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**An ethnographic case study of the role of public libraries
in facilitating lifelong learning activities in the North of
England**

Safaa Naji

**A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in
partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

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Abstract

This ethnographic study examines the role of public libraries in supporting lifelong learning (LLL) activities. It was undertaken in a library in the North of England. This study adopted the community of practice (CoP) as a conceptual framework to highlight the importance of the public library as a lifelong learning institution and to explore the significance of the knowledge and skills that are developed through social interaction with learners (users of the library) and librarians and the effects of that on users' learning and identity. Fieldwork was conducted in the library during a period of nine months. Participant observation and unstructured interviews with 11 librarians, semi-structured interviews with 48 users, along with documentary analysis, were used to generate qualitative data on the library as a lifelong learning institution and the role of librarians in supporting lifelong learning activities.

The findings reveal the potential for the public library to be a lifelong learning institution which are: the stimulating learning environment of the library; diversity in the library; a variety of learning resources and accessible facilities as well as cooperation with other organisations in the community. The findings also suggest that the library has integrated social, economic and educational effects on both individuals and communities. The library offers equal and free learning opportunities for everyone, regardless of their background, which provides learners with on-going skills. In this sense, the library is considered as key to unlocking inequality. The findings reveal that the library achieves social justice, fosters social cohesion and prevents social isolation. In addition, the public library plays a vital role in promoting individuals' health and well-being through bibliotherapy sessions. The findings also show that the library constructs learners' identities as they become confident, independent learners, critical thinkers and active citizens.

On an economic level, the library has a direct and indirect economic impact on individuals, as well as on the whole community. The direct role has been demonstrated by saving users money and supporting people to find jobs as well as starting up their own businesses. Its indirect role is demonstrated though saving money for the public Exchequer, such as the NHS. However, the library faces challenges which affect the quality of delivering those services such as funding cuts, leading to the closure of library buildings, lack of public perception of the library's value and misunderstanding the rules by the users. The study also highlights that the librarians play a significant role in supporting lifelong learning activities. The librarians deliver the learning sessions as proficient teachers. They also support library users by guiding them to access the valuable information resources and learning sessions which meet their needs. This study shows that there are criteria for librarians to be able to support LLL activities. However, the data indicates that the librarians face challenges such as replacing them with volunteers to run the library services. In addition, there is a lack of public awareness about their significant role in the community.

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List of abbreviations

ACE	Arts Council England
CILIP	Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
CoP	Community of Practice
DBIS	Department for Business Innovation and Skills
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
DFE	Department for Education
DFEE	Department for Education and Employment
DFES	Department for Education and Skills
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IFLA	International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
IPs	Information Professionals
IT	Information Technology
LIS	Library and Information Science
LLL	Lifelong Learning
LLUK	Lifelong Learning UK
MLA	Museums, Libraries and Archives
ONS	Office for National Statistics
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UKCES	The UK Commission for Employment and Skills

Chapter one: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This is a qualitative study which investigates the role of public libraries in delivering lifelong learning activities. It focuses on the perceptions and perspectives of the public librarians in order to examine their role in facilitating lifelong learning activities. It also studies the users' perceptions, perspectives and experiences in order to understand the role of public libraries in improving their lives socially and economically. This chapter presents the background and rationale of the study, aims of the study and research questions, an overview of the framework and the research methodology, as well as outlining the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Background and rationale of the study

Education has become an individual's right during the 20th and 21st centuries. However, a higher general level of education and learning is vital now more than ever due to social, economic, educational, technological and political changes (Brophy, 2007). Mostly, individuals are required to update and improve their skills to be able to meet the challenges of the fast-changing world (International Labour Organisation [ILO], 2011). In this sense, they become lifelong learners. Lifelong learning is seen as the foundation on which an individual can improve their employability and contribute to creating a competitive economic market. Moreover, lifelong learning can help to achieve social justice and reduce social problems by giving people confidence and a sense of control over their lives. It can also enable them to build skills and knowledge in order to contribute to the community (McNair, 2009).

In the UK, although the demand for skilled labour has increased in recent decades, the skills system faces some issues, such as a skills mismatch, which includes "skills gap, skills shortages and over-education or under-employment" (Green, 2016, p. 24). Moreover, the productivity rate is low (Elliott, 2017), which indicates that the British economy mostly relies on low skills and low paid work. Thus, investing in education

and training is needed in order to increase the productivity of the workers, so they are able to compete in the global economy (Nevin, 2016). Especially with the current political situation, with Britain leaving the EU and skills gaps widening, so the need to develop individuals' skills is demanded (Donnelly, 2017). However, there are some obstacles, which prevent some people updating their skills, such as reducing spending on adult education (Foster, 2017). Hence, the proportion of adults who do not have sufficient qualifications and skills will increase. For instance, according to Campbell (2016, p. 4), "in 2020, there are still likely to be nearly 7 million adults who are not qualified to Level 2". In this sense, participating in lifelong learning activities, which are provided by some organisations such as public libraries, could be the second opportunity for those people to update their employment skills – technological as well as basic numeracy and literacy skills. It also builds their confidence because "the skills that people have are an important part of their identity and self-esteem" (Green, 2016, p. 25). Improving skills could help in reducing inequality in the community and increasing well-being and sociability. That is because the "people with low incomes, with less education... are more likely to suffer from mental health problems than the general population" (Miyamoto and Chevalier, 2010, p. 112). Hence, lifelong learning can play a role in improving the position of the UK, both economically and socially (Jackson, 2011). Lifelong learning can be taken up at any age and it takes place in formal or informal educational organisations. This research focuses on informal learning organisations, particularly public libraries.

The reasons public libraries have been chosen is because historically they have played an essential role in improving the lives of individuals and communities by encouraging people to engage in productive leisure time activities, such as reading (Rooney-Browne and McMenemy, 2010). Moreover, public libraries are vital facilities for lifelong learning because they are not just a collection of books, but they are also learning organisations. They are a resource for parents, young children and adults, they support jobseekers to gain skills and employment and encourage civic participation, as well as assisting elderly people to combat isolation. Public libraries deliver IT sessions and training, which provide people with the appropriate skills that enable them to find jobs; simultaneously, they reduce digital exclusion (Craven, 2011). Public libraries are considered to be the key to unlocking inequality in the community because they provide free access to information communication

technology (ICT) and to a range of learning materials for everyone, regardless of economic or social status or demographic background. Public libraries play a significant integrated social and economic role in the community, for instance, providing a bibliotherapy session is not just supporting people with mental health problems to overcome their issues, but also reduces spending on the NHS by the Exchequer due to the decline in GP visits and decrease in medical service usage (Fujiwara, Lawton and Mourato, 2015, p. 7). Moreover, public librarians provide free assistance, which supports people to gain skills that enable them to identify information sources effectively and efficiently, and to access and evaluate that information and then use it ethically (Julien and Genuis, 2009, p. 927).

However, many public libraries are facing cuts to their budgets which affect the quality of the services. The cuts in public spending lead to reduced opening hours and/or closing library services entirely, as well as a shortage of skills as a result of financial constraints (Child and Goulding, 2012). This, in turn, could affect people who will lose access to free learning and a social and physical place that plays a key role in building a community socially and economically (Rooney-Browne, 2009; Child and Goulding, 2012; Casselden, Pickard and McLeod, 2015). My study emphasises that the public library is a lifelong learning organisation and it plays an indispensable part in the community.

Many researchers have acknowledged the role of public libraries in delivering lifelong learning activities. For instance, Eve, Groot and Schmidt (2007) investigate how the availability and accessibility of learning opportunities could be improved for adults across Europe. This action research study was funded by the EU's Socrates programme and provided training for public librarians across Europe to build their confidence in supporting adult learners, particularly those lacking ICT skills. Although the project focuses on providing guidance for librarians in delivering ICT skills for adults, it indicates that libraries are building on traditional strengths in supporting learners. In addition, the libraries' staff develop their role 'from passive facilitator to active provider, and in some cases, tutor' (Eve et.al, 2007, p. 405). However, more recently, researchers such as Casselden et al. (2015) have investigated the challenges which are facing public libraries in the context of the 'Big Society'. The 'Big Society' is a concept promoted by the Coalition Government (2010–2015) which indicates the ability of people and their local communities to fulfil their own ambitions

(Goulding, 2013). However, the study by Casselden et al. (2015) focuses on the use of volunteers to run public libraries. Moreover, some of the researchers investigate the role of public libraries during the economic recession such as Rooney-Browne (2009), Rooney-Browne and McMenemy (2010), Child and Goulding (2012) and Goulding (2013). There is still a need for more qualitative research into how, and in which way, public libraries can facilitate lifelong learning activities and how librarians deliver lifelong learning activities. In addition, there is a need for a deeper knowledge of the way that public libraries affect users' lives from the perspective of the users themselves. Although recent research by Involve and Dialogue by Design (2016) studies users' views of the value of public libraries, it mostly focuses on the space of the library, such as equality of access, free information resources and a place for children to learn. However, it does not further discuss how this place motivates the people to learn and how the library supports people (children and adults) to be lifelong learners. Moreover, as Halpin, Rankin, Chapman and Walker (2013, p. 8) mention, there is a need for more specific British research into public libraries, especially with regard to the effects of library closures, as well as the use of new methods to evaluate the benefits of public libraries in communities. This ethnographic research intends to gain a more in-depth qualitative understanding of the role that public libraries and their librarians play in delivering lifelong learning activities as a response to social, economic and political changes.

1.3 Aims of the study and research questions

This study aims to explore the role of public libraries in delivering lifelong learning activities through a community of practice; to examine the social and economic impact of lifelong learning opportunities for the libraries' users and to determine the librarians' current role in facilitating lifelong learning. In particular, this study answers the following research questions:

1. What is the potential for enhancing lifelong learning in public libraries through a community of practice?
2. To what extent do lifelong learning activities, through public libraries, affect the users, socially and economically?

3. How much do the services of librarians add to the value of public libraries as learning environments?

1.4 Overview of the conceptual framework

I adopted the community of practice theory (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) as the theoretical framework of this study. This theory enabled me to evaluate the public library as a lifelong learning environment. The core of this theory is based on the idea that individuals learn through social interaction with each other in shared practice. Construction of identity is also the main aspect of the community of practice as it asserts that the learning “implies becoming a different person” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 53). Using a community of practice allowed me to gain a deeper understanding about the role of the library in building individuals’ identities and how the learners (library users) improve their knowledge, skills and capacities through interaction with each other and with librarians. Further details about this theory will be discussed in chapter three.

1.5 Overview of the methodology

An ethnographic case study aims to gain a thick description about the role of public libraries and their librarians in delivering lifelong learning activities. The ethnography supported me to understand the phenomena in its natural setting for long-term engagement. I mainly relied on participant observation to generate the data; I conducted this observation for nine months between January and September (2015). I also used semi-structured interviews to gain the users’ perspectives and unstructured interviews with librarians, as well as documentary analysis to generate the data. I followed the five steps of thematic analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) to interpret my data, as I explain in chapter four.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is organised into eight chapters. Following this introductory chapter, chapter two presents the critical literature review related to lifelong learning and the public libraries sphere. This includes the conceptualisation of lifelong learning and the significance of lifelong learning activities in economic and social changes. In this chapter, I also provide a critical discussion about the economic, social and educational role of the public library in the community and the role of librarians in delivering learning activities. The chapter also highlights the challenges that public libraries face in England.

Chapter three presents situated learning within the community of practice (CoP) as a theoretical framework of the study. I start the discussion with the conception of the theory and justify the reason for it being relevant to my study. Furthermore, I discuss the essential features of CoP, such as mutual engagement, shared repertoire, diversity and learning as becoming: building identity.

Chapter four, methodology, starts with discussing the justification of the chosen paradigm and methodology approach. The selection of participants, ethical issues, data generation and thematic analysis, as well as the trustworthiness of the study, are discussed.

Chapter five is the first analysis chapter and includes the criteria which make the public library a lifelong learning organisation. This chapter ends with the challenges that face the public library under investigation.

Chapter six provides analysis and discussion of the findings in relation to the educational, economic and social role of the public library in the community.

Chapter seven includes the interpretation of the findings in relation to the role of librarians in delivering lifelong learning activities. It also highlights the challenges that the librarians face.

Chapter eight, the conclusion, highlights the findings and implications of the study, the contribution to the knowledge, limitations of the study and provides suggestions for further researches.

Chapter two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to examine the role that public libraries play in delivering lifelong learning activities. The review of the literature will take the reader through a sequence of sections, which are pertinent to the objectives of my thesis, and each one of those sections is indicative of a specific theme within the sphere of lifelong learning (LLL) and public libraries. As the purpose of my thesis is to explore how lifelong learning is supported in public libraries, it is useful to introduce readers to the concept of lifelong learning and its role in improving lives, then examine the role of public libraries and librarians in delivering lifelong learning activities. Therefore, this chapter will start with a comprehensive discussion of the concept of lifelong learning and the significance of LLL to the economic, social and political arenas. Then, the following sections will highlight the educational, economic and social role of public libraries in England. Thus, firstly, I will start with the discussion of the concept of LLL.

2.2 Conceptualisation of lifelong learning

Lifelong learning is a complex concept that is not easy to define. The variety of definitions stems from the diverse perspectives of what the concept means. Furthermore, LLL is not simply a contemporary concept – it has been used in educational, social, economic and political discussion since the last century (see, for example, Jarvis, Holford and Griffin, 2004, p. 3; Fales, 1989; Lengrand, 1975). The concept of LLL is constantly evolving. LLL has been used synonymously with lifelong education which is considered as a consequence to the nature of human beings; people continuously need to understand things, which do not necessarily involve teachers, but which they could learn by reading or asking friends or colleagues. In this regard, learning does not cease when individuals leave school, and in other words, ‘formal education’ is not the sole way to gain knowledge and learning. Learning can also be accomplished through self-directed study or ‘informal learning’. Informal learning is “truly a lifelong process where every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience” (Somtrakool, 2002, p. 30). For

the purpose of my study, informal learning will be used, particularly informal learning as is delivered in public libraries. Although some researchers, such as Jarvis (2010), consider that lifelong learning usually indicates learning that takes place in a setting beyond the formal education system, LLL covers all kinds of learning and education, both formal and informal.

LLL is also frequently associated with adult education. Although adults are more likely to benefit from lifelong learning involvements, as Schuller and Watson (2009, p. 3) point out – “lifelong learning focuses mainly on adults returning to organised learning rather than on the initial period of education or an incidental learning” – the philosophy of LLL applies to the whole life-course, ‘from cradle to grave’. In this sense, the European Commission (2001, p. 9) defines LLL as “all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence, within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective”.

The LLL concept has also changed due to changes of political focus. For instance, in 1997, when New Labour came to power, education was central to their policies with its statement ‘education, education, education’ which was considered as key to both a successful economy and encouraging social inclusion (Fisher, Simmons and Thompson, 2015). In this context, individuals are required to update their skills and knowledge continuously. In other words, to be lifelong learners, New Labour considered LLL as a tool to achieve a successful economy by improving the skills of the individual (Department for Education and Employment [DFEE], 1998), as well as a mechanism to tackle social exclusion and achieve social justice (Department for Education and Skills [DFES], 2005). However, the economic and social benefits of LLL were uncertain due to many reasons, such as the complexity of the New Labour politics; the lack of labour market regulation of finance and dependence on centralisation so the economic growth was unbalanced with London growing economically more than any other city (Keep, 2009; Colly, Valero and Van-Reenen, 2011). The concept of LLL in the policy documents of the Coalition Government (Liberal Democrat–Conservative) was used as a tool to improve the economy and reduce social exclusion. The Coalition took power in May 2010 and it saw skills as a key policy lever for delivering both improved economic performance and social mobility. Moreover, it believed that participation in LLL should be widened to ensure that every individual who had not benefited from formal education should have the

opportunity to learn (Department for Business Innovation and Skills [DBIS], 2010). However, the government saw public spending as a cost rather than an investment (Nash, 2015) and as a result, it implemented cuts that affected the educational participation of the working class and young people which made ‘fairness’ a rhetorical target (McLay et al., 2015). The spending cuts caused further economic problems and inequality in society, especially as the government’s (Conservative party) Budget 2016 revealed a further £3.5bn in public spending cuts (Croucher, 2016). In 2017, the Conservative Government is continuing with an austerity plan even when the UK has decided to leave the European Union; Government outlines potential spending cuts of up to 6% with the aim of saving up to £3.5bn by 2020 (Elgot, 2017). As my study explains later, many public authorities, especially library services, have been closed or reduced in size due to the funding cuts. However, the concept of LLL “is considered to be an essential requisite for finding a link between economic prosperity and personal, and professional development, or political policy and cultural division” (Fullerty, 2011, p. 28).

Therefore, LLL can be defined as acquiring and updating all kinds of skills, knowledge and abilities throughout the lifespan which enables people to adapt to the changing world around them. Participating in LLL depends on individual perspectives, understanding of the self and identity, and their incentives for participation. This might be to get a better job, for self-actualisation or even for enjoyment, which helps to enhance the individual’s life, thereby enriching the whole community.

As we shall see later, LLL has a potential role to play in improving the economy and achieving social justice which can be supported through public libraries.

2.3 The role of lifelong learning in economic changes

As mentioned earlier, LLL is not a new concept. In Europe, for instance, 1996 is considered as a year of lifelong learning with Delors’ report proposing four pillars of lifelong learning. These are: *‘Learning to do; Learning to be; Learning to know; and Learning to live together’* (Delors, 1996, p. 21). In the UK, the upsurge in LLL came in 1997 with Kennedy’s report, entitled *‘Learning Work: Widening Participation in*

Further Education', which was the first to highlight the importance of lifelong learning in the British further education sector. Kennedy emphasises that lifelong learning in the 21st century is essential to social cohesion and economic success:

Learning is central both to economic prosperity and the health of society. A healthy society is a necessary condition for a thriving economy... where people in employment can adapt to change; where enterprise can flourish and where those seeking employment can acquire the skills they need for economic activity (Kennedy, 1997, p. 16).

Therefore, LLL has been seen as a tool to improve the economy and enable people to adapt to the economic changes. However, it has become more important than ever because of the changes in demand in the labour market due to increased globalisation and use of technology. Although technology could be seen as machines replacing jobs in some sectors, leading to increased unemployment (Brown, Lauder, Ashton, and Tholen., 2008, p. 5), it also creates a demand for new services, thereby increasing the number of jobs (Whittaker and Hurrell, 2013). Globalisation has also contributed to changes in the demand for labour; as it is described as “an unstoppable force, and is creating a worldwide product, capital and labour markets” (Keep, 2009, p. 7). This leads to ‘a win-win scenario’ whereby Western economies compete with global economies, such as India and China, which have succeeded in producing high value-added, high-technology products (Brown et al., 2008, p. 4). Hence, both globalisation and technological change help in reducing the number of unskilled and semi-skilled jobs in the labour market. Therefore, skills, innovation and productivity are seen as keys to face such global economic challenges as we move towards a ‘knowledge-based economy’ (Dutta, 2016). In a ‘knowledge-based economy’, the importance of knowledge as an input to the economic process has fundamentally changed, and knowledge-intensive industries form a key area of core economic growth (Smith, 2002). A knowledge-based economy depends mainly on intellectual capabilities rather than physical abilities, and on technology rather than the exploitation of cheap labour (Powell and Snellman, 2004).

Notwithstanding the move towards the ‘knowledge-based economy’, low pay and low skilled work remain essential in the economy. For instance, in the UK, “the economy

depends considerably on low-cost, low-specification and often low-quality goods and services which are affordable for those on low incomes” (Simmons, Thompson and Russell, 2014, p. 93). Although the pound fell after the Brexit vote last year (Bowler, 2017), the UK economy has witnessed some improvement. The UK gross domestic product (GDP) increased by 0.2% (Office for National Statistics [ONS], 2017b, p. 2) and the employment rate increased (ONS, 2017a). However, there is low productivity (Elliott, 2017) which indicates that the British economy mostly relies on low skills and low paid work. Low paid work in the UK is high by international standards (Clarke and D’Arcy, 2016). Nevertheless, the result of the EU referendum might impact the number of workers who remain in low paid work. That is to say that, at this moment, the increasing and/or declining economy in the UK is uncertain. Usually, low paid work affects some socio-economic groups, including “young workers (22 years and under); older workers (50 years+); some ethnic groups (such as Pakistani and Bangladeshi); and women as well as students in part-time work” (Devins et al., 2011, p. 17). Low paid work also predominates in certain sectors such as retail, hospitality, personal services, residential care, hotels and restaurant sectors (Schmuecker, 2014). Furthermore, employment rates and payment are also considerably lower for people with disabilities because disabled people are more likely to have no or low-level qualifications (The UK Commission for Employment and Skills [UKCES], 2014).

Although getting stuck with low skills/low paid jobs causes an economic problem of ‘low skills equilibrium’ and thus continues with a low-value-added economy (Keohane and Hupkau, 2014), accepting lower paid work shows the initiative to move from benefits (jobless) to entering the work-world which might enhance social mobility (Devins et al., 2011). However, if low-paid workers do not make any progress in the labour market, they might be trapped in ‘dead-end’ jobs or alternate between low-paid work and unemployment (Devins et al., 2014, p. 3). This is to say that entering the workforce does not mean a shift out of poverty, therefore, it would appear that workers need to update their knowledge and skills, especially employability skills, to be able to meet the needs of changing skills requirements in the labour market.

There is a correlation between low level of skills and low-paid jobs. Those with low skill levels are more likely to stay in a low-paid job. In their study, Keohane and Hupkau (2014) find that 51% of people who are in low-paid jobs are educated to

GCSE level or have no qualifications. Therefore, raising demands for skills can offer more qualified and better paid jobs, particularly in a knowledge-driven global economy. Moreover, skills can be a route to better income and economic prosperity. Wright, Brinkley and Clayton (2010, p. 5) claim “the growth of knowledge-intensive services drove the UK out of the recession in the 1980s and 1990s” which might work with recession nowadays. Similarly, Hyde and Phillipson (2015, p. 4) point out that “increasing the skills of the UK workforce could generate an additional £80bn for the economy and improve the employability of older workers”. In order to improve the economy and develop skills in the long term, investing in human capital is required. This could have benefits for individuals as well as for society as a whole. The concept of human capital refers, as Woodhall (1997, p. 13) points out, “to the fact that human beings invest in themselves, by means of education, training or other activities, which raises their future income by increasing their lifetime earnings”. The investment in human capital leads to economic growth because it equips the individuals with skills and technological knowledge; moreover, it means training potential innovators (Mirela-Ionela, 2012). Long-term investment means engaging in learning from early childhood and throughout our working life (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2012), because many people might lose the formal learning opportunities and in order to achieve the equality, lifelong learning can be central in economic competitiveness.

Furthermore, low productivity and a lack of investment in skills weaken the UK economy because the unemployed and most low-paid workers receive benefits which are financed from taxes (Brown et al., 2008). Thus, the government should seek to enhance the skills and productivity of those who are stuck in low-paid work because increasing their productivity and earnings could reduce the overall benefit bill and increase tax revenues. For instance, in 2015 the government expended around £34bn on tax credits for people in low-paid work and around £5bn goes to the unemployed beside a large portion of the housing benefit bill (ONS, 2016a, p. 2). Although investing in training and lifelong learning might be seen as a cost, it has mutual economic benefits; it improves the quality of the economy as individuals continue to update their skills and knowledge and it reduces the government’s financial cost as Hood, Joyce and Phillips (2014, p. 168) claim the Exchequer saves around 50p, on average, for every £1 increase in wages.

Thus, lifelong learning and improving the quality and efficiency of training may lead to improved job prospects and increased economic growth (Chenic, Angelescu and Gheorghita, 2012, p. 4562), especially with Britain leaving the EU and skills gaps widening. That is because Brexit might lead to skills shortages as many employers are not able to recruit enough skilled workers in some industries such as engineering and IT (Coughlan, 2016). Thus, the need to develop the individuals' skills is demanded (Donnelly, 2017). Skills development, especially employability skills including basic literacy and numeracy skills, problem solving, IT skills, team working, ability to work under pressure, confidence, commercial awareness as well as communication and interpersonal skills (UKCES, 2009), is considered essential to face the economic changes and support individuals to find decent jobs (Nash, 2015; Nevin, 2016). In contrast, Lawton (2015) argues that the weakness of the UK economy is not a result of a skills shortage, but due to "a mismatch between the skills people have and the requirements of the jobs they currently occupy". Similarly, Green (2012) and Keep (2013) claim that increasing skills and qualification levels without an equivalent growth in demand for skills by employers may cause an economic problem of 'under-employment' as many people working in jobs are over-qualified and do not use the skills they have which might put the skills under the risk of atrophying, thus undermining the productivity of the economy (Schmuecker, 2014).

A mismatch between skills supplied and demanded in the labour market is considered as one of the reasons which leads to low productivity (European Commission, 2016). The availability of jobs is pertinent to the under-employment as Mishel (2011) considers that the unemployment problem, especially under the conditions of crisis, is related to job availability – either the unemployed people are located in the wrong places or they have skills that are not matched to the available jobs. Work-based learning (WBL) can provide solutions to mismatched skills; WBL provides the opportunity for workers to update their skills and capabilities, which are required for their jobs in their workplace, and thus might lift them out of low-paid work. WBL is an 'expansion of labour power' as it offers workers greater levels of autonomy and contributes to increased self-surveillance to be able to meet the global economy demands and to be more productive (Avis, 2010, p. 184).

However, improving employability skills is still important and it could be one of the ways to develop a highly skilled and productive workforce in the UK. Furthermore, employment skills, technological as well as the basic numeracy and literacy skills, which are commonly demanded by employers (European Commission, 2016), can be delivered in some of the informal learning organisations such as public libraries. I will discuss in more detail the role of public libraries in supporting lifelong learning activities later. However, investing in skills might fail due to the lack of labour market regulation. For instance, the current adult skills system does not provide people with skills and qualifications which meet the demands of the labour market (Dromey and McNeil, 2017). Besides the average government spend on adult education reducing from £2.4bn between 2013–2014 (Keohane and Hupkau, 2014, p. 44) to £1.49bn between 2016–2017 (Foster, 2017, p. 15), Keep (2009, p. 10) further argues there are some reasons which make participating in skills unsuccessful; the first and the most considerable one is that most training is informal and often non-certified such as vocational and adult education which are still out of the spotlight of media attention or policymakers. Moreover, “imperfect information; time preference, short-termism and risk aversion; capital market imperfections; externalities, labour market imperfections and the poaching of skilled workers” (Keep, 2006, p.3) can be obstacles to achieve the benefits of lifelong learning. It is worth mentioning that my study does not attempt any in-depth analysis of reasons beyond the economic recession that would require a separate study. My study aims to discuss the role public libraries might play in improving the skills.

To summarise, lifelong learning has direct economic effects including impacts on earnings, on employability and on the wider economy, which require more public spending on training and education. It also has indirect effects on health, well-being and sociability (Field, 2012), thus, there is a strong correlation between economic success and social cohesion. Usually, people with high incomes are more confident and more sociable; “people with low incomes, with less education and living in deprived neighbourhoods are generally more likely to suffer from mental health problems than the general population” (Miyamoto and Chevalier, 2010, p. 112). Therefore, lifelong learning has both economic and social effects associated with it which I will discuss in the next section.

2.4 The social benefits of lifelong learning

Although lifelong learning has become a policy goal for global economic success, it has been essential to achieve social justice and reduce social exclusion. That is because LLL can promote societal participation by enabling the individuals to be better informed and more active citizens; improving their personal well-being and fulfilment and supporting their creativity and innovation, as well as reducing inequalities (The European Older People's Platform, 2007, p. 2). Inequality is one of the most socially problematic aspects and has effects on some social outcomes (Lübker, 2004). For instance, Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) find that there is a correlation between income inequality and lower levels of public health and general well-being, as well as a high level of violent crime and other social outcomes such as trust. Moreover, educational inequality is associated with a higher level of violent crime and political unrest (Green, Preston and Janmaat, 2006). At the same time, more income and educational-equal societies tend to have higher levels of social and political trust, and lower levels of crimes as well as higher levels of social cohesion (Han et al., 2012, p. 4).

Social cohesion is a complex concept, but it can be defined according to the Council of Europe as *"the capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, minimising disparities and avoiding polarisation. A cohesive society is a mutually supportive community of free individuals pursuing these common goals by democratic means"* (European Committee for Social Cohesion, 2004, p. 3). Social cohesion in liberal societies like the UK relies on an active civil society and core beliefs in individual opportunity and merit to hold society together (Janmaat and Green, 2013, p. 10). However, Britain is among the nations that have a high level of inequality of educational opportunities and skills inequalities (Avis, 2016). Skills inequalities challenges can be tackled by providing individuals from all social backgrounds with effective ways to improve their skills and knowledge (Janmaat and Green, 2013).

The above notwithstanding, there are some factors that create barriers to participation in learning or training, especially among young people. Social barriers might be personal experience, such as financial hardship due to parental divorce or

unemployment, or they may arise from individual circumstances, such as “they are teenage parents; they are homeless; they have a disability; they have a mental illness or they misuse drugs or alcohol” (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999, p. 48). Regardless of these barriers, such people are considered as ‘othered’ and they need to be involved in learning in order to achieve social justice (Avis and Orr, 2015, p. 33). In this sense, LLL aims to offer a second chance to all people, regardless of age and educational backgrounds, to develop their civic responsibility within society. That is to say, LLL can play a potential role not just in improving marketable skills, but also in acquiring social skills including communication skills such as the ability to work with others; and civic skills such as respecting other’s cultures, interests and identity (Borgonovi and Miyamoto, 2010).

Furthermore, LLL can play a significant role in building a ‘learning community’ which can be defined, according to Longworth (1999, p. 6), as “a community where every individual, business, schools, colleges, universities and local government cooperate to make it an economically, culturally and mentally pleasant place to live”. It might seem impossible to build this community; however, it can be achieved by considering learning as a normal and a right activity for people regardless of their age, socio-economic or educational background and providing human resources to help people update their skills and encouraging citizens to develop their skills and knowledge across the life-span (Tett, 2010). In other words, LLL should be a reality and people should have an equal opportunity to learn throughout their lives. LLL is seen as an answer to perceived social problems, such as crime, unemployment, poor health and poor education which might affect social cohesion (Field, 2009). For instance, lifelong learning could help in improving health. This is accomplished by providing people with skills which enable them to choose healthier lifestyles and better manage illness. Additionally, it may enable them to obtain better jobs with higher earnings and which may improve their living environment and access to health care (Miyamoto and Chevalier, 2010).

As discussed earlier, lifelong learning has integrated economic and social effects. For instance, people with low incomes are more likely to face some social problems such as “anxiety, feeling of shame and rejection, and increased likelihood of drugs dependency or criminality” (Simmons et al., 2014, p. 64). Similarly, low income and

unemployment are the main reasons that increase poverty. For instance, the poverty rate is high for people who work in sectors such as retail, hospitality, personal services and residential care; it is also high for those working in sales (16%) and caring (14%) (Schmuecker, 2014, p. 4).

Poverty is one of the factors which contribute to social exclusion. Social exclusion happens “when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime and poor health” (Social Exclusion Unit, 2004, p. 2). For instance, people who live in poverty are generally less confident, more likely to have health problems and more likely to engage in risky behaviour (Miyamoto and Chevalier, 2010). Additionally, children from poorer backgrounds are more likely to be excluded from school, to be truant and have lower levels of educational achievement. Consequently, they are more likely to end up not in education, employment or training (NEET) at age 18 than those from more affluent backgrounds (HM Government, 2012, p. 10). Therefore, it is more important than ever to support people to engage in learning and get additional support from formal and informal learning organisations to update their skills and knowledge. Accordingly, participation in lifelong learning became a fundamental responsibility of the ‘good citizens’ (Simmons et al., 2014, p. 46) who know their rights and duties for their society which involves active citizenship. Citizenship can be defined according to the UK Citizenship Foundation (2012) as:

Ensuring that every individual has the knowledge and skills to understand, engage with and challenge the main pillars of a democratic society – politics, the economy and the law in order to make the society work together.

Participating in active citizenship helps to build community cohesion and therefore it has been a priority for governments. Thus, citizens should take responsibility and be more active in their communities through a renewed sense of solidarity and empowerment (Birdwell, Scott and Horley, 2013). People may be active in different ways; they might be involved in political processes through voting and by helping as a volunteer, or can participate through forms and structures, such as serving at school or on management committees of voluntary organisations. They may also participate in a natural group, such as a campaigning group at a local, national and

global level (Packham, 2012, p. 5). Moreover, being an active citizen can help to build bridges between the generations through participation in children's activities or through work with old people (Longworth, 1999) and consequently supports those involved to build their confidence and self-esteem by meeting new people and/or improving their English (if they are non-native). In addition, it could help citizens to acquire new skills and knowledge which assist them to gain employment and enable them to effect change in everyday life experience at the community level (Mark, 2011).

Therefore, active citizens can be informed, knowledgeable and able to participate in public debate through LLL opportunities by teaching and supporting the young to engage in practical projects so that they can acquire knowledge about active citizenship (Jarvis, 2008, p. 47). In other words, people can learn through doing, or as it is known, 'civic education'. However, citizenship is not just responsibilities; it is a package of responsibilities and rights (Goldsmith, 2008). People should take their place in a 'civic society' (Johnston, 2006), which can be achieved by involving citizens in the process of governance and through democratic means, thus the citizens' voices should be listened to (Jarvis, 2008). However, in order to enable citizens to be active and help in building their community and its social cohesion, citizens need to be inspired to do more than deliver opinions (Longworth, 2006). Moreover, mostly, people should be encouraged to improve their own ability to contribute in democratic decision-making in their social, political, cultural and economic life (Longworth, 1999).

Offering an equal participation in democratic decision-making is difficult due to "failing to recognise people's cultural differences or the inequality of distribution of socio-economic resources" (Tett, 2010, p. 93). Moreover, reductions in spending on local public services contribute to reducing opportunities for equal participation in learning. The worst impact of budget cuts may be felt by the most "deprived communities, households and individuals, as these groups are known to be most reliant on public services" (Besemer and Bramley, 2012, p. 6). In other words, the cuts reduce the chance of achieving social justice. However, those challenges can be tackled by providing people with specific knowledge and skills to develop their personality and improve their understanding of the value of solidarity, tolerance and

cultural diversity. In order to achieve the aim of this learning society, government may need to create an environment where people feel comfortable and motivated to learn. This kind of environment can support peaceful relationships and structures for promoting a culture of peace (Mark, 2011, p. 43). This kind of environment can be found in the public libraries, as I will discuss later.

In summary, lifelong learning can play a significant role in achieving social justice which can be defined as “every one of us having the chances and opportunities to make the most of our lives and use our talents to the full” (Curran, 2002, p. 1), thus, it aims to treat all members of society fairly. Everyone has the right to be supported to engage in learning and to update their skills, especially those who need additional help to progress, such as disengaged young people, unemployed people, offenders and hard-to-reach learners such as those with disabilities. However, lifelong learning is not a ‘silver bullet’ (Sissons, 2014, p. 19); it cannot eradicate illness, poverty, crime, unemployment or other social problems totally. Certainly, it can reduce them, and sometimes helps indirectly. For instance, learning can reduce the crime rate in an indirect way by improving the skills necessary to work which may prevent people engaging in crime and by enabling them to move to an environment where offending behaviour is unacceptable (Schuller, 2009). Lifelong learning can be offered in a range of ways by colleges or by local authorities and organisations. Public libraries are considered as learning organisations that can play a significant role in delivering lifelong learning activities which will be discussed in the next section.

2.5 The role of public libraries in delivering lifelong learning

In the knowledge-based society, access to information has become vital in order for people to update their skills and improve their personal lives, in other words to be lifelong learners. Thus, people need equal access to continuous lifelong learning to “acquire functional literacy, numeracy and skills to earn a living through decent employment or self-employment” (King and Palmer, 2013, p. 21). Public libraries as informal educational organisations can offer people access to knowledge and information that are needed for their continuous learning, personal skills and civic skills. That is because public libraries provide a safe, neutral, flexible, voluntary and non-judgemental place, which supports disadvantaged groups, the poor, ethnic

minorities and people with mental, physical and learning disabilities (Halpin et al., 2013).

However, public libraries supported lifelong learners long before the term 'lifelong learning' emerged politically (McMenemy, 2009). Since the Public Library Act of 1850 was conceived, learning was to be its main purpose. The Act gave local boroughs the authority to establish free public libraries across the UK, which aimed to educate the working classes and improve their conditions (Kelly, 1973). Since then, public libraries have spread across the UK and have strengthened their role in society. For example, during the First and Second World Wars, public libraries played a significant role by providing rehabilitation and educational activities, such as teaching men who returned from the war, and by supplying materials which could help them to escape from the horror of the war (Black, 2000). However, in the 21st century, the role of public libraries has changed with greater emphasis on their contribution to lifelong learning. Public libraries are not just a place for books and media, computers and access to information, but also for social networking that allows individuals to grow within and as part of a community (Flood, 2012).

Today, however, The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 governs the library service. The 1964 Act sets out the statutory duty for all local authorities to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service set in the context of local need (McMenemy, 2009). "Comprehensive and efficient" public library service means that every individual in the local area has right to use the library services; and the library should provide sufficient number, range and quality of books and other materials to meet the general requirements and any special requirements of adults and children (Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, 1964, p. 6). In order for library authorities to fulfil the 'comprehensive and efficient' services, they should have an adequate stocks of books and other materials either by keeping these items themselves or having arrangements with other library authorities to obtain them. In addition, the authorities should encourage both adults and children to make full use of the library service, and of providing advice as to its use and of making available such bibliographical and other information as may be required by persons using it (Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, 1964, p. 7). The 1964 Act also states that the Secretary of State for Culture oversees a local authority's role in complying with the Act (CILIP, 2015, p. 1) which means that the Act sees public libraries as

indispensable organisations in the community and local people should receive quality services. The Act led to the creation of library advisory councils in England and Wales and these still exist (McMenemy, 2009, p. 32). In England, the advisory council is now Arts Council England (ACE), which has represented the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) since October 2011 and is funded by the DCMS (Department for Culture, Media and Sport [DCMS], 2013).

As we shall see later, public libraries have an economic, social and educational role to play in society, thus they can foster the lifelong learning activities.

2.5.1 The economic value of public libraries

Economic globalisation, along with rapid advance of technology and an explosion of new knowledge, created social and educational inequalities and increased instability through employment (Balapanidou, 2015). Mostly, individuals need to participate in continuous training to build their skills and knowledge, particularly digital skills. The report by the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee (2016, p. 10) reveals that 23% (12.6 million) of the UK population lack basic digital skills. Digital skills are vital to find work as unemployed people have to search for a job via the internet to “identify what employers want, they should consider their skills and strengths if they match with the job description details” (Simmons and Walker, 2015, p. 262). Moreover, the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) (2014a, p. 2) states that 72% of employers would not employ people who do not have ICT skills. Additionally, people with good ICT skills earn between 3%–10% more than those without (CILIP, 2014a, p. 2). Nonetheless, ICT skills are not just knowing how to use a computer and access the internet, but also having adequate knowledge and skills to find appropriate resources, evaluate information and use the information effectively in solving problems (Lai, 2011, p. 83).

Public libraries, as learning institutions, can play a significant role by providing guidance and training on how to search for and use quality information resources that help with personal enrichment and the fulfilment of knowledge (Rooney-Browne and McMenemy, 2010; Hall, 2011). Moreover, public libraries can support jobseekers to find opportunities and prepare themselves for interview by offering

courses and digital skills training (Arts Council England, 2014). For instance, the Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) (cited in Crawford and Irving, 2013), through its survey in 2012, found that public libraries could play a significant role in supporting ICT and improving people's skills. The survey showed that about 80% of public libraries' users stated that libraries helped them to improve their understanding of online information and 70% of users agreed that the libraries had improved their ICT skills (Crawford and Irving, 2013, p. 194). In this sense, public libraries play an educational as well as an economic role simultaneously.

Providing users with training and advice to find jobs and help them to start up their own businesses is considered to be a significant economic role to play. For instance, Enterprising Libraries, between April 2013 and March 2015, have together created nearly 1,700 new businesses and 4,200 new jobs (DCMS, 2015, p. 12). However, there are many ways that public libraries can help in improving the economy. Basically, public libraries provide free and low-cost services and promote borrowing rather than buying by offering citizens access to numerous resources such as books, newspapers, magazines, information, workshops, entertainment and advice as well as computers for internet access (Rooney-Browne, 2009). Although the percentage of internet access has increased since 2006, in 2016, 11% of households in Great Britain did not have internet access, 21% reported that this was due to a lack of skills. Further barriers reported included equipment costs being too high (9%) (ONS, 2016b, p. 19). Thus, access to the internet via library services may be the only opportunity for this section of the population to use it (Davies, 2013, p. 14). In contrast, Feather (2011a, p. 74) argues that public libraries are not free; they are charging for materials like CDs and inter-loans where the cost is typically passed on to the users. However, public libraries offer free access to the internet and materials such as books and newspapers and the fee, for example, for borrowing CDs "is often to cover costs of processing and growing the video collection" (Marco, 2008, online). For instance, "if someone is looking for a rare film, perhaps older or on 'an obscure format' (Betamax tapes are out there still) libraries can offer those films cheaper than other commercial alternatives such as eBay" (Marco, 2008, online). In addition, some academic libraries charge their students for inter-loan services. Moreover, public libraries, unlike many businesses, seem to have performed well in the recession. In their study Child and Goulding (2012) find that use of public libraries increased

during the recession, which means that people recognise their value as a free service in times of economic difficulty. For instance, a study by Besemer and Bramley (2012) shows that in 2011 nearly 85% of people in the UK believed that libraries are essential and should be available to all; this percentage had increased by 15% since 1999.

