower degree of social regulation.

Delphi Study respondents noted that these individual acts help to strengthen overall community cohesion, and enable community ownership thereby enhancing the democratic nature of the library service. This is in keeping with Putnam's (2000, cited in Hardill and Baines, 2011 p.117) analysis of social capital, and the importance of volunteering as a key indicator of social capital. In addition, it is highlighted by the phase 2 research findings discussed in chapter five. It is also important to note that these benefits considered in the Delphi Study relate primarily to the concept of additionality in a service, rather than staff replacement.

4.5.2 Issues regarding volunteer use

Figure 6. Issues of Volunteer Use for the Library Service



Issues for all stakeholder groups from the viewpoint of the respondents were examined, and weighted ranking graphs provided for all groups. The chart above demonstrates the key issues for the library service as a whole, and as would be expected they encompass many of the other perceived stakeholder issues identified by respondents. The ranking was closer for many aspects indicating a number of concerns for respondents of equal importance.

The move from additionality to replacement of staff by volunteers was viewed as one of the key issues. There were also concerns regarding the conflict that would arise as a result of this move, with a significant number of jobs under threat, and paid staff feeling less valued. The capacity of a community to fill the gap with willing volunteers was also viewed by respondents as an important issue, especially where deprivation results in a demand for paid work as a priority. The benefits system may also impact on what an individual can do as a volunteer.

These concerns are mirrored by CILIP (2012 p.6) who also stress that it is,

'imperative that reductions have been properly planned within an agreed framework set out in a Library Strategy and based on proper local needs analysis'.

They argue that loss of skilled staff reduces,

'the capacity of services to innovate and change, to shape services to the needs of local communities, deal with complex enquiries and work in partnership with a whole host of organisations' (The Guardian, 2012 p.6).

Delphi Study respondents also highlighted the hidden costs of volunteer use, and stated these were often misunderstood by politicians. Sufficient quality and integrity of service provision requires well trained and committed volunteers, which in turn demands focussed volunteer training and management. Respondents also highlighted that there was a danger the library user may not distinguish between paid staff and volunteers, and thus confusion and possible frustration may arise on the part of the former. This is something that is identified by Wandersman and Alderman (1993, cited in Rogelberg et al., 2010) as a key problem.

Respondents felt that safeguarding issues and appropriate role allocation require a well-managed volunteer programme, an increased role of the part of paid staff to deal with this, and the additional challenges that may arise as a result of paid staff and volunteers working together. Volunteers often have a certain perspective on what a library and its paid staff do, and what they as volunteers can do, and this may not necessarily match the requirements of the service. As Wilson (2012 p.195) observes, 'it is widely understood that volunteers and staff are not only co-dependent but also have conflicting interests'.

It should be noted that these issues stem from the library managers rather than the wider stakeholders, and exploring the actual perspectives of the latter in a case study setting, would help to uncover the discrepancy between perceived and actual outcomes.

Essentially politics has a key role in all of this; the politics of a local community may affect volunteer rates in addition to how the community responds to any changes and how the local authority approaches their budget cuts.

4.6 The future of volunteer use

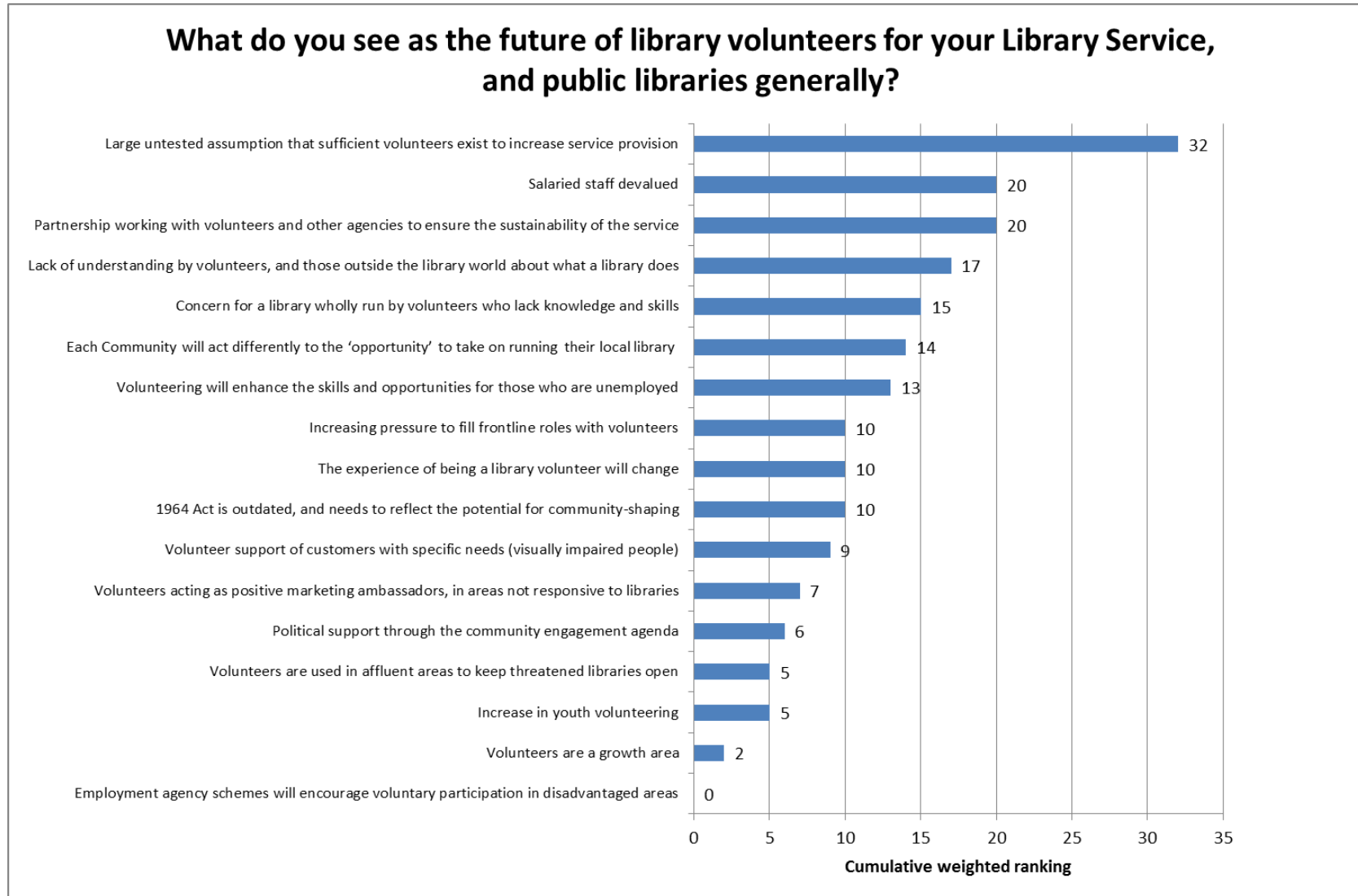


Figure 7. The future of volunteer use

Respondents' views concerning the future of library volunteers (see figure 7 on the previous page) covered a variety of topics, but the most prevalent related to the largely untested assumption that sufficient volunteers exist to increase service provision, and the fact that different communities will react accordingly. Such worries are not unfounded; in a report on community libraries, Arts Council England (2013b) considered a variety of community managed approaches all making use of volunteers. They raised the concern that those communities from disadvantaged areas may not be capable of rising to the challenge asked of them (Arts Council England, 2013c), yet ironically may be those most in need of a library service and the benefits to community it brings (Arts Council England, 2013b).

Related to the capacity of volunteers were other respondent concerns over libraries run wholly by volunteers without professional involvement, and the possible lack of understanding, skills and knowledge that such volunteers may have with regard to the running of a library service. They also considered that the role of a library volunteer is likely to develop over time. It is interesting to note that Arts Council England (2013b) acknowledged that their research focussed predominantly on the establishment of community libraries, rather than their running, and as such the management approach and skills required by volunteers may change. The results from phase 2 (chapter 5) will examine the latter 2 areas in greater depth.

The other key concern of respondents related to the devaluing of paid staff, and this is an area that Arts Council England (2013b) examined with regard to the proper planning of any move to volunteer use in a library service, stressing the importance of meaningful consultation with all stakeholders (including staff) in order to gain *buy-in* and to benefit from in-house advice and experience. They promote the role of partnership working in such arrangements, and the benefits that this can bring.

Indeed, another topic identified by respondents related to the need for partnership working with volunteers and other agencies in order to ensure the sustainability of library services,

and this very much mirrors Arts Council England's views emanating from their research on future libraries (Arts Council England, 2012).

This demonstrates the positive 'saviour' roles identified for volunteers by respondents regarding the future. Volunteering is viewed as a growth area, being used increasingly to tackle the problems of keeping libraries open. It also has the potential to create volunteers as positive marketing ambassadors in communities not responsive to libraries.

An interesting issue which ranked at the half-way point on Figure 7, related to the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act (Great Britain, 1964) and whether it was sufficient as legislation in an increasingly different environment compared to the one experienced nearly 50 years ago when the legislation was originally introduced.

A final consideration of other issues on the part of the respondents largely reiterated previous concerns, particularly relating to the long term sustainability of a volunteer operation, and initial catalysts for such a move to volunteer-led libraries. Communities have the potential to be divided, with a number of groups each with their own agendas. Such agendas might not necessarily be that of the library authority, and this could cause friction between the overall vision and what is actually delivered.

One respondent however differed quite markedly from the other respondents in their final summing up of the situation, in that they viewed volunteer use as an opportunity.

'Volunteer use should be viewed as natural customer engagement, not a threat but a promise. Many of the issues identified in round 2 related to a deficit model and identified volunteer use as a problem, not an opportunity. 'We love the new perspective, energy and enthusiasm that volunteers bring to the work, it is wholly positive' (Delphi respondent G).

Thus, it was felt that community involvement should be trumpeted, at the same time as professional staff development, supporting a mixed economy of library service delivery. This last point is in keeping with the views of Arts Council England (Davey, 2013) who conclude that public libraries need to encourage more future-proof and innovative ways of working, in order to remain resilient and sustainable. This should be developed in tandem with the continued importance of professional skills and experience, and quality

leadership. These issues will be considered further in phase 2 of the research, and will be used as a basis from which to formulate suitable questions for key groups of stakeholders.

4.7 Conclusion

In summary, it is clear that the issue of volunteer use is a highly subjective one, with a variety of PLAM viewpoints on the matter. There was a clear concern relating to the perceived move from additionality to staff replacement in terms of the role of the volunteer, and respondents were keen to see a clear distinction between the two sets of 'workers'. Respondents felt that volunteers, particularly in a value added sense, benefitted the library through service enhancement and extension, and helped to facilitate community engagement and ownership. However, they were concerned that the increased use of volunteers to replace staff was a flawed assumption in terms of saving money, and had dire consequences for the quality of the service that could be provided. They expressed their worry regarding the untested nature of this new development, and the effect this would have on the professional staff working in the service.

The importance of partnerships was discussed by respondents as a future way of delivering library services, although the actual nature of such partnerships was not considered fully.

Interestingly, the final round of the Delphi Study brought out some of the most honest opinions and viewpoints, perhaps as respondents felt that this was their final chance to have their say. The comments below illustrate the consensual concern of the majority of respondents:

'The underlying problem is that 'communities' are divisive. They split people into smaller and smaller 'communities of interest' and in the end they are all fighting one another. Most people are, at heart, selfish – there is no Big Society.....there is no recognition of what the next community along the road may need' (Delphi respondent D).

'I believe that we will do what the politicians want and reduce the quality and value of the entire library network, which will then start to crumble. To misquote Bill Clinton 'fix the roof when the sun shines, not when its raining'. Currently it is both physically and metaphorically raining on libraries' (Delphi respondent A).

However, the following comment stood out as very different from the other respondents, demonstrating a more positive outlook.

'Target the 'have nots', the 'haves' will argue and defend libraries regardless of whether they use them or not, the have-nots need them whether they know it or not and will do so increasingly. The word volunteer is a problem [just as the word patient is in health world]. Stop stereotyping and start listening, especially to organisations far ahead of us in this. It really is not our library service' (Delphi respondent G).

Our perspectives on volunteer use are moulded by who we are, our political beliefs, where we work, and the individual political/economic situation that affects a particular library service, and this was apparent when examining the perspectives of the library managers in the Delphi study.

The next chapter will present the results and analysis from phase 2 of the research. The phases of research were analysed separately, and can be viewed as connected but also distinct from each other. Phase 1 set the scene and explored library manager thoughts on volunteers as a phenomenon, whereas phase 2 explored varying stakeholder opinions in the environment based on initial findings that arose from phase 1, and aimed to construct a complex picture of how these opinions sit together in the wider spectrum of public library service provision.

5. Chapter 5: Phase 2 results and analysis 2014/15

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings from phase 2 of the research, which followed on from the phase 1 Delphi study. The Delphi study aimed to provide an overview of current opinion regarding volunteer use among a selection of PLAMs throughout England. It also facilitated links with potential case study library authorities for phase 2.

Phase 2 of the research involved the analysis of two case study library authorities, examining differing stakeholder perspectives of volunteer use. Both library authorities were based in the North-East of England, and were Metropolitan Boroughs. As the North-East has a larger proportion of areas that are deemed to be the most deprived in England (Communities and Local Government, 2010), this may impact on the capacity of volunteering efforts. Of the case study authorities (to be labelled LA1 and LA2), LA1 used volunteers for purely value-added purposes, whereas LA2, in addition to a traditional use of value-added volunteers, also had engaged with the development of a small number of volunteer-led libraries, which had replaced staff (see section 2.1 for discussion of types of volunteer use). It was therefore interesting to examine views from both case studies and identify if differences existed, in addition to considering the common themes that arose from stakeholders regardless of their case study authority.

Stakeholders were questioned using a variety of methods: Staff were surveyed anonymously using an online questionnaire, library managers and volunteer coordinators were interviewed, volunteers were questioned in focus groups, and library users were surveyed using a researcher administered questionnaire. The model of volunteering interrelationships (Figure 1) considered in section 2.8.4 was used as a basis by which to identify key stakeholder groups that would be investigated.

Findings from the frontline staff and user surveys will be considered initially, using the questions asked as a structure for analysis. Interview and focus group findings will be structured in a thematic manner, as this better suited the results that arose from the data.

5.2 Key findings of library frontline staff survey – Dec-Jan 2013

The frontline staff survey was conducted in LA1 only, due to the political and financial challenges that arose during the course of the case study investigation. The gatekeeper of LA2 requested that a staff survey wasn't undertaken, as the situation was deemed too sensitive. These wishes were respected in order to gain continued input from this case study authority. Although this reduced the validity of any frontline staff views, coming only from one authority, results were triangulated with a variety of other stakeholder opinions, including professional library managers/volunteer co-ordinators. This helped to gain an overall picture of the situation, and therefore improve the validity of findings.

5.2.1 Demographics

Twenty-six frontline library staff took part in the survey which was administered online, 70% worked full-time and 30% part-time – none of the part-time workers volunteered in addition to their working. Staff were a mix of grades, the majority employed as library assistant or senior library assistants (4 respondents described their grade as Librarian or above). Almost three quarters of the staff (69%) had worked in the library service for over 10 years, nearly half of respondents having worked for over 21 years in the service. Half (50%) of the respondents worked alongside volunteers, which is symptomatic of a general change in volunteer use, with the number of volunteers increasing by 100% in 2014 compared to 2010 (Patterson, 2014). It is worth noting, however, that the number of hours worked per volunteer is likely to be much lower than a paid member of staff. Those who worked with volunteers did so in a value-added context, and listed the following key activities:

- Mat making group
- Summer reading challenge
- School holiday activities
- Miscellaneous library events, e.g. coffee mornings
- Digitisation of photographs
- Home readers service

5.2.2 Paid staff versus volunteers

All staff felt that there was a difference between paid staff and volunteers, relating to the skills, knowledge and experience of the former, and their associated qualifications.

There was a strong concern from library staff surveyed regarding the importance of volunteers in helping to maintain a library service as long as it didn't take away paid employment, and that they should not be used as an alternative to paid staff (with 58% of respondents considering this to be a key issue regarding the use of volunteers in their library service.) Less highly ranked issues included the fact that volunteers were there to support staff, and were helpful for certain activities (27%), and could be extremely valuable for service delivery (19%). There were also concerns relating to volunteer reliability and commitment (19%), and the quality of the service delivered, management issues and professionalism (12% of respondents).

5.2.3 Benefits of using volunteers

In terms of the benefits that volunteers bring to a library service, the following suggestions were made by staff surveyed.

- Share a wider range of skills and knowledge and experience (42% of respondents)
- Help during busy periods and act as an extra pair of hands (42% of respondents)
- Free up staff time, and offer support (42% of respondents)
- Give a volunteer experience of working/enhances their CV (23% of respondents)
- Enhance and expand what the library has to offer (23% of respondents)

- Community engagement (19% of respondents)
- Maintain/continue current services (as often not enough paid staff) (15% of respondents)
- Flexibility (12% of respondents)

This tallies with findings from the PLAMs Delphi study, and very much adheres to the MLAC's findings (Museums Libraries and Archives Council, 2011a) and shows a clear connection between the individual, the service and the community.

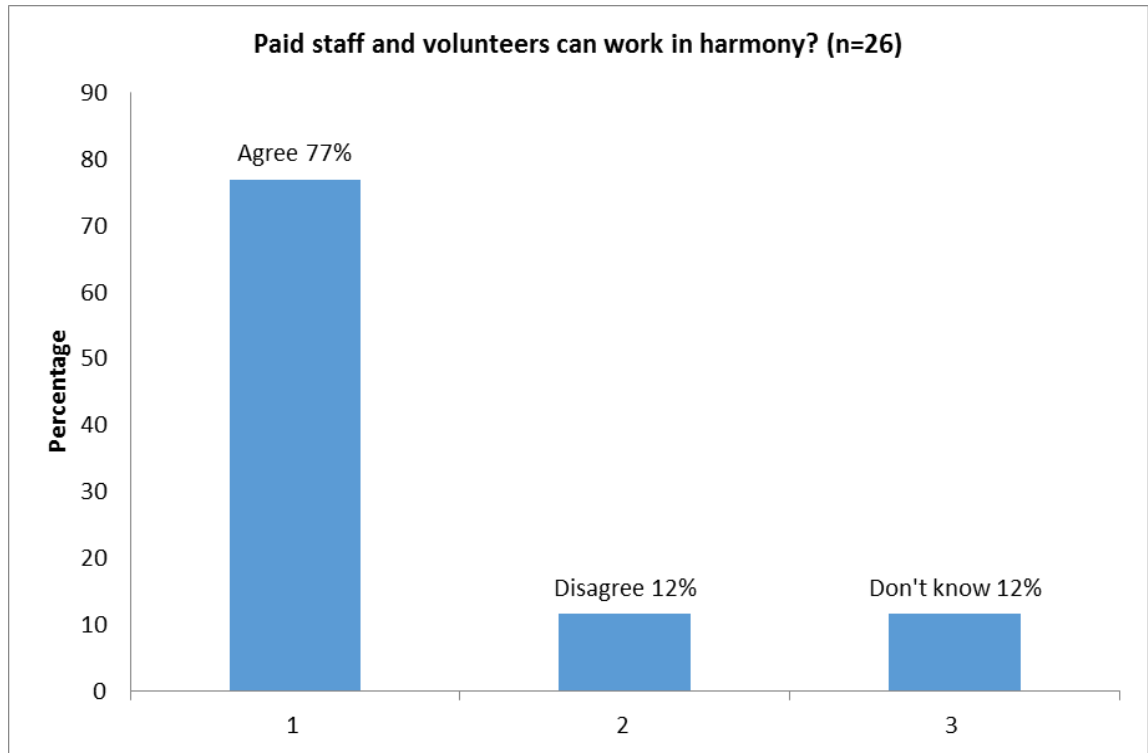
5.2.4 Issues with using volunteers

However, in terms of the main issues that arise from using volunteers, over half (58%) identified commitment and reliability as a key problem when using volunteers. Of less importance, but still an issue, were:

- Volunteers were replacing staff as a result of cutbacks (39% of respondents)
- Accountability; volunteers had their own agendas (31% of respondents)
- Confidentiality and safeguarding (31% of respondents)
- Volunteers are not cost-free, and take up staff time (27% of respondents)
- Volunteers lack knowledge and the experience of staff (23% of respondents)
- Customer service lacking (19% of respondents)
- Inconsistency (15% of respondents)
- Image; volunteers are a threat to the library profession (14% of respondents)

Such responses mirror what many commentators have already highlighted, including Anstice (2012), CILIP (2011), Hill (2010) and Wandersman and Alderman (1993, cited in Rogelberg et al., 2010).

Figure 8. Paid staff and volunteers can work in harmony



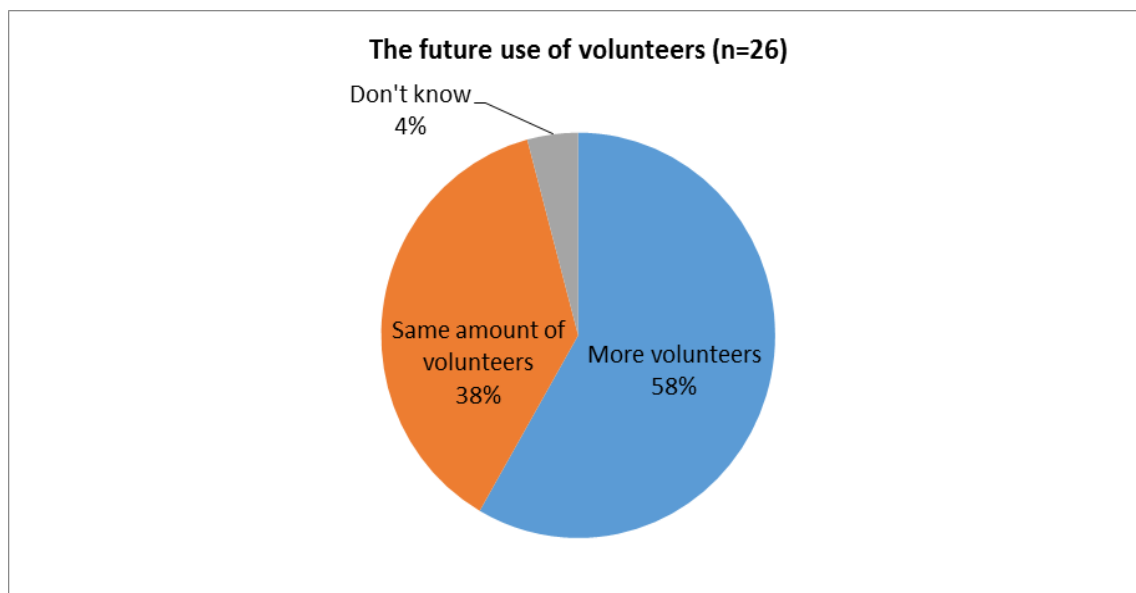
Over three quarters (77%) of respondents felt paid staff and volunteers could work in harmony but there was a caveat to this; to ensure that the use of volunteers didn't result in paid staff being made redundant (23% of respondents). In addition, volunteers need to be properly trained, managed and only used for certain types of work, so clear parameters were set.

As mentioned earlier, all respondents clearly saw a difference between paid staff and volunteers in terms of the skills, knowledge and experience that a paid staff member had (39% of respondents) and the training and qualifications that paid staff had (30% of respondents). Less prominent reasons related to the increased commitment from paid staff, accountability, contractual obligation, and staff understanding the workings of a library.

5.2.5 Future use of volunteers

The majority of respondents (96%) saw future use of volunteers staying the same or increasing in their library service. No-one saw less volunteer use as likely in the future.

Figure 9. The future use of volunteers



Responses acknowledged that views were very much informed by the current value-added nature of their volunteers, and could be very different if volunteers were brought in to replace paid staff. There was also worry about what volunteer developments were doing to the library profession as a whole, and the standards of service that would result from such a phenomenon. A lack of trust of volunteers, and a derogatory view of their ability was displayed by a small number of respondents; as one respondent noted, 'Pay peanuts – get monkeys' (staff survey respondent LA1 R19).

These staff concerns were also recently exhibited in a recent CILIP survey (May, 2013) which asked professionals how they felt about the state of their current workplace, and the wider public library sector. Within this report it was found that most respondents 'did not feel positive about the future of the public library service they work for' (May, 2013 p.3), and there were clear concerns regarding the increasing use of volunteers to run public

libraries, and the resulting impact on professional jobs and service delivery, together with volunteer management challenges.

5.2.6 Conclusion

In summary, it is clear from the frontline staff survey conducted that working with volunteers was a reality for over half of all staff surveyed, but there was an identifiable mistrust from staff regarding the motives for increased volunteer use, and the impact that this was having on the professionalism of the sector. These results reinforced many of the concerns that arose from the Delphi study, demonstrating that volunteer use impacts on all levels of library service delivery irrespective of a paid library worker's seniority.

5.3 Key findings from user survey – Jan-Feb 2013

Similar to the frontline staff survey, the user survey was only conducted in LA1, following the request of the LA2 gatekeeper, due to ongoing political and financial tensions within the library authority. As mentioned in the section 5.2, validity was enhanced using triangulation of results from a variety of stakeholders, providing a complex and rich picture of the situation.

