

**British Library R & D Report 6224**

# **WHAT DO PEOPLE DO WHEN THEIR PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE CLOSES DOWN?**

**An investigation into the impact  
of the Sheffield Libraries strike**

**Richard Proctor, Bob Usherwood,  
Gill Sobczyk**

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## Abstract

This is an account of the work undertaken to investigate the impact of temporary closure of public library services on user behaviour and attitudes. The context for the research was the eight week strike action by the staff of Sheffield Libraries and Information Services in 1995, which also provided an unprecedented opportunity to examine the robustness of library use and how easily previous patterns of use were resumed after the strike. An account is also given of the impact of library closure on the local infrastructure and of the portrayal of the library service in the media.

The research used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with library users, staff at libraries in the region, and managers from a sample of bookshops in Sheffield. Press coverage of the closure was monitored. Data on book issues and books on loan was collected over a six month period to provide additional evidence of the longer term impact of the closure.

Based on the findings from the user survey, the research demonstrated that libraries play an important role in the lives of users. 89% of users surveyed had missed the library for at least one purpose. Only 9% replaced their library use with non-library oriented activities, suggesting that for regular library users there is no significant competition strong enough to persuade them to stop using the service. 44% of respondents replaced the service with some related activity but the research indicated that the alternatives to library use were unsatisfactory or unacceptable on a long term basis. 31% of all respondents said that they could find no suitable alternative at all for the missing service. 99.6% of respondents said they would resume normal use of the service.

The analysis of issue data showed that the closure had not affected issues in the longer term and reinforced evidence from the user survey that normal patterns of library use have been resumed. The analysis of the books on loan data indicated that a financial loss due to the non-return of library material was incurred by Sheffield Libraries. A review of press coverage and letters received by Sheffield Libraries and by the research team indicated a high level of public support for the strike action and for the public library service.

Conclusions reached are that the extended closure has not broken users' library 'habit' because library services are not replaceable for the majority of users. The research revealed that for the majority of users the public library is a service of inestimable value, enhancing quality of life, and, for many people, fulfilling an essential need.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## 1.0 Introduction

On June 5th 1995 strike action by the staff of Sheffield Libraries and Information Services, caused the closure of almost the entire service. Initially, it was assumed that the conflict might be resolved quickly, but towards the end of the same month it became clear that the strike would be a long one.

As soon as this became clear, Staff of Sheffield University's Department of Information Studies realised that the strike presented an opportunity to investigate some aspects of user behaviour and attitudes inadequately covered by previous research. In particular, the strike would allow us to determine the value of the service to individuals, by analysing changes in their behaviour and attitudes during the strike.

If the research could be carried out immediately the strike ended, it would also be possible to test the robustness of the library 'habit' and make some estimate of the long term impact of the service closure. This would involve analysing the future intentions of those people returning books borrowed before the strike.

The research would also allow us to estimate the economic impact of the library service based on changes in the frequency of visits to local shopping centres.

In less than two weeks we drew a proposal up and submitted it to the British Library for immediate consideration. The British Library, commendably, treated the proposal as urgent. In less than three weeks, we got approval to appoint a researcher. The strike ended after eight weeks, less than a week after the research was approved.

## 1.1 Aims

The primary aim of the research was to increase the knowledge of library managers and professionals about user behaviour and attitudes. We were particularly interested in changes in behaviour and attitudes that occurred as a result of the service closure.

At the same time, we realised that the intended survey of library users would also provide some valuable information on the general characteristics and behaviour of library users that would contribute to existing research in this area.

The research attempted to answer the following specific questions:

**i. To what extent might service disruption affect established patterns of library use and behaviour?**

*What efforts were users prepared to make to replace lost services from: a) other libraries, and b) other sources?*

*How far did the service disruption change users' attitudes to the service?*

*How did the service disruption affect people's choice of leisure activities?*

*To what extent might it affect the way people use the service in future?*

**ii. How important are libraries in the lives of library users?**

*Which library services did users miss most?*

*What efforts were library users prepared to make during the strike to secure alternative sources of books and information?*

*To what extent did non library-related activities replace library use?*

*What impact did the loss of service have on users' quality of life?*

*Were any differences in behaviour and attitudes revealed which were dependent on the nature of specific communities?*

**iii. What did the strike reveal about public and media attitudes to the library service?**

*How was the service loss reflected in the media?*

*How was it reflected in user complaints and comments?*

**iv. How important are libraries to the local infrastructure?**

*Do library closures affect users' frequency of visits to their local centre?*

*What is the impact of library closures on the local retail economy?*

## **1.2 Background to the closure**

Three hundred and fifty library staff were on strike for eight weeks, from 5 June 1995. This followed a breakdown in negotiations with Sheffield City Council over the Council's proposal to withdraw enhanced pay for Saturday working.

The public had little notice of the strike. During the week before the strike, talks had ended with a demand from the trade union, Unison, that the Council should provide written assurance that enhanced pay rates for Saturday working would be honoured. When the Council failed to meet the union deadline of 10am on Monday June 5th, staff immediately withdrew their labour. Out of 34 service points, including the Central Library, only two libraries (Hillsborough and Parson Cross) remained open for the duration of the strike. Two more, (Upperthorpe and Burngreave), were each open for a total of eight days. (See Map, Appendix 1.)

Staff returned to work on Wednesday 2nd August. This was after the Council had assured them that any changes in pay or flexible working patterns would be introduced only through negotiation. Any changes would remain within national agreements on conditions of service.

## **1.3 Research on user behaviour and attitudes**

There have been many surveys of users and non-users of public libraries, although some of these are now dated - e.g. Groombridge (1964), Luckham (1971) and Totterdell (1976).

Within the last five years the public debate about the role of the public library service has intensified and has resulted in some wide-ranging research. Comedia (1993), undertook an independent study, intended to provoke debate about public library services. Amongst the questions it attempted to answer were: '*Who goes to public libraries and why?*' and '*Is its social and community function more important than its role in lending books?*' Comedia surveyed over 500 users in Cleveland, Hertfordshire and Hounslow, as well as conducting street interviews in Birmingham city centre and in Hounslow.

The present research follows closely on the publication of the DNH Review of Public Libraries in England and Wales, 'the largest piece of research into public libraries ever undertaken...' (Aslib 1995). As part of its remit, this study investigated both use patterns and attitudes to libraries. It surveyed over 2000 adults throughout England and Wales, conducting over 900 home interviews and sending questionnaires to 3,600 households. In addition it attempted to find evidence of the economic impact of the public library on town centres.

All these pieces of research demonstrated the popularity of the public library service and indicated the value people placed on it. However, they all surveyed users who had made their own choices about whether or not to use the service, and in no way could the assertions made by respondents be tested.

Many people said they valued the service, and used it regularly, but what would they do if, suddenly, they had no library to turn to? Where would they get their information from? Which services would they miss the most? What lengths would they go to, to replace the missing service? How easy would it be to break the library 'habit'? Would they take up other leisure activities?

It became clear that the Sheffield Libraries strike might provide answers to some of these questions and provide a rare insight into the value people in a large urban community placed on their library service. It would also test the robustness of the library habit, and, for the first time, enable an assessment of the 'competition' for the time of library users.

A look at the research undertaken by Comedia (1993) and Aslib (1995) suggested other areas for study. What, for example, would be the impact of the library closure on local shops and businesses? What factors would determine the response and attitudes of different communities? Would some services, for some communities, for example, prove to be essential, or inessential?

The value of the present research is that it provides an unprecedented opportunity to investigate the behaviour and attitudes of users who are, quite unexpectedly, and unwillingly, deprived of their library service for a period long enough for it to have some impact on their lives. The research made it possible, for the first time, to assess

the importance of the public library in peoples' lives. It achieved this by investigating what a sample of users did when its services were no longer available to them, and which services they missed the most. It also permitted an assessment to be made of where the competition for library users' time lies, by investigating what the sample chose to do when they could no longer use the library service.

In terms of economic impact, it also allowed an estimate to be made of the difference the absence of a library made to journey patterns to local centres, and by inference, an estimate of the impact on local trade.

Periods of temporary closure long enough to have a significant impact on library users are rare, and we were able to trace no previous research on the impact of temporary closure on library users.

When libraries have been forced to close temporarily through some disaster such as a serious fire, what published literature there is has tended to focus on 'crisis management' rather than on the impact of the closure on users. Simpson (1994) and Holderness (1995) both concentrate on aspects of disaster management.

Perhaps one reason for the lack of research in this area, is that, within a short time of the initial closure, alternative services have tended to be provided, either on site or close by, e.g. Goldthorpe, Barnsley, 1991; Norwich 1994; and Stannington, Sheffield 1995.

Literature on the effect of service disruption due to strike action is equally lacking. Myers (1991) reported only on the impact of strike action on staff. Tomlinson (1977) discussed how the library profession should manage proposed strike action and concluded only that the focus should be in attempting to solve problems without inconveniencing library users.

Backhouse (1984) reported on the four week strike action taken by members of the trade union, NALGO, in libraries in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets in June 1984. The strike followed the Council's decision to close two libraries with the loss of four posts. Again, the emphasis was on the management of the strike and its effect on staff.

Although both the Library Association and the Library Campaign monitor threatened service point closures, there is no comprehensive record of authorities or service points that have been subject to closure or significant interruption of service during the last 10 years.

It was known that Derbyshire County Library had re-opened two branch libraries previously closed due to budget decisions. However, some alternative services were provided during the closure, and the impact on library users was minimised. No research was carried out into the impact of the temporary closure on library users.

Because suspension of service for a significant period, *without replacement*, could not be traced before the present stoppage, the robustness of the library 'habit' has, therefore, never been open to testing by research. This aspect of the present study is, therefore, as far as the researchers are aware, unique.

## **1.4 Methodology**

We decided that a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques was the most appropriate strategy to achieve the aims of the research and to gain the richest picture of the impact of service loss. Qualitative data provided an understanding of the impact of the closure from interviewees' own perspectives. By analysing quantitative data we were able to determine how far the qualitative data reflected a more general pattern. (Stone and Harris, 1984).

### **1.41 Library profiles**

At the time of the strike, Sheffield Libraries and Information Services provided library access through 34 service points. In June 1995 the population of the city was estimated by the City Council's Central Policy Unit, to be 531,000. The number of registered borrowers totalled 206,965 in April 1995, equivalent to 39% of Sheffield's population. This proportion is lower than the Comedia (1993) claim that 58% of people hold a library card.

The choice of five service points (Central Lending Library, Broomhill, Darnall, Southey, and Waterthorpe) for participation in the research survey was made in consultation with the Senior Assistant Director for Sheffield Libraries and Information Services. In order to capture a representative sample of the library user population in Sheffield the criteria for selection were: a) that the catchment areas should cover a range of different communities, and b) that choice should include libraries with different roles within Sheffield's tiering strategy, from small community library to Central Library.

The geographical spread of the sample libraries was not felt to be a significant issue. Libraries open for less than 30 hours per week were deliberately excluded from the sample because it was felt that limited opening hours would exclude certain categories of user. Descriptions of the five libraries are shown in Table 1, below. Their locations relative to other libraries are shown on Map 1, Appendix 1.

**Table 1: Library Profiles**

<b>Library</b>	<b>Community served/description</b>	<b>No. of hours open per week</b>	<b>Total Issues 1994/5 (non-book shown in brackets)</b>	<b>Registered users (Books and sp (% of catchm population))</b>
Central Library	Contains unique services (Local Studies, Business, Science and Technology Library, Arts and Social Sciences Library, Information Services) as well as a central lending library. It serves the whole population of Sheffield and a small proportion of non-residents.	46.5 (inc. all day Saturday, 2 late evenings)	704,019 (Central Lending only) (22,012)	52,212
Broomhill	Serves a predominantly middle class professional community.	42 (inc. all day Saturday, two late evenings)	194,760 (16,801)	9,070 (20%)
Darnall	Inner city library serving a community with a high proportion of people from ethnic minorities.	39 (inc. ½ day Saturday, one late evening)	140,355 (12,334)	5,866 (43%)
Southey	Serves a community in one of the largest council estates in Sheffield.	30 (inc. ½ day Saturday, one late evening)	80,788 (6,056)	4,806 (28%)
Waterthorpe	Located in an out of town shopping complex serving population in geographically dispersed townships.	42 (inc. all day Saturday, 2 late evenings)	335,846 (43,583)	17,928 (48%)

The research methodology comprised four main elements:

#### **1.42 Semi-structured interviews with library users.**

Interviews were carried out with 518 library users returning library material to the community libraries and the Central Library in the four week period following the re-opening of Sheffield libraries on 2nd August. Users were approached either outside entrances or in the lobbies, as they were entering or leaving the libraries. The questionnaire (Appendix 2) used in the survey was semi-structured, containing both structured questions to make it easier to compare actual data, and open-ended questions to allow for freely worded responses.