The economic value of public library services has an indirect benefit to the individual as well as the whole community as public libraries may provide a range of savings to the public exchequer in different areas, such as education, social care and health (Poole, 2015a). For instance, library usage in England has saved at least £27.5m per year on NHS costs; this saving was based on reductions in GP visits and reductions in medical service usage (Fujiwara, Lawton and Mourato, 2015, p. 7). Moreover, public libraries have different types of economic contribution such as visitors spending in the library locality in shops and cafes; a study by Research and Consultancy (ERS) (2014) identifies the average spend in the library locality ranges from £18.43 and £35.32 in Scotland, Wales and in Northern Ireland (ERS, 2014, p. 1). However, in order to provide an effective business information service and training opportunities to the public, library staff need to improve their ICT and teaching skills (Wilson and Train, 2005). Furthermore, public libraries should have cooperative relationships with other organisations such as colleges (Lai, 2011). Nonetheless, as I will explain later, the cuts in public spending, which led to reduced opening hours and/or closing library services entirely, as well as reducing the number of professional librarians, have had a significant impact on both the level and quality of local service provision.

In summary, public libraries, as an integral part of the society, have evolved to become vital assets within their local communities, where users are as likely to search for a job, learn a skill or apply for a driving licence as they are to borrow a book or read a newspaper (Libraries Taskforce, 2015). Public libraries can play a central role in achieving social justice which will be discussed in the next section.

2.5.2 The social impact of public libraries

Public libraries have always been more than just collections of books. They can play a significant role in society by offering a variety of services including 'mobile libraries, services for ethnic minorities, children and the elderly, homework clubs, e-government portals, cybercafes, newspapers and health advice, in an attempt to be all things to all people' (Chowdhury, Poulter and McMenemy, 2006, p. 455). Therefore, public libraries "belong to everyone and can become a focus of community" (Vincent and Pateman, 2012, p. 86). This means that public libraries can help in fostering social inclusion. As mentioned earlier, there are still members of society who cannot access the internet; people are encouraged to attend ICT training in order to reduce the effect of what is called 'digital exclusion' or 'digital divide'. According to the OECD (2001), the digital divide is:

The gap between individuals, households, businesses and geographic areas at different socio-economic levels with regard both to their opportunities to access information and communication technologies (ICTs) and to their use of the internet for a wide variety of activities (OECD, 2001, p. 5).

Public libraries can help in closing the digital divide by providing access and training and creating accessible e-resources (Craven, 2011). Most importantly, they can help by offering 'information literacy', which means providing people with skills that support them to evaluate, organise and use information from a variety of sources (Nwezeh, 2011), especially electronic information that is sometimes 'trivial, inaccurate or wrong' (Harle and Tarrant, 2011, p. 130) or as Jarvis (2008, p. 110) suggests that some information is published as a kind of 'brainwashing' or 'indoctrination'. However, in order for libraries to accomplish this role, they need more resources that involve equipment, personnel, time and space and to do this, Russell and Huang (2009, p. 73) suggest that more "cooperation with local communities, charitable organisations and private sectors is needed".

Notwithstanding moving towards providing digital services, using public libraries as social and meeting places is still needed. In their study, Aabø and Audunson (2012, p. 184) find that public libraries are considered as "community-meeting places,

promoting social inclusion and the minimal degree of communality in norms and values that citizenship presupposes". Moreover, public libraries can play a significant role in reducing social problems such as isolation – social isolation and loneliness. These terms are used interchangeably and they mean "lack of desired affection, closeness and social interaction with family or friends, community involvement or access to services" (Davidson and Rossall, 2014, p. 3). Loneliness affects people's health as the ONS report shows that feeling lonely leads to "increased blood pressure, elevated stress levels, weakening the immune system and heightened feelings of depression, anxiety and Alzheimer's" (Thomas, 2015, p. 6). In the UK, the percentage of elderly people who live alone is high, the statistics show that in 2016, "3.5 million people aged 65+ live alone and over 2 million people aged 75 and over live alone" (Age UK, 2017, p. 15). This percentage has increased since 2011, and one of the reasons for this increase is reliance on online services for everything from customer services to shopping and social security payments and closure of some social meeting places and local hubs such as public libraries (Jones, 2015).

In addition, the ONS report shows that people aged 80 and over are twice as likely to report feeling lonely than those of working age and the 65–79 age group (29.2% compared to 14.8% and 14.5% respectively) (Thomas, 2015, p. 3). This suggests that engaging elderly people in work can help in reducing isolation. However, as some jobs require training to learn new skills, elderly people may feel embarrassed to admit that they need these kinds of basic skills or that it is too late to learn such skills, especially ICT (Canduela et al., 2012, p. 43). Public libraries as safe, neutral, non-judgemental and voluntary places can help by providing elderly people with training. In addition, public libraries may help in reducing isolation by offering a wide range of resources and the empathy of its staff in a social environment. Also, public libraries can deliver their services to elderly people, via mobile libraries, either in care homes or to people who are housebound (Vincent and Pateman, 2012).

Furthermore, public libraries can provide health services, as well as books on prescription or as it is called 'bibliotherapy' which is defined according to Walker (2014, online) as "the use of fiction and poetry to support and improve positive outcomes for people with mental health and well-being issues". This helps in reducing depression and anxiety, increasing self-esteem and improving social skills

and concentration. Public libraries might have a significant role to play because they have a wealth of resources and knowledge as part of a community setting. They can also offer a friendly, neutral, non-clinical environment with helpful staff (Walker, 2014). The bibliotherapy programme is available for free in 97% of public libraries and nearly 445,000 people have attended this scheme (DCMS, 2015, p. 14).

Therefore, public libraries can help to achieve the social justice; however, social justice in public libraries according to The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA, 2016, online) means “services are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status”. In contrast, Dolan and Khan (2011, p. 82) argue that public libraries “do not serve the disadvantaged effectively”, as most of their services are directed at the provision within the library, while many people live in places where it may be difficult to reach the library. Similarly, Vincent and Pateman (2012, p. 77) claim that public libraries are not for all: “they are middle-class institutions and they are irrelevant to the vast majority of the proletariat”. However, according to the Chief Executive of CILIP, Nick Poole, public libraries are safe places for vulnerable groups and those at a social disadvantage because they are trusted civic institutions at the heart of their community, designed to provide equality of access to information and freedom of expression (Poole, 2015b).

Public libraries can play a potential role in achieving equality of opportunity by supporting learning at all stages of life, from babies and small children to older people. For instance, public libraries deliver ‘Bookstart’, which helps to introduce books to babies and, more importantly, to encourage parents to share reading with their children (Goulding, 2006, p. 275). Bookstart is ‘the world’s first national book gifting programme, it was established in 1992 and run by the reading charity BookTrust’ (BookTrust, 2017a, online). The programme provides free books to all children at two key ages before school to help families read together and inspire children to be a lifelong reader. At the age of one, babies receive the first pack which includes two board books, a rhyme sheet and a booklet of tips and ideas for sharing books. At the age of four, the children receive second gift which includes a picture book for families to share and a friendly booklet with tips for reading together (BookTrust, 2017b, online). Bookstart is administered through public library services

but gifted by health visitors, in this sense, Bookstart is considered as cooperation between childcare providers and public libraries (Goulding, 2006, p. 238). In order to fulfil the aim of this partnership, Bookstart depends on library staff to be involved in promotion, outreach work and learner support (BookTrust, 2017c).

Alongside this, public libraries encourage children to read for pleasure by offering a variety of activities such as the 'Summer Reading Challenge' which is "the UK's biggest reading for pleasure programme and encourages children aged between 4–11 to read six books during the long summer holiday" (DCMS, 2015, p. 9). Moreover, public libraries offer activities for adult learners as well, such as the 'Six Book Challenge' which helps to improve learners' reading and thus build their confidence (Libraries Taskforce, 2015). According to DCMS (2015, p. 14) 92% of participants said that they were more confident about reading after taking part. Additionally, public libraries can support adult learners taking their first step back into learning by offering resources and training (ICT and/or numeracy and literacy skills) in a non-educational environment.

Nevertheless, in order for public libraries to achieve the educational role, people need to have adequate incentives to learn, as Alison Wolf states: "you cannot make people learn if they neither want to nor see the point of it" (Wolf, 2007, online). In other words, it is a kind of 'active citizenship'; people need to understand the significant role public libraries can play in improving their lives which requires cooperation between libraries and other organisations such as schools, colleges and universities. Public libraries are required to better meet the needs of their existing users and to extend their reach into communities that have not previously had access (Harle and Tarrant, 2011, p. 121). To do this, public libraries need more funding, however, the current funding cuts affect the performance of public library services, as I will discuss later.

Providing equal access to information (printed and electronic versions), regardless of race, income, class, age or gender, assists in achieving democracy (Fitch and Warner, 1998). Durcan (2011, p. 333) compares public libraries and other organisations which might be able to support democratic living and finds that public libraries 'are the best places' to achieve democracy by offering people:

The ability to read, access and understand the information needed for daily life beside free and equal digital sources which give citizens the opportunity to vote electronically; to shop; and apply for employment online as well as providing shelter and security (Durcan, 2011, p. 333).

Moreover, public libraries can help people to be more 'active citizens' as citizenship is considered to be the foundation of a democratic society; Longworth (1999, p. 71) states that citizenship should be taught by practising such as "sending children in schools to old people's homes or inviting adults to participate in a neighbourhood or environment". Public libraries are available for all ages from the cradle to the grave so people might learn by practising how to work with each other as part of the community, in addition, as public libraries are accessible by all cultures and backgrounds which might allow people to understand the meaning of tolerance and diversity of cultures. Public libraries could be the heart of the community and the key to unlocking inequality.

In this sense, it could be argued that the public library can play a potential role in developing social capital (Goulding, 1994; Birdi, Wilson and Mansoor, 2011). Social capital can be defined according to Putnam (1995, p. 67) as "features of social organisation such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit". The main characteristics of social capital are: "citizenship; neighbourliness; trust and shared values; community involvement; volunteering; social networks and civic participation" (Goulding, 1994, p. 3). However, public libraries can develop the social capital because they are a public space for all which enables them to create social interaction and trust and a feeling of equity within the local community (Vårheim, 2007, p. 424). The public library can be a 'third place' where it is neither work nor home where people can spend time together; thus the library can inspire social trust (Vårheim, 2007, p. 424). In addition, the library as a public space can bring together "diverse populations into one community to learn, gather information and reflect" (Goulding, 1994, p. 4). Nonetheless, public libraries are facing challenges such as funding cuts and shortages of staff, which might affect the efficiency of the services; I will discuss those challenges in the next section.

2.5.3 The closure of public libraries

As discussed, public libraries can play a vital role in an integrated lifelong learning framework. They are a resource for parents, young children and adults, they support jobseekers to gain skills and employment and encourage civic participation as well as assisting elderly people to combat isolation. However, there are many challenges facing public library services, chiefly through cuts in public spending, which lead to reducing opening hours and/or closing library services entirely (MacDoland, 2012). According to the BBC (2016), almost 450 UK public libraries have closed since 2010. However, it seems that local authorities have defended closures in terms of widening access as it has been argued that many libraries are located in areas that are difficult to access having been built before many newer housing developments. Many older libraries have also struggled to comply with disability access requirements (Society of Chief Librarians, 2012). The number of books borrowed is another criterion which local authorities rely upon to close public libraries (Halpin et al., 2013). In some cases, book loans have reduced because of the reduction in public spending (Casselden et al., 2015). A study by Rooney-Browne (2009) finds that cuts in public library expenditure affected the quality of library services because book funds were cut and opening hours were reduced by 60%. Moreover, the UK government in its response to a report by the Culture, Media and Sport Committee, said that “*the closure of one or even a number of library branches does not necessarily signify a breach of the 1964 Act*” because “The 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act does not seek to be overly prescriptive but instead anchors the delivery of a local service to the needs of the local community” (Woodhouse, 2016, p. 3).

However, the closure of public libraries, especially in a time of economic crisis, impacts the deprived communities and individuals who at the same time are affected by the cuts in English higher education and increased fees (Avis, 2011). For instance, in their study, Fujiwara et al. (2015, p. 35) find that public libraries are valued more highly by certain sections of the population. In particular, “those with dependent children; people under 45 years and those with higher levels of education as well as unpaid family workers”. Furthermore, public libraries are still popular places to visit. According to DCMS (2015), there were 224.6 million visits to libraries in England and 191 million book loans in 2014/15 alone. Additionally, most people

consider that public libraries play a significant role in improving their life. This is evidenced by the study of Fujiwara et al. who found that 76% of library users would be willing to pay an increase in council taxes to keep their library open while among non-users, 63% of respondents said they would be willing to pay something (Fujiwara et al., 2015, p. 23). As the UK is a democratic society, the voices of the citizens should be listened to (Jarvis, 2008).

Reducing opening hours and closing libraries have an effect on society. For example, 70% of participants in the study by Proctor, Lee and Reily (1998) stated that they had used the library less since the opening hours were reduced. Moreover, the closure of public libraries in any community may affect the whole community infrastructure. Hall (2011, p. 5) points out that public libraries are part of England's national heritage bequeathed to us, and that we should protect this heritage. In addition, closure of public libraries affects social cohesion. As Proctor et al. (1998) find in their study, children did not just lose opportunities to gain a variety of skills and experiences that school alone could not offer, but they also lost the "place of social interaction, providing a friendly and familiar environment in which children can learn important social skills. It helps them build relationships with adults and respect and understand elderly people" (Proctor et al., 1998, p. 91). Also, there are many barriers that may discourage potential learners from going into libraries or other educational institutions. One of these barriers is geographical area, so libraries should be located in a suitable location; and that will not happen if libraries are closed (McNicol, 2002).

Therefore, by closing public libraries, the community might lose an important organisation, this is because public libraries are not just places which offer free, safe and neutral access for all people, but also places to provide homework clubs, reading groups, baby rhyme times and variety of library's resources and services to make reading and study a more social activity (Culture, Media and Sport Committee, 2012, p. 23). Moreover, by closing public libraries and reducing opening hours, public libraries cannot meet the requirement of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, which states that "the duty of every library authority to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use" (Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, 1964, p. 6). However, many researchers,

such as Harle and Tarrant (2011) and Durcan (2011), believe that libraries require more funding to achieve their role and meet community needs. Public libraries themselves should offer a well-designed and extensive range of online coursework with content that is relevant to people's needs and interests as well as being fun and enjoyable (Worpole, 2004). However, funding cuts lead to another challenge in terms of reducing the number of professional librarians, which I will discuss later.

2.6 The role of librarians in facilitating lifelong learning activities

The change in the role of public libraries required a change in the role of librarians, particularly in the complex world of modern information and its retrieval. Historically, the word 'library keeper' was used to refer to 'librarian' until the 18th century, when the word 'librarian' replaced it (Feather, 2011b, p. 253). The role of librarians has become more complicated, especially in the digital age, as it has changed from provider to trainer, then to teacher. This teaching role would support people to gain skills that enable them to identify information sources effectively and efficiently and to access and evaluate that information and then use it ethically (Julien and Genuis, 2009, p. 927). In this way, it would appear that librarians have an impact on people's lives by teaching them that accessing good quality information does not just help their economic circumstances, but also affects their social, personal and learning outcomes (Innocent, 2009). In his blog, Bradley (2010) discusses librarians' interest in knowledge, "the correct dissemination of that knowledge, and the appropriate choice of knowledge from an appropriate container". In other words, librarians become 'information professionals' (IPs) who use "strategically information in their jobs to advance the mission of the organisation, they (IPs) accomplish this through the development, deployment and management of information resources and services and harness technology as a critical tool to achieve goals" (Abels et al., 2003, p. 1).

Generally, public libraries in the UK depend on paraprofessional and professional staff as well as volunteers (McMenemy, 2009). Paraprofessional staff, according to McMenemy (2009 p. 98), "are often not of a sufficient grade or training level to provide learning programmes". The professional librarian or information professional,

as explained previously, is engaged in a wide range of activities from helping children with homework to teaching ICT skills to all ages, supporting people to find jobs, to helping people who suffer from mental health issues. In order for the librarian to accomplish their role as a professional, they should continue developing to be able to accept the challenge in a changing world (Hezemans and Ritzen, 2004, p. 254). In other words, librarians should be lifelong learners themselves, so they are able to coach learners on the lifelong learning journey. Moreover, according to CILIP (2014b), a professional librarian needs skills such as:

Interpersonal skills which help them to communicate effectively with all members of the community; ability to deliver library services to the public; enthusiasm for reading for pleasure as well as an ability to provide reader development activity; ability to build and maintain partnerships with internal and external partners; ability to manage projects and deliver them on time; and meet targets and constantly improve performance.

However, a number of professional and paraprofessional (paid) staff have been replaced by volunteers. The idea of volunteer-run libraries is being encouraged in the UK as a result of funding cuts. For example, according to the BBC (2016), the number of paid staff in libraries fell from 31,977 in 2010 to 24,044 in 2016 and more than 31,403 volunteers are involved in UK public libraries. Voluntary work is considered as the first step to enter into paid work because it helps to increase the skills and knowledge of volunteers. It could contribute to community cohesion, for example, by “helping refugees, and those serving community sentences for non-serious criminal offences” (Packham, 2012, p. 2). Thus, voluntary work is considered as a kind of ‘active citizenship’, and in the case of public libraries, volunteers assist in keeping the libraries open. Moreover, it could be argued that volunteers can add value to the public library services by making libraries more representative of the communities within which they are based, so enabling them to reach out into their communities, and attract new users. This may involve undertaking additional responsibilities such as home visits and supporting staff in the library team (DCMS, 2010; Goulding, 2013).

Nevertheless, ideally, volunteers should be viewed as a supplement to the library staff, not an alternative to them, because they are less committed to long-term positions and lack the skills necessary to do a librarian’s work (Bradley, 2012, p. 38).

This, in turn, affects the quality of lifelong learning activities that are delivered to the learners, and they (public libraries) cannot meet the requirement of the 1964 Act that every library should provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' service. Therefore, in order for libraries to address known local needs, professionalism should be at the heart of any library service and volunteers need to be working closely with librarians and not replacing them (Arts Council England, 2013). According to Harris (2011), there is no conviction that unpaid staff could run libraries satisfactorily, especially in a digital age, public libraries are not just for people who cannot afford to buy books or pay for the internet but also for an information safety net. Thus, it is more appropriate for libraries to be staffed by trained and qualified information professionals who can help in information searching in a more efficient and more productive way (Feather, 2011a, p. 77).

Moreover, information professionals can help in teaching students to become critical thinkers, intellectually curious observers, and creators and users of information because students are required to rely more heavily on library materials with a demand for more varied media resources, including print and non-print (Nwezeh, 2011, p. 187). However, reducing the number of professional librarians has not just been affected by the funding cuts, but also by lacking understanding about the value of information professionals in the community. There is a definite need for clear definition about the professional librarian and the skills and duties involved in librarianship (Shaw, 2010).

In addition, there is a need for greater understanding of the nature of the profession (librarian job) which might be considered as a stressful job. Although the report by Jones (2015, online) shows that working as a librarian is one of the least stressful jobs in the UK, Jordan (2014, p. 291) claims that public librarians face stress every day on the job. While some librarians might find their jobs stressful because it is 'unchallenging' (BBC, 2006, online), other librarians state that the stress increase is due to needing to keep up with community demands, especially with technology; the librarians might lack the latest skills (Knibbe-Haanstra, 2008). In this sense, librarians need to update their skills continuously; however, the factor that is considered to be most stressful for the librarian is budget cuts which could lead to job losses or a reduction in their working hours. For instance, Jehlik (2004) (cited in

Jordan, 2014, p. 292) finds that after the budget cut reductions in Omaha Public Library, the librarians felt that they were “misunderstood and unappreciated, anxious, overworked and irritable, exacerbating personality differences among staff”. This feeling could be as a result of the stressful job as “they are constantly exhorted to do more with less” (Jordan, 2014, p. 292). Consequently, it might affect the efficiency and the quality of facilitating the library’s activities and learning sessions. In order to reduce those challenges, librarians should be provided with training programmes which assist them to handle the stress in a productive way that would help them to be creative and satisfied in their jobs (Holcomb, 2007; Jordan, 2014).

To summarise, it is possible that public libraries and their librarians can play a vital role in delivering lifelong learning activities. This ethnographic study aims to investigate the role of public libraries and the librarians in facilitating lifelong learning activities and how those activities might affect the users socially and economically.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the different perspectives of LLL and its role in reducing the skills inequalities and inequality of opportunities as well as combatting social exclusion. I also discussed the economic, social and educational role of public libraries as lifelong learning organisations and the role of librarians as ‘information professionals’ in supporting individuals to improve their personal life by improving their literacy, numeracy and IT skills. As explained in this chapter, there are numerous constraints and threats, which may reduce the effectiveness of public library services, mainly funding cuts and shortages of staff that affect the individual and the whole community. It is suggested that public libraries need more funding to be able to meet community needs and more consideration from government and organisations such as CILIP to increase understanding of the value of the public library and its librarians in the community.

Chapter three: The Conceptual Framework: Communities of Practice

3.1 Introduction

This chapter assesses the suitability of the community of practice (CoP) as a theoretical framework in supporting the operationalisation of the data for the study. It also evaluates the appropriateness of CoP in demonstrating how public libraries, as a learning environment, support the individuals to develop their skills throughout life and contribute to the general development of the community. However, firstly, I will discuss the potential theories which I also considered that might have helped me to achieve the aim of this thesis. I have chosen two theories which are: socio-culture theory (Vygotsky) and knowing organization (Choo). I selected those theories because the aim of my thesis is to investigate how the library can be a lifelong learning centre and the way that the learning sessions were delivered and how they affected the users socially and economically. However, I will discuss why I did not choose those theories and used CoP instead.

3.2 Potential theories

3.2.1 Socio-culture theory

This theory was developed by the Russian psychologist Lev S. Vygotsky, the aim of it is “to explain how individual mental functioning is related to cultural, institutional, and historical context” (Scott, 2013, p. 1). For Vygotsky learning is a social process and is the foundation of human intelligence in society, hence, social interaction in Vygotsky’s theoretical framework plays an essential role in cognition development (Steiner and Mahan, 1996). Vygotsky believes that individuals learn through two levels as he explains:

Every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals. (Vygotsky, 1978, p.57)

A second aspect of Vygotsky's theory is the idea that the development of the cognitive is limited to a "zone of proximal development" (ZPD). It includes all of the skills and knowledge that children cannot yet understand on their own, but it can be developed with adult guidance or peer collaboration (Steiner and Mahan, 1996). Vygotsky (1978, p. 86) defines ZPD as:

The distance between the actual development as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers

In this sense the development of the ZPD from Vygotskian perspective depends on full social interaction. In other words "development occurs as children learn general concepts and principles that can be applied to new tasks and problems" (Scott, 2013, p. 3). However, this theory cannot be applicable in my thesis because firstly, although my participants learn through social interaction, they do not learn in two levels as explained above. Secondly and more importantly, Vygotsky's theory mainly focuses on children's development not adult learning (Orr, 2009), as my participant sample includes children as well as adults so I cannot use this theory in my thesis.

3.2.2 Knowing organization

This theory was developed by Professor Chun Wei Choo; and provides a structure for framing the organisation as a learning-centered organization. Choo (2006, p. 4) defines 'knowing organisation' as:

It possesses information and knowledge so that it is well informed, mentally alert, and aware of threats and opportunities. Its actions are based upon a shared understanding of the organization's context and aspirations, and are leveraged by the available knowledge and skills of its members....

Choo (2001, p. 197) highlights that "organizations use information in the three arenas of sense making, knowledge creation and decision making". First, organizations search and evaluate information which related to the organization's goals in order to make important decisions. The second area of strategic information is used when the organization makes sense of changes and developments in its

external environment. The sense making view means that the organizational actors are continuously trying to understand what is happening around them. However, they do not need to be rational processors of information; they could “create their own subjective reality rather than try to discover some existing reality” (Choo, 1996, p. 333). The third area of strategic information use to create, organize and process information in order to generate new knowledge through organizational learning (Choo, 1996, 330). Knowledge creation is achieved through recognition of the relationship between tacit and explicit knowledge in the organization (Choo, 2001). Tacit knowledge is “personal knowledge used by members to perform their work and to make sense of their worlds.... (and) to make intuitive judgements about, the successful execution of the activity” (Choo, 2006, p.135). Explicit knowledge is “formal knowledge that is easy to transmit between individuals and groups” (Choo, 1996, p. 334), and it is “rule-based when the knowledge is codified into rules, routines or operating procedures” (Choo, 2000, p. 39).

Therefore, this organisational theory focuses on knowledge management or information management, thus, it is not applicable in my thesis because it cannot support the aims and research questions of my thesis. As my research aims to investigate how the library delivers learning sessions and how users use those sessions and how those sessions might affect the users’ life, I used CoP as the most appropriate theoretical framework. That is because CoP deepens my understating about the public library as learning environment, it enables me to investigate how users (children and adults) learn through social interaction and how the library as lifelong learning institution might improve the social and economic life of the users.

The rest of this chapter will discuss in detail the conception of community of practice, situated learning and identity and the components of communities of practice. I will start the discussion with the conception of CoP.

3.3 The conception of communities of practice (CoP)

Lave and Wenger (1991), in a study of situated learning, develop the concept of communities of practice. They define CoP as a “set of relations among persons, activity, and world over time and in relation to other tangential and overlapping

communities of practice” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 98). The core of CoP is based on the idea that individuals learn by interaction with each other in shared practice. However, not all groups of people or communities are considered as a community of practice. Wenger states that: “the term is not a synonym for group, team or network” (Wenger, 1998, p. 74). Therefore, he assigns three crucial characteristics of CoP which are a domain, a community and a practice (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2015). The domain is the key issues or passion that brings the community together (Yon and Albert, 2013). In my case, the domain is an interest in learning and improving the quality of life. The community consists of members who have common interest or practice. Although my participants do not have the same interest, they were occupied in similar or related activities and they had a wish to develop their lives and improve their skills. The practice involves the activities, ideas, tools, information, styles, language, stories and documents shared by the community (Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002).

In my study, the public library has become a learning centre by offering neutral and equal access to all services and information. Those services might help individuals and groups to foster social and economic development which would lead them to play a more effective part in their community. Furthermore, public libraries are used as meeting places which may help in building social cohesion and in strengthening the social interaction within the community. Librarians have a shared desire to improve libraries’ services and meet users’ needs. The library’s users in this study enter the library and become a part of the library community and so they need to adhere to its regulations and procedures. Although there are different groups that interact in various ways and engage in different activities, they have a shared aim and a shared desire to learn and develop their social and/or economic life.

3.4 Situated learning

For Lave and Wenger, learning can be gained through social interaction with others within a particular community of practice, rather than just individually as they state: “learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 31). By this definition, Lave and Wenger emphasise that participation is a fundamental part of learning and, as Young (2002, p. 179)

believes, Lave and Wenger's work converts the 'school-centric' approach by asserting that learning is not associated with teaching and it (learning) can take place in any setting beyond the school classroom. Likewise, Simons (1992) and Smith (1992) consider that the learning environment, which can be the best stimulus of self-determined learning, is a key factor of successful education. With this in mind, Wenger (1998, p. 8) states that "learning is an integral part of our everyday lives", thus, he sees that learning continues through the lifespan in any learning environment.

Therefore, significant learning for Lave and Wenger, "involves the whole person; it implies not only a relation to specific activities, but a relation to social communities" (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 53). Additionally, it supports people to change direction, develop identities and reshape their membership of the community as Wenger (1998, pp. 95–6) highlights:

Significant learning... It is what changes our ability to engage in practice, the understanding of why we engage in it, and the resources we have at our disposal to do so... It is not just the acquisition of memories, habits and skills, but the formation of an identity.

In my case, library users can learn and develop their identities to become more active citizens in their communities. The public library as a lifelong learning environment provides an opportunity for users to learn in a social setting and engage with their wider communities, thus, helping to foster social cohesion and build better social relationships. Although some people prefer to learn individually, they still engage in social practice as the library is a social place. Additionally, public libraries and librarians encourage learners who have lacked trust or felt marginalised by formal education to be more confident and enthusiastic to learn (see chapter six).

3.5 Identity: learning as becoming

Learning and building identity are parallel, as Davis (2006, p. 3) states. For Lave and Wenger, "identity is a learning trajectory" as they assert that "learning implies becoming a different person... [It] involves the construction of identities" (Lave and

Wenger, 1991, p. 53). For Erickson (1994) identity represents a self-image which develops through experiences and sensations that arise from being in the world. In this sense, developing identity starts with the classroom and goes through lifelong experiences. The focus on identity includes our ability to be a certain person in a particular community. Hodkinson, Biesta and James (2008) share Wenger's (1998) view that learning is a process of identity formation: "we learn not only by doing, but also by reflecting upon what we do and by consciously monitoring our actions" (Hodkinson et al., 2008, p. 41). Wenger (1998, p. 215) asserts that "learning transforms who we are and what we can do... [it is] a process of becoming – to become a certain person or, to avoid becoming a certain person". Library users in my study come to learn, to develop their skills and knowledge, to reinforce what they already know and to improve themselves. Some of them want to improve their professional career opportunities and some want to avoid 'being ignorant' so they attend the library to improve their literacy skills.

Social practice in CoP is the core of learning. In this sense, "the concept identity serves as a pivot between the social and the individual" (Wenger, 1998, p. 145). However, it does not mean "denying individuality, but viewing the very definition of individuality as something that is part of the practice" (Wenger, 1998, p. 146). In other words, improving individuals' skills might lead to improving the whole community. Benner (2003, p. 1814) highlights that the "community is formed by people recognizing that successful work practices requires continual learning". As identity can be shaped by learning, learning should be offered in a place where new ways of knowing can be realised in the form of such an identity. If someone fails to learn as expected it may be necessary to consider if there is a lack of learning place (Wenger, 1998, p. 215). The public library as a safe, neutral, flexible, voluntary and non-judgmental place, can offer the best opportunities for individuals to acquire new skills and knowledge. Thus, it improves the quality of daily life in communities and promotes both individual and community identity.

3.6 Components of communities of practice

The aim of CoP is to improve members' capabilities (Wenger and Snyder, 2000, p. 142) and to develop a network of individuals who have similar interests (Lesser and

Prusak, 1999, p. 7). According to Wenger (1998, p. 73), CoP consists of three major components: “mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire”. These form a source of community coherence. However, in the context of my study, mutual engagement and shared repertoire are relevant to the analysis of data, which I will discuss in the next section.

3.6.1 Mutual engagement

Mutual engagement is where people engage with each other in many ways (Barton and Tusting, 2005, p. 2) through regular interaction (Tusting, 2005, p. 39). For Wenger, mutual engagement is where members of a community are engaged in actions whose meaning they negotiate with one another (Wenger, 1998, p. 73). He (1998) points out that engagement could happen anywhere and takes no form; it might be formal or informal. However, learning within a community is not copying others (Frances, 2005, p. 85) and mutual engagement does not mean homogeneity (Wenger, 1998, p. 76) but instead it is building identity through engagement.

In a community of practice, we learn certain ways of engaging in action with other people. We develop certain expectations about how to interact, how people treat each other, how to work together. We become who we are by being able to play a part in the relations of engagement that constitute our community... It does not mean that all the members of the community look at the world in the same way (Wenger, 1998, p. 152).

In a public library, learners might share mutual engagement as they establish relationships with each other. Such interactions might include helping each other to improve their reading and/or computing skills and exchanging books, opinions and information. Some interactions go further, as they help each other in solving personal problems. Although the interaction between learners might involve disagreement, it is still a kind of participation as Wenger (1998, p. 77) highlights: “disagreement, challenges and competition can all be forms of participation”.

In spite of the benefits of mutual engagement in CoP, “people may not be willing to participate and share their knowledge with others for fear of being deprived of their competitive advantages” (Kim, 2015, p. 53). Moreover, in contrast to Wenger, Tusting (2005, p. 38) asserts that mutual engagement “is broader than simply

engaging in an activity... community membership that still remains valid when the person concerned is not actively engaging". In the context of my study, some people prefer to learn or read on their own. However, as a public library is a social place, it encourages a feeling of social solidarity and belonging to the community.

3.6.1.1 Diversity and partiality

Diversity is pivotal in CoP because it makes engagement in practice 'possible and productive' (Wenger, 1998, p. 75). CoP may include young and old, conservative and liberal members who have different personal aspirations (Wenger, 1998, p. 75). As members have different perspectives and identities and they work together, talk with each other and exchange their information, this interaction will affect their understanding and help in building their identities.

Mutual engagement involves both our competence and the competence of others. It draws on what we do and know, as well as on what we do not do and what we do not know to contribute to the knowledge of others (Wenger, 1998, p. 76).

In the context of my study, a public library is a welcoming, neutral and social place, thus, it offers different activities for all ages regardless of the users' cultural or educational backgrounds. It provides resources in different languages and offers people an opportunity to work together and become more tolerant of cultural, religious and individual differences.

However, Wenger does not discuss diversity in terms of the significance of a multicultural background in the community which helps in developing intercultural identity and supporting social cohesion. A public library could be one of the few remaining places that can be shared by different cultural groups, regardless of race, class or gender (Durcan, 2011). A public library provides various services and activities for a wide range of users which help them to improve their lives through developing their skills and empowering them within their community. Importantly, the interactions among individuals can improve empathy for the situations of others and develop a correlation with other individuals in the community.

3.6.2 Shared repertoire

As engagement continues over time, the members in the community develop a repertoire of ways of engaging in the practice which comprises “routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions or concepts” (Wenger, 1998, p. 83). Tusting (2005, p. 39) further extends the repertoire of CoP to social practices such as “ways of thinking, speaking, discourses, tools, understanding and memories”. Shared repertoire is an essential resource for members in a community because it ‘furthers engagement in practice’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 83). In this study, users in public libraries share resources that are available at the library such as books, newspapers and computers. The public library offers sponsored training and workshops which help people to follow instructions and develop their economic and social skills.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter identifies the significance of a CoP as the key theoretical framework of my study. A community of practice theory asserts that learning is an ongoing interaction between people who share a concern and aim to deepen their knowledge and expertise. Employing this conceptual framework enabled me to understand the substantial role of the public library as an educational and cultural place in the community. Therefore, this theoretical framework was based on the principle of the public library acting as a community hub and as a platform for lifelong learning. Applying the CoP as a framework provides new understanding of the role of the public library in the community beyond providing information. It has the potential for facilitating collaborative learning because it can bring people together so they can share knowledge, test trustworthiness and build their identities.

Chapter four: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research design and methodology. The methodology concerns the plan and the strategy for the entire research (Henn, Weinstein and Foard, 2009). This includes the theoretical application of choosing the methods to be used for generating and analysing the data (Crotty, 1998). In this chapter, I will explain the research approach, methods, data analysis and ethical considerations as well as justifying the research design undertaken. The aims of this study are: to explore the role of public libraries in delivering lifelong learning activities through a community of practice; to examine the social and economic impact of lifelong learning opportunities for the library's users and to determine the librarian's current role in facilitating lifelong learning. In order to achieve these aims, the ethnographic case study qualitative approach has been adopted. It focuses on a case study of Town Hall (pseudonym) public library and uses ethnography to gain a deeper understanding of how people use public libraries to develop their skills. Firstly, however, it would be helpful to discuss the use of the interpretivist paradigm.

4.2 Justification of the paradigm adopted

A paradigm, as defined by Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 183), is a basic set of beliefs that guide action. My research is underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm which is appropriate for understanding the social world (Sparkes, 1992; Henn et al., 2009). It asserts that the social world is closely linked to constructivism (Gray, 2009) which seeks to study the individual in their real life and work. Therefore, interpretivism involves understanding how people interpret the world around them.

Understanding the world in its social and cultural context (interpretivism) so it is what the world means to the person or group being studied is critically important to good research in the social sciences (Willis, 2007, p. 6).

The interpretivist paradigm is “the net that contains the researcher’s epistemological, ontological and methodological premises” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 13), essentially to understand the individual’s world as Creswell (2014, p. 8) highlights:

(To) develop subjective meaning of their experiences – meaning directed towards a certain objective or things. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas.

The interpretivist paradigm starts from the “position that our knowledge of reality is a social construction by human actors” (Walsham, 2006, p. 320) and as public libraries are a social construct, embedded in a complex political and social world, interpretivism has been adopted in this study. The interpretivist approach aims to develop insights into participants’ beliefs and their lived experience from the subjective perspectives of those participants (Denscombe, 2014, p. 2). This is in contrast to a positivist paradigm where researchers view reality objectively (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011) and “focus on facts and figures relating to the causes and consequences of phenomenon in the social world” (Denscombe, 2014, p. 2) and it is usually associated with quantitative studies. In this study, I adopt an interpretivist approach because my aim is to interpret library users and librarians’ perceptions and perspectives in order to understand the meaning of their experience from their own perspectives. An interpretivist approach gives me access to the “meaning that guides the behaviour” as Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 8) suggest. Therefore, the interpretive paradigm is useful in my case because it helps the meaning to emerge from the field. As Willis (2007, p. 99) highlights, “the goal of interpretive research is an understanding of a particular situation or context much more than the discovery of universal laws or rules”. Hence, interpretivism is appropriate for this study because it provides me with qualitative answers of how and why people use public libraries and how library services affect their users both socially and economically. The interpretivist approach seeks to uncover the meaning to gain a better understanding of the issue involved (Alvermann and Mallozzi, 2010).

4.3 The qualitative approach

Qualitative research can be defined as research where data are not in the form of numbers (Babbie, 2013). Although qualitative research does not rely on 'measurement' the researchers in a qualitative study sometimes use numbers or statistics to support their argument because, as Punch (2014, p. 3) highlights, it is "more than just research which uses non-numerical data. It is a way of thinking, or an approach, which similarly involves a collection or cluster of methods, as well as data in a non-numerical or qualitative form". Therefore, a qualitative approach can provide a deeper understanding of social phenomena and their interpretation. It can also describe and understand experience, ideas and beliefs (Silverman, 2005; Wisker, 2008; Henn et al., 2009; Thomas, 2009). In addition, it aims to "capture what actually takes place and what people actually say, in other words, perceived facts" (Patton, 2002, p. 28).

Accordingly, I adopted the qualitative approach which supported me to gain a deeper understanding of the librarians' ideas, attitudes and motives and their roles in delivering lifelong learning activities. It also provided a rich understanding of the way in which the users see the benefits of using the library. Qualitative research is appropriate for my study because I was able to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and to hear the users' voices. For example, statistical data collected from a library's documents or database can show how many books have been borrowed and how many users attended the library within a certain period of time, but cannot tell the researcher why they used the library and the reasons why the books have been borrowed. Qualitative research attempts to fill this knowledge gap by "describing life-worlds, from the inside out from the point of view of the people who participate" (Flick, Kardaff and Steinke, 2004).

Moreover, many researchers in library and information science (LIS), such as Baker (2006), Williamson (2006) and Goodman (2011), mention that more qualitative research is required in the field as most studies rely on quantitative approaches such as Proctor, Usherwood and Sobczyk (1997), Rooney-Browne (2009) and Davies (2013). Thus, it is necessary to get a better understanding of how libraries could deliver services in an effective and efficient way, especially with the recent explosion of information technology (Afzal, 2006). This can only be done by applying qualitative

research which can “play an important role in furthering that understanding and develop broad theories of information behaviour” (Afzal, 2006, p. 22). More specifically, as mentioned before, there is a need for more British research into public libraries (Halpin et al., 2013) particularly with regard to the value and benefits of public libraries to communities. Therefore, qualitative research is adopted to understand the social world from the perspective of the library users and librarians.

In order to do this, this study adopts the ethnographic case study approach. It is ethnographic because it aims to study the public library as a lifelong learning organisation, to understand the relationship between users in their community (socio-cultural community at the library) and their relationship with librarians as well as the effect of library activities. It is a case study because it is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single library. Thus, using an ethnographic case study allowed the exploration of learners’ library use over time in their natural environment; providing a deeper understanding of the environmental factors influencing delivering lifelong learning activities. It captured the way that librarians deliver lifelong learning activities and revealed how those activities affect the learners socially and economically.

4.4 Research approach

4.4.1 Case study design

Case studies tend to be associated with qualitative data (Seale, 2012) and are a research design (Babbie, 2013; Creswell, 2014; Denscombe, 2014; Flick, 2014; Silverman, 2013) which aims “to develop a depth of understanding of the case in its natural setting, it also has a holistic focus aiming to preserve and understand the wholeness and unity of the case” (Punch, 2014, p. 120). In order to achieve the aim of this study, the Town Hall public library in the North of England, with snapshots of some activities at some branches, was chosen to gain depth, richness and a detailed description of public libraries and their role in delivering lifelong learning activities. Case study research is useful when “a how or why question is being asked about a contemporary set of events within its real-life context which the investigator has little or no control” (Yin, 1994, p. 13). Therefore, the case study is a research strategy

which aims to investigate something in depth and in its social setting because it is not only interested in what is happening in the setting, it also attempts to explain why those things occur with a focus on a 'holistic view' of the setting rather than examining isolated factors (Denscombe, 2014, p. 55). A case study involves in-depth research into one case or a small set of cases which could be a child, a school, a class, etc. (Yin, 2009).