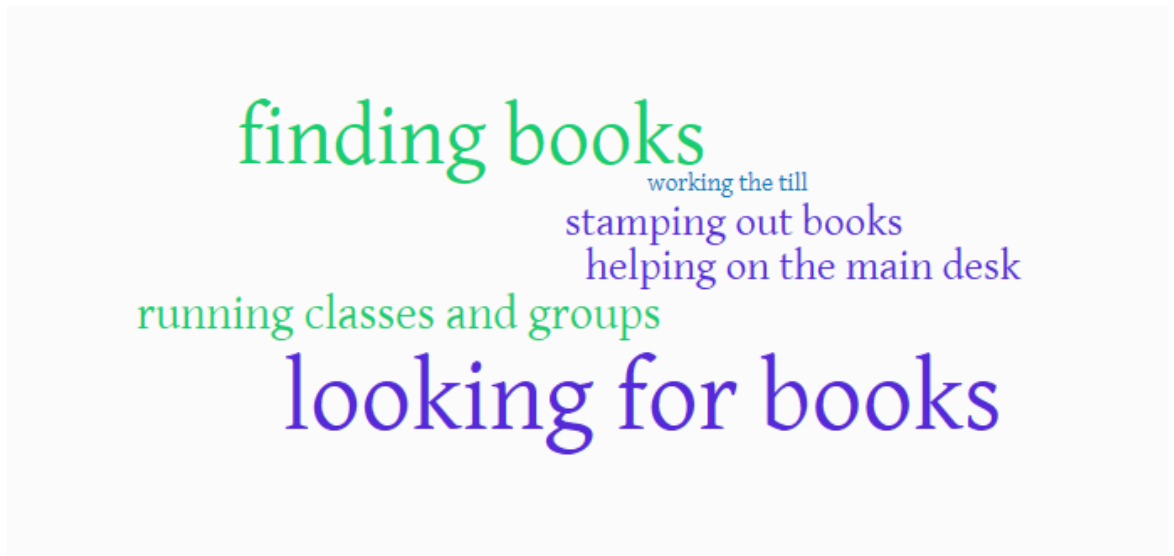
5.3.1 Demographics

The library user survey was conducted through a researcher administered questionnaire and had 30 responses in total. Nearly two thirds (60%) of users were unaware that volunteers were used in their library service, with an additional 7% not being sure. This confusion on the part of library users with regards to distinguishing who is a paid member of staff and who is a volunteer, is something that Wandersman and Alderman (1993, cited in Rogelberg et al., 2010) identify has important implications when considering library users' perceptions of service quality.

5.3.2 Volunteer roles

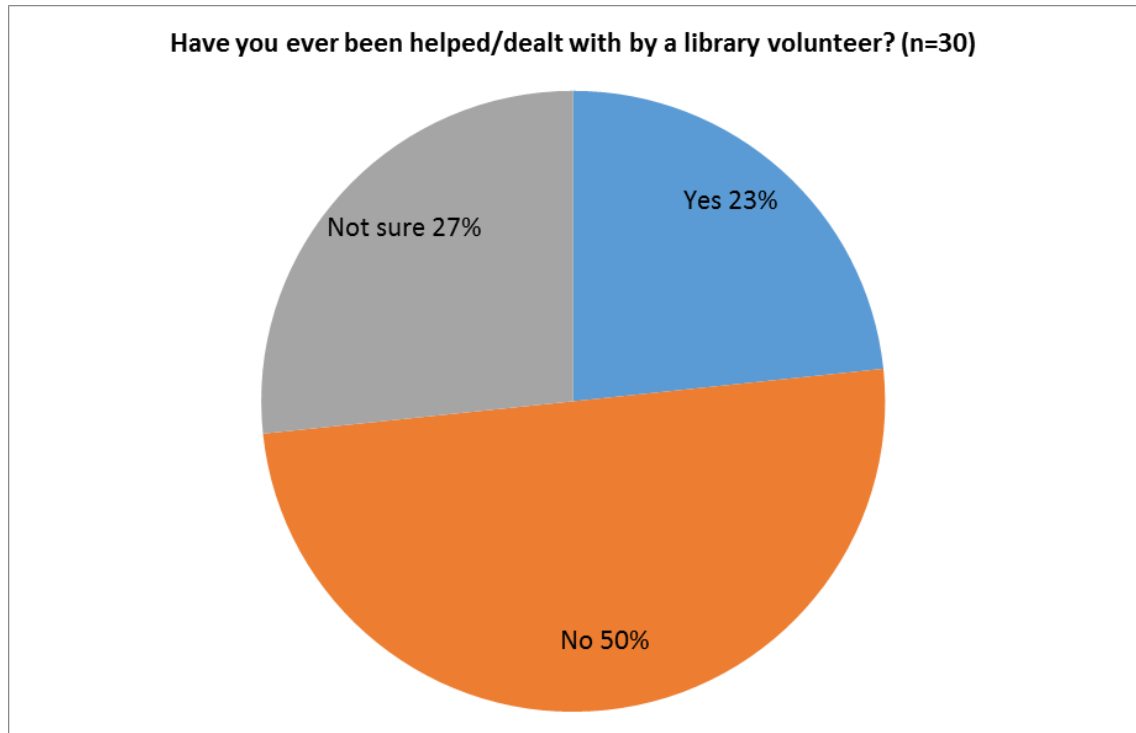
The most popular answers from respondents, regarding what volunteers did in a library service were related to helping out, particularly finding or looking for books. Respondents also mentioned roles such as helping on the main desk, stamping out books, or working the till as one respondent described it. Running classes and groups was another role which was particularly identified by those users who attended groups run within the library.

Figure 10. Word cloud of the most popular volunteer roles



It was clear that some users didn't really know whether the person on a front desk was staff or volunteer, which may not necessarily be an issue, however could be a concern when one considers the staff survey perceptions of volunteers regarding accountability, customer service, and consistency, and their contribution to the overall image of the public library. As previously mentioned, this is something that Wandersman and Alderman (1993, cited in Rogelberg et al., 2010 p.425) identify when considering the issue of service quality.

Figure 11. Have you ever been helped/dealt with by a volunteer?



Less than a quarter (23%) of users surveyed thought they had been helped/dealt with by a volunteer, although it was interesting to note that over a quarter of respondents were not sure (27%) whether they had been helped by a volunteer. Those respondents who had received volunteer help had done so for situations such as using a photocopier, mat making, asking for books, and IT training. Half of all respondents (50%) had not been helped by a library volunteer highlighting that volunteer use in this library service is not a widespread practice.

5.3.3 Benefits of volunteers to library service

The majority of respondents (82%) felt that volunteers were useful to their library service. The reasoning for this assessment of their utility was predominantly related to the increased help and assistance that volunteers provide, particularly where paid staff were busy, and to help keep service costs down. There was an acknowledgement that this was a way of bringing in new knowledge and expertise into a library, in addition to new people. Volunteers helped to bring in new sections of the community that might not naturally visit a library, for example, delivery of IT sessions.

Alternatively, volunteer use could help get the library out to those who could not actually visit the library, such as those elderly people too incapacitated to leave their homes, through use of a readers at home service.

Of the 8% of respondents that felt volunteers were not useful to the library service, lack of training and cheap labour were identified as key barriers.

On the whole the library users questioned felt that volunteering was of positive benefit to the library service, with less than a third (30%) identifying issues of concern. The issues that were most frequently cited related to the political nature of volunteer use. Some respondents commented that volunteer use might result in job losses, whereas others considered the capability of the volunteer, lacking knowledge and professionalism. One particular respondent clearly considered that anyone with learning problems should not become a volunteer.

Most respondents (89%) felt that staff and volunteers could work in harmony in a library, citing the professionalism of the paid staff, and the importance of everyone knowing their place in the operation of the library service. Interestingly, many respondents (all from LA1) also displayed some level of uncertainty in their answer, adding caveats such as;

'Got to be an advantage?' (User survey respondent R4)

'Can't see any reason why?' (User survey respondent R5)

'I assume they don't feel threatened?' (User survey respondent R9)

'Could cause problems' (User survey respondent R10)

'As long as both sides are happy?' (User survey respondent R12)

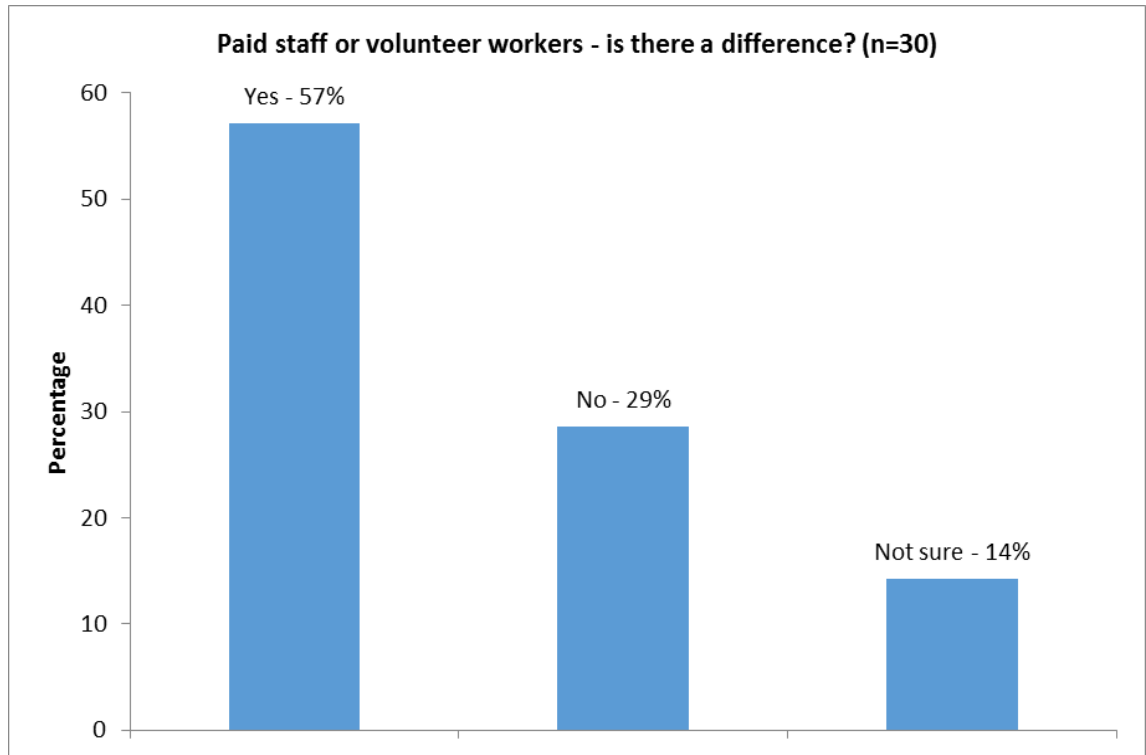
'Would like to think it would happen' (User survey respondent R21)

'Not sure how paid staff would cope?' (User survey respondent R28).

This identification of uncertainty, is perhaps telling in that although they say one thing, it is clear that they are aware of the uncertain nature of such an arrangement.

5.3.4 Paid staff versus volunteers

Figure 12. Paid staff or volunteer workers – is there a difference?



Misunderstandings were further demonstrated by library users' responses to the question asking for their thoughts on the difference between paid staff and volunteer workers. Nearly 60% thought there was a difference between these 2 types of worker. There was an expectation that staff do what they do for money, whereas volunteers do what they do in order to help, and the latter is predominantly linked to a passion that they have. Interestingly, it should be noted that staff too, when questioned, identified that a passion was very much at the forefront of why they worked in a library.

This difference between perceptions of paid staff and volunteers is clearly considered by Smith (2002) who examined the interrelationships between paid staff, volunteers and managers in the heritage environment, which is similar to libraries in many aspects.

'Whereas the status of paid staff and managers can be defined primarily by their roles within the heritage organisation, volunteers are significant because they operate both within the property and the community: they provide a link between the two, they have roles and responsibilities to both.'(Smith, 2002 p.12)

In addition, 'volunteers drew clear distinctions between themselves and the paid employees,' (Smith, 2002 p.17) particularly with regard to differing time commitments.

Holmes (2004) observes the contradictions that exist between an economic model of volunteer management, that views volunteers as unpaid workers, and a leisure model of volunteer management, which considers volunteering to be part of the leisure experience, and it is interesting to note that user survey respondents exhibited both perspectives. Paine et al. (2010) stress that volunteering is often viewed through a lens of work, which can be problematic.

'The danger of seeing volunteering as work, is that it can reduce the nature of this value to productive outputs only and the wider more holistic benefits of volunteering can be lost' (Paine et al., 2010 p.26).

Another interesting point related to the value that is given to someone who is paid, versus someone who isn't paid, by a service. This issue came out during the volunteer focus groups, and how appreciation is demonstrated if not in remuneration. Choice as opposed to compulsion, and all the things that can be associated with managing and dealing with different sets of people, were also areas that were considered.

Issues to do with accountability, stability, training and expertise, including knowing how a library works, were identified as ways to differentiate staff and volunteers. Interestingly the point about being able to tell the difference was raised by a respondent,

'Can't tell – not in the way they deal with the public – couldn't tell which are volunteers and I am in every day' (User survey respondent LA1 R19).

This point was also considered during questioning of library managers and frontline staff, and Wandersman and Alderman (1993, cited in Rogelberg et al., 2010) raise this as a key concern for volunteer use in service provision.

Those who felt there wasn't a difference between volunteers and paid staff added a caveat that this was dependent on the volunteer being trained to the same level, and doing a good job.

There appeared to be misunderstanding amongst some library users as to the role of a library worker. One respondent who detailed that they had worked in a charity shop, and therefore could speak with authority about library volunteers, did not appear to understand the difference between what library workers might do and a volunteer in a library such that the main difference for them was to do with one person being paid. This illustrates the lack of understanding on the part of some library users who might not fully appreciate the complexity of a library workers' role, and a misguided assumption that it is akin with a shop assistant role (Pateman and Williment, 2013).

One respondent (*User survey respondent R29*) felt that both library staff and volunteers should be paid, which identifies a possible lack of understanding on the part of the respondent as to the economic reasons why volunteers are being used increasingly within libraries.

Drucker (1990, cited in Zimmeck, 2000) considered two contrasting methods for the management of volunteers, modern and home-grown, the former being symptomatic of bureaucratic organisational structures, such as libraries.

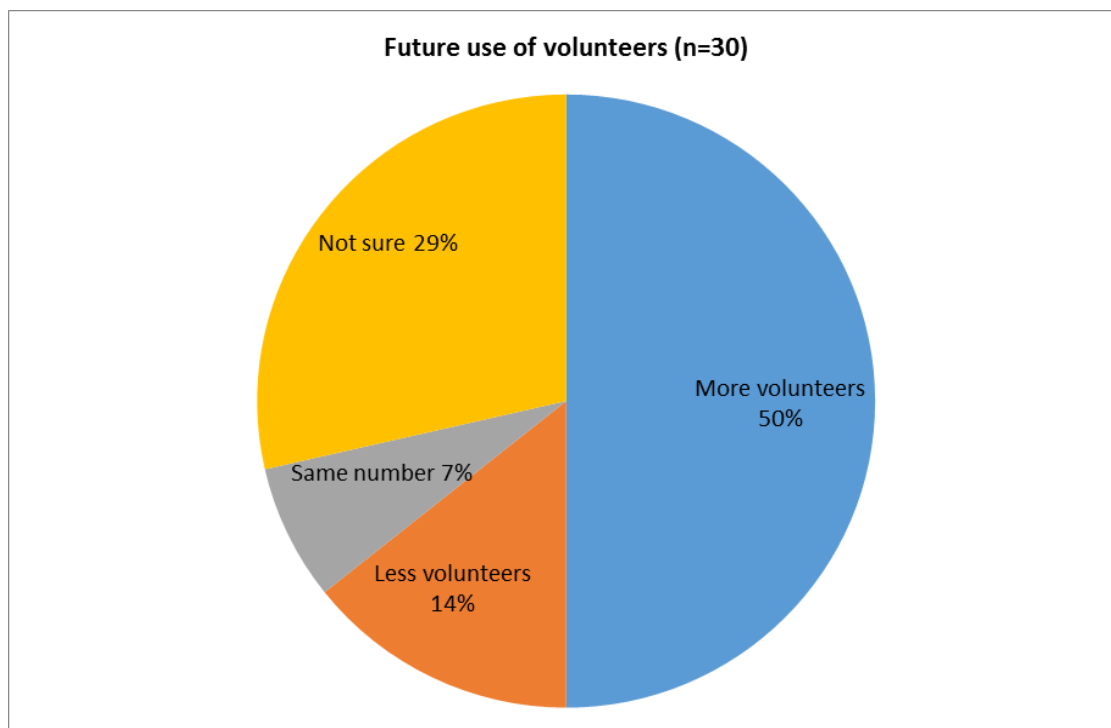
He identifies that,

'(Volunteers) are different from paid workers in a non-profit only in that they are not paid. There is less and less difference between the work they do and that done by the paid workers – in many cases it is now identical' (Drucker, 1990, cited in Zimmeck, 2000 p.18).

However, incentives such as expenses and training, in addition to intrinsic motivators such as achievement, autonomy, recognition and belonging are of more importance than payment for volunteers.

5.3.5 Future use of volunteers

Figure 13. Future use of volunteers



Over half (57%) of user survey respondents felt that there would be either more or the same number of volunteers in public libraries in the future. Almost a third of respondents (29%) were unsure whether volunteers would increase, decrease or stay the same.

An interesting challenge came to light regarding the capacity of the local community to take on a volunteering role. Nearly three quarters (76%) of the user survey respondents stated that they were unable to volunteer. Their reasons for not volunteering predominantly were related to parenting or caring responsibilities, working responsibilities, health issues, or a perception that they didn't have time. Very few said that this was because they didn't want to volunteer, indeed one respondent commented that they had not been approached by the library to volunteer, as though it was something that they would only take up if asked. Hill (2011 p.2) warns that such a reliance on volunteers, to help boost service provision, is 'misplaced and misguided'.

Indeed, those groups deemed to be at risk of social exclusion (Black and ethnic minority, disability, limiting long-term illness, or no formal qualifications) are under-represented compared to the population as a whole when considering participation rates in volunteering (Teasdale, 2008 p.2).

The capacity of a community to volunteer was certainly lacking in the sample selected for this particular library user survey. In addition Brodie et al. (2009 p.31) examine the fact that, 'lack of time may be an easier more socially acceptable reason given for non-participation', and may therefore be used to mask the underlying reasons for not choosing to volunteer (see section 2.8.3 for further discussion regarding barriers to volunteering).

5.3.6 Conclusion

In summary the response from library users, although similar in many ways to the staff questioned, was less emotional understandably. A greater proportion (89%) felt that paid staff and volunteers should be able to work in harmony, and users displayed greater uncertainty about the future use of volunteers. One could argue that this is inevitable as users are gauging their perceptions on their own experiences of using the immediate library service, and may not be aware of the wider context.

5.4 Key findings from library manager interviews/volunteer focus groups - 2013/2014

A total of eight Interviews were conducted with the library manager and librarians at a senior level, who had some association with volunteer management, four from each case study authority (LA1 and LA2). Also four volunteer focus groups took place, two from each authority. Three of these focus groups were conducted with value-added volunteers, whilst one focus group was conducted at a volunteer managed library (where paid staff were no longer working in the library).

Initial word cloud analysis of the responses from the 2 stakeholder groups is a useful way to consider the key themes that arose from the questions asked. The larger text represents a larger number of responses regarding a particular theme, and therefore illustrates the importance of a theme.

Figure 14. Word cloud of key themes arising from library manager interviews



The key themes for library managers were related to control, management issues, and relationships. They very much mirrored the views that arose from the earlier phase 1 Delphi Study, and demonstrated a negativity and worry amongst this stakeholder group.

Figure 15. Word cloud of key themes arising from volunteer focus groups



The volunteer themes had some similarities with the library manager themes, particularly relating to relationships, but there was also an awareness of their contentious existence, so themes to do with not being viewed as a threat, in addition to how volunteering was rewarded, featured more heavily. The themes identified, helped to provide an initial picture, and provide a basis from which to undertake more thorough analysis.

All data from this stage of the research was analysed using the constant comparative method (Strauss, 1987, cited in Pickard, 2013). All codes and categories were extracted manually, and visually represented in order to identify themes, patterns and linkages (See Appendix M). Six cross-cutting themes emerged from this data that linked to the codes and categories analysed (see Appendix N for matrix of cross-cutting themes). These themes were:

- Challenging environment
- Volunteer management and use
- Relationships
- Control and reward

- Professionalism and quality
- Role of communication

These cross-cutting themes are used as a structure from which to present the results from this part of the research. In addition, results from the phase 2 frontline staff and library user surveys are integrated where appropriate to enable triangulation and validation.

5.4.1 Challenging environment

A key theme that emerged from the data related to the circumstances in which increased volunteer use had arisen. This particularly related to the uncertainty of the current financial situation, the local and national political environment, thereby creating an inevitable increase in volunteering. The capacity of a particular community to rise to the volunteering demands, and misunderstandings of the public and policy makers also added to the challenge. The complexity of delivering a service with the right balance of volunteer versus paid staff was considered as a vital element for successful service delivery.

There was an acknowledgement on all sides that volunteer use was in transition from a value-added role to one of staff replacement, and this development was potentially tainting the perceived positive benefits of volunteers.

'Volunteering has been tainted by volunteers replacing employees in volunteer managed libraries (VML)' (Library manager interview LA2).

5.4.1.1 Financial situation

Library managers and volunteers both appeared to appreciate the urgency of the current situation, and cited financial factors resulting in less resource as a key reason for the greater reliance by libraries on volunteers. This change was perceived as a major challenge which has now reached critical levels,

'the ultimate challenge is one of resources; its financial, it's the budget situation we are in, because of the situation that the council is in. The budget has been massively hit, we've so far managed without closing any libraries though we have reduced hours, we've also taken hits in the book fund over recent years, but we are now at a situation where there is nowhere else to go really' (Library manager interview LA1).

Also, the focus on income targets for local authorities further intensified the financial problems that public libraries were facing. An interesting finding was that the volunteers surveyed were acutely aware of this challenge, and the resulting uncertainty that it brought to staff, service provision and the volunteers that have a role within the library. Many of these volunteers have been involved with supporting the library in a value-added capacity for many years, and have noticed the changes more recently.

'Every year when there are cuts, the readers are concerned the service (readers at home) is going to stop, but this has become a much bigger concern than when the volunteering first started' (Volunteer focus group LA1).

Uncertainty in the external environment was perceived by volunteers as having financial roots,

'who knows the future; the future will be determined by those who control the purse strings I'm afraid' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

Library managers also warned of an uncertain future, causing problems for libraries in terms of service provision and volunteer use, thereby resulting in low morale within the service.

'Nobody has mentioned any further cutbacks; although we do know that they'll probably be around the corner' (Library manager interview LA1).

Uncertainty regarding the future running of volunteer run libraries was also a key concern for one library manager, who was tasked with creating volunteer managed libraries (VML) in their authority. They questioned the longevity of such an approach, and whether it served to damage the survival of a professionally staffed library service in the long term.

'The issue is can we financially sustain them? Are successful VMLs threatening the creation of more libraries, or supporting the creation of more libraries? This creates uncertainty for library employees. Volunteers don't want it themselves, it is a catch 22 situation, volunteers for VMLs don't want success to be used as an argument to create more (VML). If the VML is a success, the council might create more' (Library manager interview LA2).

This can be viewed as a key concern, when one considers the words of Usherwood (2007 p.47) who states, 'when libraries are part of the culture that places emphasis on profit and loss, and relies primarily on quantitative data, it changes the ways in which libraries

operate'. Uncertainty arose as a strong recurrent theme from the research findings and underpins many of the stakeholder perspectives.

5.4.1.2 Political environment

In addition to the financial challenges, there was a strong focus by all respondents regarding the political environment in which libraries exist. Volunteers questioned displayed a clear understanding of the party political nature of their current predicament, and this was more acutely acknowledged by those volunteers that provided a value-added role within their library, 'the role of volunteers has become more politicised with a small p' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

Indeed, there appeared to be a realisation from all stakeholders that cutbacks were part of a wider government policy, in addition to a market driven approach being a key priority within the service sector. This is something that Goulding (2006 p.4) asserts to being a primary force in the shaping of changes to public services at present.

'In the North-East we know that our local authorities have had the brunt of the cutbacks from the Tory government, and you just think how far can they cut them?' (Volunteer focus group LA1).

'That's the way people think; if it's not making money it's not worth its salt' (Volunteer focus group LA1).

Recent research conducted by the Institute for Fiscal Studies supports these views, and found that local authority spending per person reduced by 23.4% from 2009-10 to 2014-15 (Innes and Tetlow, 2015). In particular the North-East of England fared particularly badly, having, 'seen the largest average cuts to spending per person' (Innes and Tetlow, 2015 p.2), and is likely to see further cuts in 2015-16. They suggest that the cuts have fallen disproportionately on authorities that were the most grant reliant, and had the highest levels of population growth and deprivation.

Party politics has certainly caused challenges at a local level, especially for those volunteers who work in VMLs. The freedom of these groups, related directly to the level of control that was exerted at a local authority level, in terms of their service level agreements.