The survey work began immediately after resumption of service. This was essential to catch, in the sample, those users who might have decided not to use the library again, but were returning material borrowed before the closure. Due to this time constraint, it was not possible to conduct a pilot survey. Piloting is considered to be an important component of survey methodology in order that possible weaknesses or ambiguities in the structure of the questions may be identified. (Stone and Harris, 1984).

The survey work was undertaken at times that might ensure the sample population matched, as closely as possible, the make-up of the user population in the library catchment areas. However, differences in opening hours across the libraries meant that the same sampling pattern could not always be followed.

Of the four community libraries surveyed, two (Southey and Darnall), were open for only one evening a week, and two (Broomhill and Waterthorpe) were open for two evenings a week. Southey and Darnall both closed at 12.30pm on Saturday. The survey found that 70% of all respondents were not in paid employment. The figure was as high as 96% for respondents at Southey library, although this exceptional figure may have been influenced by the times that the sampling took place.

The survey sample tends to confirm opening hours as a key issue in determining the characteristics of library users. A Cheshire survey of lapsed users, quoted in England (1995), found that 35% of employed people gave 'unsuitable opening hours' as one of the reasons for lapsed membership, compared to 25% of all users. Comedia (1993) comments on the possible exclusion of employed people because library core opening hours tend to match the 9am-5pm working day.

Profiles of user characteristics are shown in Appendix 3. The user sample was generally representative of the population characteristics of the five library catchment areas identified in user population profiles prepared by Sheffield Libraries from the OPCS 1991 Census data (Census Information Profiles). Any anomalies in comparisons are indicated in Appendix 3. Hence, the user profiles provide evidence that the sample population was valid for the survey and that a representative set of opinions and behaviour patterns was obtained.

The profiles also illustrate that public libraries in Sheffield are used by a range of societal groupings:- people of different ages, ethnic origin, educational background and

occupational status. This confirms findings reported in Comedia (1993) and Aslib (1995) and comparable data are provided where relevant.

Males represented 56% of the sample population consistent with the proportion of male users (59%) reported nationally (Comedia, 1993). 29% of users were between 30 and 44 years of age. Aslib reported that 30% of this age group were frequent users. 24% of users in our survey were over 65, compared to the national average of 29% reported by Comedia, 1993). 17% of the population in Sheffield are over 65 (Sheffield Household Survey, 1991).

The occupational status of users was recorded, but because an evaluation of user characteristics was not a critical element of the research and because of time constraints, users were not categorised by the standard socio-economic groups (AB, C1, C2 and DE). Aslib (1995) recorded substantial numbers of users in each of these groups although a higher proportion in the AB and C1 categories. Comedia (1993) concluded that *"the library audience as a whole has a wide social base and is more successful than other cultural institutions in attracting use across class, [but] users as a whole reflect a middle class bias"*.

Direct comparisons to previous research findings cannot be made but data on educational background and occupational status does indicate that the user sample broadly reflects the national picture of users. 24% of users surveyed went to University. 30% of users were in paid employment, 12% were unemployed, 17% were in full time education, and 30% were retired.

### **1.43 Semi-structured interviews with information service users who made enquiries by telephone**

Since so many reference enquiries are made by telephone we felt that a separate survey of this group of users was required. In the financial year 1994/95, 42% of enquiries in the Business, Science and Technology Reference Library and 16% in the Arts and Social Sciences Reference Library were made by telephone. Library staff recorded details of enquirers willing to participate in a telephone survey over a two week period following the reopening of the libraries. A sample of these (38) was interviewed over the telephone.

### **1.44 Telephone interviews with staff at libraries in the region**

Librarians from academic libraries in Sheffield and other major public libraries in the region were interviewed by telephone to gain their observations of the impact of the Sheffield library closure on their services. Staff from Sheffield University, Sheffield Hallam University, Manchester Commercial Library, Nottingham Business Library, Leeds Central Library, Doncaster Central Lending Library and Rotherham Central Library were interviewed.

### **1.45 Interviews with staff in book shops**

We interviewed staff from a sample of five book shops in Sheffield, by telephone. Four book shops located in the centre of Sheffield were included in the survey:- Blackwells, WH Smith, Waterstones and the Independent Bookshop. One book shop in a local shopping centre, a branch of Blackwells situated close to Broomhill library, was also included. We asked staff if they thought the public library closure had had any impact on book buying and if so, what evidence was available to support any assertions made. (e.g. comparison of sales figures with same period in previous year.) The overall aim of the survey was to identify whether book retailers had experienced a change in volume of business as a result of library closures and to make an assessment of the degree of competition libraries face from book shops.

### **1.46 Charting of books on loan data**

The research tracked the return of books still on loan at the time of service closure. All books on loan throughout the service were tracked until the decision was made by service point staff to write-off stock (4-5 months). The objective was to determine whether the percentage of books not returned was greater than the percentage of books normally written off stock through non-return. This would provide additional evidence of the strike's impact on future use of the library service, and also permit an approximate calculation of the cost of the strike in terms of non-returned stock.

### **1.47 Charting of issue data**

Book issues were plotted monthly, from February 1992 to January 1996, for a sample of eleven community libraries.

we considered four statistical approaches for examining the effect of the library closure on issue trends:- structural time series modelling, intervention analysis, polynomial forecasting, and autoregressive integrated moving average modelling. For structural time series modelling and intervention analysis, the only version of the appropriate software available, (Stamp), proved inadequate. Polynomial forecasting using trend and forecasting tools on Excel software also proved unsatisfactory because it did not take seasonal variation into account. Issue data has a seasonal component - issues fall sharply in December and tend to peak during March and October.

Given the availability of suitable software and the fact that the data series contained seasonal variation, most attention was paid to seasonal autoregressive integrated moving average (SARIMA) modelling (Box and Jenkins, 1976). Using Minitab software a SARIMA (1,0,0,0,1,1) was fitted to the issue data up until the library closure in June 1995, and then forecast for a six month period following resumption of library services until January 1996. The SARIMA was found to be acceptable although there was a small amount of autocorrelation left in the residuals.

Comparing the issue forecast with actual issues from August to January 1996, we were able to assess the effect of the library closure on issue trends and test the robustness of findings in the user survey.

### **1.48 Media coverage**

Local newspapers were scanned regularly (Sheffield Star, Sheffield Telegraph, Yorkshire Post) for news items, editorials, readers' letters, etc. on issues related to the closure. The objective was to assess the extent to which the coverage either affected or reflected public attitudes towards the library closure.

### **1.49 Comments and complaints analysis**

Sheffield Libraries encourages, records and analyses comments received about the service on a quarterly basis. The research analysed the returns for July - September 1995 to seek additional evidence of user attitudes to the stoppage and to the service.

In addition, press releases were sent to the Sheffield Telegraph, Sheffield Star, Sheffield Journal, Yorkshire Post and to BBC Radio Sheffield. (Appendix 4). Brief news items in response to press releases were published in the Sheffield Telegraph and the Sheffield Star on 4 August 1995. A telephone interview discussing the purpose of the research was broadcast on BBC Radio Sheffield. Readers and listeners were asked to send to the research team comments on the importance of libraries to them and on where they had gone for books and information during the shutdown. Posters were also displayed in all of Sheffield's libraries when they re-opened. In response to this publicity we received 17 letters from the public, commenting on the strike and how it had affected them..

### **1.50 Limitations of the present study**

Because we were not able to anticipate the length of the strike, the lead-in time for the research was extremely short - less than four weeks - and the British Library has to be congratulated on the speedy way in which it processed the proposal. The timescale for data collection was, also, of necessity, short. The research depended on a survey of users taking place immediately after libraries re-opened. This was to ensure that the survey would include those people returning books borrowed before the strike, who may have decided not to use the library again. It was also imperative that the survey of other library services and book shops was carried out whilst memories were still fresh, and anecdotal evidence of the impact of the strike was still available. The deadline for the collection of data was, therefore, eight weeks from the start of the user survey. It has to be acknowledged that opportunistic research cannot be as rigorous as research not subject to these constraints. Ideally, the questionnaire should have been piloted and questions related more closely to previous research to assist comparative analysis. Target samples should also have been set for each library surveyed, proportional to the number of registered users. Again, ideally, a sample of local

businesses should have been surveyed, in each community, to gain anecdotal evidence of the impact on retailers and other services.

## **2.0 Changes in user behaviour and habits resulting from service disruption**

The user survey identified what distinctive changes took place in the behaviour and habits of library users during and because of the strike. The findings provide an indication of what other pursuits replaced the library and where the competition for users' attention and time comes from.

The questionnaire drew a distinction between alternative and replacement activities. Alternative activities were defined as those which were not directly related to library use - e.g. watching television, playing sports. Replacement activities were defined as those which sought to replace the lost service with a similar resource or service - e.g. using another library, finding another source of information, purchasing instead of borrowing material.

### **2.1 Alternative activities**

The survey asked if anything had taken the place of library activities during the closure. 243 respondents (47%) did not find a replacement; 226 (44%) found other means of reading or replacing specific library services, and only 49 (9%) found a replacement in the form of a non-library oriented 'leisure' activity. (Table 7, Appendix 5).

Of the 49 users who volunteered alternative activities, 25 said they had found more than one alternative. 26 (53%) of the 49 said they had participated in more outdoor based activities, (e.g. gardening, walking); 14 (29%) in craft-based activities (sewing, painting), and 21 (43%) watched more TV.

It is interesting, however, that when users were asked directly if they had watched TV more than usual because of the closure, 108 (21%) said they had. (Table 9, Appendix 5).

Similarly when users were asked directly if they had listened to the radio more often than usual because of the closure 100 (19%) said they had. Yet none of these respondents identified listening to the radio as a replacement activity for the library.

An explanation of this apparent anomaly in responses may be that many respondents did not see television and radio as 'alternative' activities since they were already very much a part of their everyday lives.

Other replacement activities included using a home computer (2 users), other activities with the children (1 user), more socialising (2 users), more housework (5 users) and browsing shops (1 user). There was little evidence of other public amenities being used as a replacement for the library. Only one person used a sports centre and one person visited a museum in Sheffield.

Previous research suggests that public libraries face competition from home-based leisure pursuits (Comedia, 1993). However, evidence from our research shows that only a minority transferred to these leisure activities when deprived of a library. Neither was there any indication from this minority of users that they would be satisfied to remain solely with these alternative activities when the library service resumed.

The findings show that only a small proportion of users changed the nature of their behaviour and actively sought alternative leisure pursuits as a substitute for reading.

The results suggest that when users are deprived of library services, a high proportion (91%) will either find reading material or information elsewhere or else simply stop these activities. However, individual comments from respondents do suggest that the knowledge that the library would eventually re-open did influence behaviour. Research on user behaviour following permanent library closure is needed to put the responses from the present research into context. If the closure had been permanent the proportion of people making efforts to find alternative activities might have been much higher.

The results indicate how important reading is in the lives of library users. They also indicate that, for most people, reading is an activity for which there is no acceptable replacement activity. In this respect there would appear to be minimal competition from other leisure pursuits for the attention and time of existing library users visiting the library for leisure purposes.

## **2.2 Replacements for lost library services - use of alternative libraries**

The research examined the effort users made to replace services lost as a result of the closure and identified the extent to which both alternative libraries, and sources other than libraries, were used to acquire information or reading material.

## **2.3 Evidence from borrower data**

One approach used in the study to assess people's willingness to travel to use alternative service points was to measure the extent to which users transferred to Hillsborough and Parson Cross, the two libraries remaining open in Sheffield for the duration of the strike.

It was calculated, from management information, that about 17% of Hillsborough's active users are registered at other libraries in the city. This figure was based on the average for six months during 1994. During the period of the strike this rose by over a third to 24%. The majority of 'foreign' users were registered at Stannington (3 miles distant from Hillsborough), Southey (3.5 miles), and Walkley (1 mile). Stannington Library was closed due to a major fire in January 1995 and replaced by a mobile library service. It is likely, therefore, that the majority of Stannington registered users

recorded at Hillsborough had been using the library before the strike. A significant number of users registered at the Central Lending Library (3 miles) were also recorded, but the experience of staff suggests that most of these might be expected to be resident in the Hillsborough catchment area.

Hillsborough was picketed during the strike and this was given wide publicity in the media, (reports in Sheffield Star 20/7, 24/7 and 25/7/95). It is therefore likely that this increase was not an accurate reflection of people's preparedness to travel to Hillsborough as an alternative to a local service point. There is substantial evidence that the picket deterred people from using the service. A headline letter, '*Don't bully us*', was published in the Sheffield Star, the local evening newspaper, (Star 7/7/95), and a feature article accusing the strikers of intimidation also appeared (Star 21/7). Hillsborough's book issues during July 1995, when the picketing was at its most intense, were 60% less than those for July 1994.