According to Stake (2005, p. 445) there are three types of case study: an *intrinsic case* (or as it is known, a 'single case') which is undertaken when the researcher wants a better understanding of this particular case because the particularity and ordinariness of this case is of interest; an *instrumental case* aims to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalisation; and a *multiple case* or *collective case study* is one which is undertaken when there is less interest in one particular case. A number of cases may be studied jointly in order to investigate a phenomenon, population or general condition (Stake, 2005, p. 445). In this study, the intrinsic case was adopted because it focuses on the Town Hall library which is based in a town that has a multicultural background so it helps me to gain a 'thick description' about the economic, social or learning role of the library and the role played by librarians in facilitating lifelong learning activities. I will explain the criteria for selecting the Town Hall library as a case to be studied in section 4.5.

Thus, using a case study allows me to understand the real life of a public library in depth because it can offer insights that might not be deduced by other methods of enquiry (Rowley, 2002; White, Drew and Hay, 2009; Seale, 2012). However, case studies do have weaknesses. A common criticism of the case study concerns its generalisability (Stake, 1995; Seale, 2012; Flick, 2014; Punch, 2014) in that the data are often derived from one or more cases and are unlikely to be selected on a random basis (Silverman, 2013, p. 144). However, Yin (2014, p. 21) argues that:

Case studies, like experiments, are generalisable to theoretical proposition and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like an experiment, does not represent a 'sample', and in doing a case study research, your goal will be to expand and generalise theorise (analytic generalisation) and not to extrapolate (statistical generalisation) (Yin, 2014, p. 21).

Yin's explanation is consistent with Wolcott's (1995, p. 175) view about generalisation that "each case is unique, yet not so unique that we cannot learn from it and apply its lesson more generally". Nevertheless, this study does not aim to generalise the data, but it could be applicable in similar cases. Therefore, the case study aims to gain in-depth understanding about how the subject functions in the real world and it is most instructive when it is methodologically based on an approach like ethnographical ways of collecting data (Flick, 2014, p. 123). Ethnography was adopted in this study.

4.4.2 Ethnography

This is a qualitative approach which intends to provide a detailed and in-depth description of everyday life and practice (Hoey, 2012). The ethnographer seeks to convey a 'thick description' of the social setting (Hammersley, 1998). The term 'ethnography' comes from the Greek 'ethnos', meaning nation, and 'graphic' meaning writing (Curtis and Curtis, 2011). Therefore, ethnography means a "portrait or description of people or description of a culture or a piece of culture" (Wolcott, 2008, p. 75). In other words, the ethnographic researcher's task is to study the culture of the group or community (Spradley, 1997). One useful definition of ethnography describes it as:

The art and science of describing a group or culture... much like the one taken on by an investigative reporter... about the routine, daily lives of people. The more predictable patterns of human thought and behaviour are the focus of enquiry... The ethnographer is interested in understanding and describing a social and cultural scene from the insider's perspective (Fetterman, 1998, pp. 1–2).

The central core of ethnography is to learn about the culture by observing people, listening to them and then making inferences (Fairhurst and Good, 1991). Ethnography is often the most appropriate approach for social science research (Hammersley, 1998, p. 203) in that it aims to comprehend the meanings behind the situational particularities and to understand people's beliefs and behaviour more accurately and in a way that would not be possible by any other approach (Punch,

2014). More importantly, ethnography relies on understanding the person's beliefs rather than judging them as true or false (Hammersley, 1998).

Ethnography allows me as a researcher to document and understand the context within which an event happens with first-hand experience, without relying on prior conceptualisation or on the participants' memory of their experience. Therefore, ethnography is studying a cultural phenomenon in its natural setting with long-term engagement (Walford, 2009). In this sense, ethnography allows me to understand 'participants' constructed realities using their own understandings' (Bamkin, Maynard, and Goulding, 2016, p. 221). However, ethnography can be limited by the scope of budgets or time frames. Recently, ethnographers have found themselves adapting the approach, undertaking shorter phases of observation (Jeffrey and Troman, 2004) or creating "ethnographically informed reports" (Fetterman, 1998, p. 126). This shorter ethnography, which is known as the 'compressed approach' (Jeffrey and Troman, 2004) has also been described as *microethnography* (Berg, 2009) or *quick ethnography* (Handwerker, 2001). Bryant, Matthew and Walton (2009) claim it is useful to the LIS researchers who seek to learn more about the behaviour and actions of library users, and this approach was applied in this study.

4.4.2.1 Compressed ethnography

According to Jeffrey and Troman (2004, p. 538), there are three ethnographic time modes: compressed; selective intermittent; and recurrent. A *compressed mode*, which is adopted in this study, "involves a short period of intense ethnographic research in which researchers inhabit a research site almost permanently for anything from a few days to a month" (Jeffrey and Troman, 2004, p. 538). In order to do compressed ethnographic research, the researcher should 'hang around' in the fieldwork as much as possible to gain rich data. Moreover, the main feature of a compressed ethnographic period is "the portrayal of a snapshot in time of a particular site or event, one in which all perspectives are particularly relevant and the interaction of people and context is described in detail" (Jeffrey and Troman, 2004, p. 540). This meaning is similar to the definition of microethnography as "focusing on particular incisions at particular points in the larger setting, group or institution" (Berg, 2007, p. 174). Although I used the word 'compressed', I conducted the fieldwork over

nine months. However, Jeffrey and Troman (2004) recommend that the researcher should use another qualitative approach, which allows comparison and interrogation of any analysis, and that is why this study has adopted a case study approach along with compressed ethnography.

Many researchers highlight that having time is vital in doing ethnography. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 3) point out that “in terms of data collection, ethnography usually involves the researcher participating overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time”. Similarly, Spindler and Spindler (1992, p. 63) agree that: “the requirement for direct, prolonged, on-the-spot observation cannot be avoided or reduced. It is the guts of the ethnographic approach”, but they did not define how long ‘prolonged’ is. Usually, ethnography lasts two years; Wolcott (1995, p. 77) explains that this standard “perhaps related to the success of Malinowski’s inadvertently long fieldwork among the Trobrianders (he had to sit out World War I because of his Polish ancestry)”. On the other hand, some researches have been done in shorter periods of time, such as Walford in 1991, who spent just 29 days in the City Technology College carrying out ‘the fieldwork’. He states that: “I eventually spent about 225 hours spread over 29 days at the college, including two staff development days from October until Christmas. I like to think of this as ‘compressed ethnography” (Walford, 2009, p. 90).

More importantly, the features of the ethnographic work do not rely specifically on the period of time. As Wolcott (1987) argues, “ethnography is not the length of time on the field”. He highlights that “length of time spent doing fieldwork does not, in – and of – itself result in better ethnography or in any way assure that the final product will be ethnography” (Wolcott, 1987, p. 39). The core issue in doing ethnographic research, as Massey (1998) argues, is the quality of work which can be conducted so that the “prolonged period of time to be spent in fieldwork is not related to the term of numbers; it depends on the researcher” (Massey, 1998, online). Therefore, the best criterion for spending time on the fieldwork is the belief that enough data have been gathered to describe the culture or problem convincingly and to say something significant about it (Fetterman, 1998, p. 9). For this study, I spent time doing fieldwork until the research arrived at the point of ‘theoretical saturation’ when additional data no longer contributed to discovering anything new about the topic (Strauss, 1987).

According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 3), the most substantial features of doing ethnography are that: research takes place in its natural setting rather than under conditions created by the researcher; data are gathered from a range of sources which are relatively unstructured; the focus is usually on a few cases or just one case; and the analysis of data involves interpretation of the meaning. Moreover, Pink and Morgan (2013, p. 355) in their study applied 'short-term ethnography' and point out that the most important quality of this type of ethnography is to be more 'focused'; as the researcher focuses on activities to gain rich data and answer the research questions. My research meets these characteristics in the following way: it focuses on the Town Hall public library and particularly on the services that facilitate lifelong learning. I applied triangulation data collections (participant observation, interview and document analysis) which aided me in discovering how the library helps in facilitating lifelong learning by discovering how people use the library and to identify the role of librarians in delivering lifelong learning activities. Therefore, as this fieldwork took place at the library, the next section gives details of how the ethnographic approach was conducted there.

4.4.2.2 Ethnography and libraries

Recently, the ethnographic approach has been used in academic libraries to investigate the user's experience in the library. For example, Bryant (2007), used microethnography to investigate user behaviour in a new open-plan learning environment at Loughborough University. Importantly, this study recommended that ethnography should be used more frequently within library and information science research because it is an effective way to explore how library space is used (Bryant, 2007). However, it seems that the ethnography has not been widely used in the UK public library community (Rooney-Browne, 2011). This may be because, as Bryant et al. (2009, p. 9) suggest, "the UK LIS researchers have yet to realise the potential offered by the methodology". However, one of the ethnographic studies, which was carried out in a public library by Bridges (2010), aimed to provide a detailed, grounded description of social life and social structure(s) within Llancarreg public branch library in a city suburb of South Wales. Nevertheless, the study does not show how the library might affect the individuals' personal lives; it focuses on the

library as a social place for everyday meetings. Most importantly, the study emphasises that ethnography should be used more to study social places like public libraries in that “ethnography allows us to unearth and unpick these social rules, not by viewing them in sanitised isolation, but by directly engaging with the lived realities in which they occur”. Moreover, the study recommends more study to be done into the role of public libraries in a community in a time of financial austerity.

Ethnography has been used more frequently by Canadian and American LIS researchers such as Asher and Miller (2011), McKechnie et al. (2006) and Given and Leckie (2003). These examples shed light on the importance of conducting ethnography within a library in that it can make a valuable and substantial contribution to our understanding, especially of users’ behaviours and perspectives. Therefore, adopting ethnography enabled me not just to learn what actually happens in the library and gain more details of what is often unseen (Ramsden, 2016, p. 12), but also to understand the users and their different learning styles and how the library and librarians meet those needs and differences. Additionally, it enabled me to investigate the interaction between the users and the learning environment of the library as lifelong learning institutions, the interaction between the users and the librarians and how this interaction affects the learning process through rich data about the users’ perceptions of the importance and role of a public library and why they use it. This in turn helps to discover how libraries facilitate lifelong learning activities. In order to complete this study, participant observation, interview and document analysis were adopted as methods to generate the data, which I will explain later in this chapter. Firstly, I will explain the setting (fieldwork) of the study.

4.5 Conducting fieldwork

This section discusses the approaches to fieldwork, and how the setting and the method for the present study were selected. This study was conducted at the public library in the North of England. The selection of the library was based on many criteria. Firstly, I was given permission to access and conduct a long observation in the library as gaining access to the setting is “a crucial part of successful ethnographic research” (Denscombe, 2014, p. 84). Secondly, this library has not been studied before as a lifelong learning institution. It provides many valuable

activities that are considered as lifelong learning opportunities, so it helped me to understand how the library delivers those activities and how they impact on users. Thirdly, the library is based in a multicultural town which enabled me to investigate the social role the library plays in areas such as social justice and social cohesion. Finally, the library is under threat of closure or being run by volunteers, so it was an opportunity to investigate the importance of this library from the view of users and librarians.

After I selected the case to be studied, it was important for me to select the sections or activities which should be studied. Selecting the units to be observed is also a critical step in ethnographic study as it allows more direct and deeper analysis of the characteristics observed (Gobo, 2008, p. 98). “Fieldwork is not something you could train people for; you just had to do it” (Agar, 1996, p. 54). However, I found it is useful to start by interviewing the librarians responsible for lifelong learning activities following Fetterman’s suggestion that one should “select who and what to study – that is, the source that will help to understand life in a given community” (1998, p. 32). Interviewing the Development Librarian who is responsible for lifelong learning activities at the beginning of the fieldwork enabled me to find out which departments at the library deliver lifelong learning activities. This gave me a starting point for my observation. I conducted the fieldwork in four departments: The Reference Library, Local History Library, Lending Library and Children’s Library. I also focused on particular sessions that delivered lifelong learning activities: the reading group, Greenaway session, Summer Reading Challenge, Talk English and IT session.

The reading group is a group of people who meet every Friday at the Town Hall library to read together and improve their literacy skills. The Greenaway session is a national programme which aims to help children to think critically and judge the illustrations in a book. The children come to the library with their teacher and work with a librarian between April and July. The fieldwork for this session took place at one of the branches because the Town Hall library and the librarian did not wish to be observed. The Summer Reading Challenge is a national programme that encourages children to read for pleasure and takes place every year during the Summer, however, most of the fieldwork for this session took place at one of the branches because I did not receive permission to observe or talk to the children at the Central Library. Talk English is a session for non-native speakers to learn English

– this session also took place at the Town Hall library. The IT session aims to teach people digital skills and usually takes place at the Reference Library. However, most of the users refused to be observed during learning. I will explain more about those sessions in the data analysis chapters. Also, more details about conducting the observation will be addressed later in this chapter in the observation section. Thus, the main fieldwork took place at the Central library while the fieldwork on the branches focused just on those specific activities. However, as each department has a different librarian who is responsible for the department, I had to ask for their permission before I started the observation, although I had permission from the Development Librarian. This was one of the challenges that I faced in conducting this study.

4.6 The sample

In social research there are two types of sample, probability samples and non-probability samples (Creswell, 2014; Denscombe, 2014; Patton, 2015). A probability sample is usually adopted in quantitative studies as it is based on statistical theory and relies on a random selection from the research population (Henn et al., 2014). Non-probability samples, more specifically purposive samples, are used in qualitative research (Patton, 2015). In this study I used purposive samples which were ‘hand-picked for the topic’ (Denscombe, 2014, p. 41) as this helped me as the researcher to gain rich and valuable information from selected people who had the experience or expertise in the research topic (Patton, 2015). In my study, I selected the librarians who play a key role in delivering lifelong learning activities. As I mentioned above, I interviewed the Development Librarian first, who in turn suggested names of other librarians responsible for learning sessions at the library. In this sense it is a ‘snowball sample’.

A snowball sample is a form of purposive sampling and it builds a network of participants by introducing the researcher to other participants or key informants who meet the study criteria (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 100). It is worth mentioning that all participants in this study and the name of the library itself were all given pseudonyms. Firstly, I met Audrey, the Development Librarian, who recommended other key librarians: Jody, Janet, Jill, Mohammed, Nancy, Dena and Kevin. When I

interviewed Janet, she recommended Adele, Tamara and Amelia. Consequently, there were 11 librarians in total, see appendix 1 for more details about staff structure. Although I had planned to conduct interviews with librarians and users, I found that some participants at the fieldwork stage are important as well as they added quality information and valuable insights on the data. For example, the library provides bibliotherapy sessions to support people with mental health problems and help them to overcome their problems; I was not allowed to interview or observe the people due to their health conditions, however, I did interview the therapist who is called Juley. I also had some restrictions on talking to children or observing them so, as mentioned above, I focused on some sessions that were for children, such as the Greenaway session and the Summer Reading Challenge, as it was important to hear the children's voices. Also it was important to interview mums and teachers so I conducted four interviews with mums and six teachers and they talked about the behaviour of the children and explained how the library improved the children's skills. However, in the data analysis chapter, some children's names, which are pseudonyms, will appear because the teachers asked them to talk about their experience at the library (as I mentioned I was not allowed to talk to children). I also conducted interviews with one illustrator (Clay), who was brought in to talk about the importance of illustration in children's books.

In addition, as part of the Summer Reading Challenge programme, there was a chance for undergraduate students to volunteer to support librarians during summertime and simultaneously acquire experience and communication skills with children. They are called Summer Reading Challenge Champions or volunteers. In the data analysis chapters I call them volunteers as they are the only volunteers I met during the fieldwork. Those volunteers were: Isabelle, Jessica, Molly, Holly, Amira, Abeer, Batool, Aisha and Duaa, so I interviewed all of them. As I mentioned previously, the library provides IT and jobseeker sessions which helps jobseekers to update their skills and find a job. This session was run by an advisor (Carolyn), who is referred from the job centre, so I also conducted an interview with her. All of those participants are still purposive sampling because they let me gain in-depth understanding of the lifelong learning activities in the library. Selecting users relied on purposive sampling as they engaged in sessions and activities, so it helped me to understand their view about the role of library in lifelong learning activities. In the

reading group, there was Robin, Jack, Marry, Shelly, Tracy, Hannah, Sally and Richard, who meet to improve their literacy skills, so I conducted interviews with all of them. I conducted interviews with many users in the different departments in the library (Reference Library, Local History Library and Lending Library) – 18 users in total. It is worth mentioning that I faced a challenge in terms of interviewing people in that many of them refused to take part in the interview.

The size of the sample that would be appropriate for this study could not be determined. Adler and Adler (2012) suggest that the size of the sample may be limited by some challenges and in my study some people refused to take part. However, Adler and Adler (2012, p. 10) advise that “an adequate sample for a qualitative research... range of between a dozen and 60, with 30 being the mean”. For my study, 59 participants were selected, including librarians, users, therapist, mums, teachers, illustrator, jobseeker advisor and volunteers. I tried to include different ages, genders and social backgrounds to gain valuable insights into how the library provides services for all its community members. However, as I mentioned above, I relied on ‘theoretical saturation’ where there is sufficient information and the evidence has been repeated, so there is no benefit to adding any more samples (Denscombe, 2014; Baker and Edwards, 2012; Wolcott, 1995). As mentioned earlier, all participants in this study and the name of the library itself were all given pseudonyms. More details about pseudonyms are considered in the next section.

4.7 Ethical considerations

The ethical issues of this study throughout the process of data collection and data analysis were considered under the umbrella of the *British Educational Research Association’s* (BERA, 2011) guidance. Ethical issues to be considered in this study were: permission, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity. Firstly, I gained an ethical approval from the School of Education and Professional Development to conduct my study. Then, and before conducting my study, I sought permission from the Development Librarian with regard to observing the users in the library (Creswell, 2014). However, as every department at the library has a different librarian who was responsible for it, I had to ask permission from all the librarians to start my observation. Participation in this study was voluntary, and the participants were

asked to read an information sheet (see appendix 2). Beside the permission, informed consent from the participants was sought. Informed consent means providing the research participants with information about the overall purpose of the investigation and the main features of its design (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p. 70).

It is also important to inform the participants that they can withdraw from the study at any time. Informed consent should be gained before undertaking any part of the study (BERA, 2011). All participants who were interviewed were asked to complete an interview consent form prior to their interviews (see appendix 3). As mentioned previously, all participants were informed about the aim of the study. They were also informed about recording the interview and some users refused to have their interviews recorded so I did not do so. I received permission from the Town Hall library to observe its users. As the observation was conducted in a public place (a public library), sometimes it was impossible to gain consent from people (Silverman, 2013). Such consent may not even be necessary because the researcher does not interact with anyone and people know that their behaviour is open to public inspection (Hammersley and Alkinson, 2007, p. 214; Gobo, 2008, p. 108). However, I tried to gain consent from people wherever possible. For instance, some observations took place during sessions such as the reading group so the librarian responsible for this group asked people who were involved if I could observe them and they agreed. On my first visit I explained more about my study and what I was doing with them. However, I had been given a 'Visitor' badge so users knew that I was not a member of staff or a library user. I wore the badge all the time while I was in the library.

Another ethical issue in this study is confidentiality which is an assurance by the researcher that the participants' identity and information will never be disclosed (Ruane, 2005). Confidentiality arises from respect for the right to privacy and is based on the respondents' choice (Punch, 2014). Therefore, the participants in this study were informed that they had the right to decline to answer any questions if they wished to do so and could withdraw from the research at any point up to the publication of the findings. Transcripts of field notes, interviews and observations were secured in a locked cupboard. Interviews were transcribed and the tapes were immediately erased after completion of the transcriptions. Electronic copies of these transcripts are secured on the researcher's personal laptop, which is password

protected (Crang and Cook, 2007; Hammersley and Alkinson, 2007). In order to ensure confidentiality, I describe people and their behaviour rather than identifiable data. The participants were informed that they would not be identified in any part of the study to protect their privacy and right to anonymity. I used pseudonyms to describe the participants and the name of the library.

4.8 Methods of data generation

In order to complete this study and address the research questions, participant observation, interview and document analysis were adopted as methods to generate the data. As I illustrated above, I started conducting the fieldwork by interviewing librarians. However, firstly I will explain the observation because it is the pivotal cognitive mode in ethnographic research (Gobo, 2008) and I relied on it heavily to generate the data.

4.8.1 Participant observation

Observation assists the researcher to gain access to a rich source of information and enables them to capture what people actually do rather than what they say they do (Wisker, 2008, p. 203). Ethnography usually relies on participant observation (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) which helps the researcher to investigate people's experiences and reactions in a natural setting (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2001). The observation may be covert or overt (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In covert observation, the participants are unaware of the researcher's identity and of the purpose of the research and the researcher acts 'incognito'. However, this kind of observation is rare in ethnographic research (Gobo, 2008, p. 107). Overt observation is widely used in ethnographic research in which the purpose of the research and its procedures are explained to the people being studied (Seale, 2012, p. 249). For the purpose of this study, I adopted overt observation, which generally has been used by LIS researchers to observe users engaged in library services. According to Spradley (1980, p. 58), there are five types of participant observation: passive participation; moderate participation; active participation; complete participation; and non-participation. Non-participation happens when the observer watches people from

outside the setting, such as observing them through TV, and it is not suitable for ethnographic studies (Spradley, 1980). Passive participation – the researchers in this category are just observers and they do not interact with people (Robson, 2011). Moderate participation occurs when the ethnographer seeks to maintain a balance between being an insider and an outsider, between participation and observation (Spradley, 1980, p. 60). Active participation is “when the ethnographer engages in almost everything that other people are doing as a means of trying to learn the cultural rules for behaviour” (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2011, p. 30). Finally, in complete participation, the ethnographers become ‘ordinary participants’ (Spradley, 1980, p. 61). For the purpose of this study I assumed an active participant role because I engaged in some activities. By engaging, I mean that I sat with users and observed them very closely, and on some occasions we were involved in some discussion. This kind of participation allowed me to observe people in a unique way. However, I tried to remain an observer of actions and behaviours and kept a distance between the users and myself (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2011, p. 34).

I conducted observations in each department in the library as well as the learning sessions for a period of nine months between January and September (2015), covering about 250 hours distributed over the period including mornings, afternoons and Saturdays. In general, at the beginning, my observation was non-selective in order to get an overall feel for the situation, and then it shifted from the broad picture towards specific areas or activities (Denscombe, 2014, p. 217). I started my observation with the reading group – eight people who meet every Friday to acquire literacy skills. I gained permission from the librarians responsible for this group and from the people themselves. This group meets every Friday between one and three o’clock to read stories together. I sat with them and listened to the same story they were reading, which enabled me to observe the improvement in their reading skills.

Observing this group enabled me to record the members’ behaviours, actions and interaction within their socio-cultural context (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 170). It also gave valuable insights into the way that learners interact with each other and with librarians and how this social interaction affects their learning. It also provided a deeper understanding of how the environment of the library supports people in their learning. Along with the reading group I started observations in the Reference Library, which is the biggest department, and where most of the lifelong learning

activities take place. I described the setting, the activities that took place in that setting and the people who participated in those activities (Patton, 2002, p. 262).

At an early stage I described the setting and observed the routine as well as the day-to-day events. I sat behind the enquiry desk where users ask and receive assistance with their information questions. Thus, I began to understand why they were visiting the library. At the same time, I could see people using computers and people at tables reading newspapers or books. I changed my place during the observation to be sure that I obtained the best data to enable me to answer my research questions. So I sat next to people at the tables. Then I started focusing on lifelong learning activities, which take place in the Reference Library, such as the IT session and jobseeking session. After I received permission to observe in all departments and in order to gain a 'thick description' (Hammersley, 1992, p. 12) of the learning activities and how those activities influence the users, to gain insight into the interaction between the users and the librarians and the impact of the environment of the library on users, I focused on particular activities on particular days. For instance, the Reference Library provides IT sessions and a jobseeking session, which run every Wednesday and Thursday, so I observed people there. For the rest of the week I focused on the Local History Library and the Lending library. I observed during mornings and afternoons alternately so that I could observe the library from a different viewpoint. As I mentioned earlier, I relied on saturation so I stopped observing when there was no new or substantive data to add to the existing data. However, in order to be sure that I had obtained sufficient and appropriate data I found that I sometimes left the fieldwork to allow myself time to review field notes and the themes emerging from the data. For instance, I left the Reference Library and focused more on the other departments and sessions and after two weeks I went back to fieldwork and I found that there was not any new data in regard to lifelong learning activities so I decided to leave the library. I did the same with all departments and sessions in the library.

In the Children's Library, as I mentioned, I was not allowed to observe the children so I described the setting, then I decided that I should focus on some activities that are considered as lifelong learning activities. I gained permission to observe children during the Greenaway session and the Summer Reading Challenges. The Greenaway session usually runs between April and June. I was not allowed to

observe children in the Central Library so I asked the librarians in one of the branches and received permission, before starting with them in May. I sat with the children and the librarian at the same table. The observation gave me the chance to watch children in real life to record and describe what they do (Robson, 2011). It also helped me to gain insights into the interaction between the librarian and the children, the way that the librarian delivers the activities, and how the interactions between the children help them to learn. The observation of this session finished when the session itself finished, and I was given the opportunity to observe the ceremony at the end of this session. Thus, I got a chance to interview the teachers who accompanied the children and the illustrator who was hosted to talk about the session. In the Summer Reading Challenge, the observation took place in one of the branches. I sat in the Children's Library and I also changed my place several times to capture rich data.

In the Talk English session, I observed the ladies involved in the session to learn English. Sitting with the ladies at the same table helped me to gain 'first-hand data' (Gobo, 2008) about the kind of activities which assist them to improve their English and the relationship between each other and the librarian and how it impacts on the learning process. Thus, in general, the observation gave insight into the reasons for users' visits to the library, and to obtain a detailed description of the lifelong learning activities in the library. It also enabled me to gain a thick description of how the environment of the library affects delivery of those activities and supports users to learn, to identify how people interact with each other and with librarians and how this interaction influences their learning. Such observations raised questions related to observed events, behaviour and activities. These questions are used in follow-up interviews in order to understand those events, behaviours and activities (Agar, 1996).

During fieldwork, it is very important for researchers to have equipment to capture the rich details which will help them to organise and analyse the data (Fetterman, 1998). In this study, pen and paper were chosen rather than other devices, such as laptops, as they were less obtrusive. As observation is the main data collection method of the study, the field diary is the primary method of recording data, so careful consideration was given to its format and design. In my field notes, I recorded all the information and events which were related to my topic using pen and paper.

Every sheet of notes included the location, date, time and number of the observation as well as some space in the margins to write my thoughts about the event so as to distinguish between my reflections and what really happened. After I wrote the observation reports, I saved them in folders and organised them according to the department, for instance, 'Reference Library observation' and 'reading group observation'. Some samples of an observation report are presented in appendix 4.

4.8.2 Interviews

Interviews are considered as a primary technique along with participant observation in ethnographic research (Crang and Cook, 2007) as the interview helps to find answers to questions that may arise through observation. While the observations provide information about the behaviours of people in action, interviews provide a chance to learn how people reflect on their behaviour and events (Wolcott, 2008). However, the interview can be defined according to Kadushin and Kadushin (1997, p. 23) as "a conversation with a deliberate purpose that is accepted by the participants". The interview is a supportive technique to gain high-quality information as respondents become more involved and motivated during conversations; hence, more information can be prompted (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). In my study, the interview was an opportunity to explore the users' and librarians' perspectives and gain in-depth understanding of the role of the public library in supporting lifelong learning. As I explained earlier (see section 3.6) the sample in this study was varied. However, I classified the participants into two categories to make it easier for readers to follow. The first category was librarians and the second one users, which included the rest of the participants, even if they were not users (users, therapist, mums, teachers, illustrator, jobseeking advisor and volunteers).

Generally, there are two basic types of interview, formal (structured, semi-structured) and informal (unstructured) (Crang and Cook, 2007). I planned to adopt semi-structured interviews with librarians and informal interviews with users because I thought it gave them more freedom to express themselves and to share their perspective. However, in the fieldwork, the librarians preferred to talk about their experiences in an informal way, and the users preferred to answer questions more than talking. Thus, informal interviews were adopted with librarians and semi-structured interviews with users. A semi-structured interview is "a conversation with

the purpose of obtaining a description of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena” (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p. 3). I adopted a semi-structured interview approach in this study because, firstly, it gives the interviewees much more freedom to express themselves. Although a semi-structured interview suggests questions on a number of themes, it still offers the potential to change and modify the structure (Robson, 2011). Secondly, semi-structured interviews can explore the participants’ perspective, experiences, motivation and reasoning in depth (Drever, 2003). Thirdly, it can help in “reinforcing the purpose of gaining a detailed insight into the research issues from the perspective of the study participant themselves” (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 109). The semi-structured interviews were designed to explore the detailed account of delivering lifelong learning in public libraries using probes, prompts and a flexible questioning style. The interviews were conducted after the participants had been observed, which gave me the opportunity to understand their perspectives and thoughts on library services, as well as giving the users the chance to discuss their ideas and opinions about what they use the library for and how the library might affect their lives.

Another type of interview (informal) was used with librarians. An informal interview, or ethnographic interview as it is also known (Gray, 2009), means “a systematic process of asking a question in the form of a natural dialogue” (Stokrocki, 1997, p. 37) so it helps the researcher to discover and confirm the participant’s experiences and perception (Fetterman, 1998, p. 40). It is also described as naturalistic, in-depth, narrative or non-directive (Wisker, 2008). Although an informal interview is often hard to analyse (Gray, 2009) it is an ideal technique to understand and to reveal the cultural meaning used by informants, and to investigate aspects of the culture observed, which may still be unclear or ambiguous even though they have been subject to close observation (Punch, 2014). For this study, most informal interviews were conducted at the beginning of the fieldwork, before observing people, and this gave free rein to the librarians to express their views about the role public libraries play in delivering lifelong learning. It also allowed them to suggest ways in which this role might be improved. This method allowed any answers to be investigated in-depth with appropriate additional questions that emerged during the interviews. I conducted one interview with each librarian, except Jody, because she was

responsible for me during my time there. I conducted two interviews with her, one at the beginning of the fieldwork and another after I finished the observation as there were some questions that I wanted to explore further with her.

All the interviews in this study were one-to-one and face-to-face because this format allowed me to discuss the issues in detail with interviewees. It also gave me an opportunity to listen to interviewees' voices and see their body language which added significant meaning to the data (Henn et al., 2009). The interview questions were designed to reflect the concepts that are embedded within the research questions, the aims and the framework of the study (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 117). The questions were changed from one interview to another (Denscombe, 2014, p. 187) because every librarian has different specialist areas. For instance, the questions for the Children's Librarians were slightly different to those asked of the Economics Librarian. However, all the questions aimed to generate data related to supporting lifelong learning activities in the library – how those activities affect the users economically and socially and the role of librarians in supporting lifelong learning activities. All the questions were clear, simple and easily understood by users (Hennink et al., 2011). Some samples of interview questions are presented in appendices 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

With the interviewees' permission, the method of gathering data in this study was by audio recording, which enabled me to obtain a full transcript of the interview. Recording enables the interviewer to concentrate on the topic and the dynamics of the interview; and to return repeatedly for re-listening (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Field notes also included some valuable non-variable data, such as body language and any particular episodes or events that occurred during the interview, which formed part of the data (Henn et al., 2009, p. 189). Taking notes during the interview supports the researcher in formulating new questions, and in facilitating analysis, for instance by locating the important quotations from the tape itself (Patton, 2002, p. 383).

4.8.3 Documentary analysis

Like ethnographic interviews, documents cannot be used as substitutes for observation, but they can support the observation by identifying features and themes on which to re-focus the observation (Gobo, 2008, p. 130) in such a way that the document records useful information created by the regular activities of people or of private and public organisations (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Documentary sources are important for the ethnographer (Punch, 2009) because they provide rich information about the setting being studied (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Moreover, the most important issue in the documentary sources is that they “describe places and social relationships at a previous time when we could not have conducted our research, or provide us with a direct account of people involved in their social situation” (Henn et al., 2009, p. 110).

For this study, the documents analysed included written text such as users’ feedback in the ‘notebook for feedback’ and entitled ‘Your thoughts on the library are welcome’, brochures and leaflets which gave information about the activities available at the library. Digital communication was used as well, such as the library website, and the library page on Facebook giving details about forthcoming events. Visual sources were used such as video and pictures related to lifelong learning activities. So, in this case, the document analysis was used as a complementary strategy to interviews and observation (Punch, 2009). I also used pictures which I took during the fieldwork. The pictures show more of the environment of the library and reminded me of some details during the analysis as Fetterman (1998, p. 66) points out that “pictures allow the ethnographer to interpret events retroactively”. I asked permission from the librarians before I took any picture and tried not to identify any of the participants as the pictures do not show the participants’ faces. Using interviews, observation and documentary analysis as a means of triangulation increases the rigour of the study (see section 4.11.1.2).

4.9 The role of the researcher

As I have a librarianship qualification, I am able to recognise the significance of the environment of the library and how that might affect its use. It also means that I focused on certain themes, such as reading at the library and a bibliotherapy session, which I consider to be lifelong learning activities. Moreover, using an ethnographic approach, I adopted the role of participant observer, so I had both an insider and outsider perspective. As I observed activities very closely for a long period of time and engaged in some activities I was an insider, which led to acceptance among the library community, thus building trust between myself and the participants (Henn et al., 2014). Moreover, being a participant observer means I participated in the same setting, at the same time and in the same condition as the participants being studied (Spradley, 1980) which enabled me to acquire a cultural knowledge and understand the meaning of social interaction of people's natural environment (Henn et al., 2014, p. 197). Simultaneously, I adopted an outsider perspective which offered an understanding of things in a new way from the participants' view. In other words, I saw their world objectively and critically. In this sense, I followed Spradley's view that "doing ethnographic fieldwork involves alternating between the insider and outsider experience, and having both simultaneously" (1980, p. 57)

Moreover, during all stages of the study, from data generation to data analysis and interpretation, I aimed to be self-reflective and aware of my role as the researcher. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 210) point out, the reflexivity is "the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher", which means that researchers need to adopt an objective approach (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Objectivity means the absence of bias in the research and research which is neutral in terms of the researcher's influence on the study outcome, data collection and analysis (Denscombe, 2014, p. 272). In my study, as mentioned above, I spent long periods of time in the fieldwork, which helped me to build a close relationship of trust with the participants. Without establishing rapport and trust, I was unlikely to have access to the participants. For instance, at the first observation in reading group I used a recorder, although I explained to the participants that I was using the recorder to help me understand their view about the library services, they were not talking openly. So,

on the second visit I explained that I would not use the recorder and I would just write some notes. During the observation, I listened to their stories even some that were quite personal. I avoided interrupting and I also shared my stories with them in order to gain their trust. After a few visits we became familiar with each other and the reading group members started to talk more freely about their experience in the library. In this sense, I constructed the knowledge through being close to my participants, listening to their stories and understanding what they were saying. In other words, I used critical self-reflection in order to generate the data in an unbiased way.

Another key aspect of the interviews was where I was an active listener, I allowed participants to tell their stories without any interruptions and I encouraged them to maintain eye contact. As I spent a long time doing fieldwork, most of the participants saw me so I was familiar to them which helped them to feel sufficiently comfortable to express their thoughts and ideas. In addition, I wrote notes about their facial expressions and body language, as Wolcott (1994, pp. 3–4) points out that “everything has the potential to be data, but nothing becomes data without the intervention of a researcher who takes notes – and often makes note – of some things to the exclusion of others”. In this way, during the data analysis, I assured that I maintained participants’ own experiences, voices and views of the world which enriched my data; I also used the exact quotations from what they said.

Additionally, I used a reflective diary which is “a kind of diary in which the investigator on a daily basis or as needed, records a variety of information about self and method” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 327). Ortlipp (2008, p. 695) states that “keeping self-reflective diary is a strategy that can facilitate reflexivity”. In my study, I used a reflective diary from the beginning of my PhD journey. It includes my ideas, thoughts and personal experiences during the research such as methodological decisions and their rationales. For instance, at the beginning I considered using three public libraries as case studies to compare between them. However, I rejected this option because every one of those libraries would have needed a separate thesis to be done. Therefore, I focused on one library. In addition, the diary includes a chronological record of the departments and events observed as well as participants interviewed. In this sense, I could say that the reflective diary supported me to “make my experiences, opinions, thoughts, and feelings visible and an acknowledged part

of the research design, data generation, analysis, and interpretation process” (Ortlipp, 2008, p. 703).

4.10 Data analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research involves “following analytic procedure to prepare, analyse and interpret data” (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 205) and it aims to gain a depth of understanding of the research issues (Denscombe, 2014). In this study, the data analysis took place alongside the data generation following Gobo’s advice to allow questions to be refined and new avenues of enquiry to develop (2008). The data analysis was carried out manually, which provides a way to extract profound and subtle meaning of the issues being explored. In data analysis, there are two types of approach: ‘deductive and inductive’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In a deductive or top-down approach, the data is collected and interpreted in order to test and verify a theory, while the inductive or bottom-up approach aims to understand and develop the idea which emerges from the data itself (Henn et al., 2014, p. 53); in my study, I used the inductive approach.

In order to interpret the data of this study I used a thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis is “a process for encoding qualitative information” (Boyatzwiz, 1998, p. 4) which helps to identify, analyse and report themes within data. It also organises and describes the data set in rich detail (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 79). In this study I followed the five steps of thematic analysis developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) as explained in the following table:

Phase	Description of the process
1- Familiarisation with data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2- Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systemic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3- Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4- Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2),

	generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5- Defining and naming Themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

Table 4.1: Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 87)

4.10.1 Familiarisation with the data

As mentioned above, I started data analysis along with generating the data; I started by listening carefully to the recording and transcribing each of the participants' interviews in order to provide a true record of the original interview and as a means of enhancing and demonstrating the 'soundness of the research' (Drever, 2003, p. 61). Although transcription of 59 interviews was time-consuming (Denscombe, 2014), it allowed me to become familiar with the data, learn more about it and remind myself of the emotions and the expressions of the interviewees (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Additionally, I read the field notes to determine categories and themes and contrast ideas that were emerging in relation to the research questions. I read and re-read the transcriptions as well as the field notes and I proposed initial concepts and ideas in the margins (as in the example below) to help identify the themes, codes and sub-codes.

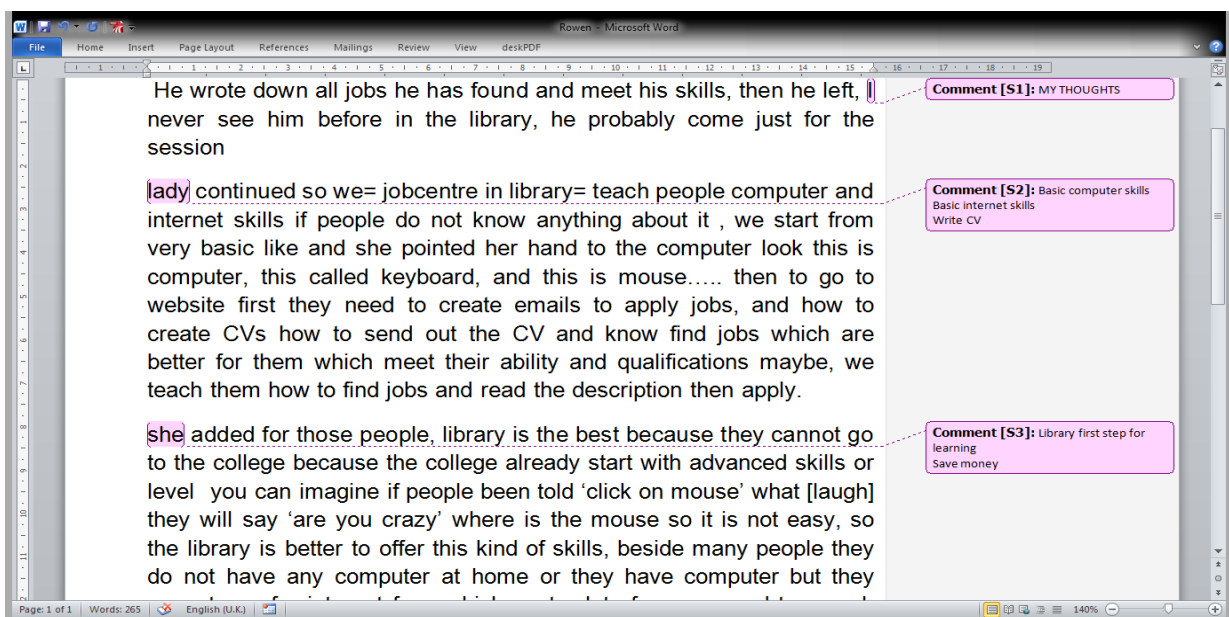


Figure 4.1 Example: The initial codes

4.10.2 Generating initial codes

According to Asher and Miller (2011), a process of coding is the most important step in analysing ethnographic data. Coding is “analysis, to review a set of field notes, transcribed or synthesised and to dissect them meaningfully, while keeping the relation between the parts intact” (Miles and Huberman, 1992, p. 56). Code refers “to an issue, topic, idea or opinion that is evident in the data” (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 216). During assigning a code to raw data, it is important that this segment is meaningful in regard to the phenomenon under study (Boyatzis, 1998). In this study, in order to generate the codes, I reviewed the collected data many times, then I identified initial codes and described them, then matched them with data extracts that demonstrate those codes (Braun and Clarke, 2006) as in the following example:

Data extract	Coded for
<p>The reading group has grown. It has changed over the years and because it's so specific who comes along, they've all got literacy issues, they recruit other members. So, because they're all either students in college or ex-students in college, they sort of recruit and bring people that they think will enjoy it. (Jill, librarian, 24.08.2015)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Reading group 2- Information literacy 3- Educational role 4- Active citizen
<p>The library is very important; it is kind of community hub like it helps people get away because it isn't just books, it is a career. There are computers; it helps people to access to the internet if they do not have internet at homes... there is so much is going on here, I think it will be a shame if we do not have them (Holly, volunteer, 08.08.2015)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Significance of library 2- Social role 3- Economic role 4- Close the library

<p>Tracy's turn to read, she reads very slowly, she struggles, Sally, Marry, Jack corrected her, she has difficulties with reading, but it seems she enjoys her reading she misses some words, and sometimes she said "I do not know". After Tracy finished her reading everyone said "Well done Tracy, you improved", she looked very happy when they told her "well done" [her eyes twinkled] (Field note, 30.01.2015)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Build confidence 2- Mutual engagement 3- Support each other
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Table 4.2: An example of initial codes applied to a short segment of data

In order to check, refine and develop the codes, I applied a 'constant comparative method' which involves "comparing and contrasting new codes, categories and concepts as they emerge – constantly seeking to check out against existing versions" (Denscombe, 2014, pp. 113–114). In this sense, I acquired a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the data and the focus of the research (Fetterman, 1998, p. 97). Thus, I read and re-read the data and the codes repeatedly; I highlighted the similarities in the interviews and conversations in different colours; each colour refers to one idea, some samples can be found in appendix 11. Then I organised and adjusted my codes by combining the codes into categories and adding new codes to accommodate the newly generated data until all the data was saturated "when no more new issues [were] identified in the data" (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 217).