'The council kind of acts as though it's willingly giving up its time; it doesn't want us, well I'm not saying it doesn't want us to have it , but it wants us to have it, but within its own sound box really, they've put up a lot of walls' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

Library managers also acknowledged the political nature of the increased volunteer use within libraries,

'I think we are here in David Cameron's Big Society pronouncement. I think the intention, as far as I see it, this is my personal view that the current government, or certainly the Conservative Party wish to completely clip the wings of local government and the spending power of local government, and they have no intention. If we were to go into a boom economic financial situation tomorrow, I don't think they would give any of that money back. I think they don't understand what libraries are, what libraries do, or the lives of the people that use them, and I think it's not just central government that doesn't understand them' (Library manager interview LA1).

For one particular library manager, not only was increased volunteer use a national phenomenon, but it had also had become a local council priority, which included the encouragement of council employees to take on a volunteering role.

'However what has happened more recently is volunteering is a council corporate priority. Volunteers (sic) is a big theme, part of vision 2030' (Library manager interview LA2).

As a result of financial challenges, resource challenges were viewed as an inevitable consequence. For library managers, staffing was viewed as having reached a crucial point after several years of cuts,

'you don't have enough staff to do the things you would ideally like to do, everywhere seems to be running on bare bones throughout the whole council now..... everything's pared back to the bone' (Library manager interview LA1).

Volunteers too acknowledged this situation,

'I think the staff have got so much more on their plate now, certainly with the lady responsible for volunteers, she's got umpteen other things to do' (Volunteer focus group LA1).

5.4.1.3 Inevitability of situation

There was a key realisation that increased volunteering was an inevitability, given the economic and political environment, from both library managers and library volunteers (value-added and those managing libraries). For library managers this wasn't necessarily

a welcome development, but faced with the challenge of no service provision, it was viewed possibly as one of the only options.

'I wouldn't particularly like to see libraries being run by volunteers, but then again if it was the only way to keep a library going? I don't know, the jury's very much out on that one, I think' (Library manager interview LA1).

'You don't have to be Einstein to look and see the way everywhere else is going' (Library manager interview LA1).

Volunteers also considered their increased usage to be part of future service delivery,

'I do think the council is struggling to keep libraries open, and all the cuts that have been made, volunteers taking over are the future unfortunately' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

Volunteers reinforced the permanent nature of such increased volunteer use, which they considered unlikely to reverse.

'Definitely there is a role for us, because unless the economic situation greatly improves we won't go back to the Halcyon days and staffing levels that we had' (Volunteer focus group LA1).

Interestingly, the volunteers who managed their own library (LA2) were almost apologetic about this phenomenon, and were conscious of the dilemma faced by library managers. It very much resembles a double edged sword, in that all respondents acknowledged an inevitability of increased volunteer use, but not necessarily for what may be perceived as the 'right reasons' (for example cutting staff costs, and library budgets) (Nichols and Forbes, 2014).

5.4.1.4 Community capacity

The local environment where volunteers are based has a key role in the success of volunteering efforts. As initially stated, two different authorities in the North-East were examined, who were pursuing different approaches to volunteer use, and had differing social demographics within their local authority area (See O'Donnell et al. (2008) for analysis of North-Eastern region census data). This was clearly indicated by respondents to be a strong determining factor in the take-up of volunteers in a community, particularly with regard to the volunteer managed library,

'the local people round here, I don't think any regular customer came forward as a volunteer' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

These particular respondents came from further afield in order to volunteer, in the case study library (LA2), after having made the decision not to volunteer in their immediate library. They exhibited traits of altruism, and principalism, as discussed by Batson et al (2002, cited in Brodie et al., 2009).

Some library managers felt that the culture of the local community and their volunteering capacity, was very much influenced by the social classes within the community and the availability of a professional pool of people ready and willing to be used as volunteers, as earlier identified by Hall (2011 p.4).

'I do think the population couldn't support that. I don't think you would get the body of people to run a library on a consistent basis, I really can't think of any of the areas, possibly?.....I just don't think we've got enough, for want of a better word, professional people, as a pool to come in to do that' (Library manager interview LA1).

This was a point that also arose in the user survey, with only a quarter of respondents stating they volunteered, the remainder citing work, caring responsibilities and lack of time as key reasons for not volunteering. Volunteering within England is currently at 27% (for those who volunteer at least once a month) (Cabinet Office, 2014), and lack of time and awareness, are the key reasons given by the population for not volunteering (National Council for Voluntary Organisations, 2015).

5.4.1.5 Misunderstandings

There was an acknowledgement amongst library managers that public libraries were complex entities, often misunderstood by the public and volunteers alike,

'you might get some very enthusiastic people, but I think it is more than having enthusiastic people, you need someone who understands what a library is' (Library manager interview LA1).

This links back to earlier comments made by respondents about public perceptions of what it means to be a library professional, and what role a library has in society.

The pivotal role that public libraries are increasingly playing in the new economic and social environment was acknowledged by the staff survey. One respondent noted,

'we are still the butt of jokes in the media and the perception of our role needs to change. We are becoming an increasingly important resource as budgets are cut elsewhere' (Staff survey LA1 R13).

The fact that public libraries have a social role to play in society, is a challenge that needs to be acknowledged, as there is a danger that those who volunteer will misunderstand what it is all about, which damages the service provided to the local community. Usherwood (2007 p.50) stresses the vital role that public libraries play in society, suggesting that,

'in a world of formulaic celebrity, infotainment and the cheap exploitation of basic instincts, the library can be a balancing force that provides people with the opportunity to enjoy and engage with a richer cultural experience'.

He argues although volunteering has a role to play in a library service, it should never fully replace professional delivery, as this may impact on quality. He also introduces the concept of 'existence value' which arises from people in a community benefitting from a public library even if they never physically visit that particular library (Usherwood, 2007 p.105).

5.4.1.6 Getting the balance right

The role that volunteering plays in service provision, was viewed as a key challenge for all respondents. Traditionally, volunteer use in public libraries has been a value-added phenomenon, which by moving to staff replacement has damaged the positive relationship benefits of the former approach. This is seen more clearly in those authorities where both value-added and staff replacement volunteers co-exist.

Pateman and Williment (2013) discuss the positive social benefits of community involvement in public libraries, but warn of the current piecemeal involvement of volunteers as being a dangerous development with underlying cost-cutting reasons. They are concerned that such developments do not necessarily help to include those currently excluded from society.

'Volunteering has been tainted by volunteers replacing employees in VMLs' (Library manager interview LA2).

It was an interesting discovery that the volunteers questioned, although not considering the possible harm that staff replacement might do to value-added working, felt strongly that their work should not replace paid staff. This arose from all volunteer respondents, including those based in a volunteer managed library.

'I hate when you get these things on the radio or tv, and you get politicians talking about volunteers, it is a really good thing helping the community, whatever. Basically it is a short hand way of getting rid of 10,000 librarians in the country, and it makes people feel good about it. We don't want to end up as political pawns here. We could be viewed as a threat, and we're aware of that! When we walk through the door, we are all aware of it, which is unfortunate, because that's not why we are here!' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

There appears to be a delicate balance between what constitutes reasonable volunteering, and when it might result in a threat to jobs,

'I've enjoyed doing this and it's helping the library out but I do also look at the other side and think, if it goes too far, it's doing people out of a paid job' (Volunteer focus group LA1).

There was also a strong belief from most library managers that volunteers in the library should have a purely value-added role, and not be tolerated in other roles. However, when one recalls the inevitability of volunteer use acknowledged by staff, volunteers and users, and the related economic and political challenges, it is an interesting dichotomy to consider.

'It is a minefield and it is a real shame that value-added volunteers are now probably a bit tainted after being in the service of museums, libraries and archives for years. Doing a really good job that often goes unvalued, it's just a shame' (Library manager interview LA2).

The library staff survey identified that staff felt strongly that volunteers should not be used as an alternative to paid staff (58%), and overstep the mark.

'There has to be a line drawn as to what can be deemed as a 'volunteering' role against effectively replacement of staff' (staff survey respondent LA1 R11).

Library users also considered the challenges of volunteer use. Those who identified associated issues with using volunteers in a library (30%), considered key themes related to the political nature of such use, and that it should not result in job losses.

The random nature by which this situation is developing, was identified by one library manager discussing the growth of VMLs in their authority. Although a level of planning appeared to have been undertaken, there was also an acknowledgement that some communities could suffer as a result. Goulding (2006) mirrors this finding, by clearly identifying that many public libraries have adopted a highly reactive approach to this phenomenon so far.

'I do feel quite strongly about this to be honest, obviously the benefit is that the library doesn't have to close. You can look at that 2 ways, you could say that community still has an open library, but you could also say well that that community might be under the impression that they still have a professionally run library. If that library wasn't there, based on the research that we've done, we know that nobody's living so far that they couldn't get a bus a couple of stops. I know it's not ideal, but most people don't live within 2 minutes walking distance anyway, so we know they've got to travel, just travel in a different direction. People who were using that library could still be using that professionally run library down the road and still be getting that level of service, yeah so I don't agree with it at all, it is a postcode lottery!' (Library manager interview LA2).

A Community Managed Library (Arts Council England, 2013c) is used by the current Government to describe a public library run by volunteers, however upon discussion with one library manager, this term was viewed as flawed, with them preferring to use the term, Volunteer Managed Library. They argued that public libraries were community libraries, using professionally trained paid staff to engage with their local communities to deliver a suitably relevant service, through community engagement. This reinforces the political nature of this concept, as previously discussed by a number of commentators including Pateman and Vincent (2010), McMenemy (2009), Hawkins (2011) and Usherwood (2007).

The current Government (and previous coalition government) appear to consider volunteer use as a way to ensure community involvement and management through their ideology of localism (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2011 p.2), whereas the library manager interviewed viewed the lack of professional involvement as flawed, and current community engagement as helping to foster a community focussed public library.

5.4.2 Professionalism

Professionalism was the second theme that arose from analysis of the data, and can be defined in varying ways. It can be viewed as something which covers the professional training and qualification of a worker, which then impacts on their standards of working and the reasons behind their actions. However, one can also consider professionalism in terms of variables such as work ethics, passion, and community focus. Larson (1997, cited in Goodall, 2000) explores the notion of professionalism at a variety of levels. It enables a particular profession to maintain a status through limited entry, and guards a particular area of knowledge by regulating and disciplining members. It also is synonymous with competence, efficiency and effectiveness. This section examines public perceptions of those volunteering as a professional entity, in addition to an examination of the reasons why people volunteer and how this impacts on professional delivery.

Professionalism arose predominantly from library managers as a key concern. The lack of public controversy resulting from using volunteers to run libraries was highlighted as frustrating, when considering librarianship as a profession, and an interesting parallel with other professions was given by a number of library managers to highlight the lack of logic of such a move.

'In a way the transformation from a professionally run library to a volunteer library hasn't thrown up as much protest as just closing a library would..... You could do it with schools; we used to have a school in every village, again, just because people might know about maths and english, it doesn't mean that they are going to teach children well, and give a professional service' (Library manager interview LA2).

This appeared to be related to a perceived lack of understanding on the part of wider society as to what librarians do, and the role of a library service,

'I think it is worrying when you start saying, not having librarians anywhere. I really don't think people understand the skills that librarians have, and to sort of make you another type of officer altogether, to gather payments from people or something, just undervalues everything that a library is' (Library manager interview LA1).

'To be honest, my feeling about volunteer run libraries, is that they aren't libraries, they are book exchanges. I've got a house full of books, but it's not a library; even if I lend books out to my friends and my family or whatever, it still doesn't make it a library!' (Library manager interview LA1).

This confusion surrounding the public perception of what a library's role is, and what staff within them do, is acknowledged thoughtfully by Pateman and Williment (2013 p. 59) as a fundamental problem, in that 'everyone knows what a library is, but many people also have an outdated and sometimes negative image of a boring institution filled with dusty books and even dustier staff'.

In addition, the Sieghart Review (2014b) identified that, 'not enough decision makers at national or local level appear sufficiently aware of the remarkable and vital value that a good library service can offer modern communities' (2014b p.4).

It is worth noting that the volunteers questioned, who were replacing paid staff at the volunteer managed library, acknowledged the professional nature of the paid staff they had replaced, and the lack of value society placed on their professional worth,

'I used to sometimes feel when you have studied for several years to get the qualification as a librarian, and it made me think that they get undervalued. We know they've done their 3 years of whatever it is, they've worked hard to get those qualifications, and you've worked hard in your professional life, we're here to kind of put a nail in your coffin' (Volunteer focus group LA1).

However, there appeared to be a strong feeling amongst the volunteers questioned, that they took great pride in their working, often coming from professional backgrounds themselves, albeit not in the library sector.

'Just because you volunteer, you're not going to give a sloppy service, you are going to give the same service' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

However, delivering a good service, as opposed to a professional service may not necessarily be the same thing, indeed a professional service may be something a volunteer can struggle to achieve, if they misunderstand what a professional library service actually is. Hill (2010) warns that the absence of professional staff will lead to a drop in service standards.

Some commentators argue that viewing volunteering through a work lens can be flawed,

'the danger of seeing volunteering as work is that it can reduce the nature of this value to productive outputs only and the wider, more holistic benefits of volunteering can be lost' (Paine et al., 2010 p.26).

There are also claims that the very nature of being a volunteer means they cannot be trusted,

'without the concrete crutch of working for a living, volunteers are suspect: they are too autonomous, and therefore, cannot be made reliable; they have no visible payoff and, so, are not predictable; they must have hidden, selfish reasons for working and, so, are hypocrites' (Pearce, 1993, cited in Zimmeck, 2000 p.2).

Interestingly, some of the volunteer managed library respondents gave an indication that they may understand more about the complexity of a library service,

'I think we have got to start activities and things in order to prove that we are providing a different kind of service as well as our book lending service, to (sort of) convince the council to keep us on at the end of the 2 years. I think we will be offering things, other than books, to the public, which is good in a way because it provides other things for the community' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

5.4.2.1 Public perceptions of the library service

The public's perception of who runs a library, and whether they are paid staff or volunteers, can be a challenge with regard to wider perceptions of service quality. One may argue that determining the status of a library worker or volunteer is irrelevant, as indicated by a volunteer from the volunteer managed library,

'as far as the customers go and the library itself, they should come in here, not thinking that oh I've come to see the volunteers' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

Library users questioned appeared to display confusion as to who was a volunteer and who wasn't in the library, indeed 27% of respondents were unsure as to whether they had been helped by a volunteer in the library or not.

There was also a clear concern from library managers regarding the level of service quality that could be achieved through solely relying on volunteers, partly due to the nature of the volunteer, and the professional standards that are accrued by paid staff.

'I think what is done (by volunteers) isn't quite up to standard, you can't develop them in the same way and they are not there as much' (Library manager interview LA2).

When library staff were asked about the difference between paid staff and volunteers, they all felt there was a difference. This difference related to the knowledge and experience a paid staff member had (39%) and their training and qualifications (30%). It was also identified by some of the issues to do with using volunteers raised by the staff survey, including commitment and reliability (58%), accountability (31%) and confidentiality (31%). Poor service standards were something that staff surveyed considered a key issue when using volunteers.

As mentioned earlier, nearly two thirds (60%) of library users thought there was a difference between volunteers and paid staff. Reasons for this relating to a lack of remuneration on the part of volunteers, and a lack of accountability, stability, training and expertise (Hill, 2010).

5.4.2.2 Reasons for volunteering

When one considers the professionalism of a volunteer, one needs to be aware of the reasons for their volunteering initially, as this may have an impact on the level of service and commitment that they offer. The reasons given by volunteer respondents for taking on this role were varied, but many of them commonly had an underlying reason regarding why they chose to volunteer; ranging from pure selfish factors, such as a love of books and reading, or the enhancement of their CV, to more altruistic factors such as helping the local community or saving the library service. Commonly there was an acknowledgement that selfish and altruistic reasons for volunteering often existed in tandem,

'I think we all start to do it for our own satisfaction, and the by-product is that we are helping everybody else, but that doesn't come top of your list' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

Also, the altruistic focus of volunteering may not necessarily be the initial catalyst for an individual choosing to volunteer, but appeared to establish itself as the predominant reason once the volunteer had become established.

'I've done lots of it (volunteering) in the past, I don't know, a bit selfish but, it makes you feel really good to give your time to something else, to another cause' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

'I first came in here as something to do, because when you retire or stop work for whatever reason, then you need to plan for this retirement. I had a friend who hadn't got enough to do who retired before me, and he had an awful lot of trouble filling his time. So it's something to do, but it's also a worthwhile something to do, rather than ride the metro all day or play bowls or something. Hopefully, it's productive' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

For Smith (2002), this phenomenon where volunteers start as enthusiasts, but over time, become fully committed to the organisation, is clearly displayed within the heritage sector.

One can view a volunteer through a variety of lenses (Paine et al., 2010) when considering reasons for volunteering including work, philanthropy, activism, leisure, care, participation and learning. Hence the reasons for volunteering may exhibit a complexity, which could alter as a volunteer develops a closer relationship with their host organisation.

There also appeared to be a strong connection between the people who chose to be volunteers and their familiarity with the library service, a past connection renewed, and a realisation that the library service was a good thing for the community. The Helping Out Survey of volunteering in 2007 supports this finding by establishing that the second most popular reason given for being recruited to a volunteering project after word of mouth (66%) was having previously used the services of the organisation (20%) (Locke, 2008 p.4).

'Everybody needs the library even if they don't think they need the library, they do need the library' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

'I've always wanted to do this since when I was little, the first book I ever owned, I bought from the library. I came regularly to the central library, near where I lived. I've always wanted to do this, I always thought I would like it' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

This brings to the fore the issue of community capacity, and whether volunteers would come from non- library users? Sieghart (2014b) queries the possible long term viability of VMLs, particularly in less affluent areas of the country.

Although, 'the more disadvantaged localities often have the greater need for such a service (but) they don't tend to have the resources, experience or confidence to take over the running of their library' (Sieghart, 2014b p.23)

The volunteers surveyed demonstrated a strong work ethic, 'you've got to do something rather than just sit there?' (Volunteer focus group LA1) often having worked in professional roles prior to taking on voluntary work, and this is an important element when considering the level of professionalism within service delivery, especially when wholly delivered by volunteers. Indeed, the majority of volunteers were predominantly retired, apart from a few students, and a mother of young children, something that Locke (2008) considers to be the norm.

'I hadn't been retired very long, and had no intentions of staying in the house, saw an interesting project and thought that would be a way of making new friends – some friends are dying off' (Volunteer focus group LA1).

The prevalence of older people in volunteering is something that Brodie et al. (2009 p.39) acknowledge as a, 'clear factor in explaining people's pathways through participation'. Rochester (2006, cited in Brodie et al., 2009) also identifies the strong association that older people have with public services, and how this interacts with their volunteering activities.

All volunteers in addition displayed a strong community focus,

'it's (reason for volunteering) just really for a lot of personal satisfaction, and also finding out what's going on in your community. Keeping the library going as a community association is extremely important as there are so many other libraries closing' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

'What I have seen in schools over the years, we became almost like factories. Whenever there were cuts, it was the arts and RE, anything spiritual/cultural was marginalised. A society that loses its culture and spirituality is a dangerous society to live in, so that's why it is important for libraries' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

Many of the volunteers came from a background of volunteering, juggling multiple roles such as magistrates, and roles within the co-operative and charity sectors.

There was a strong civic duty demonstrated by a number of the volunteers, and pride in the area they served,

'we feel passionately about it (the library), and about your local area as well' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

This passion was also raised by the user survey respondents as a key determining factor in the difference between paid staff and volunteers. It is interesting to consider however whether library staff are simply doing their jobs for money alone, or also have altruistic or other reasons for their pursuits other than payment. Many of the library staff surveyed had been working for a long time in the library service, and displayed loyalties that went far beyond the payment they received for their efforts.

5.4.3 Volunteer management and use

The third theme related to aspects to do with volunteer management and use. Most managers acknowledged the change volunteer use was undergoing from one of being purely value-added to a more mixed use, which included greater use of volunteers for primary service delivery in place of paid staff. There was a concern that this change in use had tarnished the relationship between the library service and its volunteers,

'It's become tinged lately, there's not animosity towards them, but there's definitely a few rumblings amongst staff. The staff are getting more and more work to do front-line, and less and less of the, what they see, of the nice side, when you get to work with the historic materials and you get to work with it, so I think bad feeling of the wider voice of volunteers has definitely tinged it a bit' (Library manager interview LA2).

A key theme that arose from both library managers and volunteers related to the importance of a line that should not be crossed, and this included responses from the volunteer managed library (LA2). This further illustrates the highly sensitive nature of this phenomenon,

'if we come across library staff, their response to us as volunteers could be anything. They could be thinking, oh the library shouldn't be doing that so I'm not going to be helpful, or they might be thinking that's it, they're volunteers, so they don't know anything anyway, all of that sort of thing can go around in a circle' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

In addition, there was concern from volunteers that they should not be seen as taking people's jobs,

'I think, you know, at the beginning, I think some people had a right to feel a bit resentful, because ok, we were guaranteed that there were no job cuts, we were not taking anyone's job here, but people who worked here, were moved to other places. So I think there had to be some resentment to start with, and maybe some people still feel that way, even though you know, a year later, that's life isn't it, sometimes people resent things, and other times people say, good on you' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

Library managers also highlighted the situation that arose when volunteers used in a value-added way, took away those parts of a paid staff's job that were perceived as motivators, the parts of the job that might be viewed as more fun, and seen more as a reward.

This had the potential to reduce job satisfaction amongst paid staff if taken on by volunteers.

'Events are the part of the job staff enjoy. If you are then asking volunteers to take on that role, it almost leaves the day in and day out work for library staff to do. Not having the pleasure of delivering something extra' (Library manager interview LA2).

Playing to people's strengths was considered vital to the smooth delivery of a volunteer initiative, and the mixed abilities of volunteers required careful selection and management to ensure that they were given suitable tasks that matched their ability.

'I think the other thing is around, it is the same with staff, finding out what floats their boat, what they are really good at' (Library manager interview LA1).

'Their (volunteers) abilities vary, there are 2 very confident ex-professionals who are great at, they catalogue articles about world war one, so they are really reading the content and deciding what they are about, making decisions. Whereas the others want very repetitive tasks where they can come in each week and feel confident. They are literally typing in this information, so they are copying and getting a digital version of a list, so for example the list of the war dead, it's in a manuscript book, so you can't search it, it's not alphabetical, and they're typing it up so the public can then search for their relative by name' (Library manager interview LA2).

This challenge of dealing with a diverse range of people is observed by Zimmeck (2000), who argues that people often have varied reasons for volunteering.

'Some are stayers, who want to make a long-term commitment to a particular organisation or cause, others are passers-through, who, while they may have a long-term commitment to volunteering generally, make only a short-term commitment to a particular organisation' (Zimmeck, 2000 p.26).

Although it is true to say that managing staff requires a good matching of abilities to the tasks that exist, volunteer use was argued to be an additional challenge in that volunteers were not bound by the same contractual obligations as a paid staff member, and could therefore choose to walk away when they chose to. Locke et al (2003, cited in Brodie et al., 2009 p.32) identifies the importance of, 'strategies to ensure volunteers are managed in an explicit, developmental, supportive and appreciative way', and how these will help to ensure loyalty and a sense of belonging for volunteers.

It was clear that active staff management, whereby skills of volunteers were matched to roles that existed, was particularly important in the value-added contexts.

'The volunteers that we have in the local studies library are very good because they're indistinguishable from the local history group, so the local history group are the volunteers, and again having talked with other people in other authorities, not only do they find it difficult to get volunteers, but their local history groups don't work with them so we have that amalgamation; and we work very closely with them and they are very supportive, and they help with funding and things like that, and obviously they are a very intelligent, educated, skilled set of people, who know a lot more about [redacted] local history, than I ever will so they are actually indispensable to us' (Library manager interview LA1).

Holmes (2004) outlines the impact of such professionalisation on a volunteer workforce within the heritage sector. She concludes that there is, 'no evidence that professional volunteer management altered the nature of volunteering to make it more like work' (Holmes, 2004 p.91). As such, volunteers may still feel engaged in a leisure activity, whilst their managers feel in control of service priorities.

However, it was also noted by one library manager that the process of selecting the right volunteer for the job, and being able to say no to a volunteer offering their services for free, especially where there was no service at all, could in reality be quite challenging.

'It is difficult to say no to a volunteer. Saying no to a volunteer, and selecting the right volunteer to the right job requires experience' (Library manager interview LA2).

There was a consensus amongst both volunteers and library managers that effective volunteer use required local management, and training of volunteers, which in most cases has been forthcoming. However, some of the value-added volunteers stressed that the current economic situation had impacted on the availability of paid staff support, which was not always helpful.

'The project relies on our knowledge base flagging up problems, or future problems, it's not the other way round..... it's not the library's fault, I mean it is the economic situation, you know, they've had no choice' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

Most library managers considered formal mechanisms such as interviews, and inductions as a useful part of the volunteer management process, in addition to providing guidelines, support and consistent and clear communication, however also the importance of keeping a distance and the building of trust were key themes.

Respondents acknowledged the hidden costs of using volunteers, in terms of time and money, and that this sometimes outweighed the benefits of volunteer use.

'So I think what I would say, as a reflection of that, is that volunteer groups are fabulous, their commitment is great, they do some very very good things; for example, the heritage group will bring a lot of visitors to this particular library, that maybe wouldn't have come in. It will be in the press, they've got the lottery funding and they are linked to the library, brilliant! However, the amount of support from paid staff that volunteers need is probably, what's the word, I want a phrase that is in my head, it's not kind of balanced. A small volunteer group can take more support, of paid staff's time, than the rest of the paid staff put together. So does their value outweigh the benefits that they bring?' (Library manager interview LA2).