One Central Library user, who borrowed large print books, was only prepared to travel to Hillsborough library because she felt, as she commented, '*desperate, so broke picket line*'. One user, interviewed at Southey, had also used Hillsborough Library during the strike, but commented that '*it was not nice crossing the picket line*'. Using the same method of calculation, the proportion of Parson Cross users registered at other libraries rose from 12% to 13.3%, an increase of just over 10%. This small increase is almost certainly because Parson Cross is less accessible by public transport than Hillsborough. The library is also only open three days a week.

Although Parson Cross was only picketed during the first two weeks of the strike, staff felt that this had a considerable impact on library use during the following six weeks. This is confirmed by a comparison of issues which shows a fall of 17% for July 1995 compared with July 1994.

The majority of 'foreign' users were registered at Southey (2 miles distant), Ecclesfield, (1 mile), Firth Park (3 miles) and Chapeltown (3 miles).

The increases in 'foreign' borrowers at both libraries illustrate that some Sheffield users were prepared to travel to alternative service points. The percentage increase at Hillsborough, in particular, is felt to be a significant indicator of users' willingness to travel, although actual numbers were relatively small. Unfortunately, the deterrent effect of picketing at both libraries means that it is not possible to draw any firm conclusions about the proportion or number of people willing to travel to one of the two libraries remaining open.

Despite increasing personal mobility through car ownership, recent research suggests that the number of people prepared to travel far to use a library may be limited. Findings from a user survey undertaken in Berkshire showed that on average 80% of users surveyed did not travel more than two miles to visit a community library (Stevens, 1991).

## **2.4 Evidence from user survey**

In response to an open ended question asking users how they replaced the services not available to them during the closure, nearly half of those surveyed, 226 (44%) replaced their library use by some other related activity. 97 of these (43%) found more than one alternative service. 62 (27%) visited other libraries - school or university libraries (16%), or other public libraries (11%). 23 users were prepared to use public libraries in other cities (10%). (Categories 13-15, Table 8, Appendix 5).

It was evident from users' comments that University libraries were often unable to satisfy specific needs for reading material or information. This confirms the findings of Wilson and Marsterson (1974) that resources in Sheffield's libraries complement rather than duplicate each other.

*'University library didn't have everything, such as travel books'.*

*'University caters for different functions, there is no alternative to the public library'.*

*'University was not suitable for business information'.*

## 2.5 Evidence from telephone survey

From the 28 users surveyed who needed to telephone either the Business, Science and Technology or the Arts and Social Sciences reference libraries for information during the closure, 22 (79%) were able to find alternative services. This compares to 40% of reference users calling in person, as identified in the main user survey.

**Table 2: Replacement Services for reference enquiries made by telephone**

Type of Replacement	No. of users	% of users
<b>Other public libraries</b>	7	25%
<b>University libraries</b>	5	18%
<b>Professional organisations</b>	5	14%
<b>British Library</b>	3	14%
<b>Relied on own resources</b>	2	7%
<b>Did not replace</b>	6	22%
<b>Total</b>	28	100

25% of telephone enquirers used other public libraries as a replacement service. Of the six respondents who did not replace services, four said they did not know where else to obtain the required information, and the remaining two kept their enquiries on hold until the libraries reopened. Of the six, five were making enquiries in the Arts and Social Sciences Library.

Fourteen (64%) of the 22 users who did find replacement services were satisfied with these alternatives, 8 (36%) were dissatisfied. Reasons for dissatisfaction are illuminated in the following quotations from users:

*'...used the British Library but can't get as much information there.'*  
*'...British Library and British Steel are both too expensive.'*  
*'...British Standards Institute is so busy, could get the information there, but not as convenient.'*  
*'...used Hallam University, but had to go there in person.'*  
*'...didn't get the information needed from British Steel.'*

Reasons why two users were satisfied with the alternative services found are expressed in their comments:

*'...not as convenient to use the University, but often use it in preference because it is more up to date for legal material.'*  
*'Stockport offers the same service and is also open on Wednesday mornings'*

The results indicate that telephone users of reference services tend to be more resourceful in finding replacement services than those who make enquiries in person. The evidence suggests that this is due to the fact that it is easier to telephone alternative service information points. It is easier to find replacements for business and technical related enquiries than for arts and social sciences, especially when enquiries are made on behalf of organisations, as they tend to have more access to information services provided by professional institutions.

## **2.6 Evidence from other libraries**

Three of the seven libraries surveyed in the region (Sheffield Hallam University, Manchester Commercial Library and Rotherham Central Library) provided anecdotal evidence of an increase in telephone use by Sheffield people. They reported that several people had volunteered the information that they were phoning because of the strike.

Manchester Commercial Library experienced a marked increase in reference enquiries made by telephone during the period of closure, yet this did not slacken off noticeably following the reopening of Sheffield Libraries. Several users volunteered the information that they were making enquiries because Sheffield Central Library was closed. The indication is that the increase in usage was partly due to the closure in Sheffield but evidence to support this observation is not available.

Sheffield Hallam University Library situated within 10 minutes walk from the Central Library experienced a significant increase in members of the public using the library's business and reference services. Librarians' comments supporting this observation include:

*'We had a considerable increase in general enquiries as a result of the strike. Answering these in many cases proved to be problematic as we did not have the material, e.g. foreign editions of Kompass, ditto for telephone directories and access to some databases.'*

*'We dealt with a lot of business and company enquiries on the Social Science and Business floor - some of these were quite time consuming!'*

Although these three libraries may have been the preferred alternative providers for local telephone users, they were by no means the obvious choice for everybody. One library user interviewed volunteered the information that they had used Stockport for information, and a conversation with a senior librarian in Derbyshire revealed the information that a Sheffield resident had rung their reference service for information during the strike.

However, overall there was not a significant increase in the use of other public library services.

## **2.7 Use of alternative sources - evidence from users**

### **Books**

226 users (44%) found replacements for library services from sources other than libraries. Of these, 88 (20% of those who borrow books) volunteered the information that they had bought books - (13% from book shops, 6% from charities and jumble sales and 1% from book clubs). (Table 8, Appendix 5). However, when users were prompted with a direct question as to whether they had bought books more often than usual, 128 (29%) said they had. The ability to be able to buy books is determined by economics and it was not surprising that 52% of users in Broomhill compared to 12% in Darnall bought books more often than usual.

Comedia (1993) claimed that the rapid growth in chains of quality book shops has posed a new threat to the public library. A survey of lapsed users in Cheshire libraries undertaken by the Library and Information Statistics Unit in Loughborough University, suggested that book shops are a source of competition for non-library users. The study reported that 25% of lapsed users surveyed said one reason influencing their decision not to use a library was that they preferred to buy books. (England, 1995). Our research indicates that book shops are not in competition for library users. Only a minority of users bought books from book shops as a means of replacing the books they would have borrowed from the public library. The evidence was that this was entirely for economic reasons. Users remarked that books were too expensive to buy,

one user making specific reference to children's educational books. Another remarked: *'I couldn't afford to buy books I just needed for reference'*.

The quoted comments below typify the views expressed by readers responding to the news items in the Sheffield Telegraph and Sheffield Star on 4 August 1995:

*'I had to supplement my reading with bought second hand paperbacks - not too expensive, but buying new books to read is really exorbitant'.*

*'Now that we have retired my husband and I cannot afford to buy books and so the library service is a godsend to us. we also appreciate the loan of music cassettes and videos at such a reasonable charge'.*

*'During the strike I had to resort to skulking around book shops in town making notes from gardening books.... I have also had to do the same for holiday information....'*

It is significant that 115 respondents (26%) replaced their books by means other than purchase. 10% borrowed from friends, 2% borrowed from other organisations, e.g. social clubs, and 14% read their own books.

The research showed that people who borrow books from libraries tend also to have their own books at home, even in less affluent areas. The proportion of users who read their own books was within a small range across all communities surveyed - 13% (Darnall, Southey, Waterthorpe) to 19% (Broomhill).

In response to the news item in the Sheffield press, two users stated:

*'During the strike I caught up on a large backlog of periodicals and unread presents'.*

*'... the strike deprived us of a source of pleasure and knowledge. We coped by lending each other books and rereading old favourites, not by more radio and TV.'*

From anecdotal evidence a large proportion of the 10% who borrowed books from friends actually shared the library books they had on loan during the closure. In one community, library users were particularly innovative: A library user wrote:

*'During the strike we had coffee mornings on the forecourt of the library [Walkley], at which people brought their books back and exchanged them'.*

### **Other media**

The importance users attach to the public library's provision of media forms other than books is reflected in the extent to which users sought replacements. (Table 9, Appendix 5). 37% of users who read magazines or newspapers at libraries bought

them more often than usual. 23% of users who borrowed videos from libraries said they rented videos from hire shops more often than usual. It would seem that for many users it is easier to replace videos than recorded music because of the availability of video hire shops. Only 9% of users who borrowed CDs or tapes bought these items more often than usual and only 4% of users who borrow videos bought videos as an alternative. Again economics seems to have been the deterrent.

## **2.8 Use of Alternative Sources - Evidence from book shops**

Staff interviewed at Blackwells and Waterstones book shops said that they had experienced an unexpected increase in book sales during the strike. (see section 4.3 for sales data.) Three of the five book shops had noticed an increase in the number of people coming into the shop, either for buying or browsing. Waterstones commented that there was a noticeable increase in the sales of fiction and travel books during the library closure and that several customers had remarked to staff that they were only buying books because the library was shut.

Blackwells in central Sheffield considered that more people had been browsing the book shop and some customers had remarked that they were making enquiries about books because the public library was shut. Blackwells in Broomhill commented that more paperbacks and children's fiction had been sold during the closure.

WH Smith had not noticed a change in the number of people buying or browsing the book shelves. The Independent Bookshop, situated within 150 metres of the Central Library was aware of people coming into the shop because of the library closure, yet this was more than offset by the loss of people who visit the book shop en route to or from the Central Library.

Conclusions to be drawn are that although users did make efforts to replace lost services, they tended to be dissatisfied with the alternatives found. It is significant that nearly half of all respondents (47%) did not replace library services, even though 31% said they had missed the library very much.

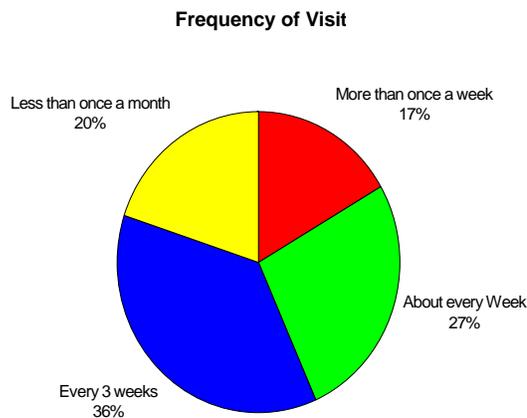
### 3.0 How important are libraries to library users?

The ways in which people use libraries can provide an indication of the role the public library plays in users' lives. Our research, therefore, investigated the frequency of visits, what purposes the library was used for and whether these were missed, and which services were used and missed the most. In addition, comments users made on why they had missed the library provided a useful source of qualitative information.

#### 3.1 Frequency of use

The survey asked how often users visited the library. The results are shown in Chart 1 and a breakdown for each library is shown in Table 10, Appendix 6.

**Chart 1: Frequency of Visits**



A high percentage of users surveyed (44%) visit the library weekly or more frequently. A direct comparison with previous recent research is not possible since both Comedia (1993) and Aslib (1995) used 'within the last fortnight' as an indicator of frequent use. However, the survey findings are broadly compatible with research in Cleveland quoted in Comedia (1993) which indicated that more than half of the sample surveyed there had visited the library within the last fortnight. Using the same indicator Aslib (1995) suggests those 54% of library users are frequent users.

Comedia (1993) found it surprising that the frequent use identified in Cleveland was still derived from the traditional function of book lending. The current research supports the Cleveland case study, indicating that 91% of regular users surveyed used the library to borrow books.

However, the high proportion of people using the library at least weekly, revealed by the current research, suggests reasons for using the library not directly attributable to book borrowing. (The loan period in Sheffield is three weeks.) Previous research appears to have underestimated the frequency of library use. This key finding requires further research.

An interesting finding was the difference in frequency of use between libraries. Nearly three quarters (72%) of Darnall's users visit the library at least once a week, whereas only 20% of Broomhill's users visit the library at least once a week.