In the coding process I followed the 'data reduction' which "refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 10). This is because I wanted to select the data and adjust it into meaningful segments, so I reviewed the interview transcriptions and field notes and assigned the codes to chunks of data which were relevant to the research questions and the topic under exploration. I combined the codes, which belonged to one theme, then I organised

the themes, codes and sub-codes which addressed one of the research questions into tables as below:

The environment of the library
Diversity
Resources for LLL
Space and facilities (sub-code)
Books and other materials (sub-code)
Library as leisure place
Library as information centre
Library as community hub
Support other organisations in the community
Challenges facing the library
Cuts (sub-code)
Closure of library (sub-code)
Lack of public perception of library value (sub-code)
Misunderstanding the rules (sub-code)

Table 4.3: Codes and sub-codes (R.Q1)

Each one of these tables refers to one of the research questions. The table below represents the themes, codes and sub-codes which are related to the second research question (R.Q2).

Children learning
The CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal (sub-code)
Summer Reading Challenge (sub-code)
Adult learning
Reading group (sub-code)
Talk English (sub-code)
IT sessions (sub-code)
Preventing social isolation
Promoting social cohesion
Developing identity
Promoting mental health
Saving money

Support people to find jobs Indirect effects of the library
--

Table 4.4: Codes and sub-codes (R.Q2)

I carried out the same process with all the research questions. The following table represents the codes and sub-codes of the third research question (R.Q3).

Librarians as teachers Librarians as information professionals Criteria to be librarians Challenges facing the librarians
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Table 4.5: Codes and sub-codes (R.Q3)

As illustrated, I carried out the same process in identifying the codes and the sub-codes with the three research questions. Although it took time as I coded the data manually, it gave me a deeper understanding of the data and the relationship between codes and sub-codes.

4.10.3 Searching for themes

After finishing the final list of codes, I started to select the most important themes that recurred most frequently in the data and then to apply the codes under those themes to the transcripts. In this way I was able “to create a standardised group of codes across all of the transcripts so that all the data under analysis can be queried in a uniform fashion” (Asher and Miller, 2011, p. 24). I reviewed the codes and the sub-codes and identified the relationship between the different codes, sub-codes and themes. I used tables to sort the codes and sub-codes under corresponding themes to gain a broader sense of my data, some samples of organising themes, codes and sub-codes for every research question can be found in appendix 12. At the end of this phase, I had “a collection of candidate themes and sub-themes, and all extracts of data that have been coded in relation to them” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 90). I

started analysis with the theme 'library environment' which related to R.Q1: *What is the potential for enhancing lifelong learning in public libraries through community of practice?* Then I continued the analysis with the rest of the themes.

4.10.4 Reviewing themes

This step aims to refine and evaluate the codes, sub-codes and the themes. In reviewing the themes, I tried to ensure that the “data within themes should cohere together meaningfully, while there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 91). In order to refine the themes, I followed the two levels identified by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 91). In the first one, I re-read the extracts of coded data under each theme in order to evaluate their coherence and ascertain that they formed a meaningful relation to the data extracts. At the second level, I kept reviewing the themes to judge that the selected themes captured the contours of the coded data. Then I reviewed the entire data set to code any additional data that might have been missed during the coding process. At the end of this phase, I understood my themes, how they fitted together, and the story they told about the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 92).

4.10.5 Defining and naming themes

This phase aims to “define and further refine the themes you will present for your analysis, and analyse the data within them” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 92). In order to define the essence of each theme and the aspects of the data that the themes capture, I re-read, evaluated and re-organised the codes and the extracts to consider the significance of the themes in relation to the aims and research questions. Following Braun and Clarke’s (2006, p. 93) advice, the names of the themes in this study are “concise, punchy and immediately give the reader a sense of what the theme is about”.

4.11 The quality of the data

Instead of focusing on validity and reliability, qualitative researchers rely on trustworthiness, which represents 'goodness or quality criteria', as Guba and Lincoln (2005, p. 196) point out. Trustworthiness, as defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), consists of the following competences: credibility; transferability; dependability and confirmability. In this study, I adopted each of these criteria to ensure the trustworthiness of the results and the trustworthiness criteria are detailed below:

4.11.1 Credibility

Credibility is equivalent to internal validity (Shenton, 2004) and refers to the researcher's ability to demonstrate the accuracy and appropriateness of the data (Denscombe, 2014, p. 297). That is to say that it is "determined (on) whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participants or the readers of an account" (Creswell, 2014, p. 201). Lincoln and Guba (1985) highlight some strategies to determine the credibility, including prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation and thick description. I will discuss these strategies which address the accuracy and appropriateness of my data.

4.11.1.1 Prolonged engagement and persistent observation

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 301), prolonged engagement means "spending sufficient time to achieve certain purposes, learning the culture, testing of misinformation introduced by distortions either of the self or of the respondents, and building trust". In this sense, spending prolonged time in the fieldwork supports the researcher in gaining a depth of understanding of the study under investigation. Fetterman (1998, p. 36) assures that "working with people, day in and day out, for long periods of time is what gives ethnographic research its validity and vitality". I adopted an ethnographic approach in my study and I spent nine months doing fieldwork, thus, I used the persistent observation and built trust and gained familiarity with participants so they were less aware of being observed. It also helped me to

establish rapport so that participants were comfortable disclosing information to me (Creswell and Miller, 2000, p. 128).

4.11.1.2 Triangulation

Triangulation is a basic method in ethnographic studies that can yield a wealth of high-quality data (Handwerker, 2001, p. 13). This is consistent with the view of Fetterman (1992, p. 93) that the “triangulation is at the heart of ethnographic validity”. It helped me to capture many different aspects at the same time; different voices, different perspectives, points of view and angles of vision of the phenomenon being studied (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). In this study, I used observation, interview and document analysis to generate the data which allowed me to compare the data and test the quality of information. Every method has strengths and weaknesses. Using triangulation means that any potential weaknesses of one method could be covered by another which increases the depth of understanding of the investigation (Gray, 2009). For instance, one of the disadvantages of the interview is the validity of the data, as the interviewer relies on what people say. However, by using participant observation, the data “have potential to be particularly context-sensitive and ecologically valid” (Denscombe, 2014, p. 222). Multiple methods, or triangulation, assist with confirmation of the validity of the findings. Thus, by using multiple methods the validity can be enhanced, especially with participant observation and face-to-face interview so that the data is gathered in its natural setting. This means that the data are checked for accuracy and relevance as they are collected (Babbie 2014; Denscombe, 2014). Triangulation gave me an opportunity to learn about the participants’ thoughts and perspectives from many sides.

4.11.1.3 Thick description

The ethnography involves a thick description, which provides sufficient depth and insight into the situation under study; thus “the ethnographer shares the participant’s understanding of the situation with the reader” (Fetterman, 1992, p. 123). In this sense, it promotes credibility as it assists the researcher in interpretation and makes

the phenomenon clear to readers (Shenton, 2004). In this study, I present vivid details about the events, setting and sessions in fieldwork and I also provide a detailed description about each step which helps in transporting the readers into a setting or situation.

4.11.2 Transferability

Transferability is equivalent to external validity or generalisability (Shenton, 2004) and refers to a “process in which the reader of the research uses information about the particular instance that has been studied to arrive at a judgement about how far it would apply to other comparable instances” (Denscombe, 2014, p. 299). The findings in qualitative researches are specific to a small number of individuals and a particular setting. Moreover, the aim of the qualitative research is “to allow for transferability of the findings rather than wholesale generalisation of those findings” (Pickard, 2007, p. 20). Thus, in order to address transferability, the researcher should provide a thick description of the context being studied (Stake, 2005; Denscombe, 2014). A thick description allows readers to comprehend their interpretation and enables them to compare and transfer the phenomenon to other situations (Stake, 2005). As explained above, I provided sufficient and rich description of the context, the sample, the methods which were used to generate the data and the themes which allow the readers to make decisions about the applicability of the findings to other similar contexts or settings (Creswell and Miller, 2000, p. 129). Moreover, as Shenton (2004, p. 71) highlights, having different results from different researchers of one phenomenon does not necessarily imply one is untrustworthy, but they simply reflect multiple realities.

4.11.3 Dependability

Reliability is ‘a matter of dependability’ (Babbie, 2014, p. 353); “if someone else did the research, she or he would have got the same results and arrived at the same conclusions” (Denscombe, 2014, p. 298). However, in qualitative research there is probably no way to get the same results given that the people and the context have changed. In order to avoid this limitation, I addressed three techniques. First of all, I provided a thick detailed description of the focus of the study, my role as the

researcher and the context which the data were generated from (Shenton, 2004). Secondly, I used triangulation of methods (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), as I explained above, using multiple sources to enhance the reliability of the research (Robson, 2011). As Fetterman (1998, p. 96) highlights, “patterns are a form of ethnographic reliability. Ethnographers see patterns of thought and action repeat in various situations and with various players”. Thirdly, I reported the analysis strategies in detail which allows the reader to gain a clear and accurate picture of methods used in this study.

4.11.4 Confirmability

Confirmability (objectivity) refers to the degree “to which qualitative research can produce findings that are free from the influence of the researchers who conducted the inquiry” (Denscombe, 2014, p. 300). In this study I used triangulation (as mentioned earlier) of data sources to increase the accuracy and credibility of findings (Patton, 2015). In addition, the interviews were recorded with great care and accuracy as Silverman (2005, p. 21) points out that “recordings and transcripts can offer a highly reliable record to which researchers can return”. I also distinguished between objective and subjective observations, thus, the finding of this study builds on the codes and themes which emerged from the topics that were presented by participants. In addition, I kept a reflexive diary; I explained in section 4.9 the role of the researcher including reflexivity.

4.12 Conclusion

This qualitative study aims to examine the perspectives and perceptions of the users and librarians about the role of the public library in supporting lifelong learning activities. In this chapter I discussed the methodological process which is congruent with the aims and research questions (Sparkes, 1992). I chose the interpretive paradigm which is appropriate to answer the research questions. I also adopted an ethnographic approach which is applicable within my chosen paradigm. For generation of data I used participant observation, semi-structured interviews with users and unstructured interviews with librarians as well as document analysis which

were congruent with the paradigm and approach employed. I also justified ethical considerations which were permission, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity. My role as researcher (self-reflective) – as an insider and outsider – has also been explained in detail in this chapter. In terms of data analysis I used thematic analysis following the five steps by Braun and Clarke (2006). Finally, in order to ensure the trustworthiness of the study, I addressed concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Introduction to data analysis chapters

The analysis chapters (five, six and seven) describe the role of a public library, as a lifelong learning institution, in developing the community as perceived by the library users and librarians. The interpretation of the data is linked to the elements of the communities of practice theory and to a literature review which are relevant to my study. The methodology chapter includes the five steps I followed to analyse the data (see 4.10, p. 80). However, in order to make the interpretation coherent and cohesive, the analysis chapters are organised in such a way that it addresses the research questions. Each chapter relates the data to one of the research questions, thus, chapter five deals with the first question:

What is the potential for enhancing lifelong learning in public libraries through a community of practice?

Chapter six will answer the second research question:

To what extent do lifelong learning activities through public libraries affect the users, socially and economically?

Chapter seven will deal with the third research question:

How much do the services of librarians add to the value of public libraries as learning environments?

The following chapter will answer the first research question.

Chapter five: The Criteria of Public Libraries to be Lifelong Learning Institutions

5.1 Introduction

Lifelong learners were considered to benefit from the public library mainly through attending activities, such as reading groups, IT sessions and bibliotherapy, as well as children's activities. Furthermore, they obtained information by using library resources, including space and facilities, ICT, books and other materials, as well as receiving support from staff. However, the learning environment is one of the key criteria that motivate people to learn. This chapter presents some criteria that contribute to the public library as a LLL institution. The public library provides a learning environment where individuals like to be, where they learn how to learn, and where they experience self-worth, enthusiasm and challenge. The public library is used as social place, a study place and information centre because it provides diversity in resources and accessible facilities. However, there are some challenges that the library faces in delivering its activities, which will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

The following section represents the analysis of the users' and librarians' perspectives about the significance of the environment of the library which motivates them to read and continue their learning.

5.2 Library as a stimulating environment

For Lave and Wenger, individuals learn by interaction with each other in shared practice: "learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice" (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 31). Fuller (2007) highlights that the main condition for Lave and Wenger's learning is "participation in social practice" which can be any social setting. The public library as a social setting can provide a stimulating learning environment which helps learners (the users in my study) to continue their learning. Users attend the library community to be a part of it; they have a shared aim and shared desire to learn and develop their social and/or economic life. Thus, learners have intrinsic

motivation to learn, as Wenger (1998) states. However, for some researchers, such as Andrew, Tolson and Ferguson (2008), the intrinsic motivation is not enough for learning; extrinsic motivation should also be considered. The data in my study suggests that the environment is one of the factors that supports users in learning. For instance, Robin, one of my participants who attended the library for information literacy help, had had a bad experience at school. The environment of the library stimulated him to learn and improve his reading. He compared the school with the library in saying: “the library is not like school, I hated school”. For Robin and many people like him, the library is neither compulsory nor judgemental as he felt that school or colleges can be. Robin described the difference between the library and the college as follows:

The best thing about this group [reading group at the library] is that it's not compulsory. If you want to come it's okay, if you do not want to, it is okay... if you want to read okay if you do not want it is still okay. We love this way no need to embarrass yourself... that's the difference between the group in the library and the session in the college (Field note, 30.01.2015).

Similarly, Marry (one of the reading group members) finds the reading group at the library to be a good learning setting for her because she feels more comfortable and encouraged, as she explains:

Well... I've been to other groups and they did not help me at all... this group gives you an option. You can read or you do not have to... when you first come here they do not embarrass you if there is a word you do not know; they will help you. They do not leave you to struggle to try to figure the word out yourself... we all help each other which is great... fabulous (Marry, user, 19.06.2015).

Marry's comment is consistent with Fuller and Unwin (2003, p. 214) who state that an effective learning community is one that provides participants with the 'ability to disengage' as well as to engage. Moreover, for Marry, the effective learning environment was not just non-compulsory but also about the relationship between

the members of the group, which she had not found at any other learning organisations, as she states:

[...] In college, although we are all in the same situation, I feel that they are laughing at me inside and I am getting judged... that's what people love about this group (library group) because we work as team (Marry, user, 19.06.2015).

Thus, the public library provides learners with an environment which enables them to interact with each other, and so learn with each other, and that is the core of CoP theory as defined by Wenger et al. (2002, p. 34) who state that: "CoP is a group of people who interact, learn together, build relationships, and in the process, develop a sense of belonging and mutual commitment". Belonging is considered as one of the factors that motivates learners to continue their learning. A study by Levett-Jones and Lathlean (2008) shows that there is a relationship between belongingness and student learning; they found that belongingness is facilitated when individuals feel safe, comfortable, satisfied, happy and accepted. Moreover, belongingness had an impact on students' attitudes towards learning and on their confidence to become involved in learning opportunities (Levett-Jones and Lathlean, 2008, p. 104). Likewise, the data of my study shows that learners felt comfortable, relaxed and welcoming so they felt that they belonged to the library community. My data exemplifies the view of Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004, p. 8) who assert that "we need to belong to learn, and whatever it is that we belong to, can be called a community of practice". CoP in a public library provides learners with a feeling of security and being relaxed, which could help them to make the most of the learning opportunities presented. The librarian who is responsible for the reading group thinks that the relaxed and informal environment in the library is one of the most significant factors in attracting people to learn in the library. My observation is consistent with the librarian's perspective that the public library environment helps learners to carry on with their learning. The following example illustrates this statement:

Tracy, one of the reading group members, attended the library to improve her reading. Tracy read very slowly and struggled. While she was reading Tracy did not feel shame or embarrassed to say "I don't know what is this" if she could not read (Field note, 15.05.2015).

By contrast, learners who do not feel they belong to the community feel they have a barrier to learning such as a fear of making mistakes or saying something foolish (Levett-Jones and Lathlean, 2008, p. 109). The data of my study indicates that learners, especially for non-natives, benefit from the library where they are free from constraints in a relaxed and non-judgemental environment. The library helped both Alia and Areen to overcome their learning barriers, such as feeling embarrassed, as the following statement explains:

Here [library] is better for me... um like all of them [the rest of the group] do not speak English like me, so I am not shy and teacher [librarian] helps us so much... it is free [laugh] (Areen, user, 25.02.2015).

For other users, the library is a safe place to study, read or even relax, as stated by Shelly, who commented that the library is the best place to escape from her own problems. Similarly, for people with mental health problems, the library is considered as a safe and relaxing place where they come to sit and forget about their situation. I observed one man who comes every day just to sit down and stare at the people:

Again today I saw the same man who is usually sitting at the same table, staring at people smiling by himself and talking to himself. The lady from the staff told me about him, "He comes every day to the library usually starts searching for a job for 15 minutes and then sits at the table reading a newspaper and watching everyone he sits here doing nothing, sits until afternoon then he leaves; I guess he has mental problems (Field note, 05.03.2015).

Regardless of his reason for being in the library, it seems that he felt that he belonged to this community (library community). He felt safe and accepted as part of the library community. This idea echoes with what Wenger et al. (2002, p. 71) suggest, that "a community is driven by the value members get from it, so people need to see how their passion will translate into something useful". Moreover, the observation showed that using a public library as a safe place is not just for adults, but for children as well. Many times I observed parents leave their children at the library reading or colouring while they (parents) went shopping or performing other

activities such as borrowing books from different departments as in the following example:

Mum with two children (boy and girl) left them at the library and went to buy some stuff; she said to them: "I have to buy something, stay here and colour if you want" she gave them colouring pencils and papers from the library and then she left... they keep colouring and talking until their mum came back to them after 40 minutes (Field note, 08.08.2015).

Besides the benefit to children staying in the library which might attract them to read books, children are considered as full citizens. That is because children might be deprived of basic rights in some communities due to economic or ethnic reasons. However, at the library, everyone is welcome, so the library is considered to be a democratic and neutral place. The library as a neutral place helps in facilitating lifelong learning activities because learners feel that they belong to the particular community, as Baker and Evans (2011, p. 6) state that [library] "*is neutral territory where people can gather freely, learn and socialise; where they are encouraged and spontaneity is supported*". This interpretation is correlated with the librarian's distinction between the library and any public place in the community as follows:

I think they're [libraries] just a free, accessible place... They [people] don't have to be a member. They can stay all day if they want and we're not going to challenge them. We're non-judgemental...So I think it's somewhere where people can go who haven't got IT and they can use computers and they can learn how to use computers. They can meet each other. I think it's really good for communities to come together. You might have people who go to the mosque or the church or the chapel or whatever, but the library is somewhere where everybody can come and mix and meet people and make friends, etc. It's for all ages, from birth to 110 [laugh] (Dena, librarian, 26.08.2015).

Similarly, users found the library to be a supportive learning place because it is neutral. It belongs to them; they do not need to meet certain criteria. The evidence from librarians and users linked to the description of a successful learning community by Wenger et al. (2002, p. 61) who state that it is a neutral place "where

people have freedom to ask candid advice, share their opinion and try their half-baked ideas without repercussion". In other words, it is comfortable; the library provides an environment which offers the feeling of home comforts. This is reflected in the fact that the public library was mentioned as a comfortable and welcoming place many times by users; the following statements exemplified this:

It is nice and quiet, it's warm I can have drink; no one bothers me, I just sit here read my paper do my crosswords then I go (Rebecca, user, 28.04.2015).

The main concept behind situated learning is that learning is rooted in a social context. Being in a socio-cultural environment stimulates learners not just to learn, but also to engage with the community. Wenger (1998, p. 227) states that [learning] "transforms our ability to participate in the world by changing all at once who we are". This kind of transformation is more important for people who have a particular kind of learning – learning how to cope with their mental problems, because transformation into a practitioner and being a member in a community of practice is tied to a conception of motivation, as Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 122) state. The public library helps in transformation; relaxed, comfortable and non-clinical environment are reasons which inspire people with mental health issues to participate in the bibliotherapy session (see section 6.4.4, p. 169) at the library according to the therapist:

[...] It helps people... when they're discharged into the community. Then they're just sat there... Whereas if they come to the library, it helps them move from that clinical setting into a community setting where they're an ordinary person and it is that sort of bridge across for them really (Juley, bibliotherapist, 16.09.2015).

Furthermore, the atmosphere of the public library motivates learners to read. Supporting reading is a core role of the public library service (Durcan, 2011b, p. 330). However, supporting reading, as a source of lifelong learning, is not just about providing learners with books and other materials, but also about providing an

environment which encourages learners to read. For instance, Aisha found the library to be a stimulating place which has a variety of books as she highlights:

Library is very important, although we can buy books and read them, but it is nicer to sit at the library, read your book, all books around you and at the same time you could use the computers (Aisha, volunteer, 19.08.2015).

A stimulating learning environment plays a significant role in supporting reading for pleasure as well as study. Wenger (1998, p. 215) states that:

To support learning is not only to support the process of acquiring knowledge, but also to offer a place where new ways of knowing can be realised... if someone fails to learn as expected, it may therefore be necessary to consider, in addition to possible problems with the process, the lack of such a place as well as the competition of other places.

However, the 'stimulating' differs from one learner to another; for some users it is just a place that helps them to concentrate, like Ahmed, who states that he studies "at the library because it is peaceful and quiet so (he) can concentrate on his work". While for other users such as Shahid, the availability of trained staff, IT facilities and books helps her to focus on her job. The evidence from the users is consistent with what Wenger et al. (2002, p. 37) state: "learning requires an atmosphere of openness... An effective CoP offers a place of exploration where it is safe to speak the truth and ask hard questions". Furthermore, the library motivates children to read; the library is welcoming, safe and socially inclusive as well as providing access to books and other facilities; it might encourage a love of books and reading amongst children (Elkin, 2011, p. 240). Many respondents shared Elkin's view that the public library encourages children to improve their reading skills. The following statement exemplified that:

I have three children; two of them love reading while the last one does not love reading. But when they come here [library] it makes them love reading, especially if that is connected with activities [craft] like today... you cannot

have like those activities at different places but at the library... every town and city should have a library... (Fiona, mum, 05.08.2015).

Thus, the importance of the library for children is not just about offering different types of books; it provides opportunities for the interaction of children and grown-ups as well as people from different cultures because the library serves diverse populations.

5.3 Diversity

Diversity is one of the factors which contribute to the library as a lifelong learning institution. The library offers equality of learning opportunity as Ashmore et al. (2015 p. 59) state: “in the context of LLL, valuing diversity means creating a learning environment that includes and respects difference and otherness”. This diversity lies not only in age factors, but also in diverse social and cultural backgrounds. The data of my research also highlights that the library is accessible for disabled people as well.

[...] Reading group at the library is also for disabled people; the [librarian] who is responsible for this group helped someone who is nearly blind, in this group the librarian uses books as well as CDs during the session (Audrey, librarian, 12.01.2015).

Diversity is pivotal in CoP because it makes engagement in practice “possible and productive” (Wenger, 1998, p. 75). CoP may include young and old, conservative and liberal members, who have different personal aspirations (Wenger, 1998, p. 75). As mentioned earlier, the public library is a neutral place and it provides services to multicultural users. There is a variety of users from children and young adults to older adults and the housebound, from the illiterate to university students and researchers. This is consistent with what Birdi et al. (2011, p. 125) state that every library service should provide a service for minority “ethnic communities, whether or not the local area is ethnically diverse”. However, Wenger does not discuss diversity further in terms of the significance of multicultural backgrounds in the community which helps to develop inter-cultural identity and increase social cohesion. According

to the Guardian (2017): “Black students continue to struggle to win undergraduate places at UK universities” (Adams, 2017). Thus, places which welcome people regardless of their ethnic and cultural background, are needed. The public library could be one of the few remaining places that can be shared by different cultural groups, regardless of race, class or gender (Durcan, 2011). This kind of diversity will help people to understand the meaning of tolerance and diversity of cultures. Maryam, the teacher, explained the significance of diversity in bringing people together, which might help in fostering social cohesion as follows:

We also enjoy the friendliness in our library; they are so welcoming and so kind, regardless of your colour, regardless of what size you are, they are so welcoming... (Maryam, teacher, 02.07.2015).

However, the data in this study indicates that the diversity in libraries differs from one activity to another. For instance, in the English café where people join in to learn English, the users are from many different cultures and are not generally from the UK. While the majority of the users in the local history department are White British people; the reference, lending and children’s departments serve people from multicultural backgrounds. In addition, by analysing the document, which is the ‘feedback comment book’ where people write their opinions about the library, I found many comments written by users from several countries around the world which means that the library has been used by people from a range of different backgrounds, such as Australia and America.

As ethnographer, I spent a period of time at the library; the library has been used by multicultural people, with different educational and social backgrounds. Mostly, the climate of the library helps them to search, read and study. The users feel welcome; staff keep smiling and asking people “How do you do?” and thanking them; users mostly can find help when they ask for it. Additionally, the library provides different kinds of resources which help learners to continue their learning.

5.4 Resources for LLL

By resources, I mean all the facilities, spaces, books and other materials which have been seen as essential to fulfil the lifelong learning need in the community.

5.4.1 Space and facilities

The location and facilities at the library were considered to be some of the factors that attract people to stay at the library. In section (5.2) I explained the users' perceptions about the environment of the library. However, in this section I will discuss how architectural design helps to expedite lifelong learning activities. As Wenger (1998) highlights, the basic components of any architectural design should enable the function of the building. The public library is an informal learning place and should be attractive and accessible to all community members. The fact is that the location of the library was one of the reasons that attracted users to read at the library; because it may have been near their homes or in the city/town centre so they could go shopping as well as visit the library:

I live in area like you need half an hour to get here by bus so yeah... sometimes it is like far, but it is kind of going to centre or town so you can get out and get food (Yasmen, user, 22.04.2015).

Although the Town Hall is an old library, it is an accessible building, especially for elderly and/or disabled people. A study by Fox (2014) found that the important features for public library design are that it be welcoming and accessible with a wide range of facilities and space. The Town Hall library is a big one; however, the size of the rooms differs from one to another. The biggest and busiest one is the Reference Library (department); which is bright and usually used for computer purposes and for reading newspapers:

The Reference Library is a very big department. It has 16 large windows; the room is bright and quiet. There are 12 computers, on the left of the enquiry desk there are eight computers so the enquiry desk is placed in the middle of the computers so that it is easier for staff to see if people need help. The enquiry desk with computers takes about 40% of the Reference Library space and the reading area takes up about 60% of the usable

space. The shelves are all around the room. There are 13 tables with 30 chairs; most of them are old. In the middle of the table there is a plant. Every table has four chairs. In the middle there is a small table with some newspapers on it and people usually browse the papers while they are standing there. Also, there is a carrier for newspapers and magazines in different languages (Field note, 23.02.2015).



Figure 5.1: Reference Library

Thus, the design of the room helps users to concentrate on reading or working on the computers. Every department has different configurations of space, resources and decoration. For instance, the Local History Library, which provides people with valuable materials about their local community and family history research, is smaller and less bright than the Reference Library. It has many pictures on the walls related to local history.

In the Library of Birmingham project, Nankivell (2003) finds that users wanted the library design to be accessible, attractive and welcoming with comfortable seating as well as computers and quiet study areas. Although I observed that many students were studying at the library, the library does not offer a quiet study area. However, most students prefer to study at a reference library because it is quieter than the lending library. Wenger (1998, p. 229) states that “community of practice is about content... not about form”. However, as the library is both for learning and leisure, it

should be designed in a way that enables it to compete with other leisure organisations in the community (McMenemy, 2009). Beside the importance of space, facilities are significant to meet users' needs. The library provides products which are based on its users' requirements, such as computers, microfilm and microfiche. For instance, in the local library most of the users were using the library for researching their family tree or for local history research. Consequently, they needed to use old books, archived newspapers and other documents, as well as microfilm and microfiche readers. In order to help users find the information they need, the library provides those machines for free:

In the middle behind the table there is microfilm for newspapers which covers the local area. There are catalogue cards for microfiches and people use them to search for the fiches they need. Also, there are machines which can copy digital images from newspaper reel, print microfilm/film record 60p per page for both A4 and A3 (Field note, 14.03.2015).

The observational data highlights that many users use microfilm and microfiche machines to build their family tree. However, most of the machines are old-fashioned, so sometimes they stop suddenly or have different problems that prevent users from using them. The following complaint from a user exemplified those problems:

User complained about all the pop-ups appearing on screen, "Why don't you put some software to stop them?" (Field note, local history, 16.03.2015).

The complaints were not only about the equipment, but also about other aspects such as toilets, bright light and the room temperature as in the following example:

A man complained about the low temperature asking "When the boiler would be fixed?!" (Field note, 31.03.2015).

During the time I spent at the library, I sometimes felt cold and I had to put my jacket on. The staff have a gas convector heater there, but this can lead to a smell of gas in the room. This kind of problem is not directly linked to the services provided, like borrowing books or using computers, but it has a significant effect on the users. This might prevent people from visiting the library and feeling comfortable to learn, especially for elderly users who need to be warm at all times.

Moreover, computers are one of the services that attract many people to use the library. Many reasons make users utilise them. Perhaps they do not have a computer at home, or they need a quiet place to study or some help with technology. The statistical data collected by the local council showed that in 2015, 55% of users come to the library to use the computer (Fountain, Silversides, Watson and Bushnell, 2015). The data in my study shows that many users attended the library to use computers. Computers were used for a variety of reasons: to study, find job adverts, play games or practise ICT skills. The library provides free access and professional assistance as we will see in chapter six.

5.4.2 Books and other materials

A shared repertoire is the third characteristic of CoP which means that community members (users) shared “routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions or concepts” (Wenger, 1998, p. 83). Li et al. (2009, p. 4) further explained the repertoire as learning facilitation: “shared repertoire’ refers to the common resources and jargons that members use to negotiate meaning and facilitate learning within the group”. Users in public libraries share resources that are available at the library such as books, newspapers and computers, as well as training and workshops. The IFLA guideline on public library services identifies the need for a wide range of materials in different formats. The range of resources should include books (fiction and non-fiction for adults, young adults and children); hard and soft covers and e-books; newspapers and periodicals (online and print). Digital information via the internet should also be included, compact discs (CDs) and DVDs; also required are large print and braille materials (Koontz and Gubbin, 2010, p. 69). The data shows that the library provides all the materials mentioned in the guidelines, however, books and materials as well as

newspapers and magazines were the most popular sources for learning. Newspapers were mostly used by elderly people. For some users, newspapers are a source of information about their local community and are a lifelong learning resource because they help to broaden the user's knowledge about their community and their history as well as reading for pleasure. For other users, newspapers are a source of historical and valuable information which help in building their family tree, as in the following example:

Man asked about article back to 19th century because he needs to trace his family tree as he said (Field note, 08.07.2015).

For other users the newspapers were used for educational purposes because either the newspaper had the latest information or it covered a specific topic, as the following respondent exemplified:

I have seen a student recently who wanted information about very latest new technology, he wanted a book, but the technology is so new so you would not find it in a published book. A newspaper database is first class for students' technical innovation information as you can find it in the newspaper before you can find it in books (Jody, librarian, 04.02.2015).

The library provides different types of newspapers that meet users' needs. If the library does not have the newspaper, they help users with an inter-loan service. Wenger (1998) points out that access to resources helps in building a learning community. The library provides diverse resources, which are not restricted to newspapers, but it includes images, thesis, CDs and maps and so it meets the IFLA guidance. The library also provides access to an abundance of websites covering a variety of topics. However, most usable websites are ones which cover family trees. The Town Hall library provides 26 websites for family tree purposes. They are free if people access them through the library website.

Clearly, the most popular materials at the library are the books, either to read in the library building or to borrow. Although the library nowadays is more than a collection

of books, book lending is still the core purpose of library services (DCMS, 2015). As books are sources for learning, the library provides a variety of topics in different languages as my observation highlighted:

There are a variety of books both fiction and non-fiction which cover different topics. This varies between cooking, art and craft, music, art history, American literature, British literature, sport, poetry, TV programmes. There are books about hunting for jobs, accountancy, childcare, beauty, crime fiction and books for the LGBT community (Field note, 27.04.2015).



Figure 5.2: Diversity in books

Diversity in books appears to mean that the users are catered for fairly. Durcan (2011, p. 333) states that public libraries can achieve democracy by offering people the ability to read, access and understand the information needed for daily life, besides free and equal access to the resources. One of the meanings of equality in the public library is ensuring that users can find what they want and in their language. It is important for the library to have different languages to serve the diversity of its community, which means that everyone has the right to be at the library which is considered to be a democratic place:

There are books in different languages, Arabic, Polish, Russian, Asian, Spanish, Italian, French and two rows for German, Urdu and one shelf for Shakespeare. There are also books about ancient history and the First and Second World War followed by British history then local history then German history, French, Spanish, then the history of the rest of the world, then American, African, Arabian, Chinese, Asian, all written in English (Field note, 27.04.2015).



Figure 5.3: Diversity in languages

This diversity in resources meets what the report by DCMS (2017, online) underlines as: “libraries reach and support the whole community regardless of age, gender, socioeconomic status or educational attainment”. In this sense, obtaining material in different languages could help in fostering social cohesion because “having access to text in one’s own language may help individuals to overcome social problems and to integrate more smoothly into this country” (Birdi, 2011, p. 126). In addition, diversity in books is important for adults as well as children. Moreover, to support people to read books and meet their needs, the library provides reserving services. The Town Hall library also provides audio books, DVDs and CDs, which were considered as particularly helpful for people who had a learning disability, as Richard who is blind considered that:

I mainly come to borrow Braille books and CDs (Richard, user, 06.08.2015).



Figure 5.4: Diversity of CDs

The observational data highlights that the library provides CDs that cover a variety of topics and they vary between learning CDs and those for leisure:

There are CDs to learn English every one [every CD] written in foreign languages, I took an example from Arabic books because I can understand it. Some books has both in Arabic and English, some books write words in English letter but in way meaning Arabic like 'mabruk' (مبروك) which means (congratulation) (Field note, 27.04.2015).

Besides the variety of types of adult books, the library provides various types of children's books as well as offering craft activities. Crafts for children at the library are as important as the books and newspapers because they help children to enrich their imagination. Also, this may attract them to read as they will see the books in the library. The arts and crafts materials provided at the library allow children of all ages and abilities to be creative:

There were three long tables. One of them had many papers and scissors, thread and other tools which help children to make masks or crowns. Most of the children were wearing one of those masks or crowns; children were very happy while they were making. At the next table there was another type of craft, and they were colouring. Children keep moving from one table to another (Field note, 05.08.2015).

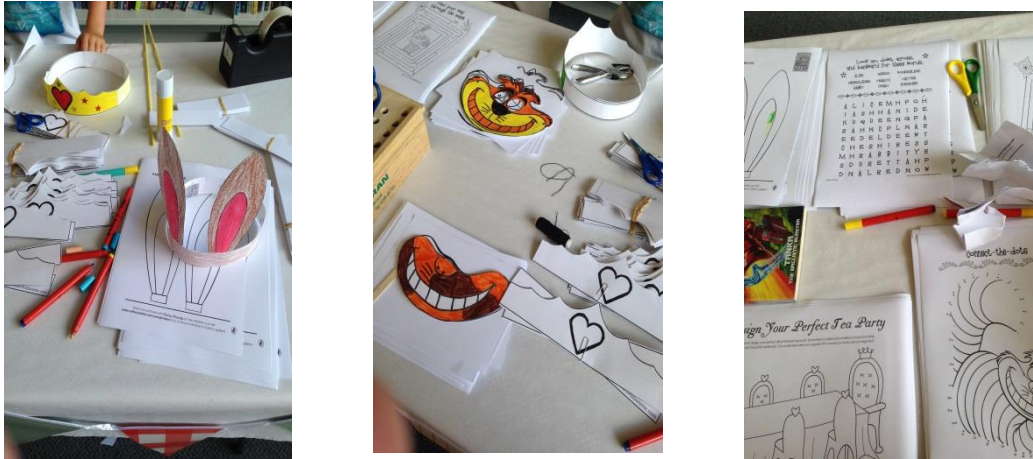


Figure 5.5: Craft activities for children

The Children’s Librarian spoke about the importance of craft at the library, especially for children who have some difficulties and are unable to use those materials at home:

We do have craft activities... [we give children] the opportunity because lots of them do not have access to such materials or mums and dads do not let them do it because they get messy at home... last summer in one of our libraries and a little boy was doing colouring... and the session finished. I told him “the time is finished, why don’t you take it with you and finish it at your home?” The boy said [sad voice of the librarian] “I do not have any crayons at home”... So I will carry on and have crayons in our libraries (Janet, librarian, 09.02.2015).

One of the mums agreed with the librarian that craft is so important and in addition it is fun for children as well as parents, as she illustrated:

Ohhh, it is brilliant, the children are happy; it is full of activities, colouring, craft, face painting... Look, I took part as well [laugh] as she had face painting as well (Fiona, mum, 05.08.2015).

Moreover, the activities at the library give children an opportunity for more social interaction. These are the kind of resources which Wenger (1998, p. 249) notes are

important to “negotiate [learners’] connections with other practices and their relation with the organisation”. Therefore, the library has been used as both a learning and a leisure place.

5.5 Library as a leisure place

The environment of the library, as explained in section 5.2, helps users to use the library for leisure purposes. The definition of leisure is different from one user to another; for some users, the library is used for reading while for others just to relax and chat. For instance, the library can be used as a social place where people meet to learn more about themselves and their communities. Moreover, the library is widely used as a reading place where users can sit and read books or newspapers as the observation highlighted:

Today is warm, there were nine people sitting at tables, reading newspapers (Field note, 10.03.2015).

Using the library as a reading place exemplifies the conception of lifelong learning which sees it as a way of learning that develops creativity and critical thinking skills for young people and helps elderly people to stay mentally alert (Rajaratnam, 2013). This kind of learning takes place in everyday life and helps individuals to improve themselves simply by reading books or newspapers. The data from this research shows that most people who read newspapers are elderly, while the users who read books are from different backgrounds and different ages. Reading at the library for some users was a form of leisure time to relax and stay away from home, in other words, it is autonomous learning. In this case, Wenger (1998, p. 226) highlights that:

The learning we do while reading newspapers or watching television... Indeed we often learn without having any intention of becoming full members in any specifiable community of practice... [It] does not mean that all learning is best done in interaction with others. There are tasks that are best done in groups and others that are best done by oneself.

Aayat's experience supports this statement as she preferred to read independently at the library:

I come here [to the library] about two to three times a week... to read books on my own, lonely... I do not have a chance to read on my own at home so I prefer to come here and read a book (Aayat, user, 27.04.2015).