Cost was also considered by the staff survey respondents, 27% of respondents cited cost and staff time as key issues when using volunteers.

Although library managers highlighted the challenges of working with volunteers and the fact that this could at times be hard work, they also acknowledged that the process forced the library authority to plan and manage priorities to a greater extent, which was beneficial to the more efficient running of the library service.

'It's made us plan our work and made us identify our priorities a bit more because they just eat work, they would say 'I've finished that massive project you gave us 2 months ago' and we're like 'ahhh, what are they going to do next week, quick'. So we've now sat down and gone 'right these are the really important collections, so this will probably keep them going for the next decade' (Library manager interview LA2).

A blended approach to managing volunteers is also identified by Paine and Smith (2006) whose research concludes that volunteers require a balanced approach to management, which is flexible, friendly and suitably resourced in terms of people and money.

5.4.4 Relationships

Relationships were a strong recurrent theme in the findings, with key points relating to the balance of power between volunteers and the library service, beneficial relationships, and the importance of control. The value of appreciation was important, as was the building of relationships within the volunteer group.

The findings show that the relationship between volunteers, staff and the library service predominantly worked in a reciprocal way, although there was a fragility to this relationship which appeared to be worsened by the current external environment, as one of the volunteer stated 'there is a *feeling* that yes, the council is obstructive, but there are reasons' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

Smith's (2002 p.4) model of volunteering relationships in the heritage sector (See figure 1, section 2.8.4) is a useful place to start in this section. She acknowledges the organisations' human resources (managers, paid staff and volunteers) are inter-related with a setting and can be considered on a number of levels, from the immediate physical space to the wider community they are serving, and the overall heritage sector. She identifies the unique link between the volunteers, the organisation and the community, and this can be translated to the library sector in a similar way.

One can view this relationship between volunteers and library service as similar to that of symbiotic parasitism, whereby both entities benefit from the relationship whilst preserving each other. This is particularly the case for the value-added volunteers, who reported

such benefits of being a volunteer as including being able to borrow books, gaining work experience, establishing social contacts, and researching for a PhD.

'One is actually a researcher and he is literally doing PhD level research, that we can benefit from, so that is almost not a volunteer situation, but it's reciprocal in that he gets access to material and he gives us what he finds' (Library manager interview LA2).

However, there was a challenge on both sides in that there was often a delicate equilibrium to be maintained, resulting in the library service needing to assert its authority in order to ensure that priorities at the service level were being met.

'It's great to have volunteers, but they are only useful if they are actually doing what you want them to do. We gave them some choices about what they might like to do, and how they might like to do it and we gave them training, but it was a bit of a culture change' (Library manager interview LA2).

In addition Smith (2002 p.28) stresses the importance of active management, warning that, 'task volunteers often lack the strategic understanding that puts individual decisions within the wider context'.

The staff survey identified that 77% of respondents felt that volunteers and staff could work in harmony; this was even higher for the user survey which had 89% of respondents saying yes to this question. For the staff survey, it is interesting to note that respondents were predominantly working with value-added volunteers, and commonly used a caveat that this would only be the case if staff jobs were left unthreatened (23%). It was clear that parameters had been set; these were similarly demonstrated by the user survey results, which although displaying a higher degree of positivity, indicated a doubt on the part of the respondents backed up with qualifying statements related to the importance of volunteers not taking jobs away, and the arrangement being mutually beneficial.

5.4.4.1 Balance of power

For the value-added group of volunteers questioned, they felt that they had been actually leading certain parts of the library service,

‘with the digitisation programme, the person who came into post didn’t really know it so we had to lead that person through the process, to get the right images, to get onto the website; so we’ve had to be quite careful as to how we approached that, so we have been leading the professional, because they did not have that skill’ (Volunteer focus group LA1).

It was clear from library manager interviews that this particular situation had arisen due to a library service reorganisation resulting in a new member of staff overseeing the work of a well-established cohort of volunteers. This reorganisation was due to financial cutbacks, and staff taking redundancy.

The dominance of a particular group of volunteers can cause problems with relationships, often fuelled by their own agenda (Nichols et al., 2015); in addition their independence and lack of an employment contract can make relationships with the staff managing them fraught with challenge.

‘Volunteers are I think, they are tricky, tricky to handle. It’s more difficult than staff, because after all, as a manager or a supervisor, you can tell somebody to do something who is staff, or NOT to do something, and they either listen to you and do what you say, or they can be in trouble. It’s not quite the same with volunteers’ (Library manager interview LA1).

The staff survey further confirmed this friction, one respondent stating, ‘volunteers can become too self-important and actually try to take over’ (staff survey respondent LA1 R27). Smith (2002 p.19) argues that the inequalities between different sets of volunteers can cause tensions, and suggests that ‘problems could arise if this social network became exclusive rather than inclusive’.

5.4.4.2 Beneficial relationships

In spite of this, relationships between the community and the library service have the potential to be greatly enhanced through volunteer engagement, and were viewed as a key benefit of volunteer use by many respondents. This was something volunteers emphasised, and initiatives such as the readers at home service, summer reading challenge, and youth events were all cited as reaching out to a wider audience, who might not be regular library users. Library users surveyed tended to see volunteer use as a

beneficial arrangement (82%), particularly regarding library events, and similarly discussed the benefits of bringing in less regular library users.

'I think that's so important to bring people in (to the library) because the bottom line is we want people to come in to read. That's not going to happen, a lot of people will not normally come into the library, it's not their thing; but if there is a function, if there is a party, they will come in, they will walk through the doors, which is a breakthrough' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

According to Goulding (2006) such relationship building helps to foster social capital, acting as a 'social glue' within the community. This can be argued as something which originally stemmed from value-added volunteering and has indeed been a central role of the public library service boosted predominantly during the drive towards community engagement (Museums Libraries and Archives Council, 2011a). Library managers interviewed, acknowledged the benefit of using a network of volunteers, and the potential for increased community engagement as a result through increased contacts, and new social groups.

'Their contacts are fantastic. I mean they do have a very wide amount of contacts. Also they are very supportive, so if we are putting on an event they will support us 100% in that, they will come and man a stall, they will do whatever we need them to do. So it is an extra group of people we can call on, and because they use their time differently, they are available Saturdays, they are alright for evenings. I do find they are quite set in what time they like to come out, but they are available and enthusiastic as well, cos (sic) they love what they are doing' (Library manager interview LA1).

Such developments served to further democratise the library service, and enable enhanced community ownership, 'opening it (library service) up to a completely different audience' (Library manager interview LA2).

5.4.4.3 Control and authority

Relationships between paid library staff and volunteers were identified as a key issue during interviews and focus groups, and clearly demonstrated the delicate balance required in order to establish harmony and equilibrium within the library service. Although value-added volunteering is more established and accepted as a part of mainstream library service delivery, it too has experienced tensions in terms of the relationships

between paid staff and volunteers. Partly this relates to the recruitment and subsequent management of the volunteers, in addition to the working environment in which they are based. However, for some library managers the fact that certain value-added volunteers may have more specialist knowledge than the associated paid staff member, in addition to being part of a well-established arrangement, caused friction for the paid staff member, particularly in terms of control and authority.

'I've tended to have inherited, they've (the volunteers) got a lot of skills, they know what they are doing, and they've been involved with the projects a lot longer than I have. So initially it was very difficult to tell them anything, and they kept saying 'well what do you want me to do' and I said 'I don't really know, I haven't really got to grips with what I need you to do, can you tell me?' So we've got a strange relationship at the moment, where they're a lot, they're in charge of some of it really! So I've got an overview of it, and am getting a lot more confident with it, but it's still best to take advice from them about what's the best way to do things, and I think I still need to work on, being, putting myself in the position where I am fully in control, but it's getting there' (Library manager interview LA1).

The value-added volunteers indeed acknowledged their ownership of some tasks where they had been volunteering for a long time, 'it's our baby sort of thing, we've done it so long' (Volunteer focus group LA1). In addition, they hinted at challenges that might arise from knowing more than the paid staff,

'sometimes, I feel that we are leading those who should be leading us. Sometimes we can be accused of going beyond your remit, and this can have repercussions that can be problematic' (Volunteer focus group LA1).

Volunteers also indicated that relationships with paid staff are often hindered by issues to do with lack of respect, and a lack of support.

'You think you are doing the role you are assigned to, but somebody else can have a different interpretation of what you should be doing, and that is generic thing that you can find everywhere. With that goes the respect that should be given to that person who should be doing that role, sometimes that gets forgotten about, that element of respect that this is a volunteer here, and there is a way you should be talking to that person' (Volunteer focus group LA1).

The staff survey indicated that there were indeed some particularly polarised perspectives of volunteers, and a lack of trust and respect from some respondents regarding the ability of volunteers, one respondent writing, 'pay peanuts, get monkeys' (Staff survey

respondent LA1 R19). This exhibits the wider concern that library staff may feel regarding volunteers being perceived as taking on paid staff roles (May, 2013).

The volunteers questioned were predominantly retired, from professional backgrounds, displaying a strong work ethic, and civic duty. They generally had a higher incidence of engaging with books, and many talked of how the public library had been part of their lives prior to becoming volunteers. Most volunteers indicated that their own interests had inspired them to start volunteering initially, particularly those who loved reading, or local history.

Such a profile of the volunteer can work against acceptance on the part of library managers, who acknowledged that often volunteers had their own agenda, rather than a purely altruistic reason for volunteering, and this clouded their perception of how valuable they were for a library service.

'They (volunteers) have their own agendas very often, and they can lead into real problems' (Library manager interview LA1).

'Some people have ulterior motives and I've had to turn some people away' (Library manager interview LA1).

Library managers stressed the importance of a library service being able to clearly communicate its priorities to volunteers, in order to help foster a true reciprocal relationship. One respondent talked of the challenges for a library service, when clear expectations were not communicated.

'In the past we had a volunteer who literally just wanted to scan photographs, but he didn't want to do any of the other elements, and it was creating a huge amount of work and he didn't want to. He did this for years and years and years, and there was no review process. He had no expectations, and we hadn't set out what ours were; what our expectations were, so we are quite clear now' (Library manager interview LA2).

Relationships with staff and volunteers also appeared to suffer due to the fact that volunteers were also customers of the library service, in addition to their other roles (such as a local history enthusiast) and this resulted in additional challenges for the staff.

'It's very difficult, I never know whether I am talking to the local history group, or whether I'm talking to the volunteers, so I tend to use them on both things. There is a slight difference, but we give them as much as they give us so it's difficult really; I mean, they're customers as well, so they are also regular customers, they are volunteers and they are the local history group' (Library manager interview LA1).

'Then you've gone in and you've been this lady's friend, and then all of a sudden you want to be the library staff, yeah, you can't be both. So you can be as friendly as you like, and I do think that was the lesson that I learned there, that you're not friends with these people, and that sounds harsh. I don't mean that, you can be friendly towards them, but you're not their friend' (Library manager interview LA1).

The misunderstanding by staff of why a volunteer is there, and their role in the service can be challenging, and illustrates the importance of not only understanding the complex interrelationships that contribute to the volunteer experience (Smith, 2002 p.27), but also appreciating the vital role communication has to play in this. Clear communication to all stakeholder groups, in addition to clearly defined roles and responsibilities are of paramount importance.

A further intervening factor arising from the development of staff and volunteer relationships, related to individual personalities, and as such, demanded careful handling and management.

'With the local history library volunteers, it is difficult to say, because again there is such a crossover between the roles. I think with staff, it tends to be again on personalities; some volunteers are more demanding and more abrasive than others, so you tend to go with who you find the friendliest and most helpful at the time. I think some of them can be quite..., I think they have different expectations, I think because you are a public library, some of the volunteers come in and think they own the public library in a lot of ways, but that's just their personality as well, others are very deferential to what the library has to offer. So I think the more abrasive personalities are less harmonious relationships, and you're going to get that' (Library manager interview LA1).

Volunteers too acknowledged that staff personalities could help or hinder working relationships, clearly exacerbated by the current political and economic situation.

For the set of volunteers that ran their own library this was all the more important, as they felt their very existence was perceived by staff as a threat to the future of the overall library service. As a result, relationships between staff had been challenging, and all volunteers appeared acutely aware of their sensitive role.

*'We have to be a little bit careful, at least some of us feel this way'
(Volunteer focus group LA2).*

5.4.4.4 Demonstrating appreciation

The issue of feeling valued for all groups of volunteers was cited as a key benefit of volunteering and appreciation was a key part of the relationship between library staff and volunteers,

*'a lot of us have got university degrees, and have had good jobs, and sometimes we're treated a little bit. I'm not saying we want them (qualifications) to be used, but sometimes a little bit of appreciation?'
(Volunteer focus group LA1).*

For library managers too, an undervaluing of the role of library staff nationally was viewed as damaging for morale, and had initiated a spiralling lack of trust of volunteers,

'I think front line staff are probably at an all time low in morale, because they feel undervalued and are given the impression that libraries are not important, and that they are just another drain on government budgets, and that we've just been loafing around for years, whereas in reality we have been trimming back budgets for years' (Library manager interview LA2).

An additional challenge outlined by library managers related to that of managing a group of people who one had very little control over, without any formal exchange of wages.

'You can't make them (volunteers) stay, you have to ask nicely. You do have to always be aware that they are not employees, they are members of the public who are helping you, and they can be a law unto themselves' (Library manager interview LA1).

Also the importance of keeping a distance between volunteers and their managing staff was outlined as a method of ensuring some control, 'we have to keep that little bit of detachment, just in case there's ever a problem' (Library manager interview LA1).

The challenge of managing a volunteer, perceived as external to the employing organisation and its associated contractual obligations, was viewed by library managers as an uneasy relationship. The staff survey also highlighted this concern, one respondent asking, 'could you get volunteers to work late nights and 10 hour days?' (Staff survey respondent LA1 R20).

The challenge of working with diverse customers, in quite demanding situations was also outlined by another staff survey respondent, 'can't expect them (volunteers) to commit the way that staff do...to deal with abuse and difficulties that the public sometimes bring' (staff survey respondent LA1 R25).

As considered earlier in section 5.3.4, Holmes (2004 p.76) views volunteering from two distinct paradigms, an economic model and a leisure model. She acknowledges that, 'if volunteering is a leisure activity, rather than unpaid work, then it would be expected that volunteers may be hostile to efforts to introduce procedures that treat them more like unpaid employees' (Holmes, 2004 p.76). This is particularly the case when volunteers are more likely to be older, retired people seeking leisure activities.

The ability of volunteers to deliver a suitable standard of library service was questioned by library managers and staff, and this had clearly impacted on subsequent relationships. Volunteers were not always perceived as professional in their working, and had limitations in terms of how they could be trained and developed compared to paid staff.

'There is a massive difference in professional standards, when the knowledge might be greater, again they haven't got the information skills often, it's lacking' (Library manager interview LA2).

Staff noted that sometimes volunteers could also be a hindrance rather than helpful to a library service. Volunteers were also aware of this perception of their abilities, and the resulting lack of autonomy this created. This particularly was voiced by the volunteers running their own library branch, who felt that such a lack of trust put up barriers in terms of co-operation which was not helpful.

'I think it should be more that the council should appreciate our volunteering more, and not be so, because they are very meticulous. All these silly rules, 'you can do this' or rather 'you can't do this, and you can't do that, and you can't do that'; and it's like well 'hello, we're giving up some time you know, give us a bit of slack and stop being so awkward', Really awkward. And it's frustrating because you think 'we're trying to help you out, and you're just putting up more and more hurdles', well not even hurdles, because they're not even letting us jump over something. It's like a brick wall around us, it is what you are here for, you are giving up your time, but you can only do this, and that's it' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

Value-added volunteers considered the importance of the training they had received, and hinted at the dangers of not being suitably trained.

'That training was important, ill-trained volunteers; well meaning, but they could wreck the library service. It's too precious' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

5.4.4.5 Relationships within a volunteer group

Relationships within groups of volunteers were generally perceived to be good, and the value of volunteers as a group was strongly emphasised, for both types of volunteers questioned. The growth of the bond between volunteers was something that arose as a key phenomenon in the groups studied.

'You volunteer as an individual, but you end up being a volunteer group, it wouldn't work individually now, we need each other' (Volunteer focus group LA1).

However, library managers identified some possible factions within the volunteer groups within their libraries,

'They've (volunteers) had arguments amongst themselves. I'm now very aware there are probably 3 distinct groups of people, and they come in at separate times, and they're not communicating with each other even though they are working on the same project. The older group don't like the newer group of people who have come in' (Library manager interview LA1).

The challenge of building relationships within a group of people who may only be in the library for a few hours every week is evident. Many of the volunteers questioned were well established and had grown used to each other over many years, with strong social cohesion. A key benefit of volunteering identified by the respondents was that they enjoyed the social aspect of their commitment, and their relationship with fellow volunteers grew over time.

'You volunteer for a reason that you want to get involved, and you either find you like it or you don't, so if you like the people you volunteer with, then that's a good reason to keep volunteering' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

The volunteers often shared a common interest, which served to bind the group more closely. Local history passions clearly served as a catalyst for many people starting their

volunteering, however running alongside these 'selfish' reasons for volunteering was a strong altruistic theme, in addition to a desire to enhance and preserve the library service.

'If a volunteer didn't care about a community, they wouldn't volunteer. It's because you feel passionately about things that you think, I've got to do something about this' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

'It's a slightly selfish one on the face of it, it might sound like it is somewhere to go, something to do, but there's more to it than that I think' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

The role of personality was raised by the volunteers running their own library. A tendency for people of a similar professional background, with their own ideas has the potential to cause friction.

'We have found that, not mentioning any names, that in the other volunteer libraries there's problems within the volunteer group. There's too many people trying to be top dogs, and whether there's too many people there, I don't know but here we've not like that, are we, we've sort of got on well' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

This hints at a wider point that volunteering tends to mirror the inequalities of wider society, such that those people who are more likely to volunteer, or indeed be asked to participate, tend to be those people who are better resourced, better educated and with wider social networks (Musick and Wilson, 2008, cited in Brodie et al., 2009 p.29). Also dominant participants, or what Brodie et al (2009 p.30) call the 'usual suspects', may deter certain sectors of the community from engaging with volunteering opportunities.

Relationships can be very much dictated by the structure that supports the volunteer effort. An interesting issue that arose from the value-added volunteers related to working space. A movement of volunteers to less publicly visible areas, separate from paid staff, had appeared to enhance feelings of isolation and undervaluing on the part of volunteers, that can be linked to Smith's (2002) model (Figure 1).

'I think it's difficult now with not having a base, like we had in the local history, when the librarian was always there, and if we had a problem, she was there to help us. But it's difficult now for both us and the library staff, we're scattered you know' (Volunteer focus group LA1).

In contrast library managers were concerned about how the close proximity of volunteers working alongside staff had challenged the relative equilibrium of the working environment.

'I think it's an out of sight out of mind thing. When they (volunteers) were working on the public computers, well they were still members of the public, they were not impinging on what is; and we can't tell how it's going to work having them all in a staff area, but it's definitely not as harmonious as it was' (Library manager interview LA2).

This raises the issue of blurred boundaries within the working environment, and the importance of ensuring the different groups of workers feel they are secure and unthreatened.

"It's a different kettle of fish when you go into the staff areas, and there's a volunteer there. It changes the dynamic a bit, and you have to sit next to someone you don't know very well on the computer next to them, and I'm conscious I have to really watch what I say now in a staff area. You just have to think, it's not that you're saying anything terrible, but what you would say in front of members of the public, you know...ideally I would prefer they were just in one area of their own' (Library manager interview LA2).

Finally, the importance of clear communication across all stakeholders in a volunteer situation was seen as vital for ensuring relationship management, and this emerged strongly as a key feature following interviews with the library managers.

'I suppose the way we deal with it is through dialogue, so there are not misunderstandings' (Library manager interview LA2).

5.4.5 Control

Control was an omnipresent theme, in terms of the wider external environment, and it was evident that many of the challenges arising for library authorities were exacerbated by this phenomenon. As such it overlapped with the other themes to some extent, covering aspects to do with community capacity, relationships, the role of volunteers and professionalism. The importance of management, loyalty, customer focus and ownership were considered as factors for enhancing control.

5.4.5.1 Community and volunteer capacity

The perceived capacity of a local community to assert control over their situation can be seen to determine the responses of local authorities with their volunteer efforts. One of the case study authorities chosen (LA1) was a highly deprived ward, and as a result library managers identified their concerns over volunteering capacity of a community, 'I don't think LA1 has got a huge culture of volunteering' (Library manager interview LA1).

Even where volunteers existed, often their technical expertise was reduced, and there was a lack of control in terms of who came forward and the ability to refuse an unacceptable volunteer.

'We are never short of people with the knowledge, it is the actual technical skills, and trying to build those skills is quite difficult when they are only in 3 hours a week' (Library manager interview LA2).

'So selection is quite funny and it is something we have just discussed...there are various mechanisms to go through (for recruiting paid staff); references, checks, and during interview stage you would maybe select people that you thought that were best for that role. But with volunteers, we don't as such have a policy where we could say maybe you are not a suitable volunteer for this role. Fortunately, it hasn't come up yet, but there have been one or two who have deselected themselves' (Library manager interview LA2).

Volunteers questioned at the volunteer-run library also identified the lack of capacity in their local community and how many of them had come from neighbouring areas where capacity had been greater.

'The local people round here (LA2), I don't think any regular customer came forward as a volunteer. We came from just outside the local area. To me that is as good a reason as any for keeping it open' (volunteer focus group LA2).

'My local library is actually [REDACTED], but I came here because there were so many of them (volunteers) at [REDACTED], so that's why I came here, and I had no intention of going back' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

This is also an issue that has been raised by Arts Council England (2013b).

5.4.5.2 Relationships

Control of volunteers at a library authority level is divided into those aspects that relate to the structural arrangement of the management of volunteering, and those aspects that

relate to the volunteers themselves. Library Managers questioned relied on a formalised structure to recruit volunteers, many of the value-added volunteers had been recruited during the community engagement focus during the Blair New Labour Government. A variety of strategies existed including use of centralised council recruitment, and use of external organisations, such as the WRVS, schools, and local history groups.

However, the model of volunteer-run libraries alongside staff-run libraries had caused friction and frustration for staff and volunteers alike at the case study authority LA2. This perceived obstructive nature on the part of the local authority was previously identified in section 5.4.4.4.

Although volunteers running their own library clearly appreciated a certain level of support from the council, their desire to take control of their library to fit the needs of their community was evident.

Mistrust was raised as an issue, as volunteers felt the library service had their own agenda, and didn't necessarily want their efforts to succeed. However, what were argued to be 'silly rules' by the volunteers, were perceived by the library manager as an attempt to avoid the blurring of distinctions between a volunteer run library and a staff-run library. They were attempting to manage the paid staff in the service, who clearly felt threatened by what they saw as an attempt to de-professionalise the workforce. This was further complicated by the existence of a local council which viewed volunteering as a corporate priority and therefore wished to expand the approach throughout the local authority, not just the library service.

This challenge in the equilibrium of power is, for Pateman and Williment (2013 p.213), a result of the need for library authorities to establish a 'philosophical and practical shift from being a service provider for our communities to being a partner with our communities'.

5.4.5.3 Role of volunteers

Beetham et al (2008, cited in Brodie et al., 2009 p.20) acknowledge the underlying tensions that exist between institutional power and individual empowerment, and it can clearly be seen how this relates to the challenges experienced by those involved with the volunteer-run library (LA2).

Control of volunteers has a direct relationship with the traits of a volunteer, as they are not homogenous. They have differing levels of commitment and different reasons for choosing to volunteer in the first place. However, most volunteers questioned displayed strong feelings regarding the important role of libraries, altruism, and community engagement. They also displayed the need for personal benefits relating to feeling valued, general enjoyment and other social factors.

A central recurring theme from many volunteers questioned was that of the volunteer as the library 'saviour'. They clearly understood the important role they had to play in saving the library service from the ravages of financial cuts, but many expressed a keen desire not to threaten paid library employment.

The dichotomy surrounding whether such volunteering efforts (particularly the running of a previously closed library) result in the de-professionalisation of the service, was a key concern. This was something expressed both by value-added volunteers, and volunteers running a library.

'I've got mixed feelings about this really, I've said this before. I've enjoyed doing this and it's helping the library out but I do also look at the other side and think, if it goes too far, it's doing people out of a paid job' (Volunteer focus group LA1).

5.4.5.4 Professionalism

The professionalism of a volunteer has to be considered in the context of control, and the motives that may be driving them as opposed to a professionally trained paid staff member. This point was usefully put by a library manager relating to local library volunteers.

'It is a local history group as volunteers doing stuff for the library. I often find I think they are working for the library, and I find they are not, they are working for the local history group. It's that sort of thing. it's how much of it links through to each other so I find what they have done is local history group stuff, where I had assumed it was library stuff' (Library manager interview LA1).

'But those sets of people don't want any more from the situation, they're not looking for jobs, they're not looking for experience, they're just looking for something to do one afternoon a week, or because they are interested' (Library manager interview LA1).

The professionalism of a volunteer was also an issue considered by the library volunteers themselves, and how particular volunteers were lacking the necessary skills in this area.