The results may suggest that for more highly educated users (40% of users surveyed in Broomhill had attended University), the public library tends to serve as a means to an end: - a means to obtain reading material. Conversely, in communities with a lower proportion of University educated residents (1% of users surveyed in Darnall had attended University), a greater number of users tend to visit the library as an end in itself; a place to visit, and to spend leisure time in.

Differences in frequency of use between libraries may also be an indication that users in less deprived areas (e.g. Broomhill) may not have to rely on the public library so much since they have access to other libraries, particularly those in the workplace. They also have access to greater financial resources. Data on users who bought books during the closure partly support this view (see section 2.7).

All four community libraries surveyed provided community activities and facilities beyond the traditional function of book lending. There is, therefore, no evidence that the difference in frequency of use was related to the presence or absence of this factor.

It could be argued that frequency of use may be related to shelf choice, i.e. if the shelf choice is poor then more frequent visits are necessary in order to 'catch' the desired material between loans. This is another area where further research is required.

Elderly users are amongst the most frequent visitors to libraries. 59% of retired users visit the library at least once a week. 50% of unwaged users visit the library at least once a week compared to 28% of employed users. The library has many benefits for that seeking work. Job seekers can peruse newspapers and magazines for job advertisements and can carry out research for information on potential employers.

45% of users surveyed between the ages of 10 and 19 years use the library at least once a week, compared to 32% of users aged between 30 and 44 years. Aslib (1995) found that the average annual frequency of visits for 16-19 year olds was higher than any other age group, and attributed the increased level of library use partly to the requirements of new educational curricula, which have increased the amount of independent project work school students do, and to school leavers' endeavours to find work.

26% of users who make reference enquiries by telephone, did so more than once a week. The majority (90%) of these were seeking information from the Business, Science and Technology Library, the remainder from the Arts and Social Sciences Library.

### **3.2 Purposes used**

Interviewees were asked to explain what purposes they usually went to the library for. Users selected options from a prescribed list: leisure, educational, information on current events, work related information and personal issues. 41% used the library for more than one purpose. The research predictably showed that 89% of community library users use the library for leisure purposes. The corresponding figure for the Central Library was 57%. (Table 11, Appendix 6). The results showed that the community libraries as well as the Central Library play a key role in supporting education. 26% of community library users visit the library for educational purposes, the corresponding figure for the Central Library is 57%.

33% of Darnall's users said that they used the library for educational purposes, compared with 10% for Southey and 24% for Waterthorpe, a 'township' library with a very wide range of resources, where we might have expected educational use to be high. It may be significant that only 1% of Darnall's users had had a university education. The high figure may also indicate the success of the TEC (Training and Education Council) funded Open for Learning initiative at Darnall .

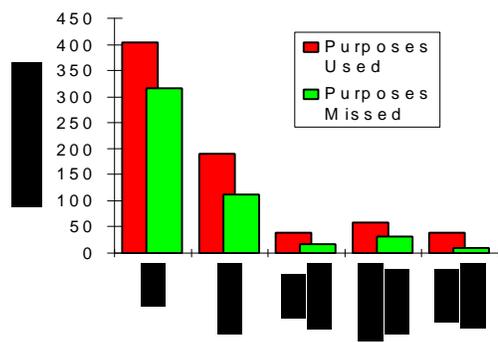
Our results reinforce those found by Aslib (1995), which reported that users primarily use the library to 'read for pleasure'. Other favoured reasons include 'educational purposes', reading to support 'recreations and pastimes' and to 'gain information or knowledge'.

### 3.3 Purposes most missed

The research asked respondents for which purpose they had missed the library the most. The question was asked in this way to provide a clearer indication of the relative importance of purposes to users.

Chart 2 indicates the contrast between purposes used and purposes missed most. Detailed information is provided in Table 12, Appendix 6).

**Chart 2: Purposes used contrasted with purposes missed most.**



79% of respondents said they had missed the library for at least one purpose. (16% of users stated more than one purpose). 78% missed leisure purposes most, 58% educational purposes. 21% said they had not missed the library, of which the majority (56%) only visited the library occasionally (less than once a month). The comments below typify the views expressed by users who did not miss the library:

*...not affected because does not rely on library as only source  
 .. not time of year to have missed it most  
 ...it was not shut long enough to really miss.*

A letter sent to the research team at Sheffield University stated:

*'Basically the closure of the city libraries did not greatly affect me, though at one time I would have been quite concerned by the loss of the facilities. This is because of the sad deterioration in recent years of the library service.*

*The closure some years ago of my local library (Ecclesall) plus the fact that few new books are now available means that I rarely borrow books from the library, apart from an occasional holiday guide book or OS maps. High fines also encourage me to buy books, mostly second hand, instead.*

*The service [reference library] has become so poor, with magazines regularly well out of date that I have recently given up making a special trip into town to visit the reference library. It has become more economic to subscribe to one or two important magazines and mainly to do without the rest.'*

The findings showed that there is a greater dependency on public libraries as an educational provider in communities where people may be expected to have less access to other sources of educational materials and generally less contact with higher education. 85% of interviewees using Darnall library for educational purposes missed the library for this purpose the most. In contrast only 44% of Broomhill users missed the library as an educational provider the most. Generally fewer people than we expected missed the library as an educational provider possibly because the closure coincided with the end of the academic year.

**Table 3: Purposes Missed Most by Occupational Groupings**

	<b>Employed</b>	<b>Housewife /husband</b>	<b>Unwaged</b>	<b>Retired</b>	<b>in Full Time Education</b>
<b>Leisure</b>	74%	92%	79%	86%	54%
<b>Educational</b>	61%	64%	50%	50%	66%
<b>Information on current events</b>	46%	33%	57%	50%	33%
<b>Work related</b>	50%	25%	71%	50%	57%
<b>Information on personal issues</b>	27%	0%	50%	18%	50%

The results show there was a high dependency on work related information for unemployed users. Not surprisingly, users who are not in paid employment or in full time education missed leisure purposes most.

The survey of telephone enquirers approaching the Central Library showed that 42% had not missed the reference services. This high figure is predictable since telephone users are clearly not limited to sources of information by geographical constraints. The majority of enquirers (87%) were making enquiries on behalf of organisations, which are more likely to have access to alternative sources of information (see Section 2.5).

### 3.4 Services used

Details of library services used are shown in Table 13, Appendix 6. Although the majority of interviewees, (85%), use the service for borrowing books, a high percentage of users make use of the wide range of other services available. The range of users borrowing videos in the community libraries is from 25% (Southey) to 44% (Waterthorpe), and the range for borrowing recorded music is 7% (Southey) to 37% (Waterthorpe). 22% of all interviewees use books or magazines for reference, 12% read newspapers and magazines, and 18% use information services or notice boards.

These results support the findings from the survey carried out in Cheshire, quoted in Aslib (1995) that there was considerable support for library services which extended beyond the loan of books. As Aslib claims *'libraries help people to inform themselves, acquire knowledge and provide information for businesses and job seekers'*.

### 3.5 Services most missed

Our study identified services that respondents missed the most during the closure, (Table 14, Appendix 6).

81% of respondents said they had missed some aspect of the service very much and 19% missed more than one service. 69% missed borrowing books, 53% missed borrowing children's books and 35% missed reference material. One user writing to the research team pointed out:

*'I am self-employed and use the Central Library in Sheffield for a great amount of reference work. The last few weeks have been very frustrating for me and, being self-employed, time is money. Clients have been very understanding regarding the delay in production of the information but the long term effect could be considerable - only time will tell'.*

Some users missed aspects of the library service that were not included on the prescribed list of services on the questionnaire. These included activity classes and social events at the community libraries, (see section 3.7). 60% of users who attended

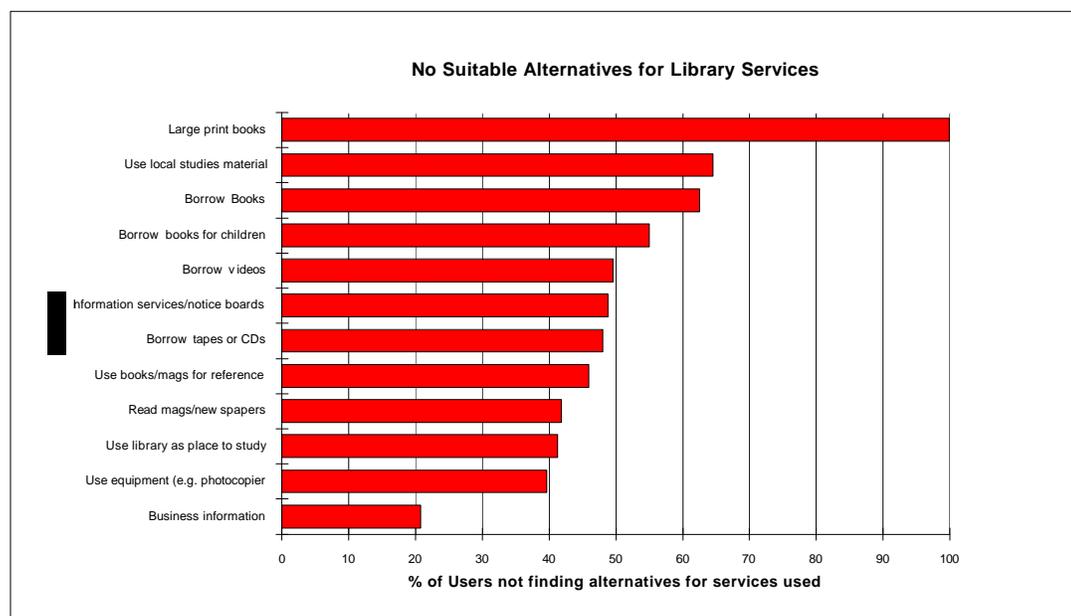
these classes, missed them the most. 22% of the 18 users who explicitly mentioned that they like to browse reading material said they missed this activity. All six interviewees using large print books missed this service the most.

### 3.6 Availability of suitable alternatives

The survey asked users which services they could find no suitable alternatives for during the closure. The results are presented in Chart 3 below. All six users who borrowed large print books were unable to find a replacement service. A similarly high figure might have been expected for local studies material, but only two thirds of local studies users said they were unable to find a suitable alternative. This is probably because usage is more sporadic and users who did not need to use the service during the closure would not have needed to look for an alternative. The proportion of people specifying that they were unable to find a suitable alternative for business information is also low (21%) and is an indication that business information is easier to replace either by telephoning or visiting other libraries close to Sheffield.

It should be noted that users' interpretation of 'suitable' would have been subjective and the survey did not measure the extent of users' satisfaction with alternative services.

**Chart 3: Services for which suitable alternatives NOT found**



### 3.7 Reasons the library was missed

The survey asked why users had missed the library or any of its services. Comments from users provided a qualitative source of opinions and perceptions as to how users felt about being deprived of the library service. 25% of users who missed the library, (79% of total surveyed), offered general explanations typified by remarks such as: '*couldn't borrow any new books*', '*inconvenient*', '*missed it dreadfully*', '*ran out of books to read*', and '*frustrated*'. (Category 13, Table 15, Appendix 6).

Comments from interviewees offering more illuminating information are categorised under headings 1-11, Table 15, Appendix 6. 14% of users who identified explicit reasons why the library was missed needed to obtain specific information or reference material. The majority of these (71%) were Central Library users. Information required included travel books, company information, newspaper articles and bus timetables. Two users needed information for job hunting or interviews.

60% of users who attend activity classes or social events at the community libraries missed these the most. Activity groups at Waterthorpe include dance and craft classes and talks given by outside speakers. At Waterthorpe, these are organised externally but the library's facilities are used to hold the event. At Darnall social activities are organised by the library staff. All these activities were particularly popular among retired users.

This is another indicator of the more intangible benefits users derive from their local library. It is significant how many respondents overall missed the library for a reason not specifically related to the commonly accepted core services of reference, information and book lending.

### **3.8 Impact on 'quality of life' of users**

Previous research, (e.g. Aslib, 1995) has indicated that public library services contribute to the quality of life of library users and that the benefits users derive from the library extend far beyond its role as a provider of reading material and information. The current research provides strong evidence for the social value of the service in the majority of communities.

In three out of the four community libraries surveyed (the exception was Broomhill), over half of those surveyed who said they had missed the library said they had missed it most for a reason related to their well being or life style, rather than a more specific book or information related reason. (Categories 5-7, Table 15, Appendix 6).

Supporting evidence is also provided by the findings on frequency of use presented in Chapter 3. In the same three community libraries the percentage of people visiting the library at least weekly ranged from 44% to 72%. These high figures indicate that a large percentage of library users visit the library far more often than they need to, given the loan period of three weeks. This suggests that the library visit is, in itself, an enjoyable experience that is part of a regular routine for many people. The review of users' comments demonstrates that the impact of the closure on a very significant number of users meant far more than simply being deprived of reading material.