However, as the library is a social place so it supports the idea of social company. Moreover, reading for pleasure not only increases educational attainment (Clark and Hawkins, 2011), “but also had a beneficial effect on the enhancement of emotional vocabulary places and it improved social capital for children and adults” (Finch, 2015, online). Further explanation about the reading for pleasure will be given in chapter six. Nevertheless, other ideas emerging from the observation underline the importance of the library as a leisure space; the library was used for online shopping, playing games or watching a favourite programme. The fact that some users use the computers, would appear to show that they do not have computers at home, and other users might not need to use the computers but they probably prefer to stay alone to relax as in the following example:

Young lady was sitting on a chair doing nothing she seems a bit tired, it was hot outside and because it was Ramadan – when Muslims should fast – so she just had a rest (Field note, 30.06.2015).



Figure 5.6: Library as leisure place: chess

The library as a leisure place is demonstrated when people spend time playing games. However, playing at the library is not just for people to play on their own, it is also for people to play together. Paul Gee (2005, p. 216) states that CoP in an affinity space happens when members, who have common interests or goals, interact with each other virtual or physically, such as sending moves via email or playing chess with each other. The data of my study matched with Paul Gee's statement as follows:

Two men were reading, it does not seem they know each other, one of them moved and sat at the table which has chess, the other man said "would like to play", then they play together (Field note, 02.07.2015).

The above statement shows that lifelong learning could be an aspect of leisure time, which is consistent with Craven's explanation about LLL with the statement that: "the concept of lifelong learning covers all aspects of learning, whether as part of a formal educational institution or simply as a leisure pursuit" (Craven, 2000, p. 228). The library is used as a leisure place for children as well and provides activities for children to play and at the same time improve their learning skills as the observation highlighted:

Today is Saturday; it is windy and raining outside. There is an event for children who are between 8–12 years old. The library provides various games for children; it helps to improve the imagination, all the games aim at learning through playing (Field note, 28.03.2015).

Thus, the library is used as a leisure and social place because it provides games and refreshments to encourage children to visit the library and to read and use its resources. It also helps in improving children's communication skills, especially when staff encourage children to play more and give them the chance to meet other people:

There were two members of staff, one of them was playing chess with one girl (12) and the other one was showing three boys how to play one of the games... they laughed so much... The staff were very patient and good with children (Field note, 28.03.2015).

According to Batt (1998), learning is gaining knowledge to culture oneself, which could be by listening to another person's experiences. The public library, by hosting different activities such as an author visit, helps people to better themselves and enrich their leisure time, as the observation highlighted:

The library hosted the illustrator... he started talking about himself and how he started drawing, about the way he started creating. He showed children some pictures and asked them questions about every picture and what it might be, for instance, he showed them a picture and asked "Do you know who this is?" The children said "William Shakespeare" (Field note, 02.07.2015).

The author hosting event at the library is an example of informal learning; it is an educational opportunity for children and adults to increase their knowledge. As Balapanidou (2015, p. 7) states: "Public libraries are an open world for learning and leisure for all age groups". For instance, the library hosted a poet and writer to teach librarians and teachers how to assist children in learning more and expressing themselves. Thus, the Town Hall library, as a lifelong learning institution, offers educational and social opportunities for learners to enrich their experiences.

5.6 Library as an information centre

Unintentional learning as another concept of lifelong learning emerged from the data of this research. The users used the library as an information centre, where they asked about the driving theory test, booking hotels and any kind of enquiries which added knowledge to their previous experience, such as searching skills. Batt (1998) highlights the significance of this kind of learning:

Learning is not simply about following accredited courses to obtain qualifications. It is about gaining knowledge to lead better, more fulfilling lives. Such learning comes frequently in very small quanta. It may be finding out where something is sold more cheaply, or how to travel from A to B in less time. It may be broadening one's emotional experience by reading about the life of another person or locating the self in the context of other people, be they real or fictional (Batt, 1998, online).

The public library supports independent learning because it offers a non-educational environment and free access to books and the internet as well as trained and welcoming staff. The observation highlighted that many users use the library for the driving theory test, where they use the computer for free in addition to the helpful guidance from the staff, as the following example explains:

Young man wanted computer and said "I want computer for theory test", staff booked computer for him... then he asked for help; one of the staff helped him (Field note, 23.02.2015).

The learners in this study share a 'concern', and they deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting with each other (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 4). However, in the context of independent learning, learners interact with staff and/or with librarians. Thus, this kind of interaction does not occur regularly, but they meet because they find value in their interaction (Wenger et al., 2002). The present study indicates the importance of the public library in the community as an information centre, where people know they can find answers to their enquiries. Many users use the library to apply for different types of application, as follows:

Although it is nearly time for library to close, people keep coming in. Man asked "Where should I send the naturalisation application form?" One of the staff searched and found the address then she wrote it down for him (Field note, 04.03.2015).

In this sense, learning is seen as an individual concern and depends on the presence of trained staff in order to transfer knowledge to learners (Beckett and Hager, 2002, p. 97). The data from this study suggests that there is a clear and

common appreciation of the role public libraries play in providing many types of information, such as booking flights and hotels. This kind of service is useful in terms of acquiring skills and experience that they might need in the future. The following account is an example of this:

Man wanted to book a hotel. First, he asked about the phone numbers of hotels, the member of staff said: "We have all the hotels' numbers in the UK but we do not have for outside the UK". He wanted to book a hotel in Spain so she searched for him in the computer. She showed him how to book hotel for holiday, he gave her the name of the hotel in Spain. Although the man was good at using the computer and knows how to book, but he struggled a little bit with booking and preferred to ask the staff (Field note, 23.02.2015).

These kinds of enquiries are consistent with Brown and Duguid (2002) who disagree with Wenger's argument that individuals learn by being in social relation to others. They argue that people learn on their own, picking up information from numerous sources about numerous topics without ever becoming a 'member' (Brown and Duguid, 2002, p. 128). The library was also used for quick enquiries such as printing and sending a fax. The present study indicates that the presence of the public library in a community is vital. The library as information centre can signpost people and answer their enquiries. The therapist who is responsible for a mental health group (see 6.4.4) exemplified this in saying:

We can signpost people around, is one of the best things in the library. So if people are having issues with, say, housing or mental health, whatever, we can signpost them on to agencies that can help them. So that's really valuable. We do that regularly. I think libraries are seen as safe places as well, for a lot of people (Juley, bibliotherapist, 16.09.2015).

This perspective would indicate that the library is a community hub; it provides people with information they need not just to develop their skills and experiences, but also to improve their personal life.

5.7 The library as a community hub

Community hubs are at the heart of the community. They are places that provide and host a varied range of services, public events and activities, and spaces to meet friends and contribute to community life (Library Service Review and Needs Analysis [LSRNA], 2016, p. 16). A public library could fulfil this role as it is a free accessible place for everyone. Some users see the library as an indispensable public place at the heart of their community.

I love the library, I have been going to the library since I was four or five, it is the heart of the community... When I grew up in very rural area we only had a mobile library [shocked eyes] but nobody was going to miss that library every week and we know where it was going to be and everybody went and you've done that all your life I still go to my local library in my village (Victoria, teacher, 02.07.2015).

Public libraries are not just the place for books and media, computers and access to information, but also for social networking that allows individuals to grow within and as part of a community (Flood, 2012). Li et al. (2009, p. 3) state that the CoP “creates the social structure that facilitates learning through interactions and relationships with others”. The data in my study suggests that the public library is a community hub where people come together, interact with each other and it is a heritage of that community. The following respondents explain the significance of the library in the community:

I think libraries are important because they are probably the last community places that we have... I think it really worries me when they take the library away because it is one of the places where we can go for free even if you are not reading you can go for free and you can be part of your community and you can mix with people and I think that's really important... I usually find libraries are usually history of place, at the core of the history of the place and one of the original buildings and I found that quiet interesting, so it is good to continue and keep them going... (Clay, illustrator, 02.07.2015).

Although reading at the library and borrowing books is still a main function of the library, the library community provides a safe environment which helps users to

engage and learn with each other. With repeated interactions, individuals can develop empathy for the situations of others and can develop rapport with individuals in the community (Lesser and Prusak, 1999, p. 7). The therapist at the public library echoed this statement and highlights that the library is the first step for people with mental health issues (see 6.4.4) to get back into the community as it helps them overcome barriers. Thus, the public library can play a potential role in supporting social cohesion by providing an encouraging environment for learners to engage in learning and interaction. Moreover, it supports and liaises with many different organisations in the community.

5.8 Supporting other organisations in the community

Traditionally, the role of the public library has been in supporting schools and other organisations in the community by working together or supplementing the organisation with useful resources. In chapter six I will discuss the educational role of the public library and the way that the library supports children educationally. However, this section explains the cooperation between schools and public libraries and the way they manage this cooperation. “Libraries and schools are natural cooperative partners; they have a joint social mission to contribute to knowledge acquisition and participation in democratic processes” (Ingvaldsen, 2012, p. 2). Generally, the cooperation between schools and the Town Hall public library has worked very well as they do some projects together; one project supports children to read more and encourages them to use the library and some of those projects are related to art which enriches the imaginations of the children. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015, p. 5) determine that the school’s perspective of CoP affects educational practices along three dimensions. One of those dimensions is ‘externally’; they argue that students should extend their experience by actually participating in broader communities beyond the walls of the school. A public library is the place where students can enrich their learning. Some teachers found the library a more stimulating environment than the schools for some projects as it helped students to focus on their learning as the following example illustrates:

It is very important to be at the library, it is better than school. Children can focus more; in school a lot is going on, it is very easy to be distracted but when you come to the place where it should be the focus is there and all what they have to do is concentrate (Victoria, teacher, 02.07.2015).

Therefore, the school is not the sole learning place as the public library provides learning opportunities for children, which helps, as Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015, p. 5) argue, “to serve the lifelong learning needs of students by organising communities of practice focused on topics of continuing interest to students beyond the initial schooling period”. For instance, one of the cooperation events between the public library and schools is school visits. School visits are significant for children because they help them to learn about their locality and may lead them to better social integration. This kind of service, as the observation highlighted, enabled children to investigate local characteristics, such as local personalities of the past, names of streets and buildings:

Today, one school came to visit the library to see pictures about the community and how it has changed over the years. Every child had a paper and pen to write some notes; the teacher showed the children old pictures and asked them if they knew where it was? For instance, she picked a picture of the market and asked them where it was. The children put their hands up and they knew. They were very happy that they'd discovered the old town, their local community. The teacher left them to take notes and asked how many pictures they recognised. Every child had a different number (Field note, 28.04.2015).

Another cooperative project with schools is the Summer Reading Challenge (see 6.2.2, p. 141) which aims to encourage children to read for pleasure. Library staff invited most of the schools in the local area to join in the event. The data of this study indicates that the public library integrates itself in the school environment to make itself known, thus reaching a great number of potential users and encouraging them to use the library. Some respondents, such as Tamara, the Children's Librarian, believed that reaching out to children is the main role of the librarian. However, it is complicated for the library because the children cannot go to the library on their own so they need parents to accompany them. The librarian tried the

best way to reach out to parents to inform them about the activities that were available at the library which would enrich the children's learning. Tamara, the librarian, explains how they try to reach as many children as they can:

We're going to as many as we can, this year we are starting something new we sent a very small article for the newsletter at the end of May, so if they have summer term newsletter we just sent a short paragraph about "this is Summer Reading Challenge and library takes part, anyone can join up it's for free" you know general stuff, um and we ask schools to put that in the newsletter, whether they did or not we do not know... we also are going to schools and talk to children about it but the parents we need to get to, and this summer the school newsletter is good way for doing that, and it's been on Facebook you know we use social media and something like that as well to get out as fast as we can (Tamara, librarian, 12.08.2015).

Similarly, the local FE College has a relationship with the public library. They work together with good results for both. The public library is a place where adult learners meet with their tutors to learn how to read with help from the librarian who provides them with suitable materials. Thus, cooperation between colleges and the public library gives the students the chance to learn in a different learning environment with trained staff and valuable resources. Simultaneously, collaborating with colleges encourages more users to visit public libraries. This reflects on the view of Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) that the CoP is not an isolated body, but it is composed of many members, who themselves are also members of many other communities of practice. The respondents of this study suggest that the cooperation with the college also had a different but related benefit. The college referred many students who needed more assistance with reading to the library, particularly to the reading group (see 6.3.1, p. 147); the following statement exemplifies this:

Well I knew [about the reading group] from the college when I was doing my English and maths course, they told me "if you want to do any reading group". So me and Robin and Richard first to come here... (Sally, user, 30.01.2015).

Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015, p. 4) highlight that “[CoP] are not limited by formal structures; they create connections among people across organisational and geographic boundaries”. This kind of ‘connection’ has been found in another aspect of the cooperation with the college considered by helping students to find volunteering opportunities in the library. This kind of volunteering is regarded as the first step of a career as the following response highlighted:

I wanted to work with children...There was a post in college about volunteering opportunity at the library... so I emailed them and said I am happy to help (Batool, volunteer, 19.08.2015).

Although there is a benefit of cooperation for both the college and the library, the library faced many challenges because the college was not keen enough to work in partnership with library, as the librarian states:

Public library services often link in with colleges which we've tried but we find it really hard here to link with college... We have tried and tried and tried and when I've tried working with the library in the college that worked a little bit but the college wanted to do something, not necessarily work in partnership. They wanted to do something... (Jill, librarian, 24.08.2015).

Moreover, the data of this study indicated that there is cooperation between the library and some charities. This kind of cooperation has benefits not just for both the library and the charity but also for people themselves, especially when the charities provide their services for elderly people and/or the housebound. In this sense, the housebound and elderly people could gain social benefits from this cooperation. The library reaches those who cannot go out and who may not even know about the home services available through the library. Another significant cooperative venture is working with the job centre which could have economic benefits for users and the community. The job centre held a session to teach people skills to help them find jobs such as how to apply for jobs and write their CV. The job centre provided a member of staff to teach users all those skills:

Because of the jobseeking session (where job centre provided one of its staff to teach jobseeker basic skills), the library booked about seven computers for this purpose. All the computers are next to each other and they are on the left of the enquiry desk (Field note, 04.03.2015).

Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015, p. 5) emphasise that some of the “typical government problems such as education and health require coordination and knowledge sharing across levels of government”. The community of the public library as a lifelong learning institution provides a supportive environment for individuals and other organisations in the community. This cooperation helps in overcoming some issues which the organisations face, such as lack of resources or space. However, the public library itself faces some challenges such as funding cuts and shortage of staff, which I will discuss in the following section.

5.9 Challenges facing the library

Although the public library, as a lifelong learning institution provides informal learning opportunities for people, it faces many challenges which reduce the benefits it may have in the community. Those challenges will be explained in this section.

5.9.1 Cuts

According to Johnstone (2015, online), “spending on library services across Britain fell from £990m to £940m, with the number of libraries down by 2.6%, from 4,023 to 3,917”. This public library is facing cuts to its budget which affect the quality of its services. One of the effects is that there are not enough funds to inform all potential users about the services available at the library. Jody, the librarian, highlights that to advertise about the services, the library needs more budgets, not less:

How can we manage the publicity when we do not have the money? At the minute we can use free social media (Facebook and Twitter) but if you want to use paid services like newspaper adverts you do not know how many people will reach (will read). Although the advertisement on TV is powerful, we cannot; it needs massive amounts of money... (Jody 1, librarian, 04.02.2015).

This librarian's perspective matches with what Matthew Egan, UNISON assistant national officer, states: "Libraries are having to cut back on the range of services they are able to offer, such as reading groups, CV workshops, baby bounce and rhyme time" (cited in The Public Service Union, UNISON, 2016, online). Additionally, the fundamental notion of CoP is that people learn more effectively through engaging in appropriate practice (Kim, 2015, p. 147). 'Appropriate' includes a variety of resources and a stimulating place as well as professional and trained staff, however, the cuts affect the quantity and quality of the resources available at the library. The following statement exemplifies the effects:

I use my own sources, I don't really use the library sources they look very old fashioned so I just bring my own (Yasmen, user, 22.04.2015).

Alongside the books, the number of professional librarians and projects at the library has been reduced due to budget cuts, as the librarian illustrates:

Now in preparation for the way the council services will be slimmed down from probably 2017. We will have reduced projects in the library service and we will be losing lots of staff and some libraries will be closed. We've been building up on the volunteer teams... you know that it is part of the national government agenda get more volunteers to run services anyway (Jody 2, librarian, 22.07.2015).

The cuts have had the most impact on the librarians, as the number of librarians has been reduced and the library is increasingly staffed by volunteers. Volunteers and reducing the number of professional librarians will be discussed in chapter seven. Moreover, the data of this study indicates that the cuts impact on the usage of the library, for instance, the number of computers needed to increase as many people visit the library to use the computer. The following observation highlights the various times users had to wait for a free computer:

An elderly man wanted to use a computer for an hour; they told him you should wait 35 minutes, although he was unhappy, but he waited; he sat and read book (Field note, 06.05.2015).

It seemed that waiting at the library had some benefits such as reading a book or newspaper. However, cuts in public library expenditure have affected the quality of library services as book funds were cut and opening hours reduced along with the closure of many public libraries across the country.

5.9.2 Library closures

The most serious challenges to face public libraries are the closures of libraries. Many public libraries around the UK have been closed. The library in this study is under the threat of closure, while at the time of writing my thesis at least one of the branches has been closed. This study indicates that closing of the public library is a 'nightmare' for users as well as librarians who think that the closing of the public library is 'heart-breaking' as Jody, the librarian, highlights that the closure of the public library will badly affect the people in the community:

I am working in this central library and it will not be closed I don't think, but the closure of small branch libraries will be. A huge loss for people in the community because it is not just about books; it's a meeting place; it's a haven for people; people like perhaps feel uncomfortable in another area of society often feel welcome in the library, it feels like there is place to go, they feel safe they feel secure, there is lots of benefit of the library in the community (Jody 2, librarian, 22.07.2015).

The librarian's perspective indicates that closing the public library means the loss of a powerful community hub, because it is the community which "provides a safe environment for individuals to engage in learning through observation and interaction with experts and through discussion with colleagues" (Li et al., 2009, p. 3). The following response exemplifies the meaning of this loss:

There will be a big hole in our community if they close the library... I mean whenever we come you see many people at the tables, getting books... it

does not matter what culture you are from or what religion you are, or if you are male or female, it's for everybody they can come together and they have little club and everything... it's also for people with mental health problems to encourage them to be inspired and... books in different languages so that promotes education worldwide. I think in that sense, we are very lucky to have this library in our community (Maryam, teacher, 02.07.2015).

The closure of a public library will affect some people more than others, as Fujiwara et al. (2015, p. 35) explains: “those with dependent children; people under 45 years as well as unpaid family workers”. I explained the impact of closure of the public library on the community in the literature chapter (see section 2.5.3, p. 41); however, the participants in my study are sure that the community will lose a key place that is able to bring them together, regardless of their background, which helps to achieve equality and social cohesion. Moreover, this study indicates that closing the public library for some people means that they will lose one of the most important sources for learning. One of the users was very emotional about the idea of closing the library as he highlights:

This library is part of the education system and if anybody wants to close it put him against the wall and shoot I will shoot him I will do it. It is part of education if you want to close this then you should close the schools, because a lot of people like myself coming here and we are still learning what am I going to do if they close this? (Thomas, user, 21.04.2015)

Losing the library as a learning source has been mentioned many times, especially by people who have not got other places to learn or obtain learning resources such as books and computers. The following respondent exemplifies this statement:

[...] It is a very bad thing if they do close the library... because it is something we have always had and we rely on it. Not everybody can afford to buy books, or access to the internet, so we need the library to borrow things on what we are interested in whether is fictions or fact, or to do with your job, all the information is here... (Anne, user, 21.04.2015).

For other users, the public library is the sole learning organisation, such as people with learning difficulties and people from deprived backgrounds. The commentary given by Richard is a good example:

If they close the library we will be stuck... nowhere to go or find Braille books, nowhere to read or learn and get the social company (Richard, user, 06.08.2015).

This reflects on the view of Hodkinson, Biesta and James (2008, p. 27) that “learning is also influenced by wider social, economic and political factors”, thus, people need a free, unbiased learning environment, as I explained in this chapter (see section 5.2), which helps them to continue their learning. Most users and librarians agree that the closure of public libraries will affect individuals as well as the whole community. The effect includes children, students and adult learners, as they will lose the place to study or to meet other friends, as well as the place which provides them with learning resources such as books and IT:

How wrong to close the library, although the statistics show that the number of users has declined and the number of books borrowed have also declined, but they do not see how the services impact those people [users of the library] (Jill, librarian, 19.06.2015).

The author Alan Bennett highlights that closing public libraries is tantamount to ‘child abuse’ (cited in Ferrier, 2011), because the children will lose sources of knowledge, free access to books and other materials, besides a place which allows them to interact with people so it could enforce social cohesion. Bennett (2017, online), also through his diary, asserts the significance of public libraries in individuals’ lives as he points out that “libraries shaped my life”. In this sense, it also would appear that in closing the library, adults and young children with mental health issues will lose dedicated resources and trained staff that could provide advice on some issues such as depression, stress and exams. Nick Poole, Head of CILIP (cited in Kean, 2017) warns that in closing the public libraries, “Children, young people and their parents are simply going to find it harder to find a well-stocked library where they can find

information about the issues they face”. He adds: “as a parent myself, I would be worried about my children using Google like that” (Kean, 2017). Juley, the therapist at the library, agrees and highlights that besides losing valuable resources, people with mental health issues will lose the welcoming place that the library provides:

[We] can find all the information out there (library)... So there's that benefit as well. We always have a cup of tea and coffee as well, so it's very informal and friendly and non-threatening (Juley, bibliotherapist, 16.09.2015).

The data of my study found that users defend their library and did not support the idea of closing the library, replacing it with a mobile library or replacing professional librarians with volunteers. Robin, one of the users, explains why:

Robin told me that “on Thursday [next week] there is meeting in the library me (Robin) and Marry will talk about the group [reading group] we will talk about our experience are not we Marry”? Marry nodded her head in agreement. He continued: “we do not need the library to be closed, we do not need volunteers, we do not need mobile library, and we need this library our library, we do not want to lose the library because we learnt a lot in here. We read, sometimes we have difficult words, we cannot read by ourselves. We need help here we help each other” (Field note, 27.03.2015).

Thus, for Robin and Marry the library is not just a collection of books, the library is the only way to return to learning. The public library changes their lives and that is why they want to defend the library. It is a part of their lives. Similarly, David and Thomas believe that the library is their right and it should be open. David's commentary exemplifies this:

It is not good if this library closed... because it is for people they have right to come to read and study (David, user, 29.04.2015).

Even non-users did not support the idea of closing the library. The review by the local council found about 94% of library users did not support the idea of “closing

your local library and information centre and using the money this saves to reduce the budget cuts to other local services” while 81% of non-users did not support the same idea (Fountain et al., 2015, p. 38). The fact is that many public libraries closed and many will be closed (BBC, 2016). Some local authorities have attempted to solve the problem by replacing the library building with a mobile library, however, the number of mobile libraries has reduced as well:

The majority of councils across the country have got rid of their mobile library, so the number of mobile libraries across the country has drastically reduced (Dena, librarian, 26.08.2015).

However, many people still need to read and have the right to have a library and the voices of citizens should be listened to in a democratic society such as the UK (Jarvis, 2008).

5.9.3 Lack of public perception of library value

The data from this study indicates that there are challenges that prevent effective participation of public libraries in lifelong learning. One of those obstacles is the lack of awareness about the role that public libraries can play beyond its traditional services. Jody, the librarian, shared the view of Halpin et al. (2013) that in order to promote public library services, there needs to be an increase in the appreciation of the value of the public library. This is consistent with the librarian’s perspective about the importance of publicity:

I have forever talked about COBRA [economic database]... one such of the resources being in the library for five years yet people did not know about it. The lesson for us is that we cannot just provide resources and expect people to come to us, but we have got to promote them and promote them heavily... (Jody 1, librarian, 04.02.2015).

The librarian’s perspective suggests that the lack of understanding of the value of public libraries could lead to a reduction in library usage statistics. “Value is a key to

community life... [However], the value often changes over the life of the community” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 59). In the context of my study, public libraries have a long history; they have been seen as a collection of books. However, the public library as I explained in this chapter has become a lifelong learning centre. The public library provides a variety of activities besides lending books and should be able to inform people about its services. The librarian spoke about how library usage statistics increase when people are more aware about the library services on offer:

Last September we decided that our usage of the database is very low so we ran trainer sessions... we advertised everywhere “come and learn what a database can do for you if you are interested in setting up your own business” and most of the usage (increased)... they used the databases a lot. So during August and September the usage statistics were ‘massive’ they went from single figures into triple figures people knew, since then the usage has declined that tells me you cannot just promote once, you have got to keep going you have keep sending the message out (Jody 1, librarian, 04.02.2015).

Librarian Jill agreed with Jody and considered that the library provides lots of resources and activities, but many people do not know about them and the challenge is how to inform everybody adequately, especially with the reduced budget at the library. This would suggest that the declining usage of the public library, which is considered as criteria to close the library is not because people do not need the library but rather that there is a lack of awareness of the value of the library. Therefore, more marketing about the library services is needed as The MLA (2010, p. 19) highlights:

Public library is a trusted [place] but poor marketing means awareness of the offer is low... Even within smaller overall budgets, an adequate share should be reserved for marketing and publicity; strongly-led regional and national collaboration would make this go further.

This corresponds with what Dena, the librarian, stated in that the usage of home library services declined because “we’ve not promoted it as much as we might”. Moreover, the data obtained from this study indicated that the decline in usage,

especially among children, is due to the lack of parental awareness of the valuable role the library can play in enriching children's learning:

I think what seems to happen is that they (children and teenagers) are not being brought by parents... (Janet, librarian, 09.02.2015).

Closing public libraries relies on the statistics of library usage and increasing the library usage mainly depends on promoting the library services. Promoting library services needs more funds and more effort from some organisations such as CILIP to increase the understanding of the value of the public library in the community.

5.9.4 Misunderstanding the rules

Misunderstanding the rules differs from one user to another. For some users, it is misinterpretation about what 'public' means, so they misbehave in the library. Although the library is a public place, people need to understand that it is a shared place where many people from different cultures come to study or read in peace. The following statement exemplifies the meaning of misbehaviour in the library:

Two men (young and elderly one) keep laughing loudly, one of them his mobile phone rung very loud, people at the library annoyed. The lady with the baby looked at them very angry because her baby woke up crying, she could not continue her job (Field note, 20.05.2015).

Wenger (1998, p. 77) states that: "[in CoP] there are plenty of disagreements, tension and conflicts... jealousies, gossip and cliques... can all be forms of participation". However, some behaviours in the library are more offensive, which might harm other users and librarians, thus, the library has rules. The data of this study show that some users were banned from using the library, either for a period of time, such as six months, or forever. The following example illustrates the kind of ban:

A man came to book computer; one of the staff said “OK, give me your card please”... the computer tells the staff this man is barred. Then Jody [librarian] came in and said “Excuse me, you are not allowed to use the library”. The man shouted “Why it is public library I can use it when I want”. The staff were nice with him and said “No sir, you cannot use it until April” ... They phoned security and the man said to Jody I am going to see your manager... Jody explained to me why all of this has happened. In the work room there is a list that has about seven names of those who have been barred, usually for six months. I asked why? Jody said “People like this person were banned for six months because of their verbal abuse... This man swore at some staff”. She added “Sometimes... one person broke the door, and one broke the computer” (Field note, 03.03.2015).

This long statement indicates that some people think it is a ‘public’ library so they have every right to damage it or even that they have the right to talk to staff in an unacceptable manner. This kind of behaviour might affect the quality of services at the library as it could increase the source of stress and anxiety for librarians and other staff in the library (Jordan, 2014). On the contrary, for other people, the library is full of rules; they misunderstand use of the membership card or may be afraid of getting a fine if they use the library or borrow some books. Jill the librarian exemplified this barrier as follows:

They [users] think we’ve got really strict rules and they’re anxious about asking. It’s a public space, so if they come in and someone asks them for money and they haven’t got any money they feel embarrassed... so people just don’t bother. [For instance] one man, in one of the community centres I [Jill] visited, said to me “I have got a ticket, but I don’t use the library anymore because I got into trouble with this ticket and I don’t know what’s on it...” He’d got a book out and it was overdue, and it was – then he brought it back and he owed about £1.50 or something. The fine was still on his ticket, but he had forgotten how much he owed and he said when I go back in, he thought they were going to ask him for loads and loads of money or something... (Jill, librarian, 24.08.2015).

Clearly, the library as a learning and neutral public place has to have rules which ensure that everyone is treated fairly. However, in order for a library to deliver its services successfully, more cooperation between users and staff is needed. However, further study about the effect of behaviour on library services is needed.

This study does not attempt any in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of behaviour on the library as that would require a separate study.

5.10 Conclusion

In answering research question one, *“What is the potential for enhancing lifelong learning in public libraries through community of practice?”*, the users’ and librarians’ perspectives, as well as the observations, reveal some of the criteria which make the public library a lifelong learning institution. One of those criteria is environment, for users and librarians, the public library as a safe, non-compulsory and natural place, providing a stimulating environment for learning which helps people to learn by interaction with each other or with librarians (Wenger, 1998). The public library provides members of a community with a place to read, meet or study. It supports several cultural and educational activities for individuals and groups through CoPs (Kim, 2015, p. 50). This study indicates that the public library meets IFLA guidance by providing a variety of resources and materials which meet the users’ needs. This study highlights the challenges that public libraries face, such as cuts which lead to the closure of the library buildings and/or reduction in the opening hours. In addition, the library faces challenges which affect the quality of the services, such as lack of public perception of library value and misunderstanding of the rules. This research suggests that more funding and marketing is needed in order to deliver more effective lifelong learning activities in the community.

Chapter six: The Social and Economic Role of the Public Library

6.1 Introduction

This chapter answers the second research question: *“To what extent do lifelong learning activities through public libraries affect the users, socially and economically?”* The public library has integrated social and economic effects on both individuals and communities. These social and economic effects have educational outcomes and vice versa. For instance, the library provides training sessions (such as IT sessions) that help jobseekers find jobs, which support them to update their skills and find appropriate jobs. Moreover, libraries deliver cultural activities for all age groups, and simultaneously help in building their confidence and overcoming isolation. Therefore, in order to understand the social and economic effects of the public library, it is worthwhile to explain the educational role of the library. This chapter includes all the educational activities, which are considered LLL activities, for adults, as well as children. It also discusses the social aspect of public library services and the economic value of the public library.

6.2 Children’s learning

Besides the books and other materials, libraries provide educational activities for children. Libraries provide a wide range of activities for pre-schoolers, such as story-times, songs, puppets and crafts, and picture books. These activities aid the development of early literacy skills, because they “help children expand their vocabularies, broaden their experiences and stimulate brain development” (MacLean, 2008, p. 2). The Town Hall public library provides educational opportunities, especially for children whose parents are unable to provide them with a good literacy environment due to their financial or educational background. ‘Bookstart’ is one of the programmes that provides free books for babies and pre-schoolers, thus encouraging children to read. As I explained in the literature review chapter (p. 38) Bookstart is run by BookTrust and administered through public library services but the library staff play a vital role in encouraging parents to share reading

with their children and supporting children to become lifelong readers (BookTrust, 2017c).

Aside from Bookstart, libraries provide story time and rhyming stories, which are considered learning programmes, as MacLean (2008, p. 9) highlights: “public library story times are more than reading books. They are the planting of seeds for lifelong learning” because they help improve certain skills, such as listening skills, understanding a rich variety of words, following instructions and asking questions (McKend, 2010). The observational data highlights how many parents and children benefit from stories that are available at the library, through attending story time, or by parents reading stories to their children on site, as well as borrowing books. Librarians play a significant role in delivering the story time sessions and recognise the advantages of story times, which help in building early literacy skills, social confidence and promote good reading habits. Thus, they are looking to reach out to all children in the community through nurseries and through parents who visit the library on the weekends.

Pre-school learning activities at the library provide children with literacy skills, as well as giving them “[the] first experience of being a citizen in their own right” (IFLA, 2015, p. 1). Therefore, this scheme provides children with pre-reading and social skills which could help to prepare the children to start school. The Town Hall library provides educational opportunities outside of school. The free and informal environment of the library (see section 5.2, p. 94) encourages children to learn, because it is free of traditional demands, such as exams and assignments. It also offers learning activities, such as The CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal and Summer Reading Challenge.

6.2.1 The CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal

The CILIP Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Shadowing Scheme are organised annually by CILIP. There are two medals: the CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal and the CILIP Carnegie Medal. The CILIP Carnegie Medal is awarded annually to the writer of an outstanding book. Thus, this award focuses more on the text of the story itself. The CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal, or the shadowing scheme, is “awarded annually for an outstanding book in terms of illustration for children and young people. It was

established in 1955 and is named after the popular nineteenth century artist known for her fine children's illustrations and designs" (CILIP, 2016, online).

Public libraries and librarians focus on the Greenaway Medal; basically, children work with librarians to evaluate and judge the illustrations in the books. Those books are chosen by the panel, who are usually professional librarians – "CILIP's panel of librarians". The judges read all the children's books and devise a long list, which is eventually narrowed down to a shortlist of eight books. These eight books are studied until the winner is announced. The shadowing scheme takes place from April to June; from the moment that the shortlists are revealed to the final winner announcement. The winner receives a golden medal and £500 worth of books to donate to a library of their choice (CILIP, 2016). Children choose their winner as well – the illustrator who they think is the best.

After the shortlist is revealed, the Town Hall library sends letters to all schools in the local area. The invitation letters include the benefit of the CILIP Kate Greenaway shadowing for children, as well as the period of the scheme. However, the observational data highlights that there were 10 selected schools around the local area involved in the session. I could only focus on one group during the session, but on the ceremony day I interviewed most of the teachers and only some of the children, so it gave me a chance to hear their perspectives on the shadowing scheme. The scheme took place in the Central Library, as well as its branches. Each group had between six to eight children across various age ranges – usually four, five and six years. As I mentioned in the methodology chapter that fieldwork of this session took place at one of the branches.

The shadowing scheme encourages children to join the library and borrow books on a regular basis. The librarians provide a session during the shadowing scheme called the 'basic session', which aims to introduce children to the library and encourage them to borrow books. In this session, librarians provide children with 'library skills'. The librarians illustrate how the library works and explain the different kinds of books that the library offers. The observational data highlights that many boys and girls borrowed books during this session.

Besides these library skills, the shadowing scheme provides children with LLL skills which affect their current and future learning. One of these skills is thinking critically.

The librarian worked with children to fulfil the aim of the Greenaway shadowing scheme, which is not just reading books or looking at pictures, it is a way to read and judge books critically. Teaching children to think critically is important, especially since in England “just 10% of students are top performers, [which means] they are able to critically evaluate such texts and build hypotheses about them” (OECD, 2016, p. 3). The observational data suggests that the children during this session acquire skills such as questioning, evaluating, analysing and comparing skills, along with the skill to voice their opinions. In addition, they learn that the accompanying illustration is not a decoration – pictures in books also hold significance. For instance, Amelia, a librarian, asked children to evaluate the books they have read and write a review about one of them. She gave students a review sheet on which they wrote their own name, the author’s name and the illustrator’s name. The review sheet asked questions such as: What is this book about? Do the illustrations add anything to the story? If yes, why? If not, why? Do the illustrations on the cover make you want to read the book? Did you like the book? If yes, why? If not, why? What was your favourite thing about the book, and why? What did you not like about the book? These kinds of questions could help children develop autonomy and a critical mind, as well as the ability to understand and appreciate art and further inspire their imaginations. The librarian plays a significant role in helping children to think critically. The librarian taught them to express themselves and write about their opinions freely:

Amelia [the librarian] said, “When you review the book, don’t write the exact sentence from the book”. At the end of the sheet there are five stars – she asked them to colour how many stars the book deserves. They [children] asked, “Can we say two and a half?”; she said “No, because you are making a decision – when you make a decision you should be very clear” (Field note, 22.06.2015).

Since the children had to write reviews about the books, this helps to develop their writing skills. A report by Cremin and Swann (2012, p. 63) highlights how many shadowing groups help young readers in “practising and honing writing skills. These unpressurised and ungraded writing activities are carried out for enjoyment”. This approach affects children’s learning and they can incorporate this approach into the

classroom. Moreover, the shadowing scheme encourages children to read for pleasure. Reading for pleasure is a kind of informal learning as it increases background knowledge, develops a child's cultural and historical understanding, extends vocabularies and encourages pleasure in reading in later life (Clark and Rumbold, 2006). Many respondents to this study appreciate the fact that the shadowing scheme encourages children to read for pleasure. For instance, Layla, a teacher, found that the session promotes a love of reading, saying: "it makes children more interested in books". Sam, one of the participants in the session, agreed that the session makes reading more enjoyable.

I like this session [enjoyment voice] and it's fun to see how many different books there are, different categories, and different topics like in our library. I love reading (Sam, child, 02.07.2015).

This is consistent with the illustrator's perspective, who was invited to talk about the illustrations and drawings in order to encourage children and inspire them to learn. He states that the session is a significant learning opportunity, since it encourages children to read for pleasure and advised that reading will affect their whole life:

[...] I think they can read, and with lots of books they can apply themselves to think more easily. So, I think if they can apply themselves to the books, they can apply themselves to learning and then work... Especially if they can see someone who has a career that is linked to books and reading... (Clay, illustrator, 02.07.2015).

The shadowing scheme does not just promote reading for pleasure; it also improves literacy skills and supports the national curriculum requirements for English (Cremin and Swann, 2012). Additionally, the data from this study shows that the shadowing scheme broadens children's imaginations and deepens their appreciation for art. It could develop creativity in children, as Fisher (2005, p. 74) explains, creativity "is an important element in the achievement of children, whatever their intelligence or social background". The children in this study created their own covers and drew sketches according to the librarian's description. The librarian read out a description

of one of the characters and the children drew pictures of the character. All the children drew good pictures based on the description of the character, and although some drawings were better than others, they were accurate representations. Most of the teachers agreed that the session widened the children's imagination and experience. For instance, Victoria believes the shadowing encourages children to read and improve their drawing skills, and is the reason why they join the Greenaway session every year.

[...] Children get a really broad experience of books... their drawing skills are practised because of the stories and because of imagination they put into drawing the pictures... it is amazing what they produced this year round (Victoria, teacher, 02.07.2015).

The data shows that the Greenaway session had some social effects, such as developing speaking, talking and listening skills, as well as allowing children to interact with each other. The session gives children the chance to work as a team. According to Vygotsky, "social interaction has a central role in a child's education" (cited in Fisher, 2005, p. 92). Social interaction or mutual engagement is core in the CoP, where members (children) work together and learn from each other (Wenger, 1998). This interaction does not mean copying others (Frances, 2005, p. 85), rather it means developing their identity, building their confidence, developing communication skills and improving mixed-ability and mixed-age groups (Cremin and Swann, 2012). Although some children were involved more than others, the librarian kept encouraging them to work as a team.

The session is not just about attendance, it is also a kind of gauge of children's ability to apply skills they have acquired during the session. The children need to decide which book they think should be the winner. The librarian gave the children a sheet of paper which has criteria to judge the books and said, "*you really need to judge the book without any personality. For example, saying you like this book is not enough for a book to win; it should meet the criteria*". Then, all the children worked together to decide which book should win. During the debate, children used the dictionary, as the librarian taught them and they used new vocabularies which they developed during the session, and were consequently happy and proud of that.

Although their choice did not match the real winner, the children improved their skills and experiences. It would appear that this session developed their identity, i.e. in becoming a different person (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 53); it seems that they became critical thinkers and better readers and learners. For instance, one boy said: *“I like this book [which he read] because it shows the same situation you could be in in your life”*. The observational data is consistent with librarian Amelia’s commentary about children’s analytical and discussion skills improvement as she said:

When I was listening to your discussions now I was proud of you. When we started the sessions, I had concerns about you, because this year the books were not suitable for children, but you were effective in deciding and discussing the books regarding which one should win (Field note, 29.06.2015).

The library encourages children to keep reading and appreciates their participation in the session by giving them a certificate as a reward. On the 2nd of July, they had a ceremony with some refreshments. The library invited the illustrator who was chosen as the best in the local area. The children were given a certificate and the illustrator signed one of his books for the children. This kind of reward is important because it motivates children to read more and inspires the other children to be involved in the session next year. In addition, the children present in front of the school on the session, their experience and the rewards. This presentation might help in building confidence and improving communication skills.



Figure 6.1: The Greenaway ceremony

The Kate Greenaway scheme is a significant session that could help children to be critical thinkers and independent learners, as well as good readers. The session gives children the opportunity to investigate books in depth and develop a love for reading. Ruby, one of the children, was excited about the session and describes it as 'fun' because it makes the learning more enjoyable. She said that: *"it's fun to go out of the school and do something different that we usually do not get to do at school, which is really fun"*. Thus, this session offers benefits for children, and schools should cooperate with public libraries and should be more involved in this session.

6.2.2 Summer Reading Challenge

The Summer Reading Challenge is the UK's biggest reading for pleasure programme and encourages children aged four to eleven to read six books of their choice during the long summer holiday. The children can sign in at their local library to complete the challenge. Every year the challenge has a different theme. In 2015 (when I was collecting my data) the theme was about record breakers and was linked to the Guinness Book of World Records (The Reading Agency, 2015). The theme is decided on by the Reading Agency, who for 50 years has run the Summer Reading Challenge and subsequently sells the materials to the libraries. The challenge is national so the start day and finish day are set nationally. It begins in the middle of July, just before the schools break up and it finishes between the 11th and 14th of September.