'sometimes volunteers do far more than they should be doing. I'm thinking about the family history at [REDACTED]; they come in, I don't because I must admit, I think that if somebody gets half an hour of you looking for things then that's enough. But some of the volunteers, they will just go on and on, and one in particular. I'll say 'that's not right you know, there's people queuing', and I say 'I've given you half an hour you know'; and it's not fair on the staff either, because they can't say get out' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

The consistency of a volunteer was an issue that was raised by library managers and staff, regarding value-added volunteers and their potential to fit service priorities. This was even more challenging when using younger volunteers for initiatives, such as the summer reading challenge, who had a tendency to be quite shy.

'I think the difficulty is, people tend to work in their own way, everybody's got their own take on what you want from them. So you are trying to get it as consistent as possible, across the board, so that what we get at the end of the day, fits with what I actually envisage that we're going to get' (Library manager interview LA1).

There also appeared to be a clear understanding amongst both value-added volunteers and volunteers running a library that accountability was different as a volunteer, and this brought additional freedom.

"One of the differences is they are accountable as employees, we are not. The council staff are more accountable.....we do have freedom because of that, but we are still constrained by the service agreement' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

This lack of accountability was a concern for one library manager interviewed. The danger lies in whether the users actually understand the difference between staff and volunteers; a theme that was raised by all stakeholders questioned.

Interestingly it appeared that some value-added volunteers had been carrying out their role for so long that they felt they had transcended the role of volunteer,

'Perceptions of the public is interesting, but this is more to do with community run libraries. Do the public either know or care that they are dealt with by volunteers? Because of the fact that we are visiting them at home (Home reader's service), their appreciation of the service is huge and they show their appreciation in various ways' (Library manager interview LA2).

From a volunteer perspective, those at the volunteer-run library considered that many of their library users were unaware of the volunteer-run status of the establishment, and the wider responsibilities of representing the library service as a whole.

'Some people who come through the door, probably still don't realise we are volunteers, there will be some who think we are library staff' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

'The public don't always draw too much of a distinction between what's a council run library and what's a volunteer library, and if this (library) were to close I don't think we would get the blame for it, I think the council would get the blame. So I think we are doing the council a favour.....it gives the public a better perception of the entire library service of the Borough if it is kept going like this' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

This finding was also evident from the user survey conducted, two thirds (60%) of respondents were unaware that volunteers were being used in the library service, with a further 7% not being sure, and is further supported by Wandersman and Alderman (1993, cited in Rogelberg et al., 2010 p.245) as a key concern.

It is interesting to note that all volunteers questioned displayed a keen loyalty to their parent library service, partly this was due to using a focus group approach to obtain data, which resulted in a greater likelihood of seeing volunteers with a key stake in the library service, but it also demonstrated that if volunteering is to work and succeed with longevity, there has to be a benefit for the volunteer.

5.4.5.5 Loyalty

Community loyalty can be seen as an important mechanism for ensuring control,

'I think that's why we've all joined the community, because we feel passionately about it and about your local area as well' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

'I think the most important thing, and the reason why we are here and keeping it open; it doesn't matter if I come in and do lots of statistics or whatever, it doesn't really matter at the end of the day, I think the only sole responsibility I would say, is to be there for the customer' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

In addition, the volunteers running their own library (LA2) displayed strong customer focus, in terms of how they worked and where their loyalties lay.

'We are here for the customers first and foremost, and if we know what we are doing, then we are carrying out our role effectively' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

However, inevitably there was also a selfish aspect to many volunteers' efforts, retirement being the most common reasons, although loyalty to the service appeared to grow over time as a volunteer built up a relationship and belonging with the library.

'I think getting to a certain age, initially when I was made redundant, I felt I needed to prove I was active and get off my backside, and that kind of thing, and I can get a reference off the library. That was the ulterior motive when I came down but three years hence it's something that I love' (Volunteer focus group LA1).

Volunteers also interestingly demonstrated a loyalty to the concept of a free public library service available to all, and the development of the notion of a community library in the case of those volunteers running their library.

'I've found there's a great benefit in the community libraries and it's a shame some of them have had to close, because they are on a more personal level with their regulars. I think that they provide a very important service that the city one cannot provide, and you might use both the city library and the community library, but they bring different things to people's lives. Some people mentioned the children, and the schools, there are people who have mobility issues and have to use the local library, I think this service; volunteers keeping this library open is very important' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

However, volunteers also acknowledged that this loyalty is something that can be dependent on personality and is therefore incredibly fragile when one considers what a volunteer represents. Essentially, volunteering has a selfish element to it, 'you wouldn't volunteer would you if you didn't enjoy it?' (Volunteer focus group LA2). This

demonstrates the crucial difference between paid staff and volunteers, as identified by one of the volunteers,

'we can walk away for a start if we don't like it, but they can't. We can pick or choose, they can't. If we decide not to come in on a Wednesday or come in on the Thursday instead, we can' (Volunteer focus group LA1).

Therefore, this gives volunteers an autonomy that paid staff are unable to have;

'the difference is, because I am a volunteer I can say 'Look I'm sorry but you've had half an hour'. If the staff say that, they (the customer) write in and say 'I wasn't treated very well, I went in to do this'. So that's the difference with a volunteer, you can say look, not nastily, but there's people waiting. But if you are a member of staff, you've got to be careful because they can say 'I went in, and that's their job, that's their job' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

5.4.5.6 Adding value

Library managers and staff both fully appreciated the invaluable role that volunteers have to play in terms of adding value to the library service. Staff identified some of the key benefits of using volunteers being the inclusion of a wider a range of skills, additional knowledge and experience (42%), helping during busy periods (42%), and freeing up paid staff time (42%). Less popular points raised were to do with the enhancement of the library offer and ensuring community engagement, which corresponds with published research findings (Museums Libraries and Archives Council, 2011b). For library users too, the majority (82%) of respondents felt that volunteers benefitted the library service.

However, in terms of loyalty and control there are particular challenges that serve to detract from the positive benefits of volunteer use. Library managers expressed the fact that volunteers required a lot of management, and this was often a hidden cost.

'Volunteer groups are fabulous, their commitment is great, they do some very very good things: For example, the heritage group will bring a lot of visitors to this particular library that maybe wouldn't have come in, it will be in the press, they've got the lottery funding and they are linked to the library, brilliant. However, the amount of support from paid staff that volunteers need is probably, what's the word, I want a phrase that is in my head; it's not kind of balanced. A small volunteer group can take more support, of paid staff's time, than the rest of the paid staff put together. So does their value outweigh the benefits that they bring?'(Library manager interview LA2).

5.4.5.7 Challenges of management

Effective volunteer management, particularly in the heritage sector, requires sufficient investment and careful planning (Paine and Smith, 2006) and the same can be said of the library sector.

The voluntary nature of their commitment was perceived by library managers as challenging the legitimacy of the power relationship between manager and worker. This was considered in section 5.4.4.4 in terms of the working relationships that exist, but the wider control of volunteers is a key issue for library management.

'It's the level of control you can have as well; volunteer staff are volunteering their time, they can come and go as they like. You've got no real authority over volunteers, I mean you can put guidelines in place, but you can't bring to bear some of the pressures you can on paid staff. You're not offering them wages' (Library manager interview LA1).

Volunteers also identified this lack of control as something that could be a challenge with regards to management, and required a different set of management styles and strategies.

'You're here for your own enjoyment, and you're here voluntarily. Both those things involve doing something, you know. Sometimes voluntary organisations, I can't go to the chair and say ████████ hasn't done this, what are you going to do about it? I wouldn't necessarily get anything back on that. But if I was a full time worker, I'd be going to the boss with a grievance, so it is a little bit more relaxed amongst us because of that, so we do operate differently to paid staff' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

In addition, volunteer perceptions of what their actions add to the library service may not actually meet what is required of them, resulting in a mismatch of roles. Library managers expressed concerns related to the fact that although volunteers displayed a passion for their efforts and were generally reliable, issues arose relating to the rigidity of the library structure in which volunteers found themselves.

'Well commitment is really good actually; they don't tend to let us down. One volunteer always turns up when he's not expected, which I find quite hard. I explain to him why he needs to come at the time, he's just super keen, so he's meant to start at 4, he'll turn up at 1. But 1 is our busiest time, staff are on lunches, and I don't have time to take him into the local studies area and set him away, it's a bit of a constant battle. He does understand, so now he'll just sit, he'll come in and just sit for 3 hours, and wait until 4, and then come to the desk' (Library manager interview LA2).

The role of user perceptions, was also raised by one library manager in charge of a home readers service, who stated,

'our responsibilities still lie with our customers, so if for example a volunteer didn't turn up for their delivery on a particular day, they would inform their manager and they would speak to the volunteer, but it's our responsibility to inform the customer. But releasing that responsibility has been quite difficult, because obviously they are still our customers, and staff, who have delivered for years are then quite anxious. They know the circumstances of the people on the receiving end and how much it might upset them if they don't get a certain delivery at a certain time, so that's been quite challenging trying to manage my team to say that part of the service is no longer our responsibility' (Library manager interview LA2).

This response hints at the underlying challenge of running a service, where those delivering it are perhaps, a law unto themselves, and not in direct library control.

Indeed, the fragility of such a relationship regarding loyalty was considered by a number of the managers interviewed, '(the) issue is also that volunteers can disappear at any point.....personality issues and the library could be gone' (Library manager interview LA2). Volunteers also acknowledged that volunteering was not a full time activity, 'this is an enhancement to my life, this is not my life' (Volunteer focus group LA1).

As stated previously, 82% of library users considered that volunteers were useful to a library service, although lack of knowledge and professionalism were identified by some respondents as issues that may hinder the success of the relationship.

There appeared to be a strong link between trust and the resulting control of volunteers within the case study authorities. Library managers exhibited differing levels of trust in their volunteer groups, understanding that they were not a homogenous entity, and possessed differing skills and abilities, and levels of experience. The importance of

creating the right environment to enable acceptance from front-line staff working alongside value-added volunteers was considered key, in addition to ensuring that such relationships would improve over time with careful management,

'I think there could be quite a lot of resistance to new people, and staff are resistant to new people. They're alright with the people you've got, but it is quite a delicate balance' (Library manager interview LA2).

Security and the reason for people volunteering was raised by one library manager as something that had to be monitored carefully,

'Well a big issue (with using volunteers) is security. I was very wary when I was taking on my latest volunteer.....he had a very very keen interest in the photographs and you just (start) thinking, why are a lot of single men, who are collectors, really wanting to come and work with the collection? And often they have their own agenda' (Library manager interview LA2).

The staff survey also raised this issue, with nearly a third of respondents considering confidentiality a key concern when using volunteers.

Volunteers were well aware of the lack of trust arising from the increased politicised nature of their role, and a lack of co-operation was viewed by those volunteers running their own library as having a political edge.

'if you go through the stack, and all of a sudden you will find staff - watching what you are doing, and you think we are not pinching books or anything, all we are doing is getting photographs out' (Volunteer focus group LA1).

'The council are occasionally not very helpful in terms of statistics that I'd like to see. We are being watched obviously by the council, it's a 2-year agreement and we don't know what will happen after this year. This library needs be used obviously to protect its future and the council on one or two occasions sent us a quarterly report saying all your figures are down, and it's not like it used to be.....without taking other things into account, such as we are not open the same number of hours, and also yes, it was closed for 3 weeks in the summer when a lot of regulars might have fallen away' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

Perhaps this lack of trust emanates from a misunderstanding between those perceived as internal to the library service, and those perceived as external. The solution may lie in all stakeholders seeing the bigger picture, and understanding the role that each has to play within the library service.

'If you just think a volunteer can come in to replace a member of staff, you don't understand the skills that that member of staff has, and it's not just about stamping books. I think a lot of things in libraries, is an idea that it is just stamping books, and it's more than that. And it's sometimes difficult to put into words what that is, but it is so much more than stamping books; and you get that from everywhere, and I mean it's very difficult, even in my own family, it's like 'It's not what I do!' (Library manager interview LA1).

This links back to the recurrent theme surrounding a misunderstanding of what a library actually does, resulting in a mismatch of expectations and perceptions. Zimmeck (2000) considers the dilemma of using professional control to ensure standards, versus ensuring the freedom of volunteer workers. In the case study research it was evident that the volunteers running their own library (LA2) exhibited traits of what Zimmeck (2000) refers to as collectivist-democratic organisation, whereby control was achieved through interpersonal relations of what was a socially homogenous group. However, the parent library authority (LA2) displayed traits of a bureaucratic organisation, and therefore sought to control the library through formal authority with rules and procedures. This may help to explain why the parent library authority behaviour was perceived by some of the volunteers as unhelpful and domineering, demonstrating the cultural clash of organisations (the hierarchical bureaucracy versus the collectivist democratic home-grown library). Most library users appeared to feel that staff and volunteers could work together in harmony (89%), but that this would depend on them knowing their place in any such arrangement.

5.4.5.8 Customer focus

One aspect that arose from respondents, particularly those volunteers running their own library and, to a lesser extent, value-added volunteers, was a strong customer-focus,

'the reason why we are here, and keeping it open; it doesn't matter if I come in and do lots of statistics or whatever, it doesn't really matter at the end of the day, I think the only sole responsibility I would say, is to be there for the customer' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

The ultimate goal being that those customers see their library as part of the overall service, rather than fixating on the fact it is volunteer-run.

'As far as the customers gothey come in here thinking 'oh I'm going to the library', and it wouldn't enter their heads that we are volunteers or not. Now if that's the case then we are doing it right' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

Some of the library managers interviewed challenged this notion, because of the potential incapacity of some volunteers to deliver a service, and the fact that a volunteer's own agenda may well cloud any customer focus that may exist. However, customer focus may be a way of ensuring adequate control for the parent library authority.

In addition, the challenge of mental incapacity was raised by one library manager. They considered the responsibility a library service had in terms of supporting members of the local community to achieve self actualisation, whilst at the same time maintaining a high quality service delivery.

'We do have one gentleman, who's possibly got Alzheimer's or senility. His volunteering really really helps him, but there's a point at which it's quite difficult to find him something to do, so we're not going to say 'oh, we don't want you to come here anymore', but he really likes indexing, he's been really helpful over the years and things, but it's really difficult for me..... But we know it is really important for him to keep coming along, and to be as involved as possible, so I find that quite a challenge' (Library manager interview LA1).

5.4.5.8 Ownership

This raises the issue of ownership and its importance for control. If volunteers feel they 'own' the service, then they appear to have more of a stake in that service. A library manager discussing value-added volunteers identified, 'it gives them a stake in the library service, I think that's the other thing that it does. It makes it clear that it is their library service, not ours' (Library manager interview LA1). This view was also evident in the discussions with the volunteers running their library.

The existence of volunteer autonomy resulting from an increased trust was considered a key factor for volunteers, particularly those running their library (LA2). However, there was also an appreciation that such independence still required input from the local authority, and therefore a careful balance was required, but inevitably might be a situation that never came to fruition.

'It would be nice to have a happy medium of both more freedom, but still have the support, because then I think if we could pick what books we wanted in, and pick the activities we do, and change the outsides of the building, unrestricted. That would be where I would love to see it go, and still have the support and I think it would make them (the library authority) look good as well, but I don't think they would ever let go' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

Therefore, control relates to the wider relationships volunteers have with their local community, the political setting in which they find themselves, and inevitably the rules by which they are bound.

5.4.6 Communication

This final theme arose frequently in discussions and can be viewed as a key determinant in the relative success of a volunteering effort within a library service. One can consider communication on a number of levels, both macro and micro. It can be argued that communication, if carried out correctly, can serve as the 'glue' to enable a cohesive approach to volunteer use, and help to facilitate acceptance from all stakeholders.

5.4.6.1 Community level

At a community level, it was clear from the respondents that volunteer use as a concept had been somewhat tainted by the increased move to volunteers running their own libraries. As previously discussed, it is very much a political issue and the volunteer has become a political pawn in the wider arena of public sector funding and cutbacks. Volunteer respondents were largely the 'converted' library aficionados, they demonstrated a clear loyalty to the concept of free public library provision, and it was clear that library managers felt that the public had reacted negatively to volunteer run library services, and to volunteering themselves.

'We did a consultation about which council services should be cut, and I think up to 50% of people said library services shouldn't be volunteer managed, so there is definitely an understanding out there that it is not a good thing' (Library manager interview LA2).

'We did ask the question in a bit of public consultation after we changed the opening hours last year, and to be absolutely honest when they (library users) were asked, we are going to close these libraries on Saturdays, are you happy with that? Or would you rather they were open on Saturdays? Do you think it is a good idea to use volunteers to help the libraries open on Saturdays? About 40% said, oh yes that would be a good idea, but when they were asked would they volunteer, they said no' (Library manager interview LA1).

It was also evident from the library managers, that for the wider community, a public library closure was of concern. So having a library stay open and run by volunteers was perhaps less shocking than closing it completely.

'It's not particularly controversial I think, I think the community think it really is a good idea, and you know, why wouldn't they? When you are faced with, close a library or run it with volunteers, then it does seem a better option' (Library manager interview LA2).

Volunteers running their own library (LA2) felt that their efforts were benefiting the whole library service, and not just one library.

'I think it helps them (Library service), probably because the public's perception of the library service, as a whole, is better if this library stays open, than if it closes' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

5.4.6.2 Service level

Communication at a service level was also seen as a key determinant in gaining acceptance from paid staff, and library users. A key theme that arose from both library managers and volunteers was the importance of volunteers not being perceived as a threat to the livelihood of paid staff, and not crossing a line in terms of what they would do. This was particularly strong for the value-added volunteers, who made comments such as, 'we don't want to take their jobs away' (Volunteer focus group LA2), indeed even volunteers running the library suggested their efforts were not about taking away jobs, but rather keeping a library open.

'I think, you know, at the beginning, I think some people had a right to feel a bit resentful, because ok, we were guaranteed that there were no job cuts, we were not taking anyone's job here, but people who worked here were moved to other places' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

The library users surveyed generally viewed volunteers as a positive force, and not a threat. However, they also demonstrated a strong loyalty to the library staff within their

service, which particularly reflected current volunteer use, together with the political persuasion of many of the respondents surveyed and their wider community. It was a fact that the local authority (LA1) where library users were surveyed had a Labour MP, and there was a safe labour constituency.

Library managers stressed that clear communication with frontline staff was vital to ensure understanding, and enable acceptance at a time when paid staff were likely to be feeling particularly vulnerable. This was even more important given the current state of staff emotions relating to this issue.

'I think you do have to have it clear what the expectations are, what volunteers will do, what they won't be asked to do. And you have to have it there for the staff as well, because they have to know that you are not bringing in unpaid replacements by the back door, I think. They have been used to having volunteers in the home readers service for a long time, so I think that it was almost like that didn't count, somehow. But when we started getting volunteers (value-added) in to do other things, there was a bit of concern, which is quite natural. When you're getting self-issue, self-service machines in as well, you have got to be clear what you are doing, to what end' (Library manager interview LA1).

Volunteers acknowledged that good communication was somewhat dependent on individual staff personalities, and that this was something that built up as the relationship between volunteers and paid staff matured.

'We've been doing it (volunteering) so long. They've (the paid staff) been doing the back of the library, and it's beautiful now and I said, when one of the guys came down 'you can tell there's a lady in charge now, because everything is nice and tidy'....and I said 'and we can tell you where things are [REDACTED], because we've been here longer than you', and she said, 'yeah'. But there's some people you wouldn't say that to' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

Space and organisation were also perceived as vitally important for developing and facilitating communication. Value-added volunteers commented on recent changes to their working environment where volunteer working space had been re-organised.

'I think it's difficult now with not having a base, like we had in the local history, when the librarian was always there, and if we had a problem she was there to help us. But it's difficult now for both us and the library staff, we're scattered you know' (Volunteer focus group LA1).

This situation had been further exacerbated by staff cuts, such that paid staff were often too busy to help volunteers when they ran into difficulties.

'Sometimes you feel like you are intruding on the staff, if they are very busy. You see the queues, you can see the people and you think, ah. Like last week, I couldn't get into the computer.....and I thought 'oh dear me' and [REDACTED] does a class up here, and the girls are on reception, and I thought, 'well I haven't got a code name to get in here' and you don't want to encroach on their time.....You think 'I've come here to do this and I can't waste their time by me simply not doing anything', but they're too busy. You just think if there was somebody here available to just get me into this computer, you know' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

Frontline staff surveyed perceived themselves as different to volunteers, many commented on the years of library specific training and experience that they had compared to volunteers, and the concern that the latter were being used for increasingly economic cost saving purposes.

A key point made throughout questioning was to do with the opposing states of volunteer autonomy versus support and guidance. The importance for library managers of having clear volunteer guidelines, and role of local management in assisting the furtherance of key corporate priorities was often perceived as a stifling factor on the part of volunteers, especially those running their own library (LA2). After having run the library independently, they felt constrained in terms of the powers that they had, and lack of communication from the parent library authority was perceived as frustrating and unhelpful. The experience of the volunteers running a library appeared to be one of local authority over-control and restricted communication.

'The council kind of acts as though it's willingly giving up its time. It doesn't want us, well I'm not saying it doesn't want us to have it (the library), but it wants us to have it, but within its own sound box really. They've put up a lot of walls..... and I thought because we were working for the local council they would give it (statistics on library usage) to us, and they just didn't' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

Effective communication helped to maintain control, and ensure accountability, according to the library managers, 'so yes, they (volunteers) do require a lot closer supervision, because really they are not accountable' (Library manager interview LA1). Communication

could also signal to volunteers that their efforts were appreciated, which some volunteers indicated was currently lacking.

'We don't have to be doing this, we're doing this, not out of the kindness of our hearts; obviously we want to do it, but appreciation would be nice' (Volunteer focus group LA1).

5.4.6.3 Volunteer level

The role of communication in terms of facilitating the volunteers as a group was another feature that arose from the research. Volunteer groups consisted of an often disparate group of people, who had then grown together as a group. 'It wouldn't work individually now; we need each other' (Volunteer focus group LA1).

The growth of a volunteer group becoming increasingly self-sufficient was dependent on a number of factors, including the appropriate mix of people, support, and the chance to make mistakes in the early days. The volunteers who were running their library (LA2) clearly demonstrated traits indicating that they had matured as a group from their inception a year before.

'We were not experienced, we were in the dark over certain things, and people would ask us things that we didn't know. Obviously naturally as time goes on, we sort things out for ourselves, and we know more than we did 12 months ago. So yeah, we are getting probably more detached from the council' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

It was also clear from discussions that they felt they were fortunate as a group as they had the right mix of people, and a social element that had enhanced group cohesion.

'I think that is one of the advantages of people across the age sweep because when you get a lot of retired people together, who are maybe just retired, everybody is fighting to be' (top dog). But I said I'm not, I don't want to be boss, I've done my time at work. But I think that has helped that you've got a wide range of ages' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

'If you like the people you volunteer with, then that's a good reason to keep volunteering' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

Indeed all volunteers very much appeared to have taken on Belbin-like qualities (Belbin Associates, 2015), with some members of the group having roles that very much matched their personalities. They acknowledged the importance of this stating, 'it's also about your personality, if you come in here with a domineering attitude, I am sure you wouldn't be welcome' (Volunteer focus group LA1). Volunteers had clearly developed strong bonds with their fellow volunteer colleagues, which helped to facilitate communication and cohesion. Many of the volunteers questioned were well established in the library service, having been there for a number of years, and had built up successful working relationships. Such volunteers were predominantly articulate professional people with a history of volunteer experience. This raises the question as to whether the same can be said for the wider population (Arts Council England, 2013c). For example, this response from one volunteer was quite common,

'I'm also on the friends of the library, friends of the art gallery, friends of [REDACTED] Park, I'm also a [REDACTED] Coop Committee member, and I am the fair trade volunteer rep for [REDACTED]Through the Coop I go round to local schools, debating with them how important fair trade can be to the local community. It's very interesting, I've been on the Coop committee for about 7 years now, but as I say, 2 years ago when I retired I took on these other roles. I do research for Age UK as to why elderly people don't become involved in things in the local community, I did a survey on that..... I go to all the council meetings in [REDACTED]' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

The importance of such volunteers feeling valued and being appreciated by paid staff was expressed as a key requirement, and a way of improving their motivation to give up free time and be part of library service delivery.

'It was lovely that the staff were saying, 'this is getting done and it's great', it just makes you feel that you're doing something worthwhile' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

E-mail and personal contact were the two main methods used to communicate with volunteers, although there was clearly a challenge relating to the part time nature of volunteers who may only be in a library for a few hours each week, and also the increased pressure on frontline staff time in the light of recent paid staff reductions.

E-mail was considered a key tool for volunteer to volunteer communication, although there was an interesting admission by one of the volunteers at the volunteer run library about the fact that not all volunteers actually looked at their e-mails. It did seem as though the culture of face-to-face meetings was the predominant communication tool in this particular environment. The volunteer group running their own library met on a regular basis using meetings as a focus, which not only enhanced communication but also helped to foster consensual agreement amongst the group. Partly this was part of their governance as a group running their own library, but also it demonstrated the value of coming together as a group on a regular basis, in spite of the fragmented nature of their working patterns.