For 68 users (22% of those offering specific reasons why the library was missed) going to the library was *'part of a routine'*, or *'provided a purpose for the day'*. For 49 users (16% of those offering specific reasons why the library was missed), the library was missed because it was *'a meeting point, a day out, a place to see people, or a place to participate in social events. somewhere to spend time in, to meet or chat to people'*.

For the 53% of users surveyed who were not either in paid employment or in full time education the library is undoubtedly fulfilling a social need rather than a want. Respondents derived benefits from activities considered to be the public library's more intangible benefits.

Strong feelings indicating how individuals were affected by the library closure were expressed in letters received by the research team and provided further evidence that libraries help to support the emotional needs of particular groups in local communities, such as the unemployed and the elderly.

*'Libraries cater for more than books now. Those most distressed by non-opening and hardest hit were persons house bound or unable to ask friends' assistance. The columns of school children must have been affected. Some libraries - like Firth Park - have leisure activities - you are welcome to the craft class on Mondays. The long standing Computer Club was closed. No Friday lunch club for the old and infirm'.*

*'It really is hard to imagine life without the library. I tend to go there at least once a week. There are many things only a public library can provide.'*

*'I was deeply affected by the closure. The longer it went on, the more concerned I was that we might be seen to be managing without it, and it might not reopen. My local library is Park, and it is the only resource and place to visit (apart from corner shops) in the area. I usually take my 5 year old every week to chose books - she spent more time watching TV without the stimulus of new books to read.'*

The research revealed that the public library plays a vital role in the lives of many users and does improve the quality of life by providing a valuable support service for many groups in the community.

## **4.0 The importance of libraries to the local infrastructure.**

### **4.1 The library's role in the town centre**

Previous research investigating the role of libraries in town centres or in shopping complexes has shown that libraries have an impact on the surrounding retail economy. A Comedia (1991) study, *Out of Hours*, on urban vitality, examined the role of the town centre as a focal point for local civic culture, retailing, entertainment, night life and transport interchanges. The library was identified as a key institution in town centres.

*'it was used by a wider cross-section of the local population than almost any other public, commercial or retail institution in the town centre'. (Comedia, 1993, p.1)*

Greenhalgh and Worpole (1995) pointed out that the contribution of public libraries to the vitality and economy of town centres has not been recognised in urban regeneration schemes in the 1980s. A case study, carried out by Comedia, reported on the 'invisibility' of Birmingham Central Library, the largest public library in Europe. The library's role as a key institution in the heart of the centre, accounting for the highest amount of daily 'people activity' of all public facilities in the city centre was completely overlooked in the Council's urban regeneration initiative. This lack of visibility denies the potential role of libraries in civic and economic renewal of town centres (Greenhalgh and Worpole, 1995).

A survey carried out in Hounslow Central Library, built in 1988 as part of an entertainment and shopping complex, showed that over half the people using the library were combining library use with a shopping trip. Another case study for Dorset County Council required an assessment of possible locations for a new central library in Bournemouth. A survey of retailers in Weymouth and Hartlepool, where libraries had been located to central shopping areas investigated the impact of these libraries on the surrounding retail trade. The survey concluded that some key shops did note significant increases in turnover following the opening of the libraries. The majority of retailers interviewed were relatively unaware of the library as an attraction drawing people into a shopping area. However, property developers were gradually becoming more aware of the impact a library may have on revitalising and sustaining a shopping centre. (Greenhalgh and Worpole, 1995).

### **4.2 Evidence from user survey**

Users were asked whether the library closure affected the frequency of visits to their local centre (i.e. the area in which the local library is situated). 23% of users said they had visited their local centre less often than usual during the library closure. It can be inferred from the findings in previous research, that the fall in the frequency of users' visits to local centres would have a corresponding effect on library users' frequency of visits to shops, businesses, community facilities, etc. situated in the same area.

The findings from a user survey undertaken in Berkshire reinforces this view. The survey showed that 42% of users combine visits to the library with shopping and in major libraries 77% combine library visits with other activities. (Stevens, 1991).

Of those stating that they had visited their local centre less frequently, the range across the libraries sampled was from 14% (Waterthorpe) to 28% (Central and Broomhill). It was not unexpected that the closure of Waterthorpe Library, part of a large shopping and entertainment complex, affected users' frequency of visits to the local centre to a lesser extent than the closure of the other community libraries. It is known that a relatively high proportion of Waterthorpe's users come from outside the local catchment area, their use of the library being dependent on their use of the shopping centre.

Our research added a further dimension to previous research on the importance of the public library to the local infrastructure, because our results revealed that the frequency of visits to *all* local centres is influenced by the presence of the public library. Indeed, it can be inferred from our results that the library's impact on local shops situated close to a community library or on users' routes to the library ( e.g. Southey, Darnall and Broomhill) is correspondingly greater than it is on town centres.

In every case, the research showed that the library closure led to a fall in the frequency of users' visits to their local centre. Although the short time scale of the research did not permit a survey of local retailers, the findings of the user survey suggest that, city-wide, the closure may have had a measurable impact on the economy of some local centres.

### **4.3 Impact of closure on book shops surveyed**

Two of the five book shops surveyed experienced an unexpected increase in book sales during the strike. Blackwells in Broomhill indicated that sales were about 12% up on the previous year and Waterstones indicated an increase of 8% from the previous year. However, there is no concrete evidence that these increases are attributable to the library closure. W H Smith and Blackwells in central Sheffield were unable to divulge financial information. W H Smith was not aware of an increase in the number of people coming in to their book department, nor of an increase in book sales. Blackwells in central Sheffield remarked that the noticeable increase in the number of people browsing had not necessarily translated into an increase in sales.

Against the general picture of increased use, the Independent Bookshop, situated within 150 meters of the Central Library experienced an overall loss of business during the strike. Although staff commented that the strike had brought additional business, this had been more than offset by the loss of passing trade from Central Library users. They estimated that, over all, takings of between £50 and £100 a day had been lost due to the closure.

Trade was also lost from sales to the Central Library. The library buys approximately £12,000 worth of books per year from the book shop. It was noted that passing trade had resumed following the reopening of the Central Library.

## 5.0 Media, public and user attitudes

### 5.1 Press coverage

A review of press coverage of the library closure between June and August revealed that the majority of articles focused on the progress of the strike action - actions taken by library workers and how the Council dealt with the dispute. There was minimal reference to the impact of the closure on library users.

It is possible that the impact on library users was scarcely mentioned in the press because the public were, on the whole, in support of the action and sympathised with the issues library staff were campaigning for. Indeed, the majority of readers' letters published offered support to the library staff:

*'As a user of the city library services, for over 60 years, I find that it is disgusting that our library staff are constantly being asked to accept reductions in working hours and wage cuts.'* (Reader's letter, Star 7/7/95)

One letter did refer to the impact on library users, specifically on school pupils:

*'There is growing concern throughout the city about the consequences of the library strike. The continuation of the strike could destroy pupils' hopes of obtaining sufficient grades in A level and GCSE courses. Students are dependent on city libraries for books.... as school funds cannot provide all the essential materials.'* (Reader's letter, Star, 14/7/95)

One editorial in the Star made reference to library users, but, in view of the high proportion of letters supporting the library workers' action, it appeared not to be based on factual information.

*' The last people you would expect to get involved in a noisy dispute are library workers - it seems like a contradiction in terms. But the long running campaign of industrial action by librarians in Sheffield is upsetting everybody - most of all, the thousands of people who value the service.'*

### 5.2 Users comments and complaints

The analysis of comments and complaints received by Sheffield Libraries from July to September 1995 reinforced evidence from the press that the public were overwhelmingly supportive of library staff and of the service. The service's quarterly report to the Libraries and Arts Sub Committee revealed that 98.85% of comments were favourable. 3,388 positive comments about the strike (*congratulations on the strike action, welcome back, etc.*) were collected by library staff and only 39 negative

comments. The negative comments were predominantly about the behaviour of pickets harassing people trying to use the service points that remained open during the industrial action. It appears that the closure brought the value of the public library service to users' attention. As one user stated, "*Glad the library is open once again, I did not realise how much I missed it until it was closed for such a long period.*"

Further evidence that very few complaints were made to libraries is indicated in a library worker's letter to the press:

*'If nothing else has convinced me that what we did [strike action] was absolutely the right thing to do, opening our doors again to the public has. We have received nothing but congratulations on our victory. There has not been a single complaint, moan or hostile reaction at Highfield Library where I work and we know the people of Sheffield appreciate their libraries, even if the Council does not.'*

### **5.3 Public and user attitudes towards the closure**

The level of public support was further reinforced by anecdotal evidence from the user survey, which indicated that the majority of users were tolerant towards the strike. Nineteen users expressed comments supporting the industrial action, compared to three indicating their disapproval.

Public and user attitudes towards the strike action appear to reflect a comment on the way the service has been reduced in recent years. Towards the end of the strike, letters in the press also began to make reference to the threatened closure of six libraries, again as a result of 1995/96 budget problems. The antagonisms that people felt about decisions the Council were making appeared to overcome any frustrations they may have had over the closure. The overwhelming support for the staff, in readers' letters to the press, in the analysis of comments and complaints made to libraries, and in the user survey, reveals what a close relationship there is between the service and its users. The research has shown that users place great value on the public library service and that there is minimal evidence to show that users have deserted the service. (See Chapter 6).

## 6.0 Long term impact of the strike

### 6.1 Evidence from users

One objective of the user survey was to ascertain whether the closure would affect the frequency of use of the public library service in the future. 450 users, ( 87%) surveyed, claimed they would maintain the same frequency of use as before the closure. From the five users (1%) who claimed they would visit the library less often than usual, only two of these were for reasons directly attributable to the temporary closure. (The remaining three no longer needed to use the library because educational courses had been completed). One user said she *'was fed up library was shut'*, the other said she had *'broken the habit and was sick of library services continually being cut down'*.

63 users (12%) claimed that they would be visiting the library more often than before the closure. However, this change was not necessarily attributable to the impact of the closure. From those who volunteered further information, 17 said they would be using the library more often because they were returning to college or because they had to catch up on lost study time, two because winter was on its way, eight because it was their children's school holidays, and three for information relating to job applications. Significant remarks related to the effect of the closure on users' attitudes were:

*'...had got used to coming here, more aware of its facilities'.  
'...determined to make more use of it as I'd missed it so much'.  
'I missed it, so will appreciate it now'.  
'When it was shut it gave me an awareness of what we take for granted'.*

Letters received by the research team reinforced the evidence from the user survey that normal patterns of library use would be resumed. Users' attitudes are typified in the following quotations:

*'As soon as the strike was over, we have beetled down to Woodseats and have changed our books, much to the relief of my kids'.  
  
'I was back at Highfield Library the day it opened to collect my usual nine books which last me two to three weeks'.  
  
'We were entirely in support of the library staff but are relieved to have access again to such a wealth of information and literature.'*

The evidence suggests that the public were supportive of the strike action taken by library staff, and the relationship between library staff and users would not be damaged in the longer term.