The idea is that children need to read six books over the summer holiday [six weeks], which means reading one book a week, although some children do take less than six weeks. Every time they read a couple of books and bring them back to the library, they are given stickers and have a collector sheet to put the stickers on. When they have read six books they receive a medal and a certificate to show that they have done the challenge. The aim of making the children come back to the library after they have read two books is to instil visiting the library as a lifelong habit. Because, as Janet, the librarian, explains: "visiting the library once or twice will not improve children's reading, but having a library card and coming back every week

might". The challenge keeps children engaged with the library, as Tamara, the librarian describes:

We hope that they keep coming to the library and using it. They get familiar with finding books, they get familiar with the staff, and we've got new self-serve machines downstairs [Children's Library], which the children really like using, and we can get them to use the library as a habit, which is a good thing... (Tamara, librarian, 12.08.2015).

This is consistent with the teacher's perspective about visiting the library:

[...] The children who regularly visit the library with their parents are definitely the better readers, they progress faster in school and they are inspired to promote reading to their other siblings at home... (Victoria, teacher, 02.07.2015).

The Summer Reading Challenge was considered an opportunity for children to read as since children are not in school, they might not read during the summer time, thus, their reading level could drop. Through the Summer Reading Challenge, the Reading Agency aims to inspire children to read for pleasure. Reading for pleasure has a powerful influence on children's cognitive development – more so than the parents' level of education (Sullivan and Brown, 2013, p. 2). Reading for pleasure helps in increasing children's general knowledge, understanding of other cultures, community participation and building confidence (Clark and Rumbold, 2006). This is consistent with many librarians and parents who believe that the Summer Reading Challenge promotes reading for pleasure and improves children's English, such as spelling, punctuation and writing skills. Thus, the significance of the Summer Reading Challenge comes from encouraging children to read more, especially since the number of children who cannot read is high, i.e. "one in five children in England cannot read well by the age of 11" (Department for Education [DFE], 2015, p. 13). In order to support children to read for pleasure, they need access to various types of resources (DFE, 2012), which both interest and inspire them, as the librarian explains below:

When they [children] are in schools they do read, but a lot of schools tend to focus on books through reading schemes and children have to take certain books home. But when they come to the public library... they do not have to worry about schools. They choose books that they are interested in, thus generating their excitement and love of books... (Adele, librarian, 01.05.2015).

The librarian's perspective is consistent with the results of Clark and Hawkins' study (2011, p. 14), who write that "public library users are nearly twice more likely than non-users to say that they enjoy reading". The challenge helps in re-energising children and making them excited again about reading. This will improve not just their reading, but their identity, since they might become mature readers and independent readers. In order to motivate children to be involved in reading and be independent readers, the children who complete the challenge are provided with a certificate and medal. Librarians and parents agreed that this kind of reward encourages children to be more involved in the challenge and read six books. One of the volunteers noticed that children and parents are excited about the rewards:

[...] Now you can see a lot of parents come with children because they get a medal and a certificate at the end, which encourages children to read and also read more books: not just two. I've noticed that parents take more than two with them, since they want to make their children read more (Abeer, volunteer, 09.08.2015).

Moreover, participating children build their social skills, especially confidence in speaking and communication skills (The Reading Agency, 2013, p. 1). When returning books to the library, most of the children discuss the books with the volunteers, which helps them improve their speaking and communication skills. The Summer Reading Challenge provides an opportunity, not just for children, but also for teenagers, through the 'Summer Reading Challenge Champion' in order to improve their skills. They are mostly of an undergraduate age and they volunteer to work with children during the summer holiday. The purpose of their work is to encourage children to sign up to the challenge, support them to read six books and discuss the books with them, asking particular questions, such as "What is this story about? What is your favourite character? What is your favourite part", in order to be

sure that the children have read the books. The champions usually sit at a separate desk and wear red, so people can recognise them. At the Town Hall library there were three volunteers (Isabelle, Jessica and Molly) and at the branches, there were about six (Holly, Amira, Abeer, Batool, Aisha and Duaa). The challenge helps the Champion to begin their career by testing their ability to work with children, as the librarian explains below:

It is a good opportunity for them [the Champion]. It's good for when they go to college. They can record their volunteering, and if they want a reference, we will write them a reference to say "They've done this, they've been really good at talking to children". Some of them want to work with children and want to be a teacher, so it's an opportunity to talk to children and lots of them have done the Summer Reading Challenge in the past. They remember doing it as a child they really enjoyed it, so they want to pass that on and get other children involved as well (Tamara, librarian, 12.08.2015).

All the Champions agreed with the librarian that the challenge helps them to improve their skills and ability to work with children, builds their confidence when they discuss the challenge with children and parents, and it enriches their CVs. Isabelle explained how the challenge helped her:

I did it last year as well, so I could put it down in my record – it helped with university that I had volunteering work with children, because I wanted to do teaching, so it's good for that. But this year I just do it because I enjoyed it last year, as I already got my place it does not matter anymore [laugh] (Isabelle, volunteer, 12.08.2015).



Figure 6.2: Summer Reading Challenge desk

However, volunteers and parents have argued that the challenge needs some improvement, such as increased publicity. Although the librarians assured me that there was an advertisement in the Guardian and in the school newsletter, some mums indicated that they only found out about the challenge by accident. In addition, some volunteers, such as Jessica and Molly, suggest that there should be more guidance to help children pick books that are suitable to their reading level, because many children tried to pick easy books to easily get the medal and certificate. Moreover, the funding cuts and closing of public libraries (see section 5.9, p. 123) will affect delivery of the Summer Reading Challenge, because children might not be able to access their local library. Furthermore, they might need to travel to the Central Library, but if they are not enthusiastic about reading they may refuse to be involved.

The librarian explained how one of the children was excited about the challenge. His local library was closed, although fortunately, he travelled to the Town Hall library to participate in the challenge. Thus, the Summer Reading Challenge is a significant reading opportunity, especially for children who cannot afford to buy books. In the chosen local area, about 394 children joined the challenge, which means 394 children read at least one book, and about 316 children continued to read six books and complete the challenge, so, this was an 80% completion rate.

6.3 Adult learning

Besides lending books and other materials, the Town Hall library provides adults with a place to study. The data of this study shows that the library has been widely used as a study place. Studying was either done individually or in groups. Many respondents, such as Yasmen, Ahmed and Thomas, explained that the library is the best place to study because it is quieter, more flexible than the college, and has valuable resources. Moreover, the library provides many sessions and activities which help users continue their learning. According to Kuczera, Field and Windisch (2016, p. 9) “there are nearly 9 million working aged adults in England with low literacy or numeracy skills (or both) and most of them are school drop-outs”. Those people need to update and develop their basic skills, whether they are basic ICT skills or literacy skills. However, the first step is getting back into learning, which is

the biggest obstacle for adult learners (Goulding, 2006). The library was considered to be the first step back into learning, because it is neutral, welcoming and a non-compulsory learning environment (see section 5.2, p. 94), which encourages people to take the first step in learning – especially those who had bad experiences in a formal educational setting. The data of this study highlights how many people have taken learning opportunities in the library, such as Tracy, who left school early due to learning difficulties, but is still keen to learn. Tracy wanted to start learning at the local FE College, but they rejected her because of her low literacy level as she explains:

I was disappointed when I could not find a place at the college... they told me "Your level is not suitable for the college". Then, one of my friends advised me to join the reading group in the library. At the beginning, I refused to read, but the group helps me to find my way, because I felt more confident and I felt relaxed (Tracy, user, 30.01.2015).

The observational data highlights that Tracy's reading has improved and she is now at Entry Level 1 at the college. Similarly, the library provides learning opportunities for migrant people, who come to the UK and cannot speak English. Lisa, the librarian, indicates that those people do not have any basic skills, so the college will not accept them. Thus, starting learning at the library is important to help migrants to avoid embarrassment. Sara agrees with the librarian and states that:

It really helps me; I love being here because since I have come here my language has improved, I will come every time because I want to go to college, so I need first to know how to speak well... (Sara, user, 12,02.2015).

Moreover, the Town Hall library provides activities, such as reading groups, Talk English and IT sessions which support people to acquire and update their skills and experiences.

6.3.1 Reading group

Robin, Jack, Marry, Shelly, Tracy, Hannah and Sally have literacy issues. They left school early due to bad experiences or learning difficulties. Richard is also one of the group members – he is blind, but he joined the group for social purposes and listens to the stories at home. Their ages vary between 20 and 75 years. Now, they are all either students or ex-students in the FE College. They meet every Friday at the library to read together. The group reflects Wenger’s perspective of the community of practice, as they ‘share a concern’ and they need to deepen their knowledge and expertise in basic reading and writing skills by interacting on an ongoing basis (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 4). The group started in 2009, because the tutor who led a reading group had received some funding through the college. It was originally just for six weeks and the tutor was going to work with the librarians, Mohammed and Jill. The librarians helped the tutor to access books and with thinking about the stories and characters. When the six sessions had finished, the funding was not available for the tutor to deliver further sessions. However, the students wanted to carry on, so the librarians (Jill and Mohammed) supported them. They (librarians) cover the group between them and provide free refreshments, paying for tea, coffee, milk and biscuits from their own money. The librarians are sure that the refreshments help the group to relax so they can read better. The librarians order the books for the group and sit with them and listen to them while they are reading and encourage them to keep reading.



Figure 6.3: Reading group setting

The group reads one story together. They use easy books with small sentences, specifically designed for people who still have difficulties with reading. Every one of them reads two pages until the session finishes. One of them reads and the rest listen, and they correct each other and support each other. The data from this study show that the reading group helps all the members widen their reading horizons and improve their literacy skills. All members of the group agreed that reading in a group helps them to improve their literacy skills. For instance, Jack explains how his literacy skills improved:

It helps me to read more difficult questions, especially during an exam. It helps me understand people and my reading has improved, my spelling improved and I've learnt to slow down while I am reading rather than going too fast. I do not want to miss any words because I want to get to a further level, and I want to study and concentrate more (Jack, user, 19.06.2015).

Many members also find that their general knowledge has improved. The observational data suggest that the reading group helps to increase self-confidence attitudes and independent learning. For instance, Tracy is motivated to learn more, so she borrows books to read at home. She has created a 'new way to learn'; she uses symbols to remember the meanings of words, and uses her own drawings. For example, for the word 'hook' she drew a hook, and for 'plastic' she drew a bottle. She was talking very excitedly and proudly, as this way has enabled her to learn new words. Similarly, Robin explains how he has learnt new words:

Since I have joined the group I use a diary to write down any new words I never know before... After reading a book I write down what I understand... I can read better now; I can write my name and address and can do all of that, when a long time ago I could not (Robin, user, 30.01.2015).

The aim of CoP is to develop each member's capabilities and build and exchange knowledge (Wenger and Snyder, 2000). The data from this study show that interaction helps in building confidence. The group members keep supporting each other by saying, "you read really well", or if someone struggles often they say "you've

got a lot of hard words in your section". For instance, when Shelly joined the group she was embarrassed and refused to read, but one day she read, and while she was reading her head was down the whole time. Although she struggled a lot, they all said "well done", and when she heard them, she was very happy. Her face brightened up and her eyes twinkled, which made her feel more confident to read again.

This interaction helps the community members learn together, build relationships, and in the process, develop a sense of belonging and mutual engagement (Wenger, et al., 2002, p. 34). Mutual engagement is not accomplished just by reading and correcting each other, but also provides an opportunity to discuss the books and listen to other people's opinions of books. They also recommend books for each other, which motivates them to read. Moreover, they assist each other to solve their personal problems, such as difficulties in passing exams at college, or how to face challenges in the job centre. Their mutual assistance depends on the person's specific needs, for instance, Richard (a blind person) complained that the CD player was not working. Robin helped him and told him how to use it, then Richard was delighted, since he could listen to the story again. Their interaction and discussion extended outside the reading group. They discussed their personal lives, such as their children, grandchildren and birthday parties etc. However, the group sometimes had conflicts, such as arguing about what story they should read. Some of them do not like certain stories, while the others do, but in the end they solve the problem. This disagreement is still a kind of participation (Wenger, 1998), but increases when the librarians are not with them.

The librarians play a significant role in supporting the group by supplying them with the books they need and by solving some of their problems. More importantly, the librarians help the members to be independent learners. Jill believes that the most vital benefit of the reading group is helping them (the group members) to take responsibility for their own learning and their progress:

We try to make them (reading group) a little bit more independent. They have to ask for the bag with their things in, they'll sort the book out, they fill in the form that says 10 people came today – they fill in the form and hand it in, and we don't always stay for the whole session. Sometimes, we just stay

for the first 10 minutes. We ask “Are you alright, is everything okay, have you got your book?” and talk about the issues... We always wanted them to be a bit more independent, just because it’s good for them, I think (Jill, librarian, 24.08.2015).

The observational data highlights how the group managed to read and run the session without librarians. However, the librarians mostly sit with the group and listen to them and explain the story if there are any ambiguous words in them. The librarians keep encouraging the group to read by nominating them to win Adult Learning Rewards. The librarian helps the group to be involved in the Six Books Challenge, which is now known as ‘*Reading Ahead*’. In this challenge, people need to read six books of their choice to encourage people to read for pleasure, and write a review about the books. The entire reading group have been involved in the challenge. Robin, Marry, Sally, Richard and Hannah have received rewards. The rewards are significant and motivate them to keep learning, because they feel that they have achieved something in their lives.

The group has social impacts as well as it can help in to increase social cohesion, as it brings people together and helps them get to know each other in greater depth. All members agreed that the group is an opportunity for them to relax and interact with each other, and improves their communication skills. For instance, Richard cannot read because he is blind. He usually listens to the same story at home, but he comes to the library for ‘social company’. Similarly, Sally, who is a good reader, said “I do not like to read on my own”. More social effects will be discussed in section 6.4. Reading groups are valuable in improving literacy skills, especially for young people in England, who tend to leave formal education and training earlier than OECD countries (Kuczera et al., 2016). Those people need a second chance to learn. The library could provide this chance through sessions such as reading groups, however, the challenges which the library faces (see section 5.9, p. 123) impact on those people who could lose their opportunity to learn if the library were to be closed or run by solely by volunteers.

6.3.2 Talk English

Talk English is a project which aims to help people with no or little English to improve their language skills and be more involved in the wider community. The project is funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG); the free English courses are taught by volunteer ESOL teachers (see <http://talkenglishproject.weebly.com/>). The Town Hall library, and all its branches, deliver Talk English and also provide opportunities for non-English speakers to talk with volunteers through the English café to improve their listening and speaking skills. However, the observations of this study focused on English courses, because the participants were not comfortable for me to sit with them while they were talking. The Talk English course at the Town Hall library is delivered by Lisa, who was a librarian but also volunteers to teach people English. The ladies who joined the course are from many different countries: Iraq, Germany, Malaysia and Pakistan. Some of them have been in the UK between two to nine years, while others have been here between one to six months.

As explained earlier in section 6.3, this course is considered the first step into learning, since it provides activities which do not just improve speaking, writing and reading skills, but also improve communication skills. The librarian uses activities which require the ladies to talk to each other, for instance, the librarian gave them a sheet which had many questions, such as “What’s your name?” and “How old are you?” One of the ladies was supposed to ask a question and the other should answer, then they swapped. These activities enrich the ladies’ language and build up their confidence. This learning is gained through social interaction and helps the ladies to change direction, develop identities and reshape their membership of the community (Wenger, 1998). They will also try to apply these activities to real-life situations. For instance, one of the activities was called ‘Greengrocers’, which teaches them new words and shows them how to buy food. The librarian gave them some sentences, such as “Good morning, what would you like?” One of the ladies would ask this question and other would answer, “I’d like four bananas please”, and then they changed roles by one of them being the customer and the other being a shopkeeper. The librarian gave them different examples to use in post offices or the bakery and she tried to listen to every couple while they were practising. One of the ladies described how the activity was helpful:

Now I use the activity when I go to buy something from the shop... Yeah, it is good (Areen, 12.02.2015).

The librarian provides many activities; each one of them has a focus on one of the basic skills that the ladies need in their life, such as greetings, directions and measurement. It was difficult to listen to the ladies' perspectives, especially since some of them could not understand English, however, the ladies seemed interested and some of them could manage to answer my questions, such as Sara, who assures that the session has helped her:

I learn new words every time I come here. Doing these activities with my friends improves my language, as in, ummm, how to ask questions... it is good (Sara, 12.02.2015).

Sara's perspective indicates that Talk English has some social impacts as well as it helps to engage people from different backgrounds. The librarian plays a significant role as she tried through the activities to make the ladies talk to each other. Thus, this session has learning and social effects for individuals, as well as the whole community.

6.3.3 IT sessions

Literacy is not solely associated with the ability to read and write using printed materials, it also includes the ability to use ICT skills. ICT skills have become widely accepted as basic requirements for social and economic development. Mostly, all citizens need to improve their skills to be able to compete in the changing world and not be disadvantaged in society. Some people visiting the library have very low digital skills and digital confidence, and some have no digital skills. Besides e-books and the free provision of Wi-Fi, the Town Hall library provides sessions which help users to acquire basic skills, such as how to print documents out, how to use the scanner or how to use the computer. Some people do not have computers, while others do, but do not have the skills to use them. According to ONS (2016b, p. 19),

in 2016, 11% of households in Great Britain did not have internet access, 21% reported that this was due to a lack of skills. The requirement to learn digital skills increases, as Bob, the IT expert at the library, explains:

People come to ask about IT skills. They have increased from five years ago. Sometimes people need email or are looking for jobs and they might spend between five–six hours here. Sometimes people are struggling with Facebook, or how to download some pages, fill in forms... etc. So we are here to help them (Field note, 23.02.2015).

Mostly, people come to the library to enrich their e-literacy skills, so they attend the sessions and the library provides three types of IT literacy sessions. The first one is an 'IT taster', which teaches basic IT, especially for jobseekers and the over 50s age group who have never used email, and want to use it for many reasons, such as emailing their grandchildren. This kind of session is considered a course where people are taught and are given time to practise. People who attend the IT taster are usually referred from other departments in the library, such as the local history department.

The library also provides a 'drop-in session', so people can come and learn IT skills without booking an appointment. This session is considered a one-to-one tutorial, where people book a computer and one of the IT experts teaches them the basics and/or answers their questions. The observational data highlights how many people come to this session because they want to learn and they do not want to embarrass themselves. The following statement illustrates the 'drop-in session' function:

Bob, the IT expert, spent an hour teaching a lady basic skills. She asked a lot of questions and he kept answering her... then he said: "I will leave you to try, if you need any help just ask me". She thanked him. When the lady left the library she thanked the staff and said "I've learnt something – I never thought I could do it, I'll come here every day". She was very happy (Field note, 24.02.2015).

The third session encourages cooperation with the job centre. It is called the 'jobseeking session' and is run every Wednesday by the job centre. As well as IT

skills, they teach jobseekers how to apply for a job and how to write CVs. As explained in the literature chapter, jobseekers require digital skills. They need to apply for a job via a website called 'Universal Job Match', however, this session starts with very basic information, such as "this is a computer, this is called a keyboard, and this is a mouse". Then, they go further into more complicated skills, such as how to create and use emails to apply for a job. In addition, jobseekers learn how to create CVs and search for a job which meets their ability and qualifications. This session is delivered by an expert who is sent by the job centre. Carolyn, the advisor, clarifies the importance of digital skills for unemployed people:

Everyone looking for a job is required to learn IT skills, even if the job does not require IT, such as builders or drivers. For example, when people need to apply for a SCSC (a health and safety card) they need to apply online so they need to learn how to use a computer (Carolyn, job centre advisor, 04.03.2015).

Carolyn's statement is consistent with what the literature describes, that "72% of employers are unwilling to interview candidates who do not have basic IT skills" (House of Commons Science and Technology Committee, 2016, p. 3). Thus, besides the educational effect, this session has an economic impact on the individuals involved. Although learning digital skills is hard, especially for people who have never used a computer before, the library helps in providing e-literacy skills in a simplified way, which could be the first step in developing digital skills, as Simon explains:

Simon is over 50 years old. He said: "I have never used the computer before, but now I can use it to find jobs. I have been here for three years, because I started in learning basic skills until I was able to search for a job... and I have to practise, because if you do not use these skills every day, you will forget them". Simon searched and wrote down all jobs he has found and which meet his skills, then he left (Field note, 04.03.2015).

All those sessions are significant, especially since the UK faces a digital skills crisis, as the report by the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee (2016,

p. 3) highlights – “up to 12.6 million of the adult population lack basic digital skills. About 5.8 million people have never used the internet at all”. IT sessions in the library help in reducing the present digital exclusion, however, in contrast to Lave and Wenger (1992) and Wenger (1998), they insist that individuals learn by interacting with others, rather than individually, whereas many people in the IT sessions prefer to study autonomously. People may think acquiring digital skills requires practice or may feel embarrassed about their low skills as the librarian stated. However, people learn through social interaction with the IT experts and librarians by asking questions. In this sense, learning is considered a product and an acquisition (Beckett and Hager, 2002, p. 97) rather than social participation. Nevertheless, the librarian and the staff encourage people to work together, as Nancy explains:

We always encourage people to work together. We say, “this computer is free. Would you like to use it?” So, people can sit next to each other and start to talk and work together (Nancy, librarian, 12.01.2015).

ICT skills are not just about using a computer and accessing the internet, but also having adequate knowledge and skills to find appropriate resources, evaluate information and use this information effectively in solving problems (Lai, 2011, p. 83). The library also provides the opportunity for people to be independent learners and critical thinkers, by teaching them a way to understand and evaluate the context and find the information they need. For instance, at the library, there is a history project about the First World War. The project started in September 2014 and is supposed to finish in 2018. People engage in the project and learn how to handle the information and offer their own view. People use the library resources and visual documents, such as the diary, officer orders, records and pictures. Kevin, the librarian, explains the project in more detail:

The First World War project is learning how to handle information, why this has been studied, why it is present in this way. Who put this out?... it is very analytical... This project, for some people, becomes an important part of their lives. Most of the people who are involved are retired and most of them come from professional backgrounds (careers), research degrees or non-

academic backgrounds. It helps in increasing the library usage (Kevin, librarian, 12.01.2015).

Moreover, the library offers people an opportunity to trace their family tree. By researching their family tree, people develop their digital skills and acquire searching skills. People learn how to use websites, because this kind of research needs practice and skills. For instance, a man asked for help to find his brother. The staff helped him and advised that, “first, we need to find your grandmother”. They looked at the birth, marriage and death registration. After two hours they found the grandmother’s name. The man was very happy. He thanked the lady who helped him and said “you are very friendly”. Thus, people are not just acquiring lifelong skills, but also improving their social lives.

6.4 The social role of the public library

The data from this study show that the Town Hall library has been used as a social place where people meet to learn more about themselves and their communities, or to have a chat with other people either face-to-face or online through social media, such as Facebook. More importantly, the library helps to reduce social problems, such as loneliness and health issues. The following section discusses the social aspects of the library services. It focuses on the role of the library in preventing social isolation, developing identities, increasing social cohesion and promoting mental health.

6.4.1 Preventing social isolation

As explained in the literature chapter (see 2.5.2, p. 36), social isolation and loneliness have an impact on individuals, as well as the whole community. These issues are usually associated with poor quality of life and negative health outcomes, because “loneliness is not just physical isolation and lack of companionship, but also sometimes the lack of a useful role in society” (Age UK, 2010, p. 3). However, there are many factors which affect social interaction and lead people to feel lonely, such

as illiteracy; “Poor literacy limits a person’s ability to engage in activities that require either critical thinking or literacy and numeracy skills” (World Literacy Foundation, 2015, p. 4). This correlates with the result of Strong’s study (2001, p. 110), who wrote that “people who cannot read often feel unconnected and alone”. This suggests that isolation and loneliness are not just a problem for elderly people. Social isolation might include all ages, especially adults aged between 16–34, for instance, most teenagers and people in their 20s will move away from home for the first time, while others have difficulties such as getting divorced or being a mum so they might struggle with isolation (Lambert, 2016, online). However, the participation of people in leisure and social activities in the community could help in reducing isolation (Toepoel, 2013). The public library, as a comfortable and agreeable place, promotes learning and literacy and thus it could help in reducing isolation. The Town Hall library provides this kind of service through schemes such as the ‘reading group’ (see 6.3.1), which brings people together, since the group members learn through interaction (Lave and Wenger, 1991), thus, they are not just reading, but also experiencing social communication. Sally, one of the group members, explains how the group affects her socially:

It is [the group] helpful, because I do not like reading books on my own. I can read well, but I like to share with everybody rather than reading on my own (Sally, 30.01.2015).

According to the Age UK report, language is one of the factors which leads to individuals feeling lonely (Davidson and Rossall, 2014). As migrant people may feel embarrassed about engaging in discussion, the public library helps them by providing resources in different languages and delivering services which improve their English, such as the Talk English session, as explained in section 6.3.2. However, age is one of the strongest factors which increases the potential for social isolation. According to the Age UK report (2017, p. 15), “3.5 million people aged 65+ live alone and over 2 million people aged 75 and over live alone” in 2016. Leisure can be an important tool in increasing or maintaining social integration in later life (Thomas, 2015, p. 355). The public library, as a community hub, provides community members with an opportunity to share information, access resources and activities,

and learn as well as interact with each other. Jody, a librarian, explains the importance of visiting the library in supporting social interaction:

Some people come to the library because they have no one to talk to. They are not noticed in the world, and they come to the library. I love to say "Hello, good morning, how are you?" Unfortunately in our world recently, people think more in terms of money how much things cost and forget all other socialist things. I think society is regressing (Jody 1, librarian, 04.02.2015).

The librarian's perspective is consistent with many elderly people's, such as John, who visits the library mostly for social purposes:

I just come here to read or sit down, I love being here [at the library]. I sometimes I just come and watch people. I really feel better... (John, user, 26.06.2015).

Toepoel (2013) found that reading is one of the strongest activities that contributes to a decrease in feelings of loneliness. This result is consistent with the observational data, since many elderly people visit the library to read books and/or newspapers. They might prefer to learn or read on their own, however, since the public library is a social place, it encourages a feeling of social solidarity and belonging to the community. This is in line with Tusting's (2005, p. 38) view that mutual engagement "is broader than simply engaging in an activity... a community membership that still remains valid when the person concerned is not actively engaging". The following response exemplifies the feeling of social solidarity at the library:

It is peaceful... and as you see, there are people around you... I mean, there is no need to talk to them, but it is good (Harry, user, 28.04.2015).

For other users, the library helps increase social interaction by offering the opportunity to use social media:

I come here to socialise on Facebook and see what has happened in the news and stuff (David, user, 29.04.2015).

However, being housebound is one of the primary factors which increases social isolation. According to Age UK (2017, p. 15), “9% of older people feel trapped in their own home”. The Town Hall public library provides a ‘home service’, which decreases this kind of isolation. It is a significant service that delivers services outside the library setting. The home service is valuable because it delivers books in hard copy, audio CD and MP3 formats to housebound people. These are people who cannot easily get out and visit the library or get out to the mobile library due to illness or disability, as well as elderly people, or they do not have enough money to buy books and may not have the computer skills to buy and read online.

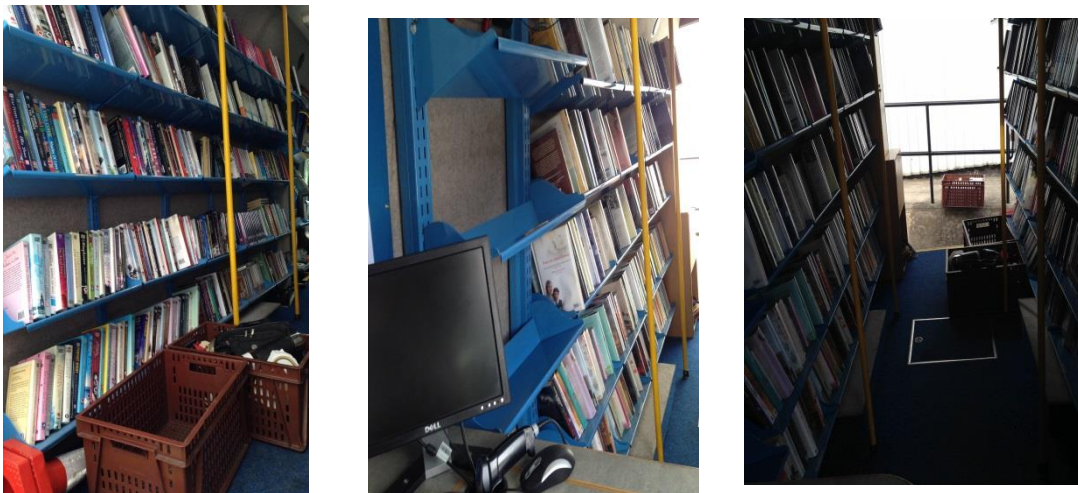


Figure 6.4: Home service van

Home service is a relationship between people and the library staff. First, the staff over the phone ask individuals who require this service some questions such as “What kind of books do you like?” and “Are there any particular authors that you like?” They also take into account the physical format, so they ask users if they prefer “large print, talking books, or talking newspapers”. Secondly, when the customer service officer (who delivers the books to people) visits, this is when they build up a rapport. The officer allows users to look at the book and decide if they like it or not. For instance, a user might say “I’ve read that and I don’t like that author,

and this print is too small” (etc.). Thus, the library builds up a profile of the user. The officer does not just deliver books that people have asked for, but also has a van full of books which are related to the users’ desires. The officer visits one particular area once every two weeks. He has cards that look like cataloguing cards, but every card has customer details on it (name, address, telephone number and what kind of books they like to read), then he sticks lots of cards together. All those cards belong to people who live in the same postcode area. So, the home service is about more than simply delivering books to the users at their homes, as the librarian explains:

We allow time. We could employ a vehicle to just go and deliver a parcel of books, but it's not like that; it's about the conversation – asking what books do you like, did you like that one, could I get you something else, which authors do you like. So, it's reader development, but it's also looking after that person in other ways as well (Dena, librarian, 26.08.2015).

The librarian’s perspective indicates that there is social interaction between the housebound individuals and the officer. According to Wenger (1998), mutual engagement is the foundation for building a relationship, because it requires regular interaction. However, this engagement aims to build social connection, rather than learning. Thus, a home service does not just provide books and information for many elderly and housebound people; it is also a vital tool to connect many isolated people with the outside world. The librarian explains how this service helps in overcoming isolation:

It helps because it stops people from being isolated. We know that we're serving a lot of people who don't see anybody from one week to the next. So, our staff going in can be a new face, it can be somebody who will look out for them. We do have staff coming back saying I'm really worried about this person, she doesn't look after herself, can we contact somebody? We can contact family members or [health and adult social care], or something like that (Dena, librarian, 26.08.2015).

The librarian’s commentary indicates that the home service has a health impact as well. This is consistent with an officer’s concerns about one of the ladies:

Today, I was worried about one lady, so I phoned social care. I told them that the lady does not seem right. They (social care) told him, they will visit her soon (Customer service officer, 26.08.2015).

It was not possible for me to interview those people and listen to their perspectives, however, it seems that the users appreciate this service, as the officer explains:

He (the officer) showed us biscuits that the lady (one of the users) gave him when he delivered her the books she wanted, and he said “They always appreciate our work” (Field note, 26.08.2015).

Nevertheless, the home service faces challenges, such as funding cuts (see section 5.9.1, p. 123), which may lead to a reduction in the number of vehicles across the local area and a shortage of resources for home services.

6.4.2 Enhancing social cohesion

As the library provides services to prevent isolation, it also helps to decrease social exclusion. Social exclusion “refers to the extent to which individuals are unable to participate in key areas of economic, social and cultural life... non-participation arising from constraint, rather than choice” (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2009, p. 6). Low literacy and digital illiteracy are one of the factors which contribute to social exclusion. People who cannot read or write they might feel ashamed about interacting with people. For instance, when I asked permission to observe people while they were learning IT skills, the librarian told me that people refused due to a feeling of embarrassment – especially for people who have never used a computer before.

Moreover, low literacy is associated with poverty (Morrisroe, 2014). For instance, children who live in poverty are less likely to be able to read and achieve well at school (Douglas, National Literacy Trust, Lawton and Save the Children, 2016). The Town Hall library offers free access to reading materials, professional support and reading activities for children (see 6.2) as well as adults (see 6.3), so, it would help in

reducing social exclusion. Furthermore, for some, the public library is the only place to learn, and simultaneously opens up opportunities for them to interact with others, as the following example highlights:

A young teenager (Pakistani) came to the library who was looking for a particular book. The staff tried to help him, then the teenager wanted someone to listen to him while he is reading. One of the staff told him “If it is a little bit of reading, then OK, because I am busy”. Then, she sat with him at the table near to the reception desk. She was listening to him and corrected him while he was reading (Field note, 13.05.2015).

Moreover, participation in learning activities supports individuals in acquiring new skills and knowledge, and it can further foster social cohesion. This is because collaboration and interaction between the participants does not just improve knowledge and skills (Lave and Wenger, 1991), it also builds a sense of trust and obligation for the community members (Lesser and Prusak, 1999, p. 7). Moreover, it supports individuals in repositioning themselves (Tett, 2016) because the engagement in social practice is a way of belonging to a community and a source of identity (Wenger, 1998, p. 174). For instance, Jack, a reading group member, explained that he has attended the group not just for reading, but also to ‘have chat’ with the other members and help them to improve their reading. Furthermore, the library reduces social exclusion by extending its services outside the building through home services (see 6.4.1) or through the mobile library, as well as through the librarians’ visits, as Jill explains:

I had a mission for four weeks, for people who are homeless or who have issues surrounding their accommodation or where they’re staying. I went once a week for four weeks. We did different activities. We did reading and stuff on poetry and stuff on illustrations and we encouraged people to read and visit the library (Jill, librarian, 24.08.2015).

A mobile library is another way to reduce social exclusion by providing services to communities where static libraries are unavailable. This suggests that the library is not just a book provider, more importantly, it is a “guardian of the right to read [as]

reading and writing are essential to maintaining a free and democratic society” (Strong, 2001, p. 110). In this sense, it could be argued that the library offers equal learning opportunities for all people within the community, regardless of their background. Equality “is creating a platform to enable everyone to access the same opportunity” (Pateman and Vincent, 2016, p. 60). Britain is one of the most developed countries, which has a high level of inequality of learning opportunities (Avis, 2016), so the public library can offer an equal learning opportunity for all people. Moreover, as explained in chapter five (section 5.2), the library is a neutral place, and open to all people, thus it can help them to become more tolerant of cultural, religious and individual differences. In other words, the library, as part of the fabric of the local community, achieves social justice (Vincent, 2012). The librarian explains the importance of the public library in fostering social cohesion:

During the summer holiday activities, we had twinning projects: two schools were involved. Because of where the population lives, you end up with a school with all Asian students, and a few streets away you end up with a school with all white students. The group’s parents are not entirely happy with children visiting the other school, but they do not mind children going to the library. So the twinning project happened in the library, where they will mix them up and interestingly one of our libraries is used as a neutral venue by two schools. It is sad, but the library is a natural public space, because the library does not belong to one member of the community or another, so there is worry if the library is taken away where can find a natural public space (Janet, librarian, 09.02.2015).

Accordingly, the library helps in improving skills and encourages intercultural communication, in this sense, public library ‘can be said to qualify as important prerequisites for an informed democratic knowledge society’ (Häggström, 2004, p. 3). One of the most important social services available at the library is researching family history or family trees. Recently, the number of people who visit the library to trace their family tree has increased. Many people, especially elderly people, visit the library to build a family tree. As explained earlier, building a family tree requires IT skills and searching skills. People learn how to use the computer and the internet to search for a particular name. At the library, to trace family trees, firstly, the staff ask people “Have you used the computer before, do you know how to use keyboard, mouse or desktop?” If they are not equipped with the basics, they learn basic IT

skills at the library (see 6.3.3), then they learn the way to search for family members. The library provides about 26 free websites, as well as census records and free access to the birth, marriage and death (MBD) records in England and Wales.

Through this service, people acquire lifelong skills, as well as a powerful and satisfying feeling. This service provides a 'sense of identity', since people feel a strong sense of belonging to a family community (Bott, 2012). On one hand, people are in social engagement with the library staff, who teach them the skills, and on the other hand, they are in contact with family members. This is consistent with Kim's (2015, p. 49) view that "online CoPs can serve as an ideal means for geographically dispersed groups of [people] to connect". The observation and interview data highlight that the library is the only way for some people to find their family members, as the following user explains:

The library is the only institution that could help me to find my sister. I looked at some of the literature on the computer that they have. I felt like I was struggling, so I decided to visit the library, since I know that they can help me (Zak, user, 29.04.2015).

Many people have found their family members, since they have used the family resources and the staff play a significant role in helping users in building their family trees, as the analysis of the 'Feedback book' highlights:

Without the kind help of all of the staff, I would never have been in a position to solve my problem. I can now move forward with my investigation into my family tree (Field note, 18.05.2015).

Thus, participating in the activities at the library in a social setting is an opportunity to learn and engage with the community, so the individuals do not feel marginalised. It also helps individuals improve their confidence and self-esteem, fostering a feeling of belonging and inclusion and further developing their identities.

6.4.3 Developing identity

For Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 53) “learning implies becoming a different person... [It] involves the construction of identities”. Thus, learning is a process of identity formation (Wenger, 1998). Participation in learning activities has been shown to improve life satisfaction, well-being and self-confidence (Hyde and Phillipson, 2015). The Town Hall public library helps in building people’s confidence by providing learning sources, along with providing learning opportunities, especially for vulnerable people. Through the reading group (see 6.3.1), it appears that the library provides assistance in ‘transforming’ the members’ identities so that they become independent learners, critical thinkers and makes them more confident. For instance, Marry, one of the reading group members, was illiterate and shame filled her life. She explains how the group supported her to become a confident reader:

I never read to my own children because I wasn't very confident with my reading. I thought they would laugh at me. I feel that my own children missed out, but now [excited voice] I read to my grandchildren. I feel a bit more confident and I take books out for them. Before, I would not read in the big group and I would not read out loud or to my grandkids, and now I do (Marry, user, 19.06.2015).

Marry’s commentary is consistent with Kirkup’s (2002, p. 182) view that “learning enables new ways of being and understanding; it is transformative”. Learning in this sense “is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming – to become a certain person or to avoid becoming a certain person” (Wenger, 1998, p. 215). The data from this study show that library users are involved in learning activities, such as reading groups and IT sessions to develop their skills and knowledge, and further reinforce what they already know and also improve themselves. Some of them want to improve their professional career, whereas others want to avoid being illiterate and disadvantaged in society. Participation within a CoP is considered a ‘source of identity’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 56). This engagement develops learners’ (users in my study) identities because it helps them understand each other, how to work together and thus makes them able to contribute to their community (Wenger, 1998, p. 152).

Supporting adults to improve their basic literacy skills enables them to alter their view of their own potential. It helps in building their confidence to pursue a wider range of educational and employment opportunities in ways that benefit themselves and their communities as a whole (Robert and Shelswell, 2005, p. 165). The data from this study suggests that library services encourage users to be active citizens. In the literature review chapter (section 2.4), I explained the meaning of citizenship and how engaging in activities brings people together and helps in building the community and adds to its social cohesion. However, in order for people to be active, they need to see the benefit of their activities and feel that their opinions should be listened to. Some of the participants in this study are being active citizens by inviting people to join in the activities available at the library. For instance, the reading group members (see 6.3) keep inviting people to join their group and learn basic literacy skills, as the librarian explains:

The group has grown. It has changed over the years and because it's so specific who comes along, they've all got literacy issues, and they recruit other members. They sort of recruit and bring people in that they think will enjoy it. I think a big part of the group is that it is about being an active citizen and being involved in something like that is a self-improvement thing, because that group on a Friday here, no one forces them to come... They come because they see the benefit that it is having on them (Jill, librarian, 24.08.2015).

The librarian's commentary is consistent with the group members' concept of getting back into learning to improve their lives. So they want "to do the same for other people". Robin, one of the members, was enthusiastic about promoting the group and its benefits:

I feel a whole world has opened up to me... it improves my life. I want to help other people who have the same issue. I invite people to join us all the time... last week the man who turned up I told him... You know it is just word of mouth – we will keep telling people to come here (Robin, user, 26.06.2015).

Similarly, Tracy, who states that the group supports her to improve her reading and gain confidence, says she keeps inviting people to join in, such as Hanna and Shelly. Shelly in turn, states that she will keep inviting people to join in, as her reading has improved. In this sense, learning becomes a source of meaningfulness and of personal and social energy (Wenger, 1998, p. 153). Moreover, the perception of the active citizen emerges as many people support their library because it is “the only place for them to learn and improve their lives”. For instance, Robin, Marry and Jack engaged in a debate with the local council to defend their library and explained the significance of the library in improving their lives. In this sense, they ‘become’ citizens who take on responsibility and become more active in their communities through a renewed sense of solidarity and empowerment (Birdwell et al., 2013). The following statement exemplifies the meaning of an active citizenship:

Robin said: “If they close the library there is no other place to go and learn”. They (users) were so enthusiastic and excited to talk about their experiences, especially Robin, who tries to get everyone involved in the debate. Robin said [shaking his hand up] “We need our library” he added [looking at me] “you know we’ve learnt a lot in this group. Many people out there do not know how to read and they need help: if the library closes there is no help for them” (Field note, 20.03.2015).