'I think that's one of the things, that when you don't see everybody all the time, if you are on a different shift to someone, and something happens on a.... Monday afternoon, how do you find out about it? The meetings.....I know they take up people's time but I think decisions are made. We all make decisions together, but we all rely on the chair to seal it off..... some people have more of a handle on some things than others, so we communicate with these monthly meetings, emails generally as well, but we also talk to each other, we can drop in and see each other' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

However, library managers who were working with volunteers raised the factions that existed amongst certain groups of volunteers, and the challenges this brought to the service delivery.

'They've had arguments amongst themselves. I'm now very aware there are probably 3 distinct groups of people, and they come in at separate times, and they're not communicating with each other even though they are working on the same project' (Library manager interview LA1).

These groups of volunteers had differing level of expertise, and lengths of service with the library authority, and this clearly demonstrated the challenge of dealing with often quite assertive personalities, yet having very little formal control over them, complicated further by the fact that these volunteers were often regular library users, in addition to being members of the wider community.

5.4.6.4 Building cohesion

Library managers appreciated the value of having a cohesive group of volunteers.

'You always treading very carefully over what you're doing with people (volunteers), and negotiating different situations as well. I think you do need to handle your volunteers carefully in most situations, because they are a set of personalities' (Library manager interview LA1).

Volunteers also acknowledged that cohesion was important for a volunteer group.

'I think we are very lucky in this library, because we have some good volunteers that like each other, get on with each other, there's no friction' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

The importance of communicating the value of such volunteering efforts was perceived as vital in order to support the altruistic reasons why people volunteer, and to help maintain their goodwill and commitment. 'Well, its job satisfaction isn't it, when you are thanked, everyone appreciates it' (Volunteer focus group LA1).

This is one of the key factors for ensuring successful volunteering, as when questioning library managers, it became evident that the local history volunteers in one authority had recently changed manager following a staff re-organisation and rationalisation. The new manager had a very different approach to her predecessor. The previous manager had relied heavily on social contact with the volunteers, whilst the new manager maintained a distance between herself and the volunteers she relied upon. This change in management style had caused friction between the library manager and the volunteers, with the latter reporting that they felt undervalued and cut off from the service. Another

manager interviewed who ran a successful home reader's service, supported by volunteers, spoke of the mechanisms she used to ensure cohesion and belonging, and the importance of communicating service appreciation to the volunteers.

The importance of building a volunteer community in order to avoid volunteer isolation, and help them to see the bigger service picture was argued by one of the library managers as vital.

'The people (Readers at home volunteers) that meet on a Monday don't necessarily know the volunteers who go out on a Tuesday, so twice a year we have a cheap lunch, we have the Christmas one, and one generally in the summer. They meet each other and they know they are part of something bigger. They all have the same problems; they are little ones. They get the same joy. I try and make them feel part of something special really' (Library manager interview LA1).

Also verbal communication appeared paramount when dealing with volunteers.

'They (volunteers) always come in 10 to 15 minutes early and we have just a quick chat, we have a cup of coffee. Again someone looking on the outside might say, 'oh they are having a bit of a chat'; but I do feel it is important because if they do want to say anything to us, something might have happened the week before, and they thought about it all week, and it just gives people a chance to just maybe say' (Library manager interview LA1).

Smith (2002 p.17) supports this notion and suggests that, 'being and feeling, part of a team is an important reward for many volunteers', a key factor being the role of social interaction.

5.5 The contested themes regarding volunteer use

It was clear that results from both phases of the research identified some key themes relating to volunteer use, which were clearly influenced by the setting in which those responses were gained, related to the macro and micro environment. There was an identifiable mismatch between perceptions of the different stakeholders with relation to the key themes that arose; particularly relating to volunteer management and use, relationships, control and reward, and professionalism. The role of communication and trust as enablers in facilitating successful volunteering were a key feature.

Such tensions need to be addressed if volunteering is to become a successful integral part of modern library service delivery, and failure to address these issues and understand the bigger picture may serve to create an unstable library environment. These contested themes will be examined more closely in chapter 6, which discusses the findings.

Figure 16 on the next page illustrates a summary of the key findings from the 2 phases of analysis and identifies the key contested themes.

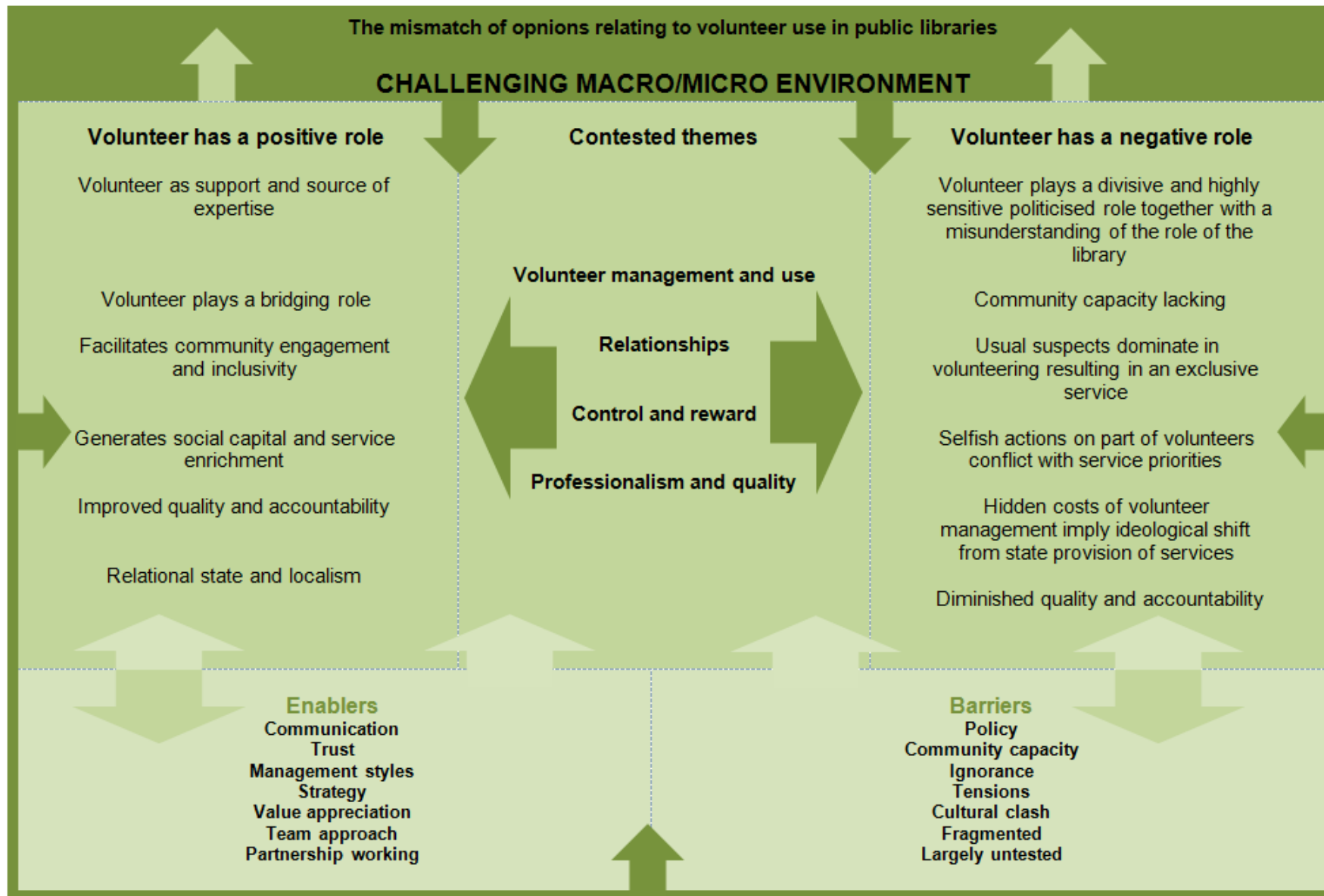


Figure 16. Summary of key findings from qualitative analysis

5.6 Conclusion

Volunteers have an important part to play in public library service provision. Historically value-added volunteer use has been integral to library service delivery, seen as a mechanism for the improvement of community engagement (Museums Libraries and Archives Council, 2011b), and the development of social capital (Scott, 2011). More recently, the promotion of a Big Society underpinned by Localism (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2011) has taken volunteering efforts further promoting the devolution of public services, such that communities have more of a stake in their delivery, thereby increasing social value (Downey et al., 2012).

It is evident that volunteer use has increasingly become a political issue, which has tainted the perceptions of all stakeholders, and coupled with the inevitability of such an arrangement library managers have been faced with challenging and uncomfortable decisions to make.

Like any change in an organisation, it takes time for the professional culture to accept these new and sometimes challenging partnerships. It is true that many of the volunteers questioned were professional people who had a passion and commitment towards the library service, however there was uncertainty on the part of staff and users as to whether they could truly achieve the same level and quality of service, given the nature of volunteer involvement.

The key to ensuring quality appears to be closely linked to remuneration, accountability, stability and professionalism. There is an element of self-selection as the current volunteers surveyed were predominantly from professional backgrounds, with a strong community focus. It could be argued that library staff also self-select, as this profession tends to attract people with similar values although they are filtered through a recruitment process. The use of active recruitment and selection for volunteers is vital to ensure the right mix of people for delivering a particular service. This also helps to deal with the

challenge of being able to say no to a volunteer, who may incur additional time and money investment for very little end result.

Both staff and volunteers clearly displayed a passion for what they did, and this was a key driving force for both sets of stakeholders. There is a delicate balance to be achieved between removing the add-on activities from paid staff for value added volunteers, so the former have more time for other tasks, but allowing paid staff to undertake those activities that are perceived as additional, but fun.

Library managers acknowledged that having volunteers forced them to have to think more proactively about service delivery and management, in addition to planning, and this is perhaps a feature of library management that may become more prevalent in the future. In addition relationship management on the part of those in charge of libraries is perhaps the key to ensuring the delicate balance of relationships both within and outside of the library service is maintained, and service priorities are achieved. This may become even more important as boundaries between paid staff and volunteer delivery continue to blur.

It was clear that for many stakeholders questioned that the Big Society had not delivered so far, and there were reservations regarding its potential to deliver service provision in the future. This mirrors reports that a Big Society Gap has emerged in the past few years, whereby 'the least affluent individuals and communities have the least sense of empowerment, the worst experiences of public services and the lowest levels of social action and voluntary service infrastructure' (Civil Exchange, 2015b). In addition Sieghart (2014b) argues that although there is a key role for volunteers in public library service delivery, uncertainty exists regarding the long term viability of such efforts, particularly where volunteers are running their own library. In addition there is acknowledgement that 'not one library model fits all situations' (Sieghart, 2014b).

The next chapter will discuss in greater depth the significance of these findings, relating back to the original review literature, and considering the original aim of the research.

6. Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter assimilates the themes arising from the results and analysis from both phases of the research, and discusses their significance in relation to the literature previously reviewed. The chapter begins with an examination of the overall aim of this research; to investigate modern volunteer use in public libraries in England.

From the research findings it was evident that the role of the volunteer in the public library setting is inter-dependent on a variety of other factors and cannot be seen in isolation as supported by earlier research by Layder (2013). Contextual and organisational elements such as the current political ideology, relating to the devolution of state powers, and a desire to reduce public spending, have impacted greatly on the nature and role of the public library volunteer (Davies, 2013). This was the case in findings both from the Delphi Study, and the subsequent case study investigations where library authorities were considered in greater depth, the latter of which displayed subtle differences in their volunteer use and management directly related to political and social complexion. As Usherwood (1994 p.135) identified nearly 20 years ago,

'the public library service is part of a complicated local government framework which is influenced by central government regulation, party politics, professional values, pressure groups and a range of other interests. In short local politics is complicated, each local authority has its own particular features and political style and that can make generalisations difficult, if not misleading'.

The research findings displayed a variety of different perspectives relating to volunteer use, dependent on individual outlook, the wider organisational context, the roles undertaken in an organisation, and the resultant interplay of these elements (See figure 16). Contextual factors, such as political ideology and the desire to devolve state powers thereby reducing government public spending, have a direct link with the public library volunteer. How these factors have been accommodated is then partly influenced by the

community, in which the library exists, thereby helping to explain the diversity of approaches to volunteer use from the Delphi participants surveyed.

Economic pressures featured heavily in discussion of increased volunteer use, and displayed an urgency and inevitability of a situation that could not be avoided, with the potential to impact on service continuity. In addition, this urgency served to further distort the political, economic and social influences on volunteer use in public libraries. Such an unavoidable situation was clearly expressed by the volunteer focus group respondents; 'it's not the library's fault, I mean it is the economic situation, you know, they've had no choice' (Volunteer focus group LA1). The Culture Media and Sport Committee (2012) has warned of the dangers of such reactive responses, and how this might put at risk a local authority's statutory duty to provide a library service.

With the increase of public spending cuts, volunteer use has become more contentious, politicised and something to be feared for many respondents. This financially driven focus in library management is something Usherwood (2007 p.47) suggests 'is not necessarily a positive move, and changes the way in which libraries operate'. The removal of public services, at a local level, was a key finding that emerged from discussions with a variety of stakeholders, with libraries being viewed as the easy target having borne the 'brunt of the cutbacks' (Volunteer focus group LA1). Library staff were understandably more aware of the reasons for these cutbacks, seeing a direct link with their immediate present situation and national government actions. As one library manager interviewed stated, "the Conservative party wish to completely clip the wings of local government and the spending power of local government" (Library manager interview LA1).

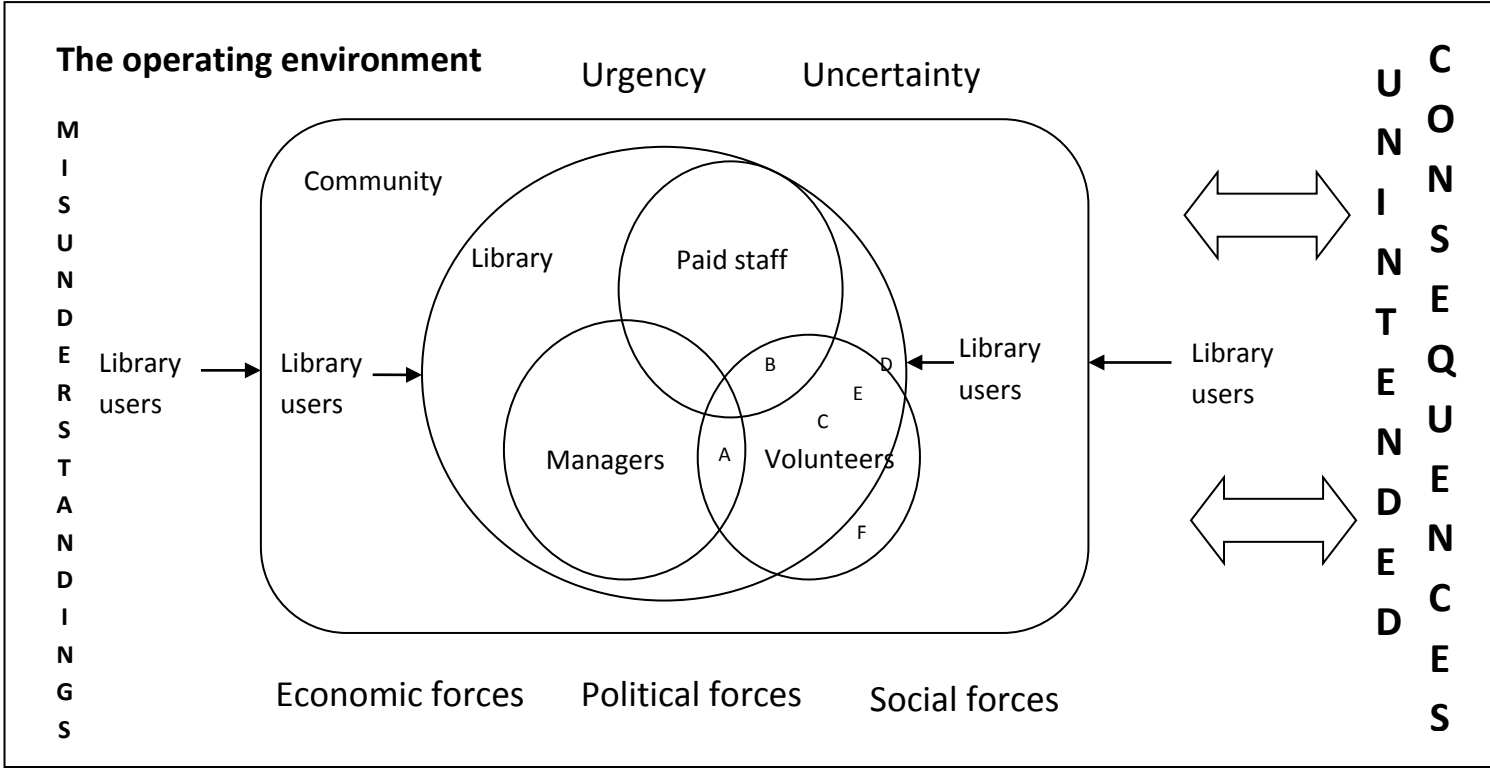
The CEO of CILIP echoes this opinion arguing that library cuts are not necessarily just 'about money, it's about ideology' (Onwuemezi, 2015). In addition the former head of the Civil Service and crossbench peer, Lord Turnbull, has reportedly argued that the real result of current public spending cuts is to achieve a smaller state (Kelly, 2015), such that,

'the revised approach to local government is narrow, functional and shorn of ambition: the council's newly shrivelled remit limited to the very letter of its statutory duties' (Kelly, 2015).

The community the library service finds itself in has a strong influence on the way it reacts to challenges of financial cutbacks and underlying political forces. The capacity of volunteering in the two case study authorities was closely related to the demographics of the local communities, and the availability of a 'willing and able' pool of professional people nearby (Hall, 2011). This was identified in the literature review as a key limiting factor in the greater use of volunteers within the library service at a national level (Arts Council England, 2013b), and it was evident that all stakeholders were concerned that the appetite for volunteering amongst the community was not capable of sustaining greater library provision.

These conflicting forces arising from political, economic and social factors have been incorporated into Smith's (2002) model of volunteering on the following page.

Figure 17. The wider forces that impact on volunteering interrelationships in public libraries (Adapted from Smith, 2002 p.12)



Inter-relationships

- A Volunteer to manager
- B Volunteer to paid staff
- C Between volunteers
- D Volunteer to Library users
- E Volunteer to Library
- F Volunteer to community

There exists a complex relationship between the actors, further challenged by the inevitability and urgency of the complex political, social and economic situation, culminating in a variety of unintended consequences. These consequences are considered further in chapter 7. Therefore, volunteering initiatives within public libraries are subject to the resultant interplay of all these features, which may go some way to describing the variety of approaches that exist within England regarding the response to public library service delivery, and in particular the use of volunteers (evidenced by recent DCMS toolkit (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2016a)).

The remainder of this chapter will consider the key themes that arose from the research regarding the role of the volunteer, using Figure 16 (see section 5.5) as a basis for discussion. It will focus on the positive and negative roles of the volunteer as perceived by the stakeholders, in addition to exploring the contested themes, which will be examined further in the context of the underpinning theory.

6.2 The role of the volunteer

It was clear from the literature review and the research findings, that public libraries are increasingly adopting a hybrid model of service delivery, with greater numbers of volunteers in use, inextricably linked to political and economic conditions. There was a general acceptance from all stakeholders that volunteer use was a growing phenomenon, and indeed an inevitable feature for modern library service provision. Such inevitability was expressed in the language used to describe the current situation, and identified an almost apologetic stance from those volunteers involved with service delivery; 'volunteers taking over are the future unfortunately' (Volunteer focus group LA2). This is supported by current figures examining volunteer use in public libraries, which shows a 100% increase in numbers in the 5 years leading up to 2013/14 (CIPFA, 2014), and a recent BBC survey that confirms that nearly a quarter of all UK library jobs have disappeared in the past 6 years, balanced by recruitment of 15,500 volunteers in the same period, and closure of 343 libraries (Wainwright et al., 2016).

If one considers Rochester et al's (2012) three paradigms of volunteering, all three types were exhibited in the research findings. The 'non-profit' approach was predominant amongst value-added volunteer use, with some volunteers also clearly displaying traits of a 'serious leisure' approach – in that they volunteered for a variety of organisations, on a regular basis. The volunteers who ran their own library were more akin to a 'civil society' approach, in that they believed their efforts were saving their library service, and unlike the 'non-profit' approach, were lacking the leadership of paid staff and managers. These volunteers were involved in leadership and operational activities to a degree, rather than being simply helpers, and this new role caused some conflict for the parent authority, in addition to the volunteers themselves.

6.2.1 Misunderstanding of role

One of the key themes underpinning current debate around volunteer use in public libraries stems from a misunderstanding on the part of government and wider society about what a public library actually does, and what roles the staff within them have. Pateman and Williment (2013 p.59) suggest that public perceptions of a library service are often outdated, and fuelled with negativity, and the library staff questioned in this research mirrored these concerns. The library users surveyed clearly exhibited some instances of misunderstanding relating to a librarian's role, and a general confusion regarding volunteering, with two thirds of respondents being unsure as to whether volunteers actually existed in their library service.

Such a misunderstanding of roles by decision makers has implications in terms of whether such services are deemed worthy of funding in times of economic austerity, and it is clear that public libraries have become an easy target.

They are less politically contentious than many other public services, and it is often assumed that library work is something that can be easily carried out by a volunteer. Creation of a 'positive, common narrative about the value of libraries to society'

(Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2015b) is a key priority for the new Leadership for Libraries taskforce, and demonstrates the vital role this issue has to play in the power and strength of a library, and its subsequent fortunes.

6.3 The volunteer has a positive role

6.3.1 Community engagement

All stakeholders stressed the importance of volunteer use as a means by which community engagement can be fostered, thereby acting as a 'social glue' (Goulding, 2006) in the local community. This factor was the second most important identified benefit of a library service using volunteers for Delphi Study respondents, and a key theme arising from phase two stakeholders questioned.

Volunteers questioned were well aware of their bridging role between the library and the local area, and exhibited a strong community focus: 'Keeping the library going as a community association is extremely important' (Volunteer focus group LA2); 'we feel passionately about it (Volunteering for libraries), and about your local area as well' (Volunteer focus group LA2). Volunteer involvement with a variety of initiatives including the home reader's service, the summer reading challenge and youth related events helped to bring in a wider audience, who were not necessarily regular library users, and this was also acknowledged by library users surveyed with 82% seeing the use of volunteers as being a mutually beneficial arrangement. 'They (volunteers) are opening it up to a completely different audience' (Library manager interview LA2). There was a strong sense that social capital development in these urban areas had improved for some sections of the local community, as considered by Griffis and Johnson (2014).

This supports the findings from research by the Museums Libraries and Archives Council (2011a) and shows a move towards what Mulligan (2012, cited in Clarence and Gabriel, 2014 p.21) terms the relational state, working *with* the community to deliver key services, rather than the state working *for* the community. Such participative behaviour lends itself

to what the current government would term Localism (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2011), or what Goulding (2009b) describes as community engagement. However, it is worth considering that social capital can also serve to exclude certain sections of society from networks (Portes, 1998, cited in Griffis and Johnson, 2014) and this will be considered in greater detail in section 6.4.2.

6.3.2 Additional expertise

Stakeholders from both phases of research cited many reasons why volunteers were a valuable addition to their service, inextricably linked to their wide ranging expertise in a range of practical and more cerebral areas. This was clearly demonstrated by the profile of most of the volunteers surveyed who tended to be highly skilled, from professional backgrounds and with much to offer the library service. They predominantly exhibited a strong work ethic, and a clear community focus together with altruistic tendencies. 'You've got to do something rather than just sit here?' (Volunteer focus group LA1); 'it's nice to be nice' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

6.4 The volunteer has a negative role

It is clear that volunteer use is walking an extremely challenging tightrope, which for many stakeholders had negative connotations in the light of current developments. Volunteers were commonly viewed as part of a wider politicised venture to cut back the state, as viewed by commentators such as (Reed, 2011).

6.4.1 Sensitivity

The replacement of staff due to financial restrictions was viewed by all respondents as something that clearly damaged the positive aspects of volunteer use, and created negativity with something that had previously been viewed by many as a mutually beneficial arrangement. Asking volunteers to run facilities in order to maintain their existence, creates a potential feeling of coercion on the part of volunteers (Nichols et al., 2015). The Delphi study identified a trend from all respondents that the supplementary

use of volunteers (additionality) was being superseded by staff replacement exacerbated by a perception that policy makers failed to understand the hidden costs of such volunteer use. CILIP (2012b p.6) mirrors this sentiment, arguing for proper planning of reductions based on local needs analysis.

Such sensitivity was a clear concern for all respondents during phase two of the research, and manifested itself in the challenges experienced by the researcher when seeking to obtain necessary data. This resulted in compromise and adaptation of the methodology in places in order to avoid offence and upset. Interestingly it was the more senior levels of library staff who acknowledged the harm that this new direction had inflicted upon perceptions of volunteering in the library service; ‘volunteering has been tainted by volunteers replacing employees’ (Library manager interview LA2), this had resulted in some frontline staff resentment, and was displayed in their survey responses. When staff were asked to provide additional comments about using volunteers, one respondent commented, ‘Pay peanuts, get monkeys’ (Staff survey LA1 R19), demonstrating a negative attitude towards their use. The staff survey detailed some particularly polarised perspectives of volunteers, together with a lack of trust and respect, clearly influenced by the fact that library volunteers were replacing paid staff as a cost-cutting measure (May, 2013).