## 6.2 Issue trends

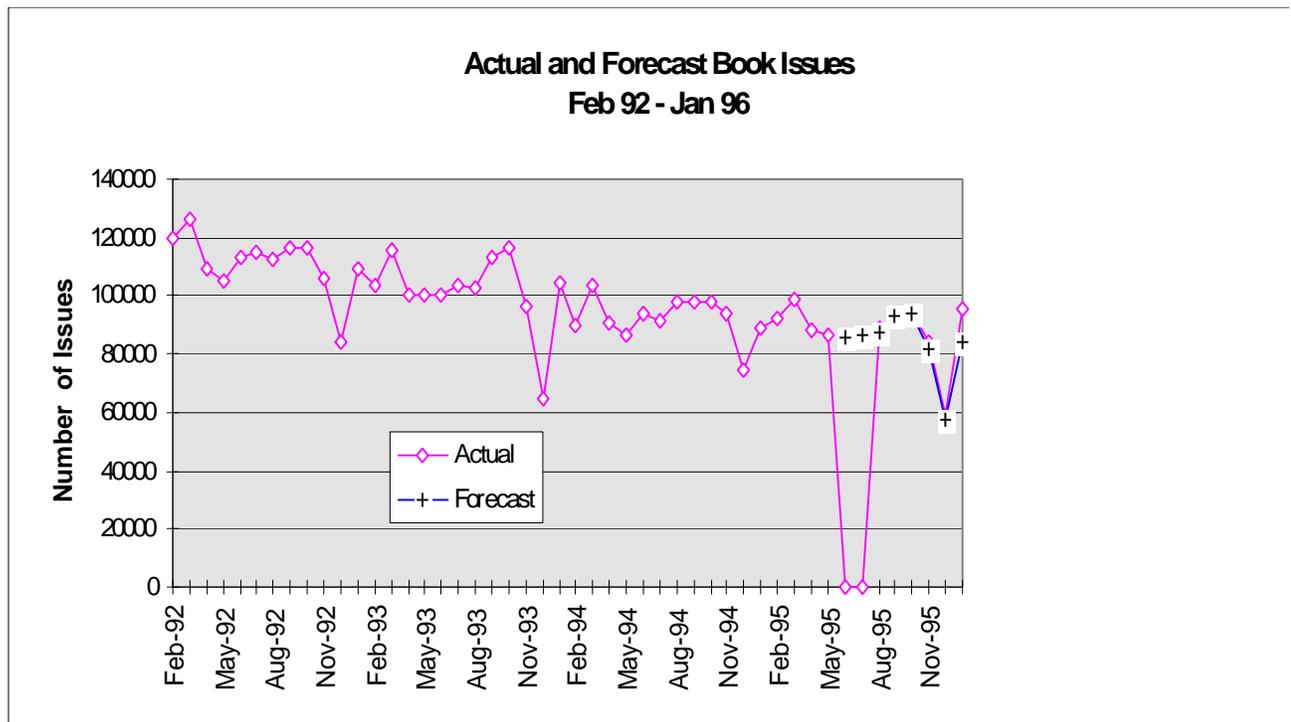
A monthly plotting of book issues for a sample of eleven community libraries was undertaken from February 1992 to January 1996 using seasonal autoregressive integrated moving average (SARIMA) modelling (Box and Jenkins, 1976).

A comparison of the issue forecast from August to January 1996, with actual issues, enabled an assessment to be made of the effect of the library closure on issue trends. The overall trend since February 1992 is one of decline and is compatible with the national decline in book issues (Greenhalgh and Worpole, 1995).

The effect of the interruption in service in June and July on issue trends for the eleven community libraries is shown in Chart 4 below.

The forecast closely matches the path of actual issues indicating that the disruption of service has had no impact on the number of issues. Indeed, actual issues were higher than forecast for five of the six months compared.

A more accurate assessment of the impact of the library closure on issue trends would require the projection to be extended over a time period longer than the six months allowed for the production of this Report.



### **6.3 Non return of books**

The necessary management data were unavailable to make an accurate calculation of the percentage of books due back before the library closure which had still not been returned five months after the resumption of service. However, an approximate calculation indicates that, for the whole of Sheffield Library Service, 4% of books (7,000) due back before or during the closure had not been returned by 30 December 1995. The three week amnesty given to borrowers, which extended the loan period for books borrowed before the closure to 23 August 1995, was taken into account in the calculation. Comparing this figure with the percentage of written-off stock to total stock in the previous year (2.5%), it would seem that the increase in non-return (1.5%) indicates that approximately 2,600 books have been lost through non-return solely due to the strike.

Based on an average book price (£10.59) for September 1995 calculated by JMLS, Sheffield Libraries' main book supplier <sup>(1)</sup>, in financial terms the non-return of books resulting from the library closure, represents a loss of £27,534 for Sheffield Libraries and Information Services.

1. JMLS (formerly John Menzies) produces an average book price based on a combination of averages for paperbacks, hardbacks, adult books and children's books. This figure was used in preference to average book purchase prices used by Sheffield Libraries and Information Services for financial modelling purposes because three average book prices are calculated. For 1994/5 these were hardback non-fiction (£16.10), hardback fiction (£14.00) and hardback children's (£7.45).

### **6.4 Reference Enquiries**

Concern had been expressed by some library staff that the number of reference enquiries dealt with in the Business, Technology and Science Library had fallen since the library closure. However, this concern was not substantiated by the analysis of the reference enquiries data recorded from January 1992 to January 1996. The findings indicated that the closure did not have any significant impact on the number of enquiries made both in person and by telephone. In the six month period following the reopening of libraries, fewer telephone enquiries were made in four out of six months compared with the same period the previous year (August 1994 - January 1995). However, the % reduction in enquiries was no greater than in the six month period preceding the strike, compared with the corresponding six months during the previous year, (December 1993 to May 1994).

What was most significant was the closeness in trend over the four year period of enquiries made in person and enquiries made by telephone. (Chart 5, Appendix 7).

Evidence that users have not remained with alternative libraries or information services used during the closure, is further supported by anecdotal evidence from Manchester Commercial Library. A conversation with a business librarian on March 5 1996 confirmed that the increase in telephone reference enquiries at Manchester experienced during and immediately after Sheffield Library closure has not been sustained.

## 7.0 Conclusions

When the present research was proposed, it was recognised that its value was twofold. First, the strike and consequent closure of Sheffield Libraries and Information Services constituted a 'critical incident' for library users. They had no option but to react to the sudden and arbitrary withdrawal of their library service, and this provided an unprecedented opportunity to investigate aspects of user behaviour and attitudes not covered by previous research. The research would, therefore, both complement and enrich the body of knowledge about the way public library users behave and think.

Secondly, it was felt that the research would have some practical value, in that it would help library professionals, managers and policy makers to understand the impact service disruption or temporary closure might have on the future use of the service. Particular concern about the robustness of the library 'habit' was expressed by Sheffield's Director of Leisure and Head of Libraries immediately after the strike, when a press statement reported him as saying:

*'Now of course, there is the added worry that many casual users will have lost the habit of browsing around library shelves and may not bother coming back now the libraries are open again.'* (Sheffield Telegraph 4/8/95)

This concern was central to the research.

The limitations of the present study, due to the extremely short lead-in time and the time constraints of the data collection have already been acknowledged in Chapter 1. Whilst recognising the weaknesses and inconsistencies inevitably present in such 'quick and dirty' research, we believe the findings to be of considerable value. The sample of 518 users surveyed compares very favourably with previous research samples in the field, research often multi-authority in scope and carried out over a much longer time period.

The research largely achieved its objectives and succeeded in throwing light on a number of aspects of user behaviour and library use not covered by previous research.

From the findings already detailed in the body of this report, the following are of felt to be of particular interest and value:

### 7.1 Characteristics of users and their use of libraries.

Core library opening hours are increasingly tending to correspond to office hours, (Comedia 1993), due to service reductions. This places limits on library access for employed people. 70% of the research sample were not in paid employment. In the case of one library (Southey) the figure was as high as 96%.

The research showed that 89% of community library users used the library for leisure purposes. It is ironic that a service that is so dependent, for its success, on leisure use should have its opening hours so heavily weighted towards 'office' hours.

- **The research raises questions about the extent to which employed people are effectively being 'disenfranchised' from public library use due to a weighting towards 'office' opening hours.**

In two out of the four community libraries surveyed, more than half of the respondents visited the library at least once a week. For a third library, the figure was only slightly less (44%). Although 91% of respondents used their visit to borrow books, the frequency of visits cannot be attributed to the need to return them, since the loan period is three weeks. Evidence of other factors accounting for frequency of use is identified in 7.3 below.

- **The research suggests that previous published research may have disguised the true frequency of visits to the local library, and, by inference, the value of that library in peoples' lives.**

Although frequency of use was generally far higher than expected, there were significant differences between libraries. These seemed to be dependent on the nature of the community. 72% of users surveyed at Darnall visited the library at least once a week, compared with 20% of respondents at Broomhill.

- **The research suggests that the library may be particularly significant as a community resource in communities where unemployment is high and access to other resources, including financial resources, limited.**

## **7.2 What changes took place in the behaviour and habits of library users during and because of the strike?**

9% of respondents had deliberately chosen to engage in a non-library related activity during the strike. The rest had either tried to replace library use with a related activity or could find no satisfactory replacement for the service.

- **The research suggests that, although libraries compete with other forms of leisure pursuit for the attention of non-library users, for regular library users there is no significant competition strong enough to persuade them to stop using the service.**

The picture is similar when we look at the 44% of respondents who attempted to find replacements for the service. There were many comments about the unsatisfactory nature of alternatives, from the high cost of buying books - (only 14% bought books from book shops or book clubs as an alternative) to the inconvenience of using other and less appropriate libraries. The 99.62% of respondents who said they would resume use of the service when it re-opened reinforces this conclusion. It is

significant that nearly a third (31%) of all respondents said that they could find no suitable alternative at all for the missing service.

- **The research indicates clearly that none of the alternatives to library use are satisfactory or acceptable on a long term basis.**

### 7.3 How important are libraries to library users?

The survey asked for which *purposes* users missed the library most. 79% said they had missed it for at least one purpose. (78% missed the library for leisure purposes most, 58% for educational purposes). Fewer people than expected missed the library as an educational provider, possibly because the closure coincided with the end of the academic year. It was significant that educational purposes were missed most in those communities where people might have been expected to have less access to other sources of educational materials.

At Darnall, where only 1% of respondents had experienced higher education, it appeared that the Open for Learning scheme operating there had contributed significantly to the high proportion of people using the library specifically for educational purposes.

- **The evidence suggests that there may be a high potential for extended educational provision through the library service in communities with limited access to higher and further education.**

The researchers had expected that most people would have missed the library for a specific reason related to lack of access to books. However, an unexpectedly high proportion of respondents said that they had missed the library for a reason related to its social value or because it had become an indispensable part of their lives. (Appendix 6: Table 15 Categories 5-7). Well over half the respondents in three out of four of the community libraries surveyed said that they had missed the library for this reason.

- **The research provides clear evidence of the very high value placed on the use of the library as a social resource, particularly in communities with a higher than average incidence of social and economic deprivation.**

The contribution that the library can make to the quality of people's lives can also be judged from many of the responses to questions asking which specific library *services* users had missed the most, and whether they had succeeded in replacing them with an alternative during the strike. The research indicated that if people are deprived of a library, a high proportion will find reading material/information elsewhere or simply stop reading until the library reopens.

- **The research provides evidence of the extent to which reading is an essential and critical factor in the lives of library users. The research demonstrated that, for the majority of the 518 respondents, it was not replaceable by any other activity.**

## 7.4 The long-term impact of the strike on the service

A reassuring finding of the research is that only two of the 518 people surveyed said they would not be using the library again. The analysis of issue trends since the strike appears to confirm that the extended closure has not broken the library "habit" of users.

- **The research suggests that normal borrowing and use patterns have been resumed because library services are not replaceable. Libraries are too important in people's lives for them, willingly, to transfer to another activity.**

## 7.5 How important are libraries to the local infrastructure?

Research on the economic impact of libraries has tended to concentrate on their impact on town centres, (Greenhalgh and Worpole 1995). However, the present research suggests that for many people library use is a key factor in determining the frequency of their visits to *all* local centres, urban and suburban. Nearly a quarter (23%) of all respondents visited their local centre less often because of the library closure.

- **The research indicates that the library's presence in a local community may have a significant impact on local retailers and other businesses.**

## 7.6 The impact of the strike on attitudes to the public library service.

Users surveyed after the strike commented that the closure had brought home to them how much they depended on the service. Indeed, more people commented that they would use the service *more* now the service was back, than indicated they would stop using it.

It is hard to think of any other public service which could engender such loyalty and support, in similar circumstances.

- **The research revealed that for the vast majority of library users the public library is a service of inestimable value, enhancing quality of life, and, for many people, fulfilling an essential need that no other pursuit or activity satisfies.**

## 7.7 Areas for further research

The findings of the research reveal the high value placed on the service by the people of Sheffield, and the lack of any acceptable alternative. It also raises questions about the sort of benefits that people get from the public library service and how this determines the frequency and pattern of their library use. It remains to be seen if these findings would be replicated elsewhere.

Particular questions in urgent need of further research are:

- .1 What has the impact of library closures over the last 5-10 years been on the lives of people and in particular on different groups in the community?
- .2 To what extent have opening hours reductions and patterns in recent years affected the characteristics of the people who use public libraries?
- .3 What is the most effective range and pattern of opening hours which will secure accessibility for the widest range of socio-economic groups?
- .4 What determines the value placed on the public library service and the frequency of its use?
- .5 What factors make a local library service indispensable rather than highly desirable?
- .6 What is the potential for the enhancement of educational support for independent learners from local libraries?