Children can also be active citizens; the library supports active citizenship through building bridges between the generations (Longworth, 1999). As the library is open for all ages ‘from the cradle to the grave’, people learn by practising how to work with each other as part of a community. This suggests that “learning is not just about ‘learning to do’ but is also, importantly, about ‘learning to be” (Fenton-O’Creedy, Dimitriadis and Scobie, 2015, p. 41); it is a process of identity transformation (Wenger, 1998). Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 81) state that identity means “the way a person understands and views himself, and is viewed by others”. The engagement in the practice helps learners discover their abilities, as Wenger (1998, p. 192) points out – engagement is a “double source of identification: we invest ourselves in what we do and at the same time we invest ourselves in our relations with other people”. Wenger’s view is consistent with the aim of the Champion (volunteers) in the Summer Reading Challenge. As explained above (6.2.2, p. 140), the library provides

an opportunity for people to test their ability and inability to work with children and engage with other people. Most of the volunteers in the Challenge say that working with children in the library increases their self-esteem and constructs their identities:

[...] I was scared to work with people. I do not have confidence. But when I work here (at the library), I feel better, so I can now talk to people and work with children (Aisha, volunteer, 19.08.2015).

For other volunteers, such as Holly, it was not just an opportunity to build confidence, but also an opportunity to explore and develop her abilities.

I suppose it helps develop your skills and ability to explain things to people. It helps with teamwork, since we are working in a team. It develops your confidence, so I can work with people... it's good, it's fun, I like working with children (Holly, volunteer, 08.08.2015).

The library helps not just adults, but also children. It seems that the children who participate in activities such as the Greenaway session and Summer Reading Challenge (see 6.2, p. 134), learn how to express themselves and become better readers in order to build their self-confidence. The following statement explains how the Greenaway session helps in improving the children's identities:

[...] It's really about getting them to talk to each other, and they really do get 100% involved with reading and socialising. It is about developing their social skills and working as a team. They have to work together as a team and it encourages them to present their work to the whole of the school. It develops communication skills as well, building their confidence. It's amazing (Maryam, teacher, 02.07.2015).

The teacher's perspective is in line with Wenger's (1998, p. 215) view that in learning "we accumulate skills and information, not in the abstract as ends in themselves, but in the service of an identity". In this sense, it could be argued that the participants in

this research constructed their identity by ‘becoming’ confident and independent through learning as a social participation activity in their community.

6.4.4 Promoting mental health

Poor health is mostly associated with low literacy, because “illiteracy limits a person’s ability to access, understand and apply health information” (World Literacy Foundation, 2015, p. 7). For instance, Morrisore (2014, p. 6) finds that “nine in ten adults (92%) with adequate literacy skills can recognise a high level blood pressure reading compared to just over half (55%) with the lowest reading level”. Generally, public libraries help in supporting people’s health and well-being, by providing free access to the internet and health information resources. In their study Fujiwara et al. (2015, p. 7) found that “library usage is associated with higher life satisfaction, higher happiness and a higher sense of purpose in life”. Besides the provision of free resources, the Town Hall library, through different kinds of activities, could help in improving people’s lifestyles and improves the health habits and skills of its users. For instance, Robin, who joined the reading group (see 6.3.1) to improve his literacy skills, says that since his reading has improved, he now reads books about the disadvantages of being overweight, so he has changed his eating habits:

I never eat biscuits and chocolate. I read books about health styles or something like that. The book mentioned that being overweight is bad for your health, so I lost my weight and since then I do not eat biscuits (Robin, user, 24.07.2015).

The observational data show that during the reading sessions Robin has never eaten biscuits. In addition, librarians play an important role in providing resources and information that supports the users’ health care (Irving, 2013), which is consistent with the observational data, since Jill, the librarian, keeps warning users during the reading group sessions that “eating too much sugar will badly affect your health”. This suggests that the library has indirect effects on individuals’ health by providing resources and activities which enable people to educate themselves and improve their lives.

Moreover, the library provides many activities which are related to health problems, such as a dementia session. The dementia session at the library is not just about Alzheimer's, it is also about listening skills and paying attention to what people are talking about, and is geared towards people who have memory problems, such as short-term memory loss. Sometimes this happens with elderly people, sometimes it can happen as a result of a stroke or a heart attack, or because there has been damage in the brain. Participation in dementia groups, where people can share their life experiences and can listen to others, is a vital way for individuals to demonstrate their value as a person (Housden, 2007, p. 17). This is in line with the librarian's perspective on the significance of dementia sessions, and "reading within a dementia session is a way of stimulating conversations and sharing memories".

The most significant activity which promotes mental health is bibliotherapy, which is defined as "the use of fiction and poetry to support and improve positive outcomes for people with mental health and well-being issues" (Walker, 2014, online). Bibliotherapy is an informal session, which involves using books, poetry and songs as well as song lyrics. In addition, illiterate people will often use audio books and CDs. There are two levels of bibliotherapy; there is 'bibliotherapy light', which runs in libraries and in care homes to open people up, and potentially allow them to discuss things that they find difficult, or help them learn from each other. In addition, there is 'deeper bibliotherapy', which is used on acute admission wards, and with people who need the additional skills of a bibliotherapist. This study focused on the light session, since it has been used at the library.

The aim of bibliotherapy is to talk to people and interact with them, reach out to the person underneath the illness and help him/her to re-engage in the community and overcome all their problems. It is a kind of open discussion where everyone can express their feelings and talk freely, especially given that the environment of the library encourages people to talk. First, during the session, they discuss one particular theme to find out what is working for people, then, they read about this theme. This method encourages people to engage in discussion and read at home as well, as the therapist explains:

It might take a while; there is a man there who is often quite lonely. He rebounded a few times and has possibly given up on reading, but for him, he said "he rediscovered books" because he thought, "oh I can – instead of

sitting and staring at the walls, I'll read". So he read a book... so as Kafka [writer] said, a book can be the axe that smashes the frozen ice. It's true (Juley, bibliotherapist, 16.09.2015).

In this sense, bibliotherapy is considered a good alternative for clinical care, because it is free of charge and free of time constraints (McCaffrey, 2016, p. 8). The most important aspect of bibliotherapy is that it helps therapists get to know the people and allows them to express themselves better. As people at this session have certain conditions, there are some subjects that the therapist cannot use. For instance, childhood books might be favourite books for some, but others did not have a happy childhood. So everyone has special needs and requires special treatment or reading matter. Thus, the therapist asks the person "How are you feeling?" In one example, one person said "I feel like there's a great big sideboard sat on my head". So, the therapist knows that this person is educated, and does not recommend one book for the whole group, as she explains:

We'd have to talk. We wouldn't recommend one book for the group, we'd just read bits out and then people say, ooh I'd like to borrow that one or ooh, I didn't like that... Because the bibliotherapist is treating you really (Juley, bibliotherapist, 16.09.2015).

Thus, bibliotherapy is not just reading books and discussing them. Its value is in taking the fear out of reading. Bibliotherapy helps by engaging people in activities that are not related to their situation. For instance, the therapist provides people with poems that do not rhyme and gives them out to people and says, "You try and arrange this how you think it should go". Then, people discuss the first lines and last lines of the poem. Thus, the session is a kind of mutual engagement (Wenger, 1998) between the people themselves and with the therapist. Social interaction helps people build relationships and share their knowledge, as the therapist explains:

Another thing about the session is you find people do share coping mechanisms and coping strategies with each other (Juley, bibliotherapist, 16.09.2015).

The therapist's commentary indicates that the session has social effects on people. As the library is a non-clinical, non-judgemental and agreeable place, it could encourage people to talk and share their experiences and feelings to other people or to the therapist. This suggests that the library improves their enjoyment of life, and builds their confidence and ability to cope, as the therapist illustrates:

For one individual, when he was discharged from the clinic, I said: "Come to my [local session], because you don't live too far away". He did, and then he started talking with one other person in the group and found that they were both really well educated and they got on together. He's back at work now. So people do move on (Juley, bibliotherapist, 16.09.2015).

This suggests that during the session, participants do not just acquire ongoing skills, but also reposition themselves in the community. They move to places "where their voices were acknowledged and they no longer felt out of place" (Tett, 2016, p. 439). In other words, this session helps in reforming participants' identities (Wenger, 1998). This is consistent with the therapist's perspective:

It helps build their confidence, and feel valued as a person and that they've got something to offer... they've still got a valued opinion. It does help. Actually sometimes people might have shaky social skills, so in the group it can help them to learn about listening and when to talk... But I think it's that feeling of being valued and the contribution you can make. Because people can make a contribution to the group (Juley, bibliotherapist, 16.09.2015).

Thus, the session improves people's communication skills. It seems that it also fosters social cohesion, as people have been encouraged to access other groups at the library, such as 'Knit and Natter groups'. Simultaneously, it has an impact on economies, such as reducing the medical service usage due to improved health (Fujiwara et al., 2015). This is consistent with the therapist's perspective, since the session is "truly integrative, which is what the NHS is looking – trying to – that revolving door syndrome, they're trying to put a wedge in it".

In addition, some participants are involved in services called 'texting services' or 'biblio text', which aims to send a text, which is usually a quote from a book or a couple of lines of poetry or a song lyric, to people who either are at the hospital or at the session, once a week. There is the possibility that this service enables people to manage their problems and overcome difficulties in their lives. The therapist explains how this service works:

It costs them nothing, all they have to do is give me their mobile phone number and obviously that's data protected. They don't have to respond at all, but sometimes people do respond – they'll text back, "oh that quote saved the day for me". The text has been useful because it's kept them feeling connected in a way, even if they haven't been coming to the group (Juley, bibliotherapist, 16.09.2015).

The therapist's commentary suggests that the people during the session are equipped with ongoing knowledge and skills and they take a fuller role in the community, since many of the text receivers apparently resend the quotes to their friends. The library also provides a bibliotherapy 'closed group' for people from the Stroke Association. It is closed because some of them recently had a stroke and are still having difficulty in talking. It helps with communication and supports people to express themselves. For instance, one person who comes to one of these groups has started doing his own creative writing. He has been encouraged to write his feelings to express himself. Furthermore, in order to keep supporting bibliotherapy at the library, the therapist has trained many librarians and other staff, as well as volunteers, to run some of the sessions. She explains that for people who want to run bibliotherapy sessions, they need to meet assessment criteria, such as a love for reading and poetry and have personal flexibility, thus, "it is not enough to be a teacher" Moreover, the therapists themselves should be lifelong learners, because many people have been coming to the sessions for years, so the therapists constantly have to develop new resources and different ways of working. It is worth mentioning that I was not allowed to attend any of the health activities; I was not allowed to talk to people or observe them during the session due to their health conditions. Therefore, I relied on the librarians' and therapist's interviews. The

therapist provides some examples of how to reach the person beyond their illness and explains how bibliotherapy works:

There was a woman who could talk, but she was refusing to talk. She didn't join in the sessions, but she stood like a tree. One week she actually came and sat down. There was one poem I read out – it just touched her, and she burst into tears. The next week that was when she'd started talking. So I think it can be a very powerful tool for getting underneath people's barriers (Juley, bibliotherapist, 16.09.2015).

Thus, the Town Hall public library supports people to live a healthy life. It is almost certain that the library service has an impact on individuals as well as the whole community, as Morrisroe (2014, p. 21) states, improving literacy and providing equal access to a healthy life is one way for the UK to tackle health inequality and decrease the pressure placed on the NHS.

6.5 The economic role of the public library

The public library has a direct and indirect economic impact on individuals as well as the whole community. The library saves individuals' money by providing free access to books and other information resources. It also supports people to find jobs or start up their own businesses. On an indirect level, the library, through the services that are provided for people, can save on spending by the public Exchequer such as on the NHS and education.

6.5.1 Saving money

Essentially, the public library provides free access to varied information resources, such as books, newspapers, magazines, CDs and DVDs, as well as free access to computers and the internet. Free access is a strong factor that stimulates people to use the library, especially for those who cannot afford to buy books or pay internet costs. The data in this study shows that users appreciate free access to numerous information resources. The following respondent exemplified the users' perspective:

Books are incredibly expensive... a lot of children and their families cannot access that... but they are free at the library. You can access them and all the latest books are there for them (Victoria, teacher, 02.07.2015).

In this sense, the significance of the library is not just in providing free access, but also in the diversity of the books. Aayat, who considers herself a 'book lover', illustrates how the library helps her to read many books:

I don't buy books... I only buy books which I want to read many times over the year, and in the library there is a big range of books. I can choose whatever I want... more options cannot be found elsewhere... I enjoy reading (Aayat, user, 27.04.2015).

Similarly, Aaron, who loves reading newspapers, advises that the library is the best provider, because it is free:

I come here about five times a week; I use the computer, and read [the local newspaper] for free... What does it cost [looking at the newspaper's price] ohh it costs 65p. I am glad I can get it for free [laugh] (Aaron, user, 30.04.2015).

Thus, the library promotes borrowing rather than buying, which helps individuals to save their money. This is in line with Child and Goulding's (2012) study which shows that use of the library during the recession has increased due to the free and cheap services. For other users, the library helps in saving their money, not just by borrowing books, but also because the library is a place where they 'can take risks', as the following respondent explains:

[...] I always say as well that libraries are a place where you can take risks. I borrow from the library a lot obviously, but I also buy books. But when I go to buy my book, I'm thinking, I'm spending money on this, I'm not going to take a risk and buy something and then not enjoy it. I've done it before when I've thought I've enjoyed it and then I was cross because I wasted £12.99 on that (Juley, bibliotherapist, 16.09.2015).

Juley's commentary is consistent with the study by Research and Consultancy (ERS) (2014, p. 15), which highlights that in Scotland, 21% of survey respondents highlighted that they annually save more than £300 by using the library to access services, such as borrowing books or subscribing to the internet. Moreover, the library provides free activities for children, such as crafts and colouring. The librarian suggests that these kinds of activities are important for children, especially some children, since she notices that they do not have crayons at home.

As mentioned earlier, 11% of households in Great Britain in 2016 had no internet access, and 9% of them reported that the access costs are too high (ONS, 2016, p. 19). The library provides free access to computers and the internet. The data from my study highlights how many users still rely on free access computers provided by the Town Hall library, whereas others bring their own laptop and use the free Wi-Fi. For instance, David, one of the users, states that the reason for him to visit the library is because he does not have access to the internet or a computer at home. The library also provides low cost services. For example, to photocopy something, people need to pay 10p per sheet for black and white and 20p for colour documents. The observational data highlights that many people visit the library to use the photocopiers. The scanner is also one of the most important services at the library, which costs 50p per sheet. This kind of service often costs considerably more outside of the library.

Providing free and low cost access and activities could stimulate individuals to learn and update their skills. This reflects Wenger's perspective that in order to build a learning community, we need to "make sure that participants have access to the resources necessary to learn what they need to learn" (Wenger, 1998, p. 10). In addition, the library plays an economic role by providing services, which helps individuals find jobs.

6.5.2 Supporting people to find jobs

As explained earlier in this chapter, the library provides activities which help the users improve their literacy skills and thus might find jobs. For instance, the reading group (see 6.3) enables Shelly to improve her reading skills, which are necessary for the job she is looking for, as she explains:

I go to church and I like to go up and read as a lay reader... so I am here to improve my reading to get the job I want (Shelly, user, 24.07.2015).

Basic literacy is required for jobseekers. Crawford (2013, p. 183) highlights how employability skills are more complex than they first appear. Individuals need to develop basic literacy and numeracy skills, as well as ICT skills. This is consistent with the job centre's advisor, who advises that English and mathematics are vital skills for jobseekers:

Jobseekers nowadays need maths and English skills, even for some jobs that you cannot imagine need all of these, such as porter or driver. For example, I was helping a man apply for a job for UPS as a parcel driver. There are three applications, one about personal life and one for maths and English and another for IT – why does a driver need all of these [laugh]... You cannot now, as before, go and give the employer your CV and simply find job (Job centre advisor, Carolyn, 04.03.2015).

The advisor's commentary suggests that there are difficulties for jobseekers. The library through its literacy and digital activities helps in reducing those difficulties and supports individuals to meet the requirement for increasing their skills in the labour market. In this sense, learning "implies becoming able to be involved in new activities, to perform new tasks and functions, and to master new understandings" (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 53).

As explained in the literature review chapter, in order to compete in the global economy, individuals need to participate in continuous training to build their skills and knowledge – particularly digital skills. IT skills are required to search for a job, because jobseekers need to apply through websites. There are three websites

people can use to search for jobs: Universal job match, Indeed and Reed. For Indeed and Reed the jobseekers use email, whereas the Universal job match lets them apply on the website itself. So, that means people should have an email address, and IT skills to access websites and find appropriate jobs. As explained above (section 6.3.3), the library provides 'jobseeking sessions' which help people who are on benefits not just to update their digital skills, but also to acquire skills, which are vital for jobseekers, such as writing CVs and using email. The observational data highlights that many jobseekers attend this session to learn how to write CVs. However, for non-native people, first they have to learn basic English and maths skills. Those people might have qualifications and skills, but they cannot speak English well, so they have first to learn the language. This leads, as explained in the literature chapter (see 2.3, p. 21), to an economic problem of 'underemployment', where the individuals' skills are under-used (Avis, 2016). Carolyn, the job centre advisor, explains this kind of problem:

This man [pointing to the man sitting at the computer] has qualifications from his country [Egypt] where he is a teacher, but in the UK they need to study again to be able to teach at UK schools. It is not because of the language, I met a lady who comes from America and studied nursery. They refused to employ her until she has a qualification from one of the UK universities, which costs a lot of money. So, those people find themselves looking for jobs that do not meet their qualifications or interests, just to get money to start their courses (Carolyn, job centre advisor, 04.03.2015).

This suggests that people may stay out of work for a long time until their skills meet the job requirements, which leads to another economic problem – a 'low skills equilibrium' (Green, 2016), since some people have skills, but they do not have experiences, whereas some people have experiences, but they do not have maths or English skills. This study does not aim to discuss the economic crisis and problems further, because this requires a separate study. Nevertheless, the data from this study show that the library supports people in finding jobs. Many people were using websites to find jobs, but some of them did not have the skills, while the others did not have the internet at home. The data of this study show that some people find jobs through the library, as in the following example.

A lady who usually comes to the library to search for jobs found a job. She said: "I finally found a job, but I still need computer to print some paper out". She was happy that she got a job (Field note, 05.03.2015).

Some people, such as Hannah, agree that the reading group, as well as free access to the computer, helped her to find a job:

I am happy that I finally found a job. The library here helped me. Although this job is just for six months, this six months might lead to a better job so I hope I just carry on with the job I am doing now because going back to the job centre is the worst thing [nervous laugh] (Hannah, user 10, 03.07.2015).

It is likely that the learning activities at the library support people to find jobs, as well as increase their opportunities to participate in society – “an increased participation that is defined primarily in terms of economic productivity” (Robert and Shelswell, 2005, p. 175). Moreover, the library does not just help in finding appropriate jobs; it also supports people to start up their own business. The library provides free databases and advice. The databases cover a wide range of subjects, and three of them are business oriented. Those databases are: Cobra, Fame and Euromonitor. Cobra is a comprehensive and continually updated online resource for business start-ups. Cobra’s databank provides several thousand practical, factual and market analysis reports, guides and fact sheets, which are indispensable to anyone with an idea for a business. Fame is the biggest company database at the library. It contains two and a half million companies from Great Britain, and these companies who are registered at Companies House are limited companies and public limited companies. People use this database to create a marketing list. They come with a list of companies they might market their services to. Nevertheless, it is a very expensive database and extremely under-used, since people do not know that the library has it, especially since there is no training about how to use this database. The Euromonitor market research database provides critical market information. Thus, it gives individuals information about whether the ideas they’ve got for their business are worth being developed. It provides lots of statistics about growth prospects in certain areas.

Generally, those databases are like signposts to support people to manage their business or to show them the skills or qualifications they need for a specific business. As the librarian highlights, “a lot of people think it is easy to set up your own business. They think it is easy to follow the instructions and therefore they will have businesses”. The librarian explains how those databases help in starting up a business:

If we search for businesses about cleaning, the database gives you an overview of if it is worthwhile to go in this business. Then she [Jody] reads information and statistics from the database and then she said so it shows you that there is growth in this industry, so if you want to set up a business it is a good time, because there is growth in it. It provides a simple overview of any particular sector (Jody 1, librarian, 04.02.2015).

The librarian commentary indicates that databases provide people with market information. It also provides information about how to complete tax forms and how to write business plans. The data from this study highlight how the databases are under-used, probably, because people do not know about them. One business enquiry was over the phone and one of the staff tried to answer the user’s enquiry, then the lady (staff) referred the user to the Fame database, because it has all the business information which could answer the user’s enquiry. However, the databases do not just help users to start up their own businesses; they also test their ability to see if they can start their own business or not, as the librarian explains:

I had a middle-aged lady who is very good at needlework. She was out of work and she wanted to know what she can do with her own talent in terms of starting a small business. We met for about an hour and she thought just because she can do sewing that she was able to create a business, so we looked at the Cobra to help her to start the business and then she started to get upset because she realised that she needed to give a lot more thought to it. She thought it would be easy, but it is not. But for people who really have a good idea for business, Cobra can help them, since it offers so much support and help (Jody 1, librarian, 04.02.2015).

This reflects Wenger's (1998) perspective that engagement in the practice supports learners to discover their abilities. Through engaging in discussion with the librarian and participating in this service, the lady discovered her inability to manage the business she wanted. However, these kinds of services need to improve and need an expert to be involved, because the librarians are advisors and are not economic experts; they cannot talk in detail about economic issues, as the librarian explains:

We might invite somebody, i.e. Barclays Bank, to come and give a lecture on preparing a business plan, or something like that. We are also looking to see whether or not we might be able to find people in the business community who would come and talk to people who would like to start their business up. At the bottom line we want people to know what we have, and to make them aware of our resources, because at this minute they do not, and they are not well used. However, that is a contribution to the economic well-being of the area, so we get people off benefits into work (Jody 2, librarian, 22.07.2015).

The librarian's commentary indicates that this service faces problems – as explained in chapter five (see section 5.9.3, p. 128) as there is a lack of public perception of the library's value beyond its traditional services. It has also been explained that when librarians are offered training on using the databases and did publicity for these services, the statistics of the usage of these services consequently increased, which means people would use the database if they knew how to. However, the library cannot necessarily provide very much publicity due to funding cuts.

6.5.3 Indirect economic effects of the library

Besides direct effects, the library can have an indirect economic impact on individuals and the whole community. Through its library services, the library can provide a range of savings to the public purse in certain areas, including education, social care and health (Pool, 2015). For instance, children's reading is a vital skill for improving the economy, since the research undertaken for 'Read On Get On' highlights that by providing children with reading skills "the economy could be more than £32.1bn bigger by 2025" (Douglas et al., 2016, p. 4). In this sense, providing

free access to varied information resources and reading activities for children (see 6.2), the library improves their reading skills and thus contributes to the economy.

The library also equips individuals with employability skills, such as digital and literacy skills (see 6.3), to help them to find jobs, and thus move them from the benefits system to the world of work. As explained above, some jobseekers find jobs through the library. In this sense, it is likely that the library saves on spending by the public Exchequer, as “the UK taxpayers spend about £23.312bn on benefits and social programmes” (World Literacy Foundation, 2015, p. 6). Improving individuals’ skills helps in increasing their income (CILIP, 2014a), as the World Literacy Foundation (2015, p. 5) demonstrates, showing that “illiterate people earn 30–42% less than their literate counterparts”. Simultaneously, it might have an impact on the UK’s workforce, as Hyde and Phillipson (2015, p. 4) state, increasing skills could add an additional £80bn into the economy. Thus, it is almost certain that participation in learning activities has an impact on the individual level. It could improve self-confidence and develop identity, as well as increase their income. On the whole community level, it might save the public exchequer, since illiteracy costs the UK economy about £81.312bn each year (World Literacy Foundation, 2015, p. 5).

The library can also make an economic contribution by saving costs for the NHS. For instance, growth in the number of elderly people could lead to an increase in public expenditure due to higher medical costs and old age pensions: “one of the potential ways to reduce medical costs seems to be the enhancement of quality of life in older age” (Toepoel, 2013, p. 356). Through its services, such as the home service (see 6.4.1), which connects isolated people with the outside world; the library helps in reducing medical costs. The library also helps in reducing medical cost spending due to improving health as a result of health-related library services, such as bibliotherapy (see 6.4.4). A study by Fujiwara et al. (2015, p. 7) values the improvement in health in terms of cost savings to the NHS. They find that the “aggregate NHS cost savings across the library-using English population to estimate an average cost saving of £27.5m per year”. This saving was based on reductions in GP visits and reductions in medical service usage, which in turn lead to reducing public spending on health and lower tax rates (Fujiwara et al., 2015). This is consistent with the therapist’s perspective about the NHS cost savings:

The savings come because people don't visit their GPs often, and they don't need the community psychiatric nurse any more, they don't need the social worker any more, and they are admitted to hospital less. Or it could be support, which they're realising in the group, if somebody had said; you don't seem so good, are you feeling okay? They've thought, oh I better go to my GP then. They do that, whereas before they would have gone right downhill and ended up in hospital (Juley, therapist, 16.09.2015).

Furthermore, visiting the library might have an economic contribution as well, for instance, a study by ERS (2014, p. 14) that assessed the economic value of libraries showed that the average spend in the library locality in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland ranges from £18.43 and £35.32. The data from my study show that many users visit the library while they have shopping bags, whereas others highlight that every time they visit the town for shopping they also visit the library. Thus, the library could have an economic impact on the whole community.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter answers the second research question which is: *“To what extent do lifelong learning activities, through public libraries, affect the users socially and economically?”* Firstly, the chapter addressed the perceptions of librarians and users on the role of the public library in supporting education. The library plays a vital role in promoting reading skills and habits for young learners through learning activities, such as the Greenaway session and the Summer Reading Challenge. It also promotes literacy skills for adult learners. The library could be seen as the key to unlocking inequality by offering equal learning opportunities for all, regardless of their background. Thus, it achieves social justice, fosters social cohesion and prevents social isolation.

This study contributes new understanding to the social role of the library, by developing the individuals' identities. Applying the CoP as a theoretical framework, shows how the participation of people in library activities contributes to their membership of the community (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and further 'become' more confident, better readers and active citizens. The public library plays a vital role in promoting individuals' health and well-being. This is seen through the successful

bibliotherapy sessions in the library. On an economic level, the data from this study show that the library might have a direct and indirect economic impact on the individuals, as well as the whole community. The direct role has been demonstrated by saving users money and supporting people to find jobs, as well as starting up their own businesses. This is contrary to Lave and Wenger (1991), and Wenger (1998), who believe that the motivation of learning is inside the learner. In this study, learning is also influenced by wider social and economic factors (Hodkinson, Biesta and James, 2008).

In the context of this study, the economic factors that stimulate people to be involved in learning activities are the free learning sessions the library provides, which help individuals update their skills and find jobs. The library is also likely to have an indirect role in saving money for the public exchequer. The data show that the library has an integrated social and economic role, for instance, the digital sessions support individuals to update their skills and find jobs, simultaneously improving their identity and increasing self-confidence.

Chapter seven: The Role of Librarians in Supporting Lifelong Learning

7.1 Introduction

This chapter answers the third research question: “*How much do the services of librarians add to the value of public libraries as learning environments?*” The librarians have a significant role to play in delivering learning activities. As the previous chapters have discussed, the library is not a collection of books; it is a lifelong learning institution. The role of librarians has changed as well as it has become more complex. The data show that the librarians have become almost like teachers as well as information professionals. They support people to update their skills and become lifelong learners. The chapter starts with discussion of the importance of the librarians as teachers and as information professionals, then looks at the criteria required to be librarians. The chapter closes with the challenges that the librarians face.

7.2 Librarians as teachers

As illustrated in the previous chapter, the librarians play a significant role in delivering learning sessions, such as the Greenaway session where children learn how to judge the books and the illustrations in the books (see 6.2.2, p. 141), and the reading group (see 6.3.1, p. 147), which help learners to update their skills. Although the librarians continually asserted that they are not teachers, the data show that the librarians deliver their activities as teachers. For instance, through the reading group session (see 6.3.1) the librarians support the members of the group to improve their literacy skills. The role of librarians is not limited to sitting down and listening to members while they are reading. It goes further by correcting their reading, explaining the story and encouraging them to learn independently. During the reading group sessions, Jill (the librarian) discussed the story with the members to make sure that they understood it, and explained the ambiguous words for readers when they asked, as in the following examples:

While Robin (one of the reading group members) was reading he asked: “Turquoise”, what does this mean? I’ve never heard about this word before”. Jill explained “It is a kind of colour” (Field note, 30.01.2015).

Hannah (one of the reading group members) asked: “Usain Bolt!! What that means?” Jill (the librarian) said “He is the fastest man in the world” (Field note, 27.02.2015).

The librarian explained the meaning of the words even when the readers did not ask about the meaning, as the following example illustrates:

When Marry finished her reading, Jill explained that the ‘Washington Post’ is a newspaper (Field note, 06.03.2015).

In this sense, the learning developed through social interaction with learners and librarians, which reflects on Lave and Wenger’s (1991) view that in a community of practice, the significance of the knowledge, skills and capacities can be developed through social interaction with others. Moreover, the librarian helps learners to gain ongoing skills, which are not just important to understand the story they are reading, but also to support them to understand the familiar situation, as in the following example:

Jill (the librarian) explained the paragraph and she explained the quotation and why it has been written in different fonts, because “it is quoted from philosophy” which means it is not said by the person in the story (Field note, 01.05.2015).

The observational data is consistent with McCaffrey’s view (2016, p. 9) that librarians today are not just gatekeepers of information; they are educators and participators with users. However, the role of the librarian as teacher does not stop with explanation of the story, but also by encouraging learners to learn. For instance, during the reading group session the librarians, Mohammed and Jill, encourage every member of the group by saying words such as “well done, you did very well” or saying “your reading is really improved”, or by nominating them to win an adult learning award which builds their confidence. The observational data show that all the reading group members were happy and proud of the way that the librarians

value them. This is consistent with the standards of the LLUK (2007, p. 2) that “teachers in the lifelong learning sector value all learners individually and equally... The key purpose of the teacher is to create effective and stimulating opportunities for learning... that enables the development and progression of all learners”. The reading group members agreed that the librarians have a significant role in improving their reading, as Tracy illustrates:

They [librarians] encourage us to read, and when we chat with them it's good... they encourage us to do more reading (Tracy, user, 03.07.2015).

Tracy's commentary suggests the importance of 'social interaction' between learners and the librarians to improve the skills. Hannah agreed and added that the librarians are significant not just for reading, but also for understanding:

I think it is better if they [librarians] are with us, because sometimes we got struggle with things we do not understand, they explain to us; when they are not here it is a bit awkward because no one knows what the words mean (Hannah, user, 03.07.2015).

Hannah's commentary is consistent with Nwezeh's (2011) that the librarian as teacher provides training and guidance which support learners to gain information literacy skills. With this in mind, the librarian Jody explains step by step how to build a search strategy for economics. As she showed me how they generally help users to use the databases when considering starting up their own business:

[...] I always show people how to do [searching] because they usually miss some steps, although instructions available online... I can read the body language and see some people they do not catch it, so I reword it for them or try to find another way to make it clearer... (Jody 1, librarian, 04.02.2015).

Jody's commentary reflects on Scales, Briddon and Senior's (2013, p. 35) view that teachers in the LLL sector “need to understand their learners, their characteristics,

needs and motivations. Most importantly, they must be good communicators". The teaching role of librarians is not just with adults, but also with children. For instance, Amelia, during the Greenaway session (see 6.2.1, p. 135), asks the children questions, to probe their understanding and encourage every one of them to engage in the discussion (Fisher, 2005). The following statement exemplifies the way that the librarian stimulates children's thinking:

The librarian (Amelia) showed children a picture, and asked "is that scary?" No one answered, then she asked "what is strange about this lady in the picture?" They said "her hair, her red eyes, and long fingers". Then she showed them another picture "what does it look like" (Field note, 02.06.2015).

In this sense, librarians are in their own way teachers, not by "teaching children the mechanics of how to read, but in teaching children how to love to read" (MacLean, 2008, p. 9). Moreover, the librarian during the session encourages children to use the dictionary to find the meaning of words. In doing this, the librarian promotes literacy development and fosters lifelong reading habits among children. The teaching role of librarians is partially demonstrated through their preparation for the learning session. Preparing the learning session is considered as "a key process for effective learning" (Fisher, 2005, p. 44) in that it provides an opportunity to cover basic issues such as health and safety. Importantly, it involves making decisions about the learning activities and resources (Dixon, Harvey, Powell, Thompson, and Williamson, 2015, p. 127). In the context of my study, the librarian during the Greenaway session prepared the place where the children should meet as she brought the tables and chairs, most importantly; she carefully read the books to check which are suitable for children:

The librarian reads the books; she told me "this book is inappropriate for children"... because one of them violent, and the other bit of romance is not suitable for children (Field note, 06.02.2015).

Moreover, during delivery of the learning session, the librarians support sociability by encouraging people to work together. For instance, through the Talk English session (see 6.3.2, p. 150) which supports non-native speakers to learn English; the librarian asked ladies to swap their places and encouraged them to talk to each other by saying “talk to someone you never talked to before”. The librarian believes that in this way the ladies will learn faster as they will learn from each other. This reflects on Lave and Wenger’s (1991, p. 31) perspective that “learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice”. For other librarians such as Jill, sociability occurs when people support each other with their own problems, as in the following example:

Shelly (one of the reading group members) came from the funeral, she sat down and start to cry Jill put her hand on Shelly’s shoulder and said “Sorry, do you want anything to drink?” she said “Yes coffee please” then Jill prepared for Shelly a coffee (Field note, 24.04.2015).

This kind of ‘empathy’ builds a strong relationship between the librarians and learners, and thus could support people to learn more. This is in line with Scales et al. (2013) who state that part of teachers’ (librarians’ in my case) role is to create effective ways of communicating with learners; understanding learners’ feelings (empathy) is one of these ways. Social participation between learners and librarians helps in identity construction for learners, as Wenger (1998, p. 145) points out that “issues of identity are an integral aspect of a social learning theory and are thus inseparable from issues of practice, community and meaning”. As explained in chapter six, delivering lifelong learning activities in the library could support people in developing their identities (see 6.4.3) by enabling them to become more confident, independent learners and active citizens. For instance, during the reading group session, the librarians touched upon an aspect of active citizenship’s in encouraging members to be more tolerant and respect each other’s feelings as the following example illustrates:

Shelly (one of the reading group members) was reading, Tracy laughed, Jill (the librarian) said “Please Tracy; Shelly will think you are laughing at her

because she cannot read". Tracy was laughing about something else, Jill knew that but she did not want Shelly to be embarrassed, Tracy said "sorry" (Field note, 01.05.2015).

Furthermore, the librarians also play a role in training volunteers, for instance, Jill provides some training about dementia, explaining how it feels to have dementia, the books that can be used and the criteria for the therapist to run a book chat with people who have dementia. Thus, the librarians as teachers deliver lifelong learning activities by supporting people to gain ongoing skills to build their identity and improve their lives.

7.3 Librarians as information professionals

A purpose of the librarian's role is to connect people with the information they are seeking. In this sense, the librarians become 'information experts' who support people to understand "what information is needed and how it is used" (Harle and Tarrant, 2011, p. 121). This is consistent with librarian Jody's perspective about the role of librarian as information professional:

In the training session (economic session), people thought that I am business advisor. I said (Jody) "well look I cannot advise you I just point you on the screen and you can do what the screen is telling you". We, librarians do not advise, we show resources we help people to interpret resources, but we cannot say: "I think you should do this"... to show them where the information is and then they decide by themselves... (Jody 1, librarian, 04.02.2015).

The librarian's commentary is consistent with the perspective of Cragg and Birkwood (2011) who state that the role of librarians is to provide people with information skills. Those skills support people to search for information (either printed or digital) and evaluate what they find. Accessing the information does not just mean to help people evaluate the information but also provides "the appropriate choice of knowledge from an appropriate container" (Bradley, 2010, online). For instance, Jill and Mohammed,

the librarians responsible for the reading group (see 6.3.1, p. 147) help in providing the books and stories which are suitable for the learners' levels:

Our role is to make sure that we've got the stock, so that if someone comes in, who has difficulty with their reading or is a sort of literacy student, that we've got some books that we can let them have (Mohammed, librarian, 26.08.2015).

The users agree that the librarians play a significant role in supporting them with the resources they need. The following response illustrates how the librarians meet people's needs:

They [librarians] help because they sort everything out... In reading group, we need special books to read; they get us books... we can choose books from the shelves but we need special books because they are librarians they can order book for us so it is better with them they make it easier for us... (Robin, user, 26.06.2015).

Robin's perspective reflects that of Wenger et al (2002, p. 103) that the ability of a community of practice to be engaging for members depends on its ability to develop and provide access to knowledge tools and guidance about its domain. Librarians can play an information-organisation role. However, the librarians are more than 'information-organisation' They might have an impact on people's lives by supporting them to access information that can improve their learning outcomes and affect their social and personal lives (Innocent, 2009). This is consistent with the bibliotherapist's perspective, (see 6.4.4, p. 169) in helping people with mental health issues to overcome their problems. She is of the opinion that the librarians support the success of the session:

They [librarians] help a lot with stock, with finding stock and recommending it. I couldn't imagine doing this job; it'd be much harder to do if I didn't have access to all these books... They also help with where to set up the groups and spotting people who might benefit from coming to the group and saying to them "did you know we had this group? Why don't you come along?"... (Juley, therapist, 16.09.2015).

The therapist's perspective indicates that the role of librarians is not just in providing resources for people, but also in inviting people to join in activities which might affect their lives. Moreover, the librarians support each other and they work together. Jody, the librarian, emphasises that in current times, librarians are working behind the scenes, planning initiatives and working on projects, so they work together to deliver more efficient services. This reflects on Wenger's (1998, p. 48) view that every individual has his/her own understanding of the world; the CoP is the place where people through social interaction, develop, negotiate and share their understanding. Jody exemplified how the librarians work cooperatively together on a particular project:

We have got an educational package to do Victorians and we've got educational package to do with Stone Age which is on curriculum... Normally the responsibility for school visits lies with lending librarians; three part-timers, we've got a lot of demands and three part-time librarians could not cover it. So, I've got to join in and another librarian joined in... We never usually involved in school visits and we had to involve and it was a big involvement for me... (Jody 2, librarian, 22.07.2015).

The librarian's commentary suggests that the role of librarians extends to fill the gap or to look after other kinds of services where there is not adequate cover. This suggests that the central role of librarians as information professionals is to ensure that the services of the library are delivered in an efficient and productive way. Moreover, the librarians reach people outside the library building. They work with colleges, community centres and parent groups because as several of them state: "we cannot just provide resources and expect people to come to us but we have got to promote them and promote them heavily". Thus, public librarians are engaged in a wide range of activities including recommending books, organising events, offering support in widening reader choice, providing learning support to improve literacy and promote reading, and supporting local businesses through collection development and IT provision.

7.4 Criteria to be librarians

Generally, the staff at the Town Hall library are divided into two kinds: librarians and customer service officers. The customer service officers work behind the frontline desk or enquiry desk, which aims to answer general questions, such as booking computers, borrowing books and filling in forms. One of the customer service officers works as an IT expert who teaches users IT skills along with the librarians. Each department in the library has a number of customer service officers and one librarian who is responsible for the department. The role of librarians is to plan initiatives, work on projects and deliver learning sessions such as the reading group and Greenaway session. This study focuses on the role of librarians because their role is under-estimated as the number of public librarians across the UK has been reduced. Thus, a number of librarians have lost their jobs (Summers, 2016). The data from this study show that the librarians' perspectives are consistent with Shaw's (2010) view that there is more need for clear definition about the professional librarian and the skills and duties involved in librarianship. Jill, the librarian, exemplified this perspective:

The professional organisation, CILIP, I don't think they have been particularly successful in protecting the status and the role of librarians. I think it's quite tricky. And people who don't know libraries think anybody who works in a library is a librarian, the caller, everybody (Jill, librarian, 24.08.2015).

This kind of issue could affect the quality of librarians' jobs; it might "put many of them at risk of career burnout" as they could feel their work is under-estimated (Holcomb, 2007, p. 669). Although, in my study, it seems that there is no sign of career burnout, in other cases there might be. However, according to CILIP (2014b), professional librarians need skills such as:

Interpersonal skills which help them to communicate effectively with all members of the community; ability to deliver library services to the public; ability to teach information literacy skills; enthusiasm for reading for pleasure as well as an ability to provide reader development activity; ability to build and maintain partnerships with internal and external partners; ability to plan

services, meet targets and constantly improve performance and constantly improve performance and commitment to continuing professional development (CILIP, 2014b, online).