Volunteers appeared to be acutely aware of their own contentious role; ‘you have to be a little bit careful....if we come across library staff their response to us as volunteers, could be anything’ (Volunteer focus group LA2). This further complicated the relationships they had with the other stakeholders.

6.4.2 Community capacity

Community capacity was a key concern that arose from all stakeholders questioned and related to the challenge for individual communities, particularly those in disadvantaged areas, of providing a willing and able pool of volunteers that could be sustained in the long

term. Such an assumption on the part of policy makers was perceived by respondents as largely untested, and this has been well considered by recent research into community libraries (Arts Council England, 2013b). It was interesting to note that the library frontline staff appeared less concerned about the issue of community capacity, focussing instead on aspects related to the quality of their immediate working environment, and wider service delivery standards.

Library users indicated a lack of interest in volunteering, with three quarters stating an inability to volunteer for the library service, which closely mirrored the perceptions of the library managers interviewed. 'I don't think there is much of an appetite (for volunteering)' (Library manager interview LA1); 'I really don't think we've got the type of background or history of things like volunteering, where we would get enough suitably experienced people to do it' (Library manager interview LA1). This is further supported by findings from Arts Council England at a national level (2013b).

Some volunteers, particularly at the volunteer-run library, discussed the lack of capacity for volunteering in the immediate community, and how they had come from surrounding areas where volunteer capacity had been greater.

'I don't think any regular customer came forward as a volunteer. We are from just outside the local area' (Volunteer focus group LA2).

Although it is interesting to note that volunteers had chosen to work in a location not naturally prone to volunteering efforts, this raises issues relating to capacity if volunteering is to further expand as a service delivery mechanism. Volunteers from elsewhere may not have such an immediate linkage with a particular community, and may be perceived as outsiders who are not able to engage fully with the local community.

6.4.3 Usual suspects

Musick and Wilson (2008, cited in Brodie et al., 2009 p.29) note that volunteering tends to be dominated by the 'usual suspects' who tend to be better resourced, better educated and have much wider social networks. Their dominance in altruism can work against a

fully inclusive library service, alienating other social groups and prioritising their own interests (Nichols et al., 2015), thereby further polarising provision to certain sectors of a community sometimes unintentionally (Griffis and Johnson, 2014 p.106). This is also a concern that arose from a review undertaken by the Scottish Libraries and Information Council (2015 p.15).

As mentioned previously, it was evident that many of the volunteers questioned were predominantly retired, with a strong work ethic, a previous link to the library, and a sense of civic duty, and therefore displayed the traits identified above. Their presence may have deterred others from volunteering locally, therefore working against the development of a fully inclusive library service (Smith, 2002). This is something that perhaps needs to be monitored, and examined more fully through further research.

Library managers interviewed also identified factions that they were aware of amongst some of the existing volunteer groups, and acknowledged the challenges of dealing with 'a set of personalities' (Library manager interview LA1); 'volunteers can become very cliquy' (Library manager interview LA1).

Tensions did appear to exist between some of the volunteers and library managers, which served to frustrate and tarnish service delivery, thereby damaging some of the positive benefits of using volunteers. Wandersman and Alderman (1993) in Rogelberg et al. (2010 p.425) support this finding highlighting the additional stresses for staff of working with volunteers, due to personality clashes and general disagreement.

6.4.4 Hidden costs

All levels of library staff were keen to outline the hidden costs of volunteer use with regard to training and management, and how important this was for ensuring quality of service provision, which supports the thinking of Anstice (2012) detailed earlier in the literature review. This raises the issue for some commentators as to whether such a reliance on a

voluntary element has a more ideological overtone, and is seeking to deconstruct the state (Kelly, 2015) (Reed, 2011).

There was a general concern from all staff questioned that the costs of a volunteer could potentially outweigh the benefits of using them;

'so their commitment is great, they do some very good things...but, a small volunteer group can take more support, of paid staff's time, than the rest of the paid staff put together. So does their value outweigh the benefits they bring?' (Library manager interview LA1).

As previously mentioned, Anstice (2012) warns that volunteers are not without a financial cost if a high quality of service is to be ensured.

6.4.5 Quality and accountability

Ensuring quality in service delivery was of paramount importance for all respondents in this research, with library managers and frontline staff raising concerns relating to the commitment and reliability of volunteers compared to paid staff. Indeed, volunteers acknowledged that they had a choice with regard to whether they decided to turn up on a particular day or not, and in addition library users stated that volunteers compromised the professionalism of the service.

Volunteers were identified as an unpredictable force, who required active management and control in order to ensure accountability and security (Smith, 2002).

For PLAMs that undertook the Delphi Study, integrity and quality were key issues with regard to volunteer use, further reinforced by the phase two research, examining a variety of stakeholder opinions.

It was clear that individuals had taken up volunteering for a variety of interest-related reasons predominantly (See Nichols et al., 2015 p.84 for a discussion of rational self interest as a motivation), and their commitment to the library had grown over time. There was a relationship between the length of volunteer service and the development of trust and loyalty, and resulting ownership of the service, arising from volunteer responses.

However, the lack of a contractual employment obligation meant there was a requirement for other strategies to be utilised in order to ensure control and compliance.

Staff discussed a range of measures, including communication and the development of a sense of belonging; but it is interesting to note that all the volunteers surveyed were long standing volunteers who had additional bonds tying them to their roles. These additional bonds were predominantly linked to the volunteer's social and political beliefs. Brodie et al. (2009) provide an excellent discussion of why people choose to participate in volunteering, and considers the importance of an individual's previous life experiences and the impact this can have on their volunteering choices as a result. Searle-Chatterjee (1999, cited in Brodie et al., 2009 p.27) stresses that, 'the propensity to participate is established early in the life course, and emerges from the intersection of socialisation within the family and personal life experience'. In addition Taylor et al. (2006 p. 129) identify the importance of 'shared views and common purpose in the volunteer-organisation relationship' for sustaining and securing long term volunteer involvement.

Senior staff acknowledged the challenges of controlling volunteers for the good of meeting library service priorities, and identified the importance of establishing and developing a mutually beneficial reciprocal relationship. Such relationship building has been recently tarnished by the underlying political and economic environment, together with the omnipresent challenge of dealing with an individual who has no contractual status within the organisation. Closer supervision and clear communication were themes that arose from the research as possible ways to improve control.

'You've got no real authority over volunteers, I mean you can put guidelines in place, but you can't bring to bear some of the pressures you can on paid staff.....I know we've got the policy that says we can ask them to leave after 3 months to 6 months if it isn't working out for us, but I don't feel you've got the same level of control over them' (Library manager interview LA1).

Holmes (2004 p.76) warns that efforts to control volunteers can be thwarted depending on the reasons why a volunteer decides to get involved; and if they perceive their

volunteering to be a leisure activity then efforts to reign in their freedom may be more difficult. The research demonstrated that many of the volunteers had indeed come to the library service because of an interest, particularly relating to local history volunteers, and therefore it was likely that they predominantly regarded their volunteering as a leisure pursuit.

The challenge of formally managing what is essentially an informal activity relates back to discussion in the literature and is a key theme (Lynch and Smith, 2010). This is all the more difficult when one considers the perceptions of library users surveyed who very clearly demonstrated their lack of awareness regarding the existence of library volunteers, similarly discussed by Wandersman and Aldeman (1993, cited in Rogelberg et al., 2010 p.425).

6.5 The contested themes

6.5.1 Volunteer management and use

Volunteers carried out a multiplicity of roles within the library services surveyed, and their continued successful use was viewed as emanating from the careful consideration and planning of service delivery, with the user as key. Also library managers stressed the importance of building service priorities at the heart of such planning. However, frontline staff and volunteers both displayed a concern relating to the recent urgency of such developments, something that commentators such as Goulding (2006 p.338) have argued to be 'random and reactive' in nature and therefore prone to difficulties.

All library managers and staff stressed the importance of volunteers having a supportive role which is in line with the now defunct Museums Libraries and Archives Council (2011b) recommendations for volunteers. The benefits of such a supportive role were stressed greatly by the volunteers questioned, however they were also cautious as to how far such support should go, and identified a line not to be crossed.

'I've got mixed feelings about this (volunteering) really' (Volunteer focus group LA1).

6.5.1.1 Saviour role

Library managers and staff also considered the 'saviour role' of volunteers at present, increasingly stepping in to save libraries threatened with closure. This role was deemed commendable but had drawbacks, in that many library managers and staff felt that there was a general confusion on the part of politicians, media and society, as to what the role of a library and the staff working in it was. Pateman and Williment (2013 p.59) mirror this concern, as does Sieghart (2014b). This lack of understanding was evident from the user survey, where there existed confusion relating to who was a volunteer and who was a paid member of staff within a library service.

Such misunderstandings potentially work against the library profession, indeed some volunteers surveyed acknowledged that their goodwill attempts to keep a library open, had simply replaced the paid staff who previously worked there. For these volunteers there was an unease regarding their new role, and this was demonstrated by the way in which they verbally expressed themselves, 'volunteers taking over are the future, unfortunately' (Volunteer focus group LA2); 'we won't go back to the halcyon days and staffing levels that we had' (Volunteer focus group LA1); 'we don't want to end up as political pawns here' (Volunteer focus group LA1). These volunteers cared passionately about saving their library service, but were acutely aware that their efforts were highly contentious. As Nichols and Forbes (2014 p.5) state,

'Local politicians and volunteers have come to grasp the nettle of this political reality with extreme reluctance. In some cases, it is still resisted on principle. In others this principle may be the publicly stated position while in practice politicians and officers are prepared to take a more pragmatic position and the issue of replacing paid employees becomes a large 'elephant in the room'. It is easy to slip from a principled position of volunteers just supplementing and providing something extra to paid staff, to them filling in for staff shortages.'

6.5.1.2 Co-ordination and partnership

Both library staff and volunteers felt that ensuring the proper co-ordination of efforts to harness the positive forces of volunteers had to be achieved through targeted management and training. Using a blended approach and building trust through

partnership working and suitable training were seen as vital components to ensuring success. Investment and careful planning are viewed as key parts of volunteer involvement (Paine and Smith, 2006).

However, library service priorities may not always match the individual needs and aspirations of the volunteers. As such, there are great challenges in successfully running a library service, in addition to playing to volunteer's strengths and making the most of what may be a very diverse set of skills and abilities. As one library manager discussed, 'it's great to have volunteers, but they are only useful if they are actually doing what you want them to do' (Library manager interview LA2).

Pateman and Williment (2013) suggest that local authorities need to reconsider their role as a service provider if they are to rebalance this delicate equilibrium of power between the volunteer as an individual, and the local authority as a service provider. This is something that Beetham et al (2005, cited in Brodie et al., 2009) consider has many underlying tensions. The research findings supported the views of Zimmeck (2000) who identifies a cultural clash existing between the hierarchical parent organisation that is the local library authority, and the home-grown arrangement of many volunteer groups.

Indeed, findings indicated that having a stake in the service was a key success factor for all those involved in library delivery, in order to foster ownership and a joint sense of belonging, thereby leading to greater responsibility. This can be easier to achieve through a formal employment contract with paid staff, but is more challenging for users and volunteers. Building relationships and loyalty with these particular sets of stakeholders demands a complex set of strategies on the part of the library service, and the research identified a number of facilitators that could be utilised: This demands a team approach that includes the use of communication, appreciation tools, and trust, using a variety of management styles tailored to the volunteers, and understanding the bigger picture for all those involved in service delivery. Smith (2002 p.17) supports this, arguing that 'being

and feeling part of a team is an important reward for many volunteers'. Taylor et al. (2006 p.144) stress the importance of recognising that poor volunteer management practices can have a highly detrimental effect on the retention and satisfaction of volunteers, and therefore their long term loyalty.

6.5.2 Relationships and trust

Relationships had clearly been damaged by current developments in public library volunteering, and the move from value-added to staff replacement strategies. Volunteers were acutely aware of the delicate situation they found themselves in, and it may take time for currently working relationships to improve.

Trust is a key part of effective volunteer management (Bussell and Forbes, 2005 p.2), and it was clear from the research that at present this mechanism is being challenged on both sides of the relationship by the current political and economic situation. It was evident that the role of communication in building trust development was of paramount importance, further facilitated by careful planning and management. The role of volunteer relationship management (similar to customer relationship management) could be the key to ensuring trust between staff and volunteers, particularly when volunteers receive benefits for their efforts that, 'are often intangible and so the relationship becomes the crucial element with the social rewards becoming most valued for the volunteer' (Arnett, German and Hunt 2003 in Bussell and Forbes, 2005 p.2). Bussell and Forbes (2005 p.2) examine the application of such marketing approaches to volunteer management, and argue that 'a relationship marketing paradigm would seem to be more appropriate to the volunteer market'.

6.5.3 Quality and accountability

As mentioned in the previous section, the challenges of formally managing what is an informal activity are great (Lynch and Smith, 2010). However, it was clear that many of the volunteers questioned in the research displayed a strong sense of loyalty to their

library service, and a desire to work for the good of the library, albeit on their terms in some cases. Many volunteers came from professional backgrounds, and were highly capable, in addition to displaying a strong work ethic. Many volunteers had a strong past association with the library service, and had developed strong bonds with the staff and users.

However volunteers were acutely aware that they were not as accountable as paid staff, and therefore a fragility existed in terms of how committed they actually were to their library role; 'we can walk away for a start if we don't like it.....we can pick or choose' (Volunteer focus group LA1); 'this is an enhancement to my life, this is not my life' (Volunteer focus group LA1). This caused worries for the library managers and staff, who were concerned about how this would work in practice for a public service with high standards of quality and accountability.

6.6 Conclusion

Volunteering has historically been an integral part of public libraries, and has resulted in greater community engagement, additional support for staff and a means by which new skills can be provided for the good of the service. More recently the role of the volunteer has shifted from one of support to one of saviour, as a result of political and economic challenges, such that an increasingly blended approach to library service delivery is being adopted throughout England. A highly emotional and complex situation now exists with regard to volunteer use, unique to each individual local authority. This rather large 'elephant in the room' whereby volunteers are replacing paid employees (Nichols et al., 2015) has led to a complex, highly sensitive and difficult situation for all stakeholders.

However, there are doubts regarding the ability of local communities to provide sufficient volunteers, and a concern that greater involvement of certain sections of a community in the volunteering effort may simply alienate those people that the public library was aiming to reach through its existence. A misunderstanding regarding the role of a library on the

part of the policy makers and the wider public further confuses policy, and recent efforts by volunteers to support the library service has resulted in a highly sensitive and fragile situation.

The challenges of planning and managing such a venture are not without cost, and there are real concerns relating to the quality of library service that results from such developments. Communication and trust are key binding factors in this tangled web, but are challenged by the interplay of factors, with each set of stakeholders having their own perspectives on the situation, such that, what may be perceived as clear procedures relating to corporate priorities for a Library service manager, are viewed as 'silly rules' by an individual volunteer. Volunteers may feel they are saving a library service from closure, but to paid staff they are simply legitimising the budget reductions of a particular local authority.

This research highlighted staff concerns that such a mixed economy of service delivery posed a real threat to the future of public library provision, and this is reflected at a national level (May, 2013). It is evident that volunteers are increasingly becoming political pawns being used for the wrong reasons within public service delivery (Davies, 2013), which has impacted negatively on their many perceived positive benefits. Interestingly, there are concerns from the culture minister that volunteers should not be replacing paid staff (Onuwuemezi, 2016), and the importance of council investment in library services is stressed, albeit without any indication of how this is to be achieved in the light of budgetary reductions.

It is clear that the public library landscape is currently still in flux, and initiatives such as the recently created Leaders for Libraries Taskforce have been working to establish what they perceive as a positive future, based on improvement of public library recognition, value and involvement (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2015b). The Taskforce aims to consider issues such as workforce development, use of technology and clearer

identification and communication of where libraries add value. However, it is questionable as to whether such a Taskforce has the power to change the future of public libraries significantly, given the underlying challenges that exist, particularly as the panel lacks any statutory requirement, or specific powers and is more advisory in nature (Blatern in Farrington, 2015).

This research has identified a need for a variety of measures in order to help facilitate the inevitable transition to a new way of working with mixed methods of public service delivery. It is vital that this is undertaken as all stakeholders have their own pre-conceived notions of what a public library is and how it operates.

For all stakeholders there needs to be clarity regarding the equilibrium of power within the public service domain, and who is responsible for service provision, where responsibilities lie and how the volunteer fits into this arrangement. Providing the bigger picture for all stakeholders may help all parties to understand their role within the service provision equation. If it is the case that service provision is moving towards a relational state model, it is vital that all actors are suitably aware and understand what this means in reality. This is likely to take some time, and involve much discussion and planning.

Formalisation of volunteer management procedures and development of the necessary skills for library staff to work effectively with volunteers is increasingly vital, if a mixed method of service delivery is to be adopted, as it ensures that all actors involved provide a suitable quality of service delivery. The Leaders for Libraries Taskforce (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2015a) has provided a toolkit of best practice regarding the different ways volunteers are currently utilised, as a first step towards formalisation of volunteer use. It is also clear that library managers require additional skills development with regard to volunteer training, relationship building, partnership working and overall leadership in order to help facilitate the successful integration of volunteers, thereby ensuring that they get the best out of them for their service.

This research has identified that mechanisms that establish trust and mutual understanding can serve to enhance the loyalty and quality of volunteers, and therefore benefit the service. These mechanisms can also help to support a relationship marketing approach which is mutually beneficial to both volunteers and the organisation, and serves to strengthen their ties, and therefore improve loyalty further (Bussell and Forbes, 2007).

It is evident that front line staff and volunteers also require training to enable them to appreciate the bigger picture, and work towards improving the tensions that currently exist within many library services. Team building is vital in order to achieve a co-ordinated and cohesive service that operates as one.

These initiatives are not without cost, or difficulty, however if a new way of working is to be the future, then it is clear that investment is required to ensure success, and provide a service in line with what the local community needs.

The final chapter will revisit the original aim and objectives of the research, and provide concluding thoughts under each objective, in addition to considering possible recommendations and future research.

7. Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the original aim and objectives of this research and provides concluding thoughts arising from the analysis and discussion of the findings. Key recommendations will also be considered, together with suggestions for future research.

The original aim of this research was to investigate modern volunteer use in public libraries in England.

This was achieved by means of eight supporting objectives:

- To identify the challenges (political/economic) currently faced by public libraries in England
- To establish past and present practice regarding the use of volunteers in public libraries
- To investigate what Library Managers see as the key issues for use of volunteers in library service provision
- To explore viewpoints of library volunteers, considering motivations for volunteering, degree of volunteering, and issues that arise from volunteering.
- To consider staff attitudes towards volunteers and their use in service provision
- To explore opinions of library users on the use of volunteers for library service provision
- To identify the variables that result in successful library service provision using volunteers
- As a result of the former, establish areas of good practice and possible ways forward.

7.2 Objective 1: To identify the challenges (political/economic) currently faced by public libraries in England

The challenges facing libraries have been explored in depth within the literature review. In addition to a growth in consumerism, and a resultant decline in public library usage nationally, the move towards economic austerity has impacted greatly on libraries. Public library services have become a convenient target for local authority cutbacks, and the use of volunteers to run such services has become an increasingly popular strategy throughout England.

7.3 Objective 2: To establish past and present practice regarding the use of volunteers in public libraries

Value-added use of volunteers is still evident in many library authorities and was very much part of the community engagement policy of the Blair Labour Government. It was clear that many of the volunteers questioned during the research were acting in this role, and had been recruited as part of a past community engagement drive. More recent volunteer use in public libraries has certainly adopted an increasingly mixed delivery approach and as such, volunteers have been used to replace staff as identified from the literature review. This relatively new approach to volunteer use has brought additional challenges and tensions to library services.

7.4 Objective 3: To investigate what Library Managers see as the key issues for use of volunteers in library service provision

This objective was achieved using results from the phase one Delphi study, and therefore will be examined distinctly from the phase two results.

7.4.1 Delphi Conclusions

Overall, it would appear that Public Library Authority Managers' (PLAM) opinions surrounding this topic cover a broad spectrum and many concerns were raised. They demonstrate the challenges that lie ahead for library services throughout England.

Volunteer use has increased for all respondents, with a variety of roles performed, although many past volunteer roles were supportive in nature. There does appear to be an increasing trend towards roles more closely associated with community managed libraries. The range of roles has increased greatly, and a third of respondents acknowledged that with budget constraints and the need to ensure the survival of library services, there was likely to be an increase in roles that covered the traditional remit of paid library staff. However, there was a clear consensus concerning the requirement for a clear division between roles of paid staff and volunteers.

The importance of a formalised process was viewed by the majority of respondents as paramount, in addition to the presence of a member of staff whose key role was to manage volunteers, and their recruitment/training process. Volunteers were not viewed as a free option, but one that involved substantial investment and training, together with the development of a clear volunteer policy, in order to ensure adherence to overall service aims and priorities.

Volunteers were generally viewed by respondents as a good thing, with the potential to further enhance a service, and aid in the engagement of the local community. Such community involvement was deemed as having a key role to play in promoting the democratic all-inclusive nature of the public library service. However, many of these benefits tended to relate primarily to a library world of additionality, whereby volunteers support paid staff, rather than replace them. Respondents considered that conflict was a likely outcome of increased volunteer use for a variety of functions, in addition to increased expenditure in order to support future volunteer development.

At present library services are predominantly perceived as something the public own and trust (Museums Libraries and Archives Council, 2010b) with high satisfaction ratings (Museums Libraries and Archives Council, 2010b). However, there was clearly a concern from respondents about the effect of volunteers on the quality and integrity of the library service. Research conducted by the Audit Commission (2002) in a report by the Museums Libraries and Archives Council detailed (2010b) 'that very high satisfaction levels may be partly driven by users' loyalty to services and a desire to protect them'. Whilst increased volunteer use could result in even greater loyalty, it could also act to the detriment of service quality perception if users consider their service is being undermined.

The future use of volunteers was inevitable for respondents, being one of the only ways forward in a period of economic uncertainty. However, the capacity of communities to deliver was also a key concern, with the potential dearth of interest in areas of high deprivation an issue.

Such developments need careful planning, in order to enable a coordinated service that meets the needs of users and the wider community served, through a clear vision. The involvement of meaningful consultation with all stakeholders, particularly paid staff, may ensure that a true partnership is formed that achieves buy-in from the latter, in addition to clearly demonstrating to the wider community that such a process has been carefully thought out.

Looking to the future, Arts Council England states,

'the phenomenon of community libraries in England is in its infancy today. A stronger network of community groups and local authorities involved in establishing community libraries is needed to promote the exchange of know-how, facilitate study visits and help generate ideas. Further research will also be beneficial in helping us understand how the different approaches are working out in practice' (2013c p.9).

7.5 Objectives 4, 5, 6: To explore viewpoints of library volunteers – considering motivations for volunteering, degree of volunteering, and issues that arise from volunteering. To consider staff attitudes towards volunteers and their use in service provision. To explore opinions of library users on the use of volunteers for library service provision.

This section will identify the main conclusions that arose from the phase two results and analysis (Figure 18 on the following page details a summary of the key issues and solutions arising from the qualitative research).

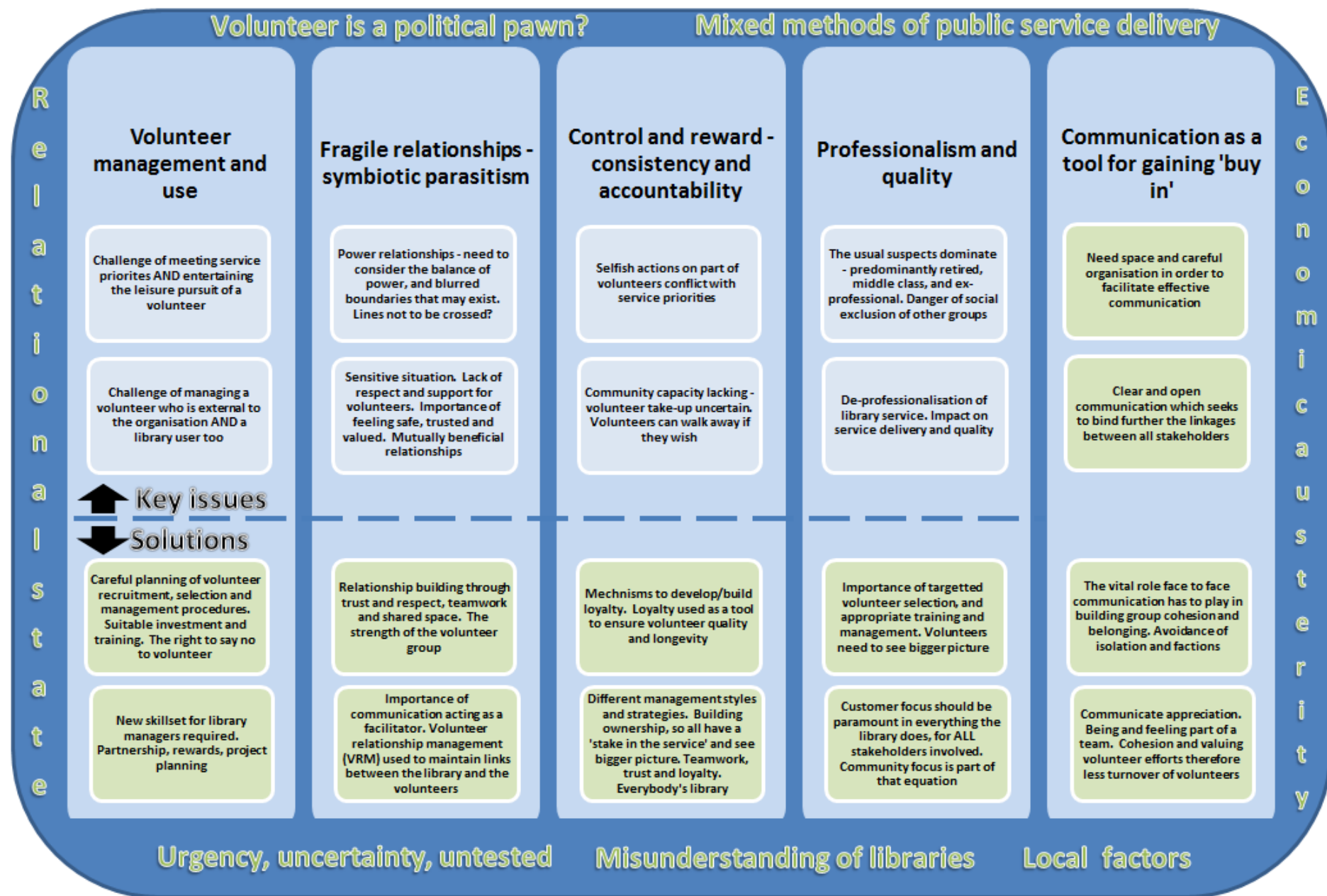


Figure 18. Issues and solutions arising from the qualitative research

The external environment within which public libraries exist has altered drastically since the election of the coalition government in 2010, such that economic austerity and localism have become the foundation stones to modern public service development, arising from predominantly ideological beliefs. This is further complicated by the fact that politicians and the general population appear to misunderstand what a library service actually is, and the role that library professionals have within this service. This has huge implications for the resulting quality of a service, and how it is perceived by users of that service, especially if user perceptions are based on a service where volunteers are not necessarily distinct from the paid staff they are working alongside.