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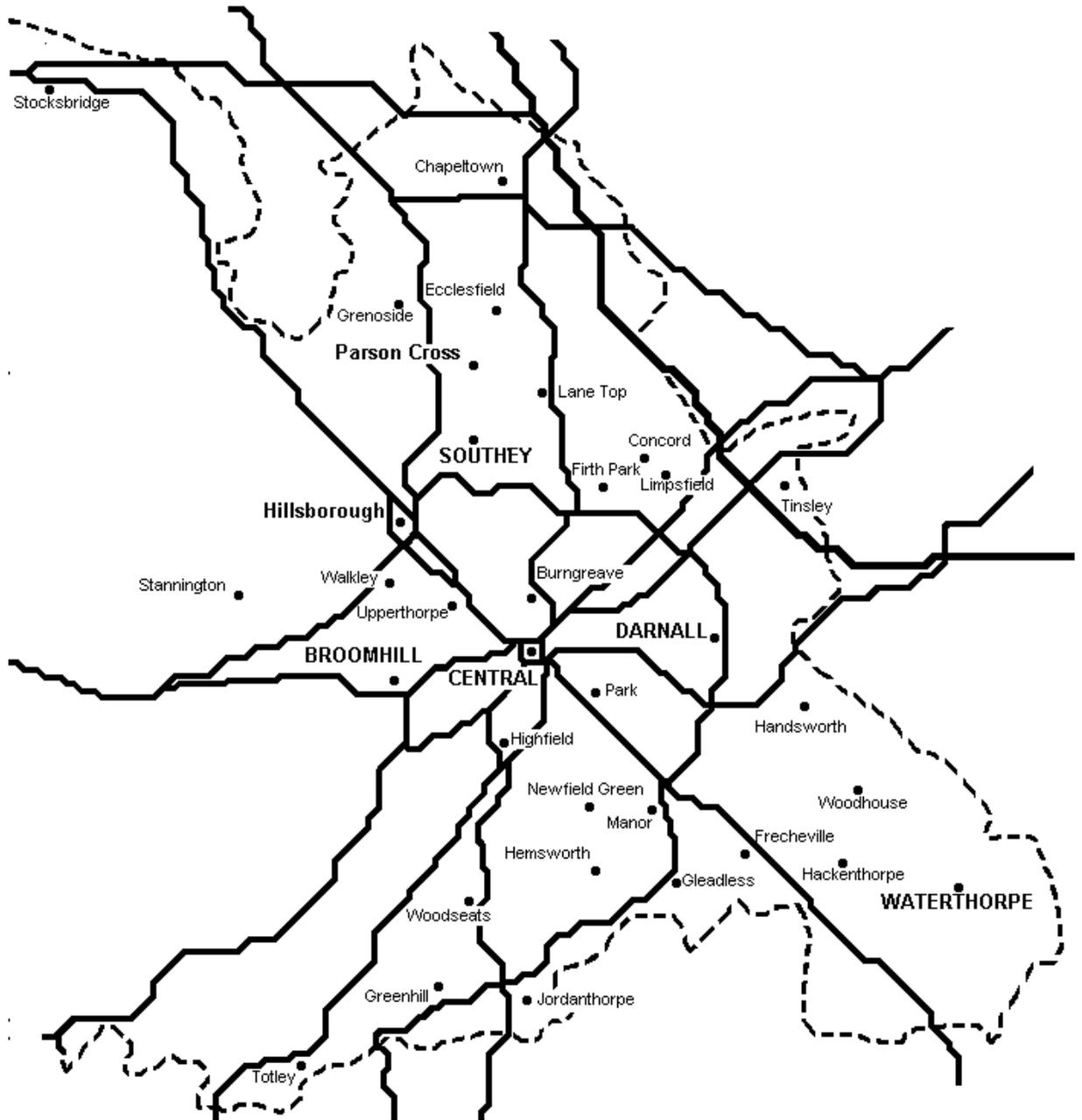
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# Appendix 1:

Map 1: Sheffield Libraries and Information Services



## Appendix 2: User survey questionnaire

Sheffield Public Library Closure

(Name of library)

1. *How often do you usually visit this library?*
  1. More than once a week
  2. About every week
  3. Once every three weeks
  4. Less than once a month
  
2. *What do you usually go to the library for?*
  1. Leisure purposes
  2. Educational purposes
  3. To find information on current events
  4. For work related reasons
  5. For information to do with personal issues (e.g. housing, welfare benefits, consumer rights)
  
3. *Have you missed using the library during the closure? Which of the above have you missed most?  
Please say why.*
  
4. *What, if anything, has taken their place during the period of closure?*
  
5. *When you visit the library do you:*
  1. Borrow books
  2. Borrow books for children
  3. Borrow videos
  4. Use books or magazines for reference
  5. Read magazines and newspapers
  6. Use local studies material
  7. Borrow tapes or CDs
  8. Use the library as a place to study
  9. Use equipment (e.g. photocopier)
  10. Information services/notice boards
  11. Other (please state)
  
6. *Which of these services have you missed most during the period of closure?  
Please say why you have missed these services*
  
7. *How did you replace the services not available to you during the library closure?*

**8.** *Was there a library service for which you could not find a suitable alternative?*

**9.** *During the period of closure did you visit .....(geographical centre covered by library )?*

1. Much less often than usual
2. Less often than usual
3. About the same as usual
4. More often than usual
5. Much more often than usual

*If less please tell me why*

**10.** *Did the closure of the library result in you watching television:*

1. Much less often than usual
2. Less often than usual
3. About the same as usual
4. More often than usual
5. Much more often than usual

*If less please tell me why*

**11.** *Did the closure of the library result in you listening to the radio:*

1. Much less often than usual
2. Less often than usual
3. About the same as usual
4. More often than usual
5. Much more often than usual

*If less please tell me why*

**12.** *Did the closure of the library result in you buying magazines/newspapers:*

1. Much less often than usual
2. Less often than usual
3. About the same as usual
4. More often than usual
5. Much more often than usual

*If less please tell me why*

**13.** *Did the closure of the library result in you buying books:*

1. Much less often than usual
2. Less often than usual
3. About the same as usual
4. More often than usual
5. Much more often than usual

*If less please tell me why*

**14.** *Did the closure of the library result in you buying CDs or audio tapes:*

1. Much less often than usual
2. Less often than usual
3. About the same as usual
4. More often than usual
5. Much more often than usual

*If less please tell me why*

**15.** *Did the closure of the library result in you buying video tapes:*

1. Much less often than usual
2. Less often than usual
3. About the same as usual
4. More often than usual
5. Much more often than usual

*If less please tell me why*

**16.** *Did the closure of the library result in you renting video tapes:*

1. Much less often than usual
2. Less often than usual
3. About the same as usual
4. More often than usual
5. Much more often than usual

*If less please tell me why*

**17.** Now that the library is open do you expect to visit it

1. Much less often than usual
2. Less often than usual
3. About the same as usual
4. More often than usual
5. Much more often than usual

*If less please tell me why*

*In order that we can compare the results of this survey with similar work that has taken place in the past I should be grateful if you would give me some information about yourself.*

18. Male / female
19. *Would you describe yourself as:*
1. White
  2. Afro-Caribbean
  3. Indian subcontinent
  4. Other
20. *Are you:*
1. in paid employment (Please give occupation)
  2. A housewife?
  3. unwaged
  4. retired (please give former occupation)
  5. in full time education
21. *Are you:*
1. 10 - 14 years of age
  2. 15 - 19
  3. 20 - 29
  4. 30 - 44
  5. 45 - 64
  6. 65 or over
22. *Please tell me the type of educational institution that you last attended on a full time basis*
23. *Apart from this have you had any further education. (e.g. WEA Open University). If yes please specify.*
24. *Finally do you think there is anything of importance about the closure of*  
\*\*\*\* *library which I have not asked you or to which I have not given enough attention?*

### **Appendix 3: Profile of user characteristics**

The following abbreviations for the libraries apply in all tables:

C = Central

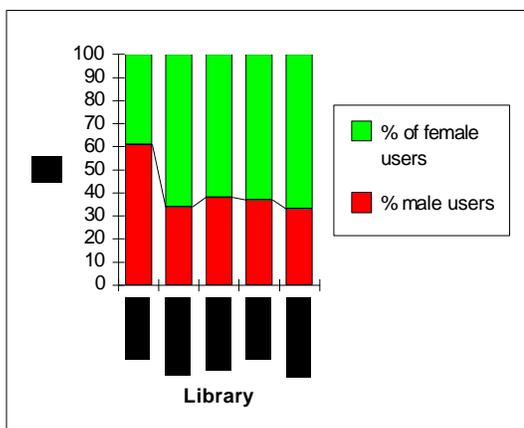
B = Broomhill  
 S = Southey  
 D = Darnall  
 W = Waterthorpe

**Table 4: Distribution of User Sample**

	All Users	C	B	S	D	W
<b>Number of users</b>	518	179	74	69	81	115
<b>% of sample population</b>	100%	35%	14%	13%	16%	22%
<b>Number of Registered Users (books) April 1995</b>	89882	52212	9070	4806	5866	17928
<b>Proportion interviewed</b>	0.58%	0.34%	0.82%	1.43%	1.38%	0.64%

Registered users refer to those registered to borrow books; borrowers of videos, CDs or tapes only are excluded (Sheffield Libraries Annual Statistics).

**Chart 1: Gender of Users**



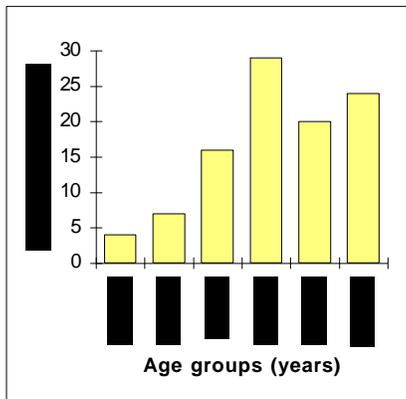
The proportion of male and female users surveyed in the four community libraries ranged from 34% to 38% for male users and 63% to 66% for female users. Only at the Central Library was a greater proportion of male users surveyed (61%).

**Table 5: Ethnic Origin of Users**

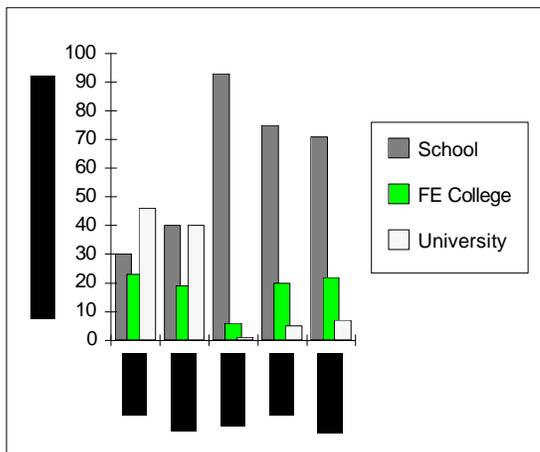
<b>Ethnic Origin</b>	<b>All Users</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>W</b>
<b>White</b>	479 93%	167 93%	70 95%	68 99%	59 73%	115 100%
<b>Afro-Caribbean</b>	4 1%	3 2%	1 1%			
<b>Indian subcontinent</b>	23 4%	2 1%	2 3%		19 23%	
<b>Other</b>	12 2%	7 4%	1 1%	1 1%	3 4%	

23% of users at Darnall described themselves as Indian subcontinent, contrasting with 10.3% of the population in Darnall (Census Information Profiles).

**Chart 2: Age range of users**



**Chart 3: Type of educational institution last attended full time**



The percentage of users for whom school was their last full time education ranges from 30% (Central) to 93% (Southey). The percentage of users who went to University full time ranges from 40% (Broomhill) to 1% (Darnall).

**Table 6: Occupation of Users**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>All Users</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>W</b>
<b>In paid employment</b>	157 30%	61 34%	30 41%	3 4%	19 24%	44 38%
<b>Housewife/husband</b>	53 10%	7 4%	6 8%	12 17%	9 11%	19 17%
<b>Unwaged</b>	66 13%	39 22%	4 5%	8 12%	6 7%	9 8%
<b>Retired</b>	156 30%	31 17%	19 26%	39 57%	31 39%	36 31%
<b>Full time education</b>	86 17%	41 23%	15 20%	7 10%	16 20%	7 6%

The range of unwaged users is from 5% (Broomhill) to 22% (Central).

The range of retired users is from 17% (Central) to 57% (Southey).

The range of users in full time education ranges from 10% (Southey) to 23% (Central).

Users in paid employment in four of the five libraries ranges from 24% (Darnall) to 41% (Broomhill). At Southey only 4% of users were in paid employment, yet the Census Information Profile indicates that 42% of the population in Southey are employed. This anomaly may be due to an inconsistency in the interview schedule that resulted in Southey being the only library where no interviews were conducted on a Saturday, the day of the week when many employed users might visit the library. It may partly be attributable to the fact that of the five libraries surveyed Southey's opening hours outside normal office hours are less than the other four libraries surveyed.

## Appendix 4: Press release



### UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION STUDIES

**Postal address:** Western Bank, Sheffield S10 2TN

**Location:** Regent Court, 211 Portobello Street, Sheffield S1 4DP

**Tel.** 0114-2768555 Extns. 5080 & 5090 **Fax.** 0114-2780300

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#### PRESS RELEASE

#### Have You Missed Your Library Service? A Research Project

Researchers at the University of Sheffield's Department of Information Studies are about to begin studying the effect of the Sheffield library shut-down. They want to find out how important libraries are to the people of Sheffield and where people have gone for their books, recordings and information during the closure.

They are asking people to write to them at the university explaining how the closure has affected them. Questions they want answering include:

**How has the closure affected the way people study, work or spend their spare time?  
What other sources, if any, have people used for obtaining books, recordings and/or information?**

**How important is the public library service in people's lives?**

Richard Proctor and Dr Bob Usherwood, who are leading the Project, emphasize that they are not interested in the rights or wrongs of the dispute which caused the strike, but want to know how people have been affected by the loss of the library service.

The Department's research has established it as an international centre of excellence. Its consistently high standard has been recognized in a number of national performance reviews.

All letters will be treated as confidential. People are asked to write to:

Gill Sobczyk  
Department of Information Studies  
University of Sheffield  
Western Bank  
Sheffield S10 2TN

## Appendix 5: Changes in user behaviour and habits

**Table 7: Take-up of alternative Activities to Library**

<b>Replacement Activities</b>	<b>All Users</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>W</b>
<b>Did not replace library activities</b>	243 47%	88 49%	22 30%	28 41%	44 54%	61 53%
<b>Other reading/libraries etc.</b>	226 44%	79 44%	46 62%	30 43%	26 32%	45 39%
<b>Non-library oriented replacements</b>	49 9%	12 7%	6 8%	11 16%	11 14%	9 8%
<b>Total Number of Users</b>	518	179	74	69	81	115

Note that the figures in the category '*Other reading/libraries etc.*' and '*non-library oriented replacements*' relate to the number of users and do not equate to the total numbers in Table 8 which represent the number of responses (Users may have indicated more than one replacement).

**Table 8: Replacements for Library Services**

<b>Category no.</b>	<b>Replacement Categories</b>	<b>All Users</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>W</b>
1	Did not replace services	243 47%	88 49%	22 30%	28 41%	44 54%	61 53%
2	Buying books in book shops	56 13%	13 10%	18 26%	4 6%	3 4%	18 18%
3	Browsing book shops	9 2%	6 5%			1 1%	2 2%
4	Borrowing from friends	46 10%	9 7%	6 9%	11 16%	6 8%	14 14%
5	Read own books at home	62 14%	17 13%	13 19%	9 13%	10 13%	13 13%
6	Jumbles sales/charity shops etc.	28 6%	3 2%	7 10%	8 12%	5 6%	5 5%
7	Joined a book club	4 1%		1 1%		2 3%	1 1%
8	Borrowed books from playgroup/social club/hospital	7 1.5%	1 1%	1 1%	2 3%	1 1%	2 2%
9	Studied at home	3 5%	2 5%		1 100%		
10	Hired videos	10 6%	1 3%	2 6%	4 24%	2 7%	1 2%
11	Bought magazines/newspapers	23 37%	6 14%	4 66%	1 100%	2 16%	1 100%
12	Bought tapes	1 0.7%					1 2%
13	University/college/school libraries	36 16%	24 30%	9 19%		3 12%	
14	Public libraries in other towns	23 10%	11 14%	4 9%	1 3%	1 3%	6 13%
15	Hillsborough public library	3 1%	2 2%		1 3%		
16	Asked friends for information		2	1			
17	Used Pakistani community centre	1				1	
18	Asked organisations for information	3		2			1
19	met friends elsewhere	2				2	
20	Public careers office	2	1			1	
21	Used a stockbroker	1	1				
22	Used church archives	1	1				
23	Used photocopier elsewhere	2			1	1	

Where practicable, the percentages in Table 8 are derived from the number of users who use the associated services.

Categories 1-8 - percentages derived from the number of users who said they borrowed books.

Category 9 - percentage derived from number of users who use the library as a place to study.

Category 10 - percentage derived from those users who borrow videos.

Category 11 - percentage derived from those users who read magazines and newspapers.

Category 12 - percentage of those who borrow tapes or CDs.

Categories 13-15 - it could only be determined on an individual basis which service users were replacing. For instance it could be borrowing books, using reference material or reading newspapers or magazines or indeed a combination of purposes, and hence the percentages relate to the total 226 users who did replace services with a related activity.

**Table 9: Users who claimed they participated in the following activities MORE OFTEN USUAL during the closure.**

Activity	All Users	C	B	S	D	W
<b>Watch TV</b>	108 21%	19 11%	20 27%	23 33%	28 5%	18 16%
<b>Listen to radio</b>	100 19%	24 13%	24 32%	11 16%	23 28%	18 4
<b>Buy magazines/ newspapers (% of all users)</b>	104 20%	28 16%	18 24%	12 17%	23 28%	23 20%
<b>Buy magazines/ newspapers (% using this library service)</b>	23 37%	14 33%	1 17%	1 100%	6 50%	1 100%
<b>Buy Books (% of all users)</b>	128 25%	37 21%	36 49%	15 22%	9 11%	31 27%
<b>Buy Books (% using this library service)</b>	128 29%	37 30%	36 52%	15 22%	9 12%	31 30%
<b>Buy CDs or tapes (% of all users)</b>	14 3%	3 2%	3 4%	1 1%	2 3%	5 4%
<b>Buy CDs or tapes (% using this library service)</b>	12 9%	2 5%	3 12%	1 20%	2 11%	4 9%
<b>Buy Videos (% of all users)</b>	6 1%	2 1%	3 4%	1 1%	1 1%	
<b>Buy Videos (% using this library service)</b>	6 4%	2 8%	3 9%	1 6%	1 3%	
<b>Rent Videos (% of all users)</b>	45 9%	6 3%	10 14%	8 12%	11 14%	10 9%
<b>Rent Videos (% using this library service)</b>	35 23%	4 15%	10 31%	8 47%	6 21%	7 14%

## Appendix 6: How important are libraries to library users?

**Table 10: Frequency of visits**

Frequency of library visits	All Users	C	B	S	D	W
More than once a week	86 17%	31 17%	4 5%	11 16%	21 26%	19 17%
About every week	139 27%	34 19%	11 15%	19 28%	37 46%	38 33%
Once every 3 weeks	189 36%	59 33%	40 54%	32 46%	19 24%	39 34%
Less than once a month	104 20%	55 31%	19 26%	7 10%	4 5%	19 17%
<b>Number of users</b>	<b>518</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>115</b>

**Table 11: Purposes Library used for**

Purpose	All Users	C	B	S	D	W
Leisure	404 78%	102 57%	67 91%	68 99%	67 83%	100 87%
Educational	190 37%	102 57%	27 37%	7 10%	27 33%	27 24%
Information on current events	40 8%	20 11%	5 7%	2 3%	6 7%	7 6%
Work related	59 11%	43 24%	7 10%	0	4 5%	5 4%
Personal issues	38 7%	10 6%	6 8%	8 12%	4 5%	10 9%
<b>Number of users</b>	<b>518</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>115</b>

(Appendix 6 continued)

**Table 12: Purposes used contrasted with purposes missed most.**

<b>Purpose library missed</b>	<b>No. of Responses</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>W</b>
<b>Leisure</b>	316 78%	71 70%	51 76%	54 79%	59 88%	81 81%
<b>Educational</b>	111 58%	59 58%	12 44%	7 100%	23 85%	10 37%
<b>Information on current events</b>	18 45%	11 55%	2 40%	1 50%	3 50%	1 14%
<b>Work related</b>	32 54%	24 56%	2 33%	0	2 50%	4 80%
<b>Information on personal issues</b>	10 26%	3 30%	2 33%	2 25%	1 25%	2 20%
<b>Total Responses</b>	487	168	69	64	88	98

The percentages represent the proportion of interviewees who use the library for the given purpose (see Table 11) and missed it most for this reason.

(Appendix 6 continued)

**Table 13: Library services used**

<b>Library Services Used</b>	<b>All Users</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>W</b>
<b>Number of users</b>	518	179	74	69	81	115
<b>Borrow Books</b>	439 85%	125 70%	69 93%	67 97%	76 94%	102 88%
<b>Borrow books for children</b>	78 15%	16 9%	19 26%	5 7%	6 7%	32 28%
<b>Borrow videos</b>	155 30%	26 15%	32 43%	17 25%	29 36%	51 44%
<b>Use books/magazines for reference</b>	113 22%	80 45%	12 16%	2 3%	9 11%	10 9%
<b>Read magazines/newspapers</b>	62 12%	42 24%	6 8%	1 1%	12 14%	1 1%
<b>Use local studies material</b>	35	35 20%				
<b>Borrow tapes or CDs</b>	133 26%	43 24%	24 32%	5 7%	18 22%	43 37%
<b>Use library as place to study</b>	58 11%	43 24%	3 4%	1 1%	5 6%	6 5%
<b>Use equipment e.g. photocopier</b>	73 14%	36 20%	12 16%	7 10%	6 7%	12 10%
<b>Information Services/ Notice boards</b>	92 18%	18 10%	21 28%	15 22%	8 10%	30 26%
<b>Business, Science &amp; Technology library</b>		24 13%				
<b>Arts and Social Sciences library</b>		24 13%				

(Appendix 6 continued)

**Table 14: Services Missed Most**

<b>Library Services Missed Most</b>	<b>All Users</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>W</b>
<b>Borrow Books</b>	303 69%	77 62%	48 70%	55 82%	63 83%	60 59%
<b>Borrow books for children</b>	41 53%	6 38%	14 74%	2 40%	4 67%	15 47%
<b>Borrow videos</b>	33 21%	5 19%	9 28%	6 35%	6 21%	7 14%
<b>Use books/magazines for reference</b>	39 35%	31 39%	2 17%		4 44%	2 20%
<b>Read magazines/newspapers</b>	23 37%	17 40%			6 50%	
<b>Use Local Studies material</b>	22	22 63%				
<b>Borrow tapes or CDs</b>	43 32%	15 35%	4 17%	1 20%	8 44%	15 25%
<b>Use library as place to study</b>	24 41%	17 40%	1 33%	1 100%	2 40%	3 50%
<b>Use equipment e.g. photocopier</b>	19 26%	10 28%	2 17%	1 14%	5 83%	1 8%
<b>Information Services/ Notice boards</b>	24 26%	9 50%	5 24%	1 7%	4 50%	5 17%

The percentages represent the proportion of users who missed the service most from the total who use it.

(Appendix 6 continued)

**Table 15: Reasons why Library was Missed**

	<b>Reasons why Library/library services missed</b>	<b>All Users</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>W</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Specific information/reference</b>	42 14%	30 27%	7 15%	2 5%	1 2%	2 4%
<b>2</b>	<b>Affected higher/further education studies</b>	19 6%	14 13%		1 2%	3 5%	1 2%
<b>3</b>	<b>Needed books for school work</b>	22 7%	5 5%	5 10%	3 7%	8 14%	1 2%
<b>4</b>	<b>Needed journals/information for job hunting</b>	5 2%	4 4%				1 2%
<b>5</b>	<b>Social activity</b>	49 16%	8 7%	3 6%	5 12%	22 39%	11 22%
<b>6</b>	<b>Habit/routine</b>	68 22%	10 9%	12 25%	21 50%	10 18%	15 30%
<b>7</b>	<b>Dependent on library</b>	15 5%	6 5%		5 12%		4 8%
<b>8</b>	<b>Library material too expensive to buy</b>	20 7%	9 8%	3 6%	4 10%	3 5%	1 2%
<b>9</b>	<b>Activity for children</b>	27 9%		12 25%	1 2%	4 7%	10 20%
<b>10</b>	<b>Other libraries do not have information</b>	24 8%	21 19%	2 4%		1 2%	
<b>11</b>	<b>Wide range of material</b>	16 5%	4 4%	4 8%		4 7%	4 8%
<b>12</b>	<b>Total</b>	307 100%	111 100%	48 100%	42 100%	56 100%	50 100%
<b>13</b>	<b>General Reasons missed</b>	103	23	11	15	18	36
<b>14</b>	<b>NOT missed library</b>	108	45	15	12	7	29
<b>15</b>	<b>MISSED library</b>	410	134	59	57	74	86
<b>16</b>	<b>Total Users</b>	518	179	74	69	81	115

The percentages reflect the proportion of users from the total (category 12) who stated a specific reason.

## Appendix 7: Reference Enquiries