There are also challenges relating to the marrying of individual volunteer priorities with the wider service level priorities, whilst still enabling a high quality of service provision. The economic model of volunteering, whereby volunteers replace paid staff, may not necessarily be in line with the leisure model of volunteering in which volunteers are seeking a leisure experience (Holmes, 2004).

The importance of controlling volunteers is paramount, and the use of intrinsic rewards for volunteers alongside a climate of instilling trust is vital for developing harmonious working.

The concluding themes arising from this analysis will be examined further.

7.5.1 Challenging environment

The transitory nature of libraries moving to an increasingly mixed model of volunteer use was clearly identified from analysis, together with a somewhat tainted view of volunteers coming from some of the stakeholders, due to the politically induced financial austerity and service cutbacks in local authorities.

The inevitability of such financial austerity, and its impact on public library service delivery, was clearly communicated, in addition to a feeling that this had compromised service planning and delivery. The recent referendum result for Great Britain to leave the

European Union (EU) (Prime Minister's Office, 2016) raises further questions over local government funding, and the uncertainty that exists regarding whether current EU funding for local government would be maintained by national government following withdrawal (Blake, 2016).

Community capacity was considered as a key issue for the case study authorities investigated, demonstrated by the lack of interest in volunteering from library users surveyed, together with opinions of staff that deemed their local communities lacking when attempting to plug the gap left by library cuts. Volunteers also raised concerns about community capacity, and indicated that they were often serving communities that were unable to support themselves with a volunteer effort. If volunteering is to be increased, it is likely that the capacity of such volunteers to cover less affluent areas would be questionable.

As mentioned in the introduction of this conclusion, all stakeholders were concerned by the apparent lack of understanding on the part of politicians and the wider community about the role of a library service, and the resulting implications this might have for service delivery and quality. Library managers and staff were clearly worried about the damage done to wider volunteering benefits for the library service, due to the enforced use of volunteers in some instances. This 'sticking plaster' approach to volunteer use, whereby they are used to heal staff cuts, can result in social exclusion (Pateman and Williment, 2013) and further polarise the service such that it attracts users who are similar to the volunteers, deterring those who feel it is no longer their service, thereby compromising inclusivity. It was evident that volunteering efforts so far did appear to mirror societal inequalities as discussed by commentators such as Musick and Wilson (2008, cited in Brodie et al., 2009). An awareness of the random and reactive nature (Goulding, 2006) by which many volunteers are now being used by public library services was identified from many of the stakeholder responses.

It would be useful to further examine the issue of exclusivity and whether such a phenomenon exists with libraries, particularly those where volunteers have taken over the running of the library completely.

7.5.2 Volunteer management and use

The blended approach of public library delivery using volunteers was acknowledged as an increasingly popular phenomenon for library managers, in addition to the sensitivities that existed when trying to carry out such an approach.

Volunteer use has potentially great benefits in terms of drawing on a wealth of skills and experience, in addition to helping to enrich the diversity of library workers (paid and unpaid), but all stakeholders identified that it needed careful management and co-ordination if it was to be a success for all parties involved, including library users.

Hence, it is suggested that a delicate balancing act is required on the part of library managers, which seeks to professionalise the volunteer workforce to ensure the matching of skills to appropriate tasks, deliver the necessary service standards, and somehow preserve the activity that originally interested the volunteer in the first place. This is by no means an easy task, although commentators such as Holmes (2004) argue that it can be done.

Therefore, this requires a new skill set on the part of library managers and volunteer coordinators, and requires additional continuing professional development to enable a flexible, friendly and suitably resourced management style. Key areas for development would include working in partnership, intrinsic rewards development, and project planning.

7.5.3 Relationships

A fragile set of relationships currently exist between all stakeholders, further intensified by the current micro and macro environment conditions.

The concept of a mutual symbiotic relationship is a useful way in which to view what traditionally has been the case for many years in public libraries regarding the use of value-added volunteers.

Both entities have thus far benefited from the relationship they have had with each other, whilst also helping to preserve each other. The challenge identified by stakeholders regarding current developments to replace staff with volunteers is perhaps more evident of a one sided relationship, whereby volunteers clearly benefit from this relationship, at the expense of a diminished public library service with compromised service priorities.

It was evident from the findings that there were uncertainties as to what was acceptable in terms of volunteer use, and blurred boundaries were a key issue. One particular group of volunteers questioned exhibited traits of holding the balance of power within their library service, and this had caused tensions for the library manager concerned. The frontline staff also identified this situation, viewing certain volunteers as having their own agenda whilst also being library customers, which made the relationship between volunteers and the library service sometimes quite difficult.

A lack of respect and support from the library service was considered a hindrance by some volunteers questioned, and had led to frustration, which undoubtedly tarnished relationships with paid staff. It is likely that this situation was exacerbated by the current political and economic environment.

The role of communication as a facilitator for relationship development is paramount, and will be discussed in more detail later in this section. Also the building of a team approach through joint training of volunteers and staff is vital to ensure a co-ordinated approach that has fewer tensions.

7.5.4 Control and reward

Control, or lack of it, was an omnipresent theme, relating to a number of facets within the results. This ranged from the lack of control the library service had over whether a particular community had the capacity to volunteer, to ensuring that those volunteers recruited delivered the wider library service priorities whilst under no contractual obligation. The concepts of professionalism, consistency and accountability all arose during stakeholder discussions, together with the challenges of managing volunteers who are neither paid nor contractually obliged with regard to what they do for their local library.

Selfish and altruistic reasons for volunteering existed in tandem, and all volunteers questioned exhibited a varying mix of these types of reasons. However, the majority of the volunteers questioned were retired, middle class and well educated, often coming from a background of past volunteering, and sometimes juggling multiple similar roles in the charitable and cooperative sectors. Interestingly, many of these volunteers had a past association with public libraries, and demonstrated a keen awareness of their civic duty.

This point links back to the earlier discussion of community capacity, and how a library service can ensure that the volunteering effort does not result in a postcode lottery, whereby 'the quality and range of library services could vary widely across the country' (Pateman and Williment, 2013 p.19).

Loyalty was certainly perceived by many stakeholders as a mechanism by which volunteers could be 'hooked' into the service on a more permanent basis. Also community focus and customer care arose as two mechanisms, albeit fragile, that helped to ensure commitment and responsibility from volunteers. However, it was necessary for these mechanisms to work in tandem with suitable methods of more formal volunteer management.

The issue of ownership was considered vital, as if people felt that they had a stake in the service, they were more likely to take responsibility, and take pride in what they did.

Building such ownership amongst volunteers however takes time and effort, and requires a co-ordinated and carefully planned approach.

7.5.5 Professionalism and quality

Professionalism was a key concern, particularly among library managers. The lack of understanding regarding public libraries and library staff, and what they do, on the part of politicians and wider society was perceived as having worked to their detriment. Public libraries were viewed as an easy target for local authorities considering economic austerity, a factor mirrored by the recent Sieghart Review (Sieghart, 2014a) which identified a clear lack of awareness on the part of decision makers regarding the value that public libraries have with regards to society. There is surely a role for professional associations, such as CILIP, to clearly represent the role of public libraries and those who work in them to decisions makers and the wider public, through advocacy and publicity campaigns.

In addition, the fact that volunteers were being used in a public service context had caused problems in terms of their visibility, and the associated impact this may have had on service delivery and quality. Such increased visibility, and the common notion by wider society that a volunteer normally works for a charity could be problematic, when one considers a volunteer's level of training, commitment, and customer focus in a public service arena. Volunteers are not a homogenous group, in terms of their motivations for volunteering, in addition to the skills, qualifications and experience they bring to the volunteer role they find themselves in.

It is therefore recommended that volunteers are given the necessary training to enable them to understand the bigger picture in terms of public service priorities, and are carefully selected via a formal process to enable a matching of volunteer skills with service priorities and ensure a sufficient level of quality.

Volunteers may also require basic training in key library areas, such as customer service, the role of a library, community engagement, together with more specific areas, so that they fully understand what their role within the library is, and what is expected of them in terms of commitment.

It may also be useful to identify volunteer workers in some way, so that their use within service delivery is clear, upfront and on view to service users. Formal roles and responsibilities on the part of volunteers and paid staff, and identification of the boundaries that exist between these roles should be communicated to all stakeholders, including library users, to avoid misunderstandings.

7.5.6 Communication

As a tool communication can be viewed as the lynchpin to ensuring that there is understanding on all sides, serving to connect the many stakeholders of the library in a common purpose, and therefore avoid misunderstandings and cement positive relationships further, through the establishment of trust networks.

All stakeholders identified the importance of communication, for moving towards a more mixed approach to library service delivery, and enabling legitimacy of this way of thinking and working.

The importance of a clear volunteer structure, access to space and resources to enable effective group working, and regular face-to-face meetings were considered ways by which volunteers could remain connected to the paid staff, in addition to avoiding the isolation and misunderstandings associated with being a predominantly part-time, somewhat un-connected entity. Such mechanisms help to ensure a sense of belonging, and further enhance loyalty and ownership, thereby assisting volunteers in becoming less transitory.

The ability of volunteers to communicate and build themselves as a group was something that the volunteers questioned felt was vital. Many volunteers worked only a few hours a week, and strongly expressed the social reasons why they had joined the volunteering effort. A culture of face to face meetings for volunteers did appear to work well not only as a guiding and motivating force, but also for allowing group cohesion and belonging to develop further.

The importance of the library manager in facilitating the building of a volunteer community to avoid isolation, and thereby ensure that they see the bigger service picture, is paramount. Many stakeholders stressed the fact that effective and meaningful volunteer management takes time, and costs money, and this should not be overlooked. However, the benefits of increasing volunteer allegiance and improving their longevity within the service, in addition to enhancing the quality of the service delivered through a consistent message are clear. Volunteer relationship management (VRM) which takes the idea of customer relationship management (CRM) (Bussell and Forbes, 2007) is suggested as a way forward for those dealing with volunteers. Use of strategies, technology and communication can facilitate a new way of working with volunteers, build relationships and ensure that the correct messages are communicated to all stakeholders.

7.6 Objective 7: To determine the variables that result in successful library service provision using volunteers

The key variables that result in successful library service provision using volunteers related to the following areas:

- A supportive local authority that values the importance of a professionally staffed library, enhanced by national government endorsement.
- Having willing and able library supporters in the local community who have the suitable experience and capacity to take on volunteering when asked.

- Volunteer use seeks to add value to the library service and enables greater community engagement and ownership of the library service.
- Volunteers bring the benefits of their specialist skills and knowledge, together with community linkages to their role within the library.
- A well organised volunteer recruitment and selection policy, which uses a variety of formal and informal management and control strategies to enable service priorities to be met.
- Mutually symbiotic relationships between all stakeholders.
- The importance of trust and respect in facilitating working relationships for all stakeholders.

7.7 Objective 8: As a result of the former, establish areas of good practice and possible ways forward

The following key recommendations aim to identify good practice, and suggest ways of further improving volunteer use within the mixed economy of public library service delivery. It is important to note that the first three variables identified in section 7.6 are somewhat out of the control of the library authority, and therefore good practice relating to volunteer management and use, relationships, control and reward and professionalism and quality will be considered.

- The volunteer is seen as part of a larger group, rather than just an individual. It is important to view volunteers as part of a wider group in addition to their individual status, as feeling a sense of belonging helps to retain loyalty and feelings of ownership, which positively benefits the library service in the long run.

- Communication facilitation is important to the smooth functioning of a volunteering effort. Face-to-face communication with fellow volunteers, staff and the wider library service is vital to counter misunderstandings and encourage cohesion.
- Physical library space has an important role to play in enhancing the smooth functioning of a volunteering effort. Separating volunteers from paid staff can further reinforce divisions, however placing the two groups together can result in an unnecessary burden on paid staff, and confuse what can be a sensitive situation. Making sure that the volunteers and paid staff have the time and space to come together is important.
- Relationship building between all stakeholders, particularly paid staff and volunteers, volunteers and library users, and between the volunteers themselves is important to enhance understanding and cohesion.
- Effective volunteer management and clear roles/responsibilities can help to counter misunderstandings, and ensure a professional approach. An initial induction of volunteers so that they are clear of their role, and what is expected of them, and how this fits with the wider service priorities, is vital to a successful start. It is also important to have a workplace structure that facilitates the management and support of volunteers, in order to enable all stakeholders to appreciate how they fit together in the wider service provision. Matching a person's traits to a volunteer role is crucial in order to ensure that volunteers work well in the role that they have, and also work well as part of a wider team.
- Volunteers should be properly trained to ensure they fully understand their role, and how it contributes to overall service standards. This costs money, and takes time, but helps to ensure a quality of service delivery.
- Library managers need specialist skills in order to effectively manage volunteers, and get the best of them. Many library managers qualified at a time when volunteers were used less intensively, and for purely value-added roles. It is

recommended that library managers receive additional training so that their skill set is appropriate for supporting the current hybrid service delivery. Key areas of focus being partnership working, intrinsic reward management and project delivery.

- Customer focus is a vital skill for paid staff and management as it helps to improve service quality. This focus should be paramount in everything that the library service does for all stakeholders including volunteers.
- Mechanisms that help to develop respect and understanding amongst all stakeholders are very important to the smooth functioning of a seamless library service: In such a politically sensitive area it is vital that individuals have a dialogue that values the importance of paid staff *and* volunteers.
- The key to successful volunteer use is to establish a mutually beneficial relationship between the library service and volunteer that benefits both actors, in addition to serving individual local community requirements. Therefore, there is no one size fits all approach that can be adopted, and success variables will need to be tailored to each library service.
- A positive outlook regarding volunteer use in public libraries is an important success variable for all stakeholders. Therefore, it is important to publicise the positive benefits of such partnerships with all stakeholders including the wider user community, in order to deal with potential misunderstandings and resistance.
- Misunderstandings are not good for cohesion of stakeholders, therefore it is vital to ensure transparency across the service, and clear lines of communication so all stakeholders understand their role, and where the boundaries lie.
- The development of volunteer relationship management (VRM) strategies using a range of techniques and technologies is vital to ensure a library service that matches wider service priorities.

- A final caveat to these recommendations relates to the fact that volunteers are essentially an unpaid, potentially uncontrollable element, with a predominantly selfish motive. As such a library service needs to ensure that there are clear guidelines put in place to ensure that they strive to achieve a mutually beneficial relationship from such an arrangement.

7.8 Original contribution to knowledge and the profession

7.8.1 Context

This research has provided further evidence that public library volunteer use is moving from a value-added role, in keeping with the dominant paradigm to a staff replacement role more akin with the civil society and leisure paradigms of volunteering (Lyons, 1998, cited in Rochester et al., 2009). There appears to be an increasing mixed delivery approach to public library services, with an increasing reliance on volunteers. Such a swift and dramatic culture shift has not been without tension and challenge, and there are understandably many concerns arising from stakeholders as a result.

One could argue that the research has identified a culture shift in public libraries from one of state provision to a relational state. However, the latter requires well informed, co-ordinated citizens in order to effectively function, plus much discussion, planning and support, which does not appear to be fully in existence at present.

There appears to be great library professional concern relating to an apparent lack of understanding on the part of politicians and the wider community regarding what a library service is, and what the staff employed actually do.

There is a worry that such ignorance is driving policy decisions, both nationally and regionally, and filtering down to volunteer quality in individual libraries.

The community capacity to provide for such volunteering is not uniform, and is clearly linked to the demographic constitution of a particular authority. Both authorities investigated had issues regarding such capacity in areas of their community.

7.8.2 Unintended consequences

There are a number of unintended consequences that arise from this situation: These include social exclusion, reduced accountability and quality of service, and a blurring of boundaries that destabilises the functioning of harmonious working relationships within the library.

7.8.2.1 Social exclusion

The research identified that volunteers came from particular sections of the local community, and were predominantly retired, middle-class and well educated. There is a concern that their presence may deter other members of the community, thereby creating an exclusive, rather than inclusive service. Further research is proposed that examines this phenomenon more carefully, and considers whether the existence of particular volunteers is perceived as a barrier by library non-users.

7.8.2.2 Accountability and quality

The very nature of a volunteer means that they have the potential to be less accountable than a paid member of library staff. The research uncovered doubts from a variety of stakeholders regarding the ability of volunteers to consistently deliver a high quality, fully accountable library service. Leadership for Libraries Taskforce (2016) recently suggested the use of a voluntary accreditation scheme for library services, whereby they ensure that delivery of their service adheres to an 'expectation set' assessed by outcome.

However, there appears to be a lack of clarity as to how this would actually work in practice, and whether this would achieve adequate control of what is essentially an uncontrollable force.

It was evident that stakeholder perspectives regarding the library service were influenced greatly by the role that they had within the service, and their perception of whether they felt they were an insider or outsider to the library as an institution. Many of the volunteers questioned had come to the library initially through a desire to further a leisure interest, and this did not always sit well with wider library service priorities, and impacted on the ability to provide a high quality service. Some staff discussed the emergence of parasitic rather than mutually beneficial relationship between the library service and volunteers, which worked further against meeting service priorities.

7.8.2.3 Boundaries

There is a real challenge relating to the perceived boundaries between library staff and volunteers working together in a library service. This has certainly become more sensitive in the current context, and the importance of building positive relationships between all stakeholders is seen as vital to ensuring a suitable balance of power, and harmonious working relationships.

7.8.3 Ways forward

It is clear that within a hybrid environment a mix of mechanisms, both formal and informal, are required to ensure volunteers become a positive asset for a service. These mechanisms will be considered further, however both require time, money and planning in order to ensure that they are appropriately targeted, and meet service priorities.

7.8.3.1 Formal mechanisms

The research identified that traditional mechanisms such as recruitment, selection and training of volunteers, together with a visible volunteer policy are an important way to ensure that public libraries get the best out of this resource thereby matching skills to provision. Library managers would benefit from additional skills development in areas such as volunteer training, relationship building, partnership working and leadership skills to ensure the successful integration of volunteers.

Such initiatives are not without cost, and investment is essential to support volunteer development and ensure a quality, user centred service.

Volunteers too require adequate training to enable them to see the bigger picture, and to ensure that they embrace public library culture, helping to build understanding and loyalty. Training in aspects such as customer service, the role of a library, and community engagement can enhance their offer, and also work as a binding mechanism so they feel part of the wider organisation.

7.8.3.2 Informal mechanisms

Less formal mechanisms are equally as important in the volunteer management equation, as they underpin the more formal mechanisms, and act as a psychological contract with the library (As identified by Taylor et al., 2006). The research concluded that ownership, trust and mutual understanding were all key factors which contributed positively to the volunteer experience. Such simple aspects had a considerable effect on how people felt about their working environment, their role, and what contribution they were making to the library service. These mechanisms over time could help to improve loyalty, working towards a more stable library environment, and greater cohesion.

Use of shared spaces for working, autonomy and partnership working may serve to enhance the situation, in addition to clear and open communication which seeks to bind further the linkages between the stakeholders.

The research found that the application of a volunteer relationship management (VRM) approach, which seeks to build and improve further relationships between volunteers and the more formal parts of a library service, is a key way to improve loyalty and work for the good of library service priorities and the wider community.

7.9 Limitations

This research attempted to examine a very new and somewhat emotionally raw phenomenon in the library world, and was not without its challenges.

The key challenge with this topic has been its constantly changing landscape. The original Delphi was conducted in 2012, when the sample of library service managers questioned had a particular perspective of volunteer use, largely influenced by previous government policy moves to foster community engagement. In the past 4 years, the situation has changed drastically, as public sector cuts have increased, and library service managers have had to make difficult decisions. New developments in policy, and theoretical opinion regarding this matter is in a constant flux, and the two phases of research helped to identify some more salient issues that had arisen during the research journey.

Volunteers replacing paid staff is still viewed by CILIP (2012c) as unacceptable, yet it is clear that many library service managers have adopted this policy in order to maintain a service. It is a highly political and emotional issue for many people, and this impacted on the initial choice of a case study authority, as shortly after selection the authority was asked to make cuts and therefore felt it necessary to withdraw from the research.

Another case study authority felt that it was difficult to conduct parts of the research with particular stakeholders, as it may have incited negative emotions, and made things difficult for the local authority. Therefore, some aspects of the research with this particular authority were compromised to a degree, but it was still worthwhile as it provided a picture of a complex and challenging situation, which could be triangulated with the other research findings.

7.10 Future research

Volunteer use of this scale in public libraries can be argued as a relatively new phenomenon, and the longevity and success of this development is unknown. Public libraries are currently in transition: a gigantic ideological experiment, or a move to greater community engagement? This will perhaps depend on the politics of the reader, however the reality is very much with us and strategies to ensure that user needs are met that fit the local community in which they reside are essential. This research has explored the multiplicity of stakeholder perspectives regarding this phenomenon and provided meaning and ways forward.

Future research should look at examining the library user experience in greater depth, particularly where VMLs have taken on the provision of the library service for some communities. The potential for such arrangements to socially exclude certain sectors of society, and further perpetuate divisions that may already exist in society should be investigated.

The analysis (5.4.1.1) identified that there are clear uncertainties regarding the financial burden of properly resourced volunteer management, and as such it is useful to consider more fully the longevity of such initiatives within communities, and to re-examine their functioning once they have more fully become part of service provision.

Comparing the experiences of established volunteer intensive organisations, such as the Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS) or the Citizen's Advice Bureaux (CAB) may help to identify key success factors for sustained volunteer involvement.

There is a need for training and development of those leading and managing library services, in addition to the frontline staff and volunteers working within library services, in order to equip all those involved with the necessary skills and abilities to work effectively as a team in a new and emerging environment. As a consequence, it is likely that not

only is there a need for continuing professional development of managerial staff, but also the findings of this research will actively feed into Library Management Masters development.

Finally, the role of communication and volunteer relationship management to ensure the future success of this mixed methods approach to service delivery is vital, if the local community is to be adequately served, and additional costs and tensions are to be reduced. Future research could investigate the introduction of VRM systems and strategies and establish successful factors.

7.11 Conclusion

Public libraries are an important part of our civilised society, so it is vital to ensure that volunteers are used effectively to ensure their continued existence.

'A library in the middle of a community is a cross between an emergency exit, a life raft and a festival. They are cathedrals of the mind; hospitals of the soul; theme parks of the imagination. On a cold, rainy island, they are the only sheltered public spaces where you are not a consumer, but a citizen instead.....As the cuts kick in, protestors and lawyers are fighting for individual libraries like villagers pushing stranded whales back into the sea. A library is such a potent symbol of a town's values: Each one closed down might as well be 6,000 stickers plastered over every available surface, reading. 'WE CHOSE TO BECOME MORE STUPID AND DULL!'....Libraries that stayed open during the Blitz will be closed by budgets. A trillion small doors closing' (Moran, 2013 p.211).

Increased use of volunteers is inevitable given current economic predictions, and therefore it is important that public libraries utilise this unpredictable, yet often extremely valuable resource with care and caution.

The role of CILIP in advocating the importance of well trained, professional library staff, and how this relates to a high quality, socially inclusive public library service is perhaps key in helping to support local strategies for using volunteers, and countering the misguided association with the shop assistant role (Pateman and Williment, 2013) which has fuelled current policy developments.

Increased use of volunteers in public library service delivery may not be a panacea, but perhaps it offers a pragmatic way forward in what is likely to remain a challenging political and economic landscape.

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