The data from this study show that there are some criteria that librarians need to be able to support LLL activities at the library. Some of them meet CILIP criteria, such as the capacity to work with people – ‘interpersonal skills’. These skills are the most important criteria for librarians because the core role of librarians is to help people to access and use information, thus, ‘love for people’ is equally as important as loving books and reading (Cragg and Birkwood, 2011, online). Loving people does not mean just loving working with people, but also understanding the activities that improve their lives. For instance, during the reading group session (see 6.3.1, p. 147), which helps people to improve their literacy skills, librarians see that people are enthusiastic to learn, so they decide to carry on with the session:

When the tutor finished the six sessions, the people who'd come along wanted to carry on, but they didn't have the funding to pay for the tutor. But we as a library service said that we would try and look after the group and facilitate it and so we carried on doing that every Friday... We cover it with our capacity, it's part of our role. So, me (Jill) and Mohammed pay for tea, coffee, milk and biscuits. And we order the books, and we try to sit with them as well because we thought it was important for them (Jill, librarian, 24.08.2015).

The librarian’s perspective indicates that the role of the librarian goes beyond providing resources; it is about understanding people’s needs and building a relationship with them which could encourage them to visit the library and read more. Many respondents agreed that the librarians are one of the important factors that encourage people to join the learning sessions. For instance, Victoria, one of the teachers, believes that the capacities of librarians to work with children stimulate children to read more:

The librarians are amazing, they are very inspiring and they do enjoy children's company, they know what they are doing, they have a lot of knowledge to share with children and children get on well with them

because they are friendly, children enjoy... they are very welcoming (Victoria, teacher, 02.07.2015).

The teacher's perspective suggests that knowledge is not the only criteria for librarians, but also personal skills, such as being 'friendly and welcoming', as well as the ability to work with people and deliver the learning session in an attractive way. In other words, generally, librarians (professional and paraprofessional) need to love their job. The data show that many professional librarians such as Jody, who has a librarianship qualification and delivers the economic activities, love being a librarian, as she says: "I am very glad that I have career and I am really lucky to have my career in libraries". Similarly, Jill (the proficient librarian), who states that she loves her job because it has an effect on people's lives:

I really love my job... How significant to teach people to read because when we gain reward it is not good just for people, but also for library that might let government to change their mind about closing down the library... every one of the reading group has a sad story; had a bad experience in the school and that is why they do not really continue with school. So they need our help (Jill, librarian, 30.01.2015).

The librarian's perspective is consistent with the CILIP (2014b) criteria as librarians need to have the ability to deliver library services to the public. In the librarian sense, the ability is the enthusiasm to teach people and improve their lives. This is line with Adele, Children's Librarian, who states that she delivers the activities as a "professional librarian" because she is "interested in working in the library". The observational data highlight that, generally, the librarians at the Town Hall library are 'effective, librarians' as they are not just familiar with sources of information (printed and digital), but they are also able to communicate the value of these sources to meet the specific needs of users (Harle and Tarrant, 2011).

Moreover, one of the criteria which many librarians get confused about is the qualifications. According to CILIP (2014b) those working as professional librarians in the public library, need either a first degree which is accredited by CILIP, or a degree

in any subject followed by an accredited postgraduate qualification (CILIP, 2013). However, the data of this study show that many librarians do not have a librarianship qualification, they have 'experience'; the librarians have more than two years' work experience as a library assistant or with an information service eligible for CILIP certification. According to CILIP (2013, online) "*professional registration is about completing a process that demonstrates that the member has attained a certain level of professional practice 'Certification', the then professional could gain Certified Affiliate status (ACLIP)*". Some librarians, such as Jody and Adele, have a librarianship qualification. While Adele stated that she benefitted from this course, Jody highlights that her work experience is more beneficial. However, all the librarians at the Town Hall library have trained as librarians whether they have a librarianship qualification or not. Nevertheless, all the librarians agree that to be professional librarians they should have a "mix of experience and qualification" as Jill illustrates:

I think that you have to have the right mix of skills and qualifications. I think you do have to have the qualification as well, educated to a certain level. I think it's quite important... then you've got to have had the work experience to go with it, so that you can get the role (Jill, librarian, 24.08.2015).

Similarly, Adele, the librarian, explains how both the librarian qualification and experience support her in delivering library activities:

I like the fact that I have qualification and I am proud of it and I am glad I did it. I feel like I achieved something... there are some bits of it really helped me in my work some more than others, I mean one of the modules I did when I was studying all about using IT and electronic information and I had to design a website. I did some sessions in the library about designing websites so I think things like that it is practical use to me. Also, I've learnt many new things during my work here... but I know there are librarians out there perhaps they have not got the qualification, but they've got experience I think it is about enthusiasm about the job (Adele, librarian, 01.05.2015).

The librarian's commentary suggests that 'enthusiasm' could be an important competency for a professional librarian. This is consistent with Lisa's perspective –

Lisa is a librarian, although she is out of work due to the funding cuts. She was enthusiastic about delivering a literacy session and teaching foreign people basic English through the Talk English sessions (see 6.3.2, p. 151). Moreover, in order for librarians to deliver LLL activities, generally, they need to be lifelong learners themselves. They need to continually learn about information products, services and management practices throughout the life of their career (Abels et al., 2003, p. 4). Thus, it seems that knowledge, skills, experiences and enthusiasm are the criteria most needed to operate effectively as librarians.

7.5 Challenges facing the librarians

As explained in chapter five (see 5.9, p. 123) the library faces some challenges which affect not just the quality of the services, but also the librarians themselves. For instance, the public library is facing a cut to its budget which may lead to closure of the library building, and consequently, staff lose their jobs. Another effect of the cuts is that there are not enough funds to inform all potential users about the services available at the library. This is also a challenge the librarians are facing as they find it is difficult to reach everyone or to create publicity about library services. Jill, the librarian, illustrates:

It's hard to reach the people because if you're trying to reach children who are seven, you just go to the school and say and you know where they all are. But for other people in the community it is really hard to market... (Jill, librarian, 24.08.2015).

Lack of awareness about a librarian's significant role in the community is one of the challenges. Some people still do not know what the real job of librarians is, or the importance of librarians. They might think that the librarian is a bookkeeper or just there to stamp books. This is consistent with the librarians' perspective about this challenge as in the following example:

I think we've been edged out... and lots of people outside libraries question a value, how paid librarians, they do not understand what value a librarian

brings to the library services, especially when they are not working with public [laugh]... (Jody 2, librarian, 22.07.2015).

To overcome this problem Cragg and Birkwood (2011) suggest that governments, along with organisations such as CILIP need to teach people or show people how the librarian has importance in society. Although it might cost money, it helps our libraries to remain open as they have a significant effect on society both economically and socially. However, one of the serious challenges facing the librarians is that in many cases volunteers have taken over running the library, which means that the librarians lose their jobs. According to Summers (2016), around 8,000 library workers (including librarians) have lost their jobs since 2010. Although volunteers assist in keeping the libraries open, there is no way that they can run the library satisfactorily (Harris, 2011). This is consistent with the librarian's perspective as in the following example:

It's difficult though because with everything that's happening in libraries and volunteers, because I think the people who don't know much about what we do, they just think it's so easy. So they could do that. Then you're going to end up with people who are good-natured but not particularly professional in what they do (Jody 1, librarian, 04.02.2015).

The librarian's perspective matches with Lyttle and Walsh's (2016) view that a person who volunteers to help does not necessarily have the skills to run the library. This is consistent with the users' perspectives, such as Marry, Jack, Hannah and Robin, who do not trust volunteers because "they are unable to answer our questions well". As I explained earlier, librarians should have specific competences to be able to deliver lifelong learning activities and volunteers might not have those competences which affect the quality of service delivery. Thus, public libraries cannot meet the requirement of the 1964 Act that every library should provide 'comprehensive and efficient' services. The librarian, Jill, explains how relying on volunteers affects the services in the library:

You wonder about the suitability of the volunteers. And you wonder about things like the quality of what you deliver. Because if I'm paid for my work, if I'm doing it wrong, my boss can say to me you're doing that wrong [laugh]. Because it's her job to monitor me and she can say no, you can't do that... She can direct me. But if we've got volunteers, it's a very different relationship... who monitors them? Who tells them? That can be sometimes a bit unclear, because they use our premises (Jill, librarian, 24.08.2015).

The data from my study show that most of the users are not happy with the idea of volunteers running the library because they are unable to deliver the services as well as the librarians do. For instance, Marry discusses why they reject the idea that volunteers can replace the librarians:

I do not like volunteers, they are stupid... librarians are reliable if you come in you can find them with smile on their face, volunteers will not do their jobs perfectly because they will not be paid and maybe they will not come when you need them (Marry, user, 06.02.2015).

Hannah agreed and added that the volunteers “are not interested in helping us”. Wenger (1998, p. 10) points out that in order to stimulate the members of the community to engage in meaningful practices, access to resources that enhance their participation and open their horizons should be provided. In this sense, learners need an information professional to guide them, because the success of any initiative mostly depends on the understanding of why and what information is needed and how it is used (Harle and Tarrant, 2011). This is consistent with one of the user's perspectives about the importance of librarians in delivering learning activities:

We've got to have very responsible people to run the library; they cannot be volunteer or untrained people because the library is part of education system (Thomas, user, 21.04.2015).

However, relying on volunteers does not just affect the quality of services, but also impacts on the librarians themselves if they lose their jobs as Jody states:

I love my job, I've been a librarian for 25 years, but I would not be librarian if I were younger right now because I would be wondering where I will go [laugh] what will I do (Jody 2, librarian, 22.07.2015).

On one hand, it could be argued that the library will lose 25 years of experience and skills and the librarian will be out of work. On the other hand, this kind of feeling might have an impact on the quality of the librarian's job. That is because the librarians might experience stress. They might be less enthusiastic about their job or might feel anxious about losing their jobs (Jordan, 2014) which could lead to delivering the library services in a less efficient way. Although in my case it seems that librarians do not have this kind of experience, other librarians in different places might have. Moreover, the librarians usually train the volunteers to prepare them to start their work at the library, however, the librarians, such as Jill, feel it is like 'wasting time':

It's the type of thing that we librarians would have normally done, but now, what we're doing is we are training the volunteers to do it. So, in one way, that's a really positive thing because that work will happen. But then sometimes I think well that's really sad, because rather than telling people what to do, I'd rather do it (Jill, librarian, 24.08.2015).

This is consistent with Lyttle and Walsh's (2016) view that volunteer management can take up a huge proportion of the coordinator's time. At the time of collecting my data, there were no volunteers at the Town Hall library; however, in the future there could be, as many librarians believed that the library may end up being run by volunteers along with one member of paid staff who is not necessarily a librarian. However, the danger with volunteers is who would replace them if they stop volunteering at the library. Thus, in order for the library to meet its users' needs, the volunteers should work alongside librarians, not replace them.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter answers the third research question: “*How much do the services of librarians add to the value of public libraries as learning environments?*” The data show that the librarians play a significant role in delivering LLL activities in the library. The librarians deliver learning sessions as proficient teachers; the librarians support learners (adults and children) to update their skills and develop their identity to be independent learners and critical thinkers. The librarians also support library users by guiding them to access the valuable information resources and provide sessions that meet their needs. This study shows there are criteria for librarians to be able to support LLL activities. They need to be trained as librarians as well as having experience in delivering learning sessions, and it is also appropriate for the librarians to have interpersonal skills including loving people, enthusiasm about their job and being lifelong learners themselves. Those criteria are consistent with the view of Wenger et al. (2002) who point out that librarians need an understanding of library science, digital skills and interpersonal skills to “consult with practitioners and help connect people with shared or complementary interest” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 104). However, the data show that librarians face challenges such as closing the library, lack of public awareness about their significant role in the community and being replaced by volunteers in running the library which affects the quality of the services and the financial situation for the librarians.

Chapter eight: Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This qualitative study has been carried out to investigate the role of public libraries in delivering lifelong learning activities. It has explored the perceptions, perspectives and experiences of the users in using the public library as a lifelong learning organisation; it has examined the impact of lifelong learning activities delivered through the public library, on the users. It has also evaluated the role of librarians in facilitating lifelong learning activities. Specifically, it was undertaken to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the potential for enhancing lifelong learning in public libraries through a community of practice?
2. To what extent do lifelong learning activities, through public libraries, affect the users, socially and economically?
3. How much do the services of librarians add to the value of public libraries as learning environments?

This research was an interpretative study, with participant observation being the main source to generate data along with semi-structured interviews, unstructured interviews and documentary analysis. CoP as a theoretical framework has widened my understanding of the role of the public library as a lifelong learning organisation and in developing the community. Chapters five, six and seven have set out the findings while this section draws together the conclusions and implications of this research. Thus, this final chapter represents and summarises the journey of this study, reiterating how the objectives have been met. It also justifies its original contribution to knowledge, as well as the limitations of this research alongside recommendations for further research.

8.2 The findings and implications

This section highlights the significance of the findings in answering research questions and discusses briefly how these findings differ, add or support other studies in the LIS literature. I will start the discussion with the first research question: “*What is the potential for enhancing lifelong learning in public libraries through a community of practice?*” This question has been answered in chapter five. Applying CoP theory enabled me to further understand how the library can be a lifelong learning organisation, as Willey (2014) points out: “the focus of communities of practice is creating an environment that facilitates learning”. This study suggests the most important criteria that make the public library a lifelong learning institution. These include the environment, diversity, variety in resources and cooperation with other organisations in the community. Unlike the other LIS studies, such as *Involve and Dialogue by Design* (2016), which emphasise the significance of the public library as a safe, non-compulsory and natural place for people to meet, this study focuses on users’ perspectives who state that the public library provides a stimulating environment for learning which supports them to learn by interacting with each other or with librarians (Wenger, 1998).

In contrast to Wenger, this study shows that learning needs extrinsic motivation not just intrinsic motivation. The environment of the library was one of the most important factors in encouraging people to engage in learning activities. For instance, Marry, Robin and Tracy, who had learning difficulties in formal education, found the library to be the best learning place for them as it is non-compulsory. This motivated them to continue their learning. Moreover, as they have a shared learning place, it facilitated interaction with each other and they felt that they belonged to the library community. Belongingness has an impact on students’ attitude towards learning and on their confidence to become involved in learning opportunities (Levett-Jones and Lathlean, 2008, p. 104). My data shares the view of Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004, p. 8) who assert that “we need to belong to learn, and whatever it is that we belong to, can be called a community of practice”. CoP in a public library provides learners with a feeling of security through its relaxed and welcoming atmosphere which enables them to make the most of the learning opportunities presented. For instance, Jill, the librarian, responsible for the reading group, thinks that the relaxed

and informal environment in the library is one of the most significant factors in attracting people to learn in the library.

For other users, such as Aisha, the library is a stimulating learning environment because it provides a variety of types of books. Besides the books, Shahid, one of the users, prefers to study at the library due to the availability of trained staff and IT. Moreover, Wenger et al. (2002, p. 61) provide a description of a successful learning community as a neutral place “where people have freedom to ask candid advice, share their opinion and try their half-baked ideas without repercussion”. The library as a neutral place was mentioned many times by the participants of this study as they do not need to meet certain criteria to attend the library. In this sense, the library provides a successful learning community.

Diversity is one of the factors that contribute to the library as a lifelong learning institution. The library offers equality of learning opportunity as Ashmore et al. (2015, p. 59) state “in the context of LLL, valuing diversity means creating a learning environment that includes and respects difference and otherness”. The observational data highlights that diversity in the Town Hall library was not only seen in age factors, but also in social, religious and cultural backgrounds. Although the diversity is vital in CoP, Wenger does not discuss diversity further in terms of the significance of multicultural backgrounds in the community which helps to develop intercultural identity and increase social cohesion. This kind of diversity would help people to understand the meaning of tolerance and diversity of cultures. This study reveals that diversity in culture is one of the factors that stimulate people to learn. For instance, Maryam, one of the participants, emphasises that the diversity at the library supports people, especially children, to respect and accept other cultures in the community. That is to say that the public library belongs to everyone, regardless of their educational, economic or social background.

The resources of LLL, such as the spaces and facilities, as well as the variety of learning resources (printed and electronic) are one of the factors to support the lifelong learning activities in the library. As Wenger (1998) highlights, the basic components to any architectural design should meet the function of the building. My study shares the results of the study by Fox (2014) whereby a public library design that it is welcoming and accessible with a wide range of facilities and space is a key

factor in attracting people to visit the library. Besides the importance of space, facilities are significant in terms of meeting users' needs. The library provides products that are based on its users' requirements, such as computers, microfilm and microfiche. Computers are one of the factors that attract users to visit the library, either because they do not have a computer or they do not have IT skills. The Town Hall library provides free access to computers and the internet as well as teaching IT skills. A shared repertoire is the third characteristic of CoP, which means that community members (users) shared "routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions or concepts" (Wenger, 1998, p. 83). At the Town Hall library, the users shared books, newspapers and other common resources to facilitate learning within the community. The Town Hall library meets the IFLA guidance by providing a variety of types of learning resources, including fiction and non-fiction for adults, young adults and children, as well as large print and Braille materials and digital resources such as CDs, DVDs and e-books (Koontz and Gubbin, 2010). This reflects on Wenger's (1998) view that access to the resources helps in building a learning community.

The environment of the library, as well as the variety of LLL resources, encourages users to utilise the library not just as a learning place, but also as a social and leisure place. According to Craven (2000, p. 228), "the concept of lifelong learning covers all aspects of learning, whether as part of a formal educational institution or simply as a leisure pursuit". This study shows that the library has been used as a reading place. For some users, such as Aayat and Anne, reading at the library, was like leisure time to relax away from the home; in other words, autonomous learning. This is consistent with Wenger's (1998, p. 226) view that:

The learning we do while reading newspaper or watching television... Indeed, we often learn without having any intention of becoming full members in any specifiable community of practice... [It] does not mean that all learning is best done in interaction with other. There are tasks that are best done in groups and others that are best done by oneself.

However, this study reveals that even when people study alone, they prefer the library as a reading place because it is a social place so it supports the idea of social

company. Thus, in this sense, “reading [has] a beneficial effect on the enhancement of emotional vocabulary places and it improved social capital for children and adults” (Finch, 2015, online). My study also shows that the library as a leisure place has been used for online shopping, playing games or watching a favourite programme, having a chat or just for relaxing. Thus, the result of this study matches with what Paul Gee (2005, p. 216) states, that CoP in affinity space happens when members, who have common interests or goals, interact with each other virtual or physically, such as sending moves via email or playing chess with each other. A stimulating environment and free access to books and the internet, as well as trained and welcoming staff support people to use the library for unintentional learning as another aspect of lifelong learning, such as the driving theory test, booking hotels and applying different types of application. In contrast to Wenger (1998) and Lave and Wenger (1991), who insist that the individuals learn in social relation to others, this study reveals that by using the library as an information centre, people learn on their own, picking up information from numerous sources about numerous topics without even becoming a ‘member’ (Brown and Duguid, 2002, p. 128). Moreover, this study suggests that the public library is a community hub because it provides and hosts a range of services, public events and activities in a space spaces where people can meet friends and contribute to community life.

Another criterion for the public library to be a lifelong learning organisation is cooperation with other organisations in the community, such as schools and FE colleges. This kind of cooperation helps “to serve the lifelong learning needs of students... beyond the initial schooling period” (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 5). This study reveals that the cooperation between schools and the Town Hall public library has worked very well as they work on projects together. For example, a project which supports children to read more and encourage them to use the library. Some of those projects are related to art to enrich the imaginations of the children. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015, p. 5) argue that students should extend their experience by actually participating in broader communities beyond the walls of the school. Many teachers, such as Victoria, found the library to be a more stimulating environment than schools for some projects as it helped students to enhance their learning. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015, p. 4) highlight that “[CoP] is not limited by formal structures; they create connections

among people across organisational and geographic boundaries”. This kind of ‘connection’ has been found in the cooperation between FE colleges. The library was used as a place for the adult learners to meet with their tutors to learn how to read with help from a librarian who provided them with suitable materials. The ‘connection’ has also been found in another aspect of the cooperation with college by helping students to find volunteering opportunities in the library. Thus, by answering the first research question, this study provides a new understanding of the library as a lifelong learning organisation, as Wenger (1998, p. 215) highlights:

To support learning is not only to support the process of acquiring knowledge, but also to offer a place where new ways of knowing can be realised... if someone fails to learn as expected, it may therefore be necessary to consider, in addition to possible problems with the process, the lack of such a place as well as the competition of other places.

However, the study suggests that the library needs more funding to be spent on resources such as books as many users complained that most of the books are out of date. More spending is needed on facilities such as new computers and microfilm machines because they are old and sometimes stop working. Other facilities such as heating and toilets need to be improved, as they affect the quality of service. As people, especially the elderly need to be comfortable to be able to read and learn effectively.

R.Q2 To what extent do lifelong learning activities, through public libraries, affect the users, socially and economically?

This question has been answered in chapter six. This study reveals that the library has integrated social, economic and educational effects on both individuals and communities. The library provides free learning sessions for everyone regardless of their background or age, thus it does not just improve individuals’ skills and knowledge, but can also address issues of inequality. This study highlights that the Town Hall library provides valuable learning sessions for children, such as the Greenaway session and Summer Reading Challenge. The CILIP Kate Greenaway

Medal (Greenaway session) is a national programme, which provides children between four to six years old with skills to judge the illustrations in books. Although this session provides children with LLL skills, it seems that there is a gap in the literature about the significance of this session. This study explores that the Greenaway session supports children to become critical thinkers and independent learners and encourages them to read for pleasure and widen their imaginations. Most importantly, this session gives children the chance to work as a team through social interaction. This social interaction or mutual engagement supports them to learn from each other (Wenger, 1998). Thus, it is likely that it helps in developing their identity, building their confidence and improving communication skills, because this interaction does not mean copying others (Frances, 2005, p. 85).

The Summer Reading Challenge is another learning programme which instils reading as a lifelong habit. The aim of this programme is to encourage children to read during the summer holiday, thus, to inspire them to read for pleasure. Unlike other studies, such as the report by DCMS (2015), this study highlights the significance of the Summer Reading Challenge, not just for encouraging children to read for pleasure, but also to support undergraduate students (Summer Reading Champion or the volunteers) to improve their skills. This scheme gives the volunteers a chance to work with children during the summer and encourage them to read books. All the volunteers (the Champions) in this study agreed that the scheme is an opportunity for them to test their ability to work with children and build their confidence as most of them wanted to go into teaching. In this sense, the public library is considered as the first step for individuals to begin their career. However, this study suggests that the scheme needs more publicity to attract more children to join in. It also suggests that there should be more guidance to support children to pick books that are suitable for their reading level.

This study also highlights that the public library is considered as a first step to back to learning because it is neutral, welcoming and a non-compulsory learning environment. It encourages people, especially adults who had a bad experience in a formal educational setting, to learn. For instance, Tracy, who left school early due to learning difficulties and wanted to go back to learning, but the local FE College refused her because her literacy skills level was low. However, she joined the reading group in the library and started to gain some literacy skills and now she

studies at the FE College. The study also shows that the library is the first step for some non-natives to learn English. For instance, Lisa, the librarian, indicates that those people do not have any basic skills are not accepted by the College. Thus, starting to learn at the library is important to help migrants to avoid embarrassment.

Additionally, the library provides learning sessions for adults. One of them is a reading group. The reading group is a group of eight people who meet every Friday to read together, thus improving their reading skills. In this way, the group members learn through social interaction with each other. Mutual engagement is one of the components of CoP where members of a community are engaged in actions whose meaning is negotiated between them (Wenger, 1998, p. 73). In the reading group, mutual engagement is not accomplished just by reading and correcting each other, but also through discussing the books and hearing other people's opinions of them. To date, it seems that there is a gap in the LIS literature to highlight the significance of the reading group in improving literacy skills. It is almost certain that the reading group members in this study have become better learners, critical thinkers and more confident. Another learning session is Talk English which supports non-native people to learn English. Vincent (2015), in his blog, points out that libraries are important places to welcome refugees and help them by providing free access to the resources and signposting to other local services. However, my study finds that the library, especially through Talk English, is not just providing migrant people with language skills, but also promoting social cohesion. That is because the individuals in the Talk English session learn through social interaction which helps them to change direction, develop identities and define their membership of the community (Wenger, 1998).

The most common learning session in public libraries is the IT session. Most LIS studies, such as Rooney-Browne and McMenemy (2010), Hall (2011) and Crawford and Irving (2013) show that public libraries support jobseekers to find opportunities and prepare themselves for interview by offering courses and digital skills. This is consistent with the result of my study The Town Hall public library provides three kinds of IT sessions which are 'IT tasters' – this kind of session is considered a course where people are taught and given time to practise and people need to book an appointment to attend. The second one is a 'Drop in session' where people can attend without booking an appointment. This session is considered to be a one-to-

one tutorial, where people book a computer and one of the IT experts teaches them the basics and/or answer their questions. The third session is a 'jobseeking session' which is done in collaboration with the job centre. Besides IT skills, this session provides jobseekers with information about how to apply for a job, such as how to use the Universal Jobmatch website and how to write CVs. However, my study shows that the environment of the library as non-embarrassing and a non-judgemental environment is one of the significant factors in attracting people to learn IT in the library. Moreover, in contrast to Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998), many people in the IT sessions prefer to study autonomously or through interaction with IT expertise and librarians.

All learning sessions at the library are provided for everyone regardless of their educational, economic or social background which contributes to social justice and social cohesion. In addition, the learning sessions have integrated the social and economic impact of the individuals as well as the whole community. For instance, the reading group reduces the illiteracy level and brings people together, since group members learn through interaction (Lave and Wenger, 1991), thus, they are not just reading, but also experiencing social communication. It would appear also that it helps in improving people's lifestyle and improves the health habits and skills of its users. IT skills sessions help in increasing digital skills which are important for individuals to find jobs and reduce digital exclusion. On the whole community level, learning sessions at the library could save the public exchequer, since illiteracy costs the UK economy about £81.312bn each year (World Literacy Foundation, 2015, p. 5).

Moreover, the library plays a significant role in reducing social isolation. Besides the learning sessions, which provide people with skills and ability that enable them to engage in activities, the library provides a home service. The home service aims to connect isolated people with the outside world by delivering books and other information resources to the housebound and elderly. My study is consistent with what Vincent and Pateman (2012) highlight to show that the home service is a way to achieve the social justice. However, my study shows the importance of this service in reducing the isolation through the interaction between the user and the officer who delivers the materials to them. It also provides a new understanding of Wenger's social interaction, as the mutual engagement through this service aims to

build social connection, rather than simply learning. Some LIS studies such as Goulding (2006), Durcan (2011) and Vincent and Pateman (2012), evaluate the social value of public libraries in the community. However, my study provides a new understanding of the social value of the public library and its significant role in building individuals' identities. For Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 53) "learning implies becoming a different person... [It] involves the construction of identities". My study shows that for the participants in this research (children and adults), through engaging in lifelong learning activities in the library, it is almost certain that their identities were constructed by 'becoming' confident, independent, critical thinkers and active citizens. That is because learning, as Wenger (1998, p. 215) highlights, "is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming – to become a certain person or to avoid becoming a certain person".

This study reveals that the library, through the sessions, especially bibliotherapy, plays a vital role in promoting individuals' health and well-being. Bibliotherapy means "using the fiction and poetry to support and improve positive outcomes for people with mental health and well-being issues" (Walker, 2014, online). To this date, there is a gap in the literature about the impact of the bibliotherapy session, delivered through public libraries, on people with mental health problems. This study shows the importance of the environment of the library, as a non-clinical, neutral and welcoming environment, that encourages people to talk and express themselves. The therapist in this study stated that bibliotherapy in the public library is a good alternative to clinical care because it supports the therapist in reaching out to the person underneath the illness and helps him/her to re-engage in the community and overcome some of their problems. The therapist also asserted that many people have improved considerably and moved on to a more normal life. This suggests that during the session, participants do not just acquire ongoing skills, but also reposition themselves in the community. They move to places "where their voices were acknowledged and they no longer felt out of place" (Tett, 2016, p. 439). In this way, the bibliotherapy session helps in reforming participants' identities (Wenger, 1998). This study recommends that bibliotherapy should be included in public library services across the UK.

On an economic level, the data of this study suggests that the library has a direct and indirect economic impact on individuals as well as the whole community. Most of

the LIS studies, such as Rooney-Browne and McMenemy's (2010) and Child and Goulding's (2012) emphasise the significant role public libraries play in saving people money. This study is consistent with LIS research; the direct economic role of the public library has been demonstrated by saving users money by providing free access to varied information resources, such as books, newspapers, magazines, CDs and DVDs as well as free access to computers and the internet. Providing free and low cost access and activities stimulates some individuals to learn and update their skills. This reflects Wenger's perspective that in order to build a learning community, we need to "make sure that participants have access to the resources necessary to learn what they need to learn" (Wenger, 1998, p. 10). This study highlights the problems that jobseekers could face in finding jobs as they need skills such as literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. The library could support people to find jobs by providing activities, such as IT sessions and jobseeking sessions, which help the users to improve their literacy and digital skills and thus find jobs. In this sense, learning "implies becoming able to be involved in new activities, to perform new tasks and functions, and to master new understandings" (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 53). This study also suggests that the library could support people to start up their own business by providing free databases and advice. Those databases – Cobra, Fame, and Euromonitor, provide people with market information. They also provide information about how to complete tax forms and how to write business plans which support the individuals to discover their abilities (Wenger, 1998).

This study would seem to suggest that the library also has an indirect role in saving money for the public Exchequer such as on the NHS and education. For instance, as the public library provides skills that enable individuals to find jobs, the library could be saving the public Exchequer money, as "the UK taxpayers spend about £23.312bn on benefits and social programmes" (World Literacy Foundation, 2015, p. 6). A study by Fujiwara et al. (2015) values the improvement in health in terms of cost savings to the NHS in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. They find that the "aggregate NHS cost savings across the library-using English population to estimate an average cost saving of £27.5m per year". This saving was based on reductions in GP visits and reductions in medical service usage, which in turn lead to reducing public spending on health and lower tax rates (Fujiwara et al., 2015). This is

consistent with the results of my study as the therapist stated that people who attend the bibliotherapy session do not visit their GPs as often.

The study highlights that the library faces many challenges affecting the quality of the service. This public library is facing cuts to its budget and one of the effects is that there are not enough funds to inform all potential users about the services available at the library. The funding cuts also reduce the number of professional librarians. Hence, the cuts affect the quantity and quality of the resources available at the library. However, the most serious effect is the potential closure of the library building. The data from this study suggest that the users need their library and they get emotional about it, as for many of them, it is their only learning opportunity. The fundamental notion of CoP is that people learn more effectively through engaging in appropriate practice (Kim, 2015, p. 147). 'Appropriate' includes a variety of resources and a stimulating place as well as professional and trained staff. Thus, when the library is closed or run by volunteers it will not be an 'appropriate' learning place.

Another challenge which the library faces is the lack of public perception about library value which could lead to a reduction in the statistical usage of the library as some people still think the library is a collection of books. In this sense, the study recommends that more publicity about the role of the library in the community is needed. A further challenge is related to behaviour of people in the library. Wenger (1998, p. 77) states that "[in CoP] there are plenty of disagreements, tension, and conflicts... jealousies, gossip and cliques... can all be forms of participation". However, some behaviours in the library are more offensive, which might harm other users and librarians. Therefore, the library has rules to control some of these behaviours. All of those challenges have been discussed in detail in chapter five.

R.Q3 How much do the services of librarians add to the value of public libraries as learning environments?

The third research question has been answered in chapter seven. Some of the LIS studies highlight the role of librarians as teachers and IPs such as Nwezeh (2011) who places more emphasis on the role of librarians in distance learning. However, a more recent study by Casselden et al. (2015) focuses on the challenge that the

librarians face in being replaced by volunteers to run the library as a consequence of funding cuts. My study highlights the role of librarians as teachers and IPs from the perspective of librarians and users. It suggests that the librarians play a significant role in delivering LLL activities in the library. Lave and Wenger (1991) point out that in a community of practice, the significance of the knowledge, skills and capacities can be developed through social interaction with others. This interaction allows the librarians to explain the story for the learners, correct their reading, encourage them to learn independently and pose questions that help them to think critically. The librarians in this study deliver the learning sessions as proficient teachers through social interaction between themselves and the learners (library users). The librarians support learners (adults and children) to update their skills and develop their identity as independent learners and critical thinkers. The role of librarians as teachers also includes preparing for sessions and providing learners with suitable learning resources. In addition, this study shows that the librarians support sociability by encouraging people to work together. Librarians, such as Jill and Lisa, believe that in this way the learners will learn faster as they will learn from each other. This reflects on Lave and Wenger's (1991, p. 31) perspective that "learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice". The librarians as information professionals, support library users by guiding them to access the information resources and sessions that meet their needs and wishes.

The study suggests that the librarians need to meet certain criteria to be able to support LLL activities at the library. They should be trained as librarians as well as having experience in delivering learning sessions. The librarians also need to have good interpersonal skills including a love for people, which means not just loving working with people, but also understanding the activities that can improve lives. They also need to have enthusiasm to teach people and improve their own lives and they should be lifelong learners themselves. Those criteria, which emerged in my study, are consistent with the view of Wenger et al (2002, p. 104) where they discuss the role of librarians in organising a community of practice; pointing out that the librarians need an understanding of library science, digital skills and interpersonal skills to "consult with practitioners and help connect people with shared or complementary interests".

However, this study reveals that the librarians face some challenges such as losing their jobs due to the closing of the library and/or replacing them with volunteers. This study is consistent with the view of Harris (2011) that although volunteers help to keep the libraries open, there is no way that they could run the library satisfactorily. In addition, the participants of this study stated that they are unhappy with the idea that the volunteers would run the library because they are unable to deliver the services as well as the librarians do. For Wenger et al. (2002, p. 103) the ability for the community of practice to be more efficient and engaging for members depends on the ability to develop and provide access to knowledge tools and guidance about its domain; librarians can play an information-organisation role.

In addition, as librarians have specific competences to be able to deliver lifelong learning activities, the volunteers might not have them which will affect the quality of service delivery. Thus, public libraries cannot meet the requirement of the 1964 Act that every library should provide 'comprehensive and efficient' services. This study also suggests that relying on volunteers means the librarians will lose their jobs so they will be 'out of work' which might affect them socially and economically. In addition, they might be less enthusiastic about their job or might feel anxious about losing their jobs (Jordan, 2014) which could have an impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of delivering the library services. In addition, this study poses the question of who will replace the volunteers if they stop volunteering at the library. In order for the library to meet its users' needs, the volunteers should work alongside librarians, rather than replacing them. Another challenge, which the librarians face at the Town Hall library, is the lack of public awareness about their significant role in the community. This study shares Shaw (2010) and Cragg and Birkwood's (2011) suggestion that the government and some organisations such as CILIP should provide more definitions about the professional librarian and the skills and duties involved in librarianship and their role in the community.

8.3 Contributions to knowledge

This study has contributions on many levels. It is the first to apply CoP as a theoretical framework in the public library setting. Although, there is an MSc dissertation by Van Wyk (2005) regarding applied CoP that focuses on the knowledge management practice of the academic library in the University of Pretoria in South Africa. However, applying CoP deepens my understanding and it looks at the public library as a learning environment and examines the factors that make the library a lifelong learning institution. Thus, my first contribution to the context of the study is providing criteria that make the public library a lifelong learning organisation. These criteria are based on the users' and librarians' perspectives. Secondly, this study sheds light on the library as a first step to get back into learning. It also provides a thick description of the learning sessions, which are available at the library, such as the Greenaway session, Summer Reading Challenge, reading group and Talk English. By applying CoP, this study provides a new understanding of the significance of those sessions, not just by providing users with ongoing skills, but by changing direction, developing identities and reshaping their membership of the community through social interaction (Wenger, 1998). Thirdly, CoP theory enables me to provide new understanding of the role of the library in building users' identity. The participants in this research (children and adults), through engaging in lifelong learning activities in the library constructed their identity by 'becoming' confident, independent, critical thinkers and active citizens. Fourthly, my study brings to light the importance of the bibliotherapy session as an alternative to clinical care because it enables people with mental health issues to talk and express themselves as well as to re-engage in the community. Lastly, this study examines the criteria for librarians to support lifelong learning activities. As well as qualifications and experience, librarians need to love their job and they need to be enthusiastic to support people. In addition, they should be lifelong learners themselves.

Firstly, in terms of the theoretical framework, although the CoP theory helps me to understand how the library as a lifelong learning institution improves the social and economic life of the users, Wenger does not further explain the importance of social interaction of individuals as it enhances social cohesion. This study explores social interaction at many points at the library and finds that is not just for learning purposes, but also for social company. In other words, social interaction enables

individuals to learn from each other simultaneously as they support each other socially. Such social interaction renews the sense of social solidarity and enhances the trust between the community members. Secondly, this study brings to light the importance of diversity in fostering social cohesion. Wenger (1998, p. 75) points out that CoP may include young and old, conservative and liberal members who have different personal aspirations. However, the theory does not explain further the significance of multiculturalism in the learning setting which does not just impact on identity development, but also could support the idea of tolerance of other cultures and religions, which is very important in enhancing social cohesion, especially in a multicultural country such as the UK. Thirdly, although Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) emphasise the importance of the social interaction in learning, they do not further explain the significance of the learning setting itself, as extrinsic motivation, in supporting the learning process. This study highlights the importance of the learning environment, which stimulates people to learn, even if the learning is autonomous learning because the library is a social setting so people still feel the social aspect. Thus, this study suggests that CoP can be combined with social capital to study the public library as a social place that enhances the social cohesion and fosters a sense of equality within the community. For the role of the public library in the formation of social capital (see Goulding, 2004; Vårheim, 2007; Birdi et al., 2011).

In terms of methodology, as explained in the methodology chapter, ethnography has been used more in an academic library setting to investigate the user experience in libraries. However, this study suggests that ethnography is the most appropriate method to be used in the public library because it deepens the understanding of individual difference in learning, as the ethnographer has lived experience of those who are being studied. Thus, I gained an in-depth understanding of their voices, needs and complaints. In addition, this study demonstrates that ethnography is an appropriate method to investigate the effect of the learning environment on users' learning, and to examine the impact of social interaction between community members.

8.4 Limitations of the study

The fieldwork of this study took place at a public library in the North of England. Although some of the services, such as Greenaway sessions, reading group and the Summer Reading Challenge are national programmes, every librarian has a unique way to deliver those activities. In this sense, as explained in the methodology chapter (see 4.11.2, p. 90) the findings cannot be generalised and the results of this investigation may not be an accurate representation of the experiences of the other users and librarians across the country. However, the findings may be applicable to other contexts, especially some of the lifelong learning activities at the library that are successful and familiar. For instance, bibliotherapy is known all over the world as the therapist states that many researchers from Japan and America as well as from other parts of the UK came to ask about her work so they can apply it in their own libraries.

Secondly, this study is significant because it is based on the users' and librarians' perspectives about the library as a lifelong learning institution. Although the study examines the challenges which the librarians face, such as volunteers, I did not interview any volunteer who has replaced the librarians because at the time of collecting my data I have not met any of them.

Thirdly, the findings of this study are not representative of the customer services officers. Although the customer services officers play a significant role in facilitating the activities at the library, the staff sample of this study was based only on the librarians because they are responsible for delivering the learning sessions.

Fourthly, although I explained about the misunderstanding of the rules in the library and the behaviour of some users at the library, which might affect the quality of delivering the services, I did not measure the influence of the users' behaviour on delivering the library activities in depth. That is because the aim of my study is to investigate the role of the public library in delivering lifelong learning activities in the community.

8.5 Recommendations for future research

Based on the discussion of the limitations of the study, this section highlights some suggestions for further research. As the findings of this study cannot be generalised, the findings are only representative of the experiences and perspectives of participants who chose to take part. In this sense, similar research needs to be conducted in other parts of the country to gain a comprehensive picture about the significant role the library can play in individuals' lives. Moreover, as this study reveals that the public library has integrated educational, social and economic roles, thus, each one of these roles might in itself constitute a topic for further research with different perspectives. For instance, it would help to study in depth the economic role of public libraries by using quantitative methods to measure the cost savings for the public Exchequer through public library services.

In addition, some of the specific topics identified throughout this study deserve further research in order to better understand the role of the public library as a lifelong learning organisation in the community. For instance, the reasons behind some people not considering public libraries as lifelong learning places and the role of some organisations, such as CILIP, in changing this consideration. Moreover, this study identifies that the users' behaviour in the library might affect the quality of delivering library activities; it also could have an impact on librarians themselves as it might increase the source of stress for many public librarians. In this sense, more studies are needed to measure the effectiveness of the users' behaviour on delivering the library activities in depth.

As I mentioned in this study that some public libraries are run by volunteers, which can be considered as a challenge for librarians as well as the users. More research is needed to measure in depth the effect of delivering services by volunteers and the training they need to be able to deliver them, especially learning sessions. Further ethnographic studies would help to provide a thick description of the relationship between volunteers and users and how the volunteers deliver the activities or could provide a comparison between librarians and volunteers in terms of the interaction with users, as some users of this study state that the volunteers are 'not interested to help'. Moreover, as I mentioned in this study that the customer services officers deliver basic services such as lending books and booking computers, those officers

need more training to gain skills, particularly digital skills, as many of them state that they do not have enough skills, especially with the number of librarians that have been reduced across the country. Further research should to be undertaken about the role of the customer services officers in facilitating the library services and attracting potential users as well as the training they need in order to deliver the library services in an efficient way.

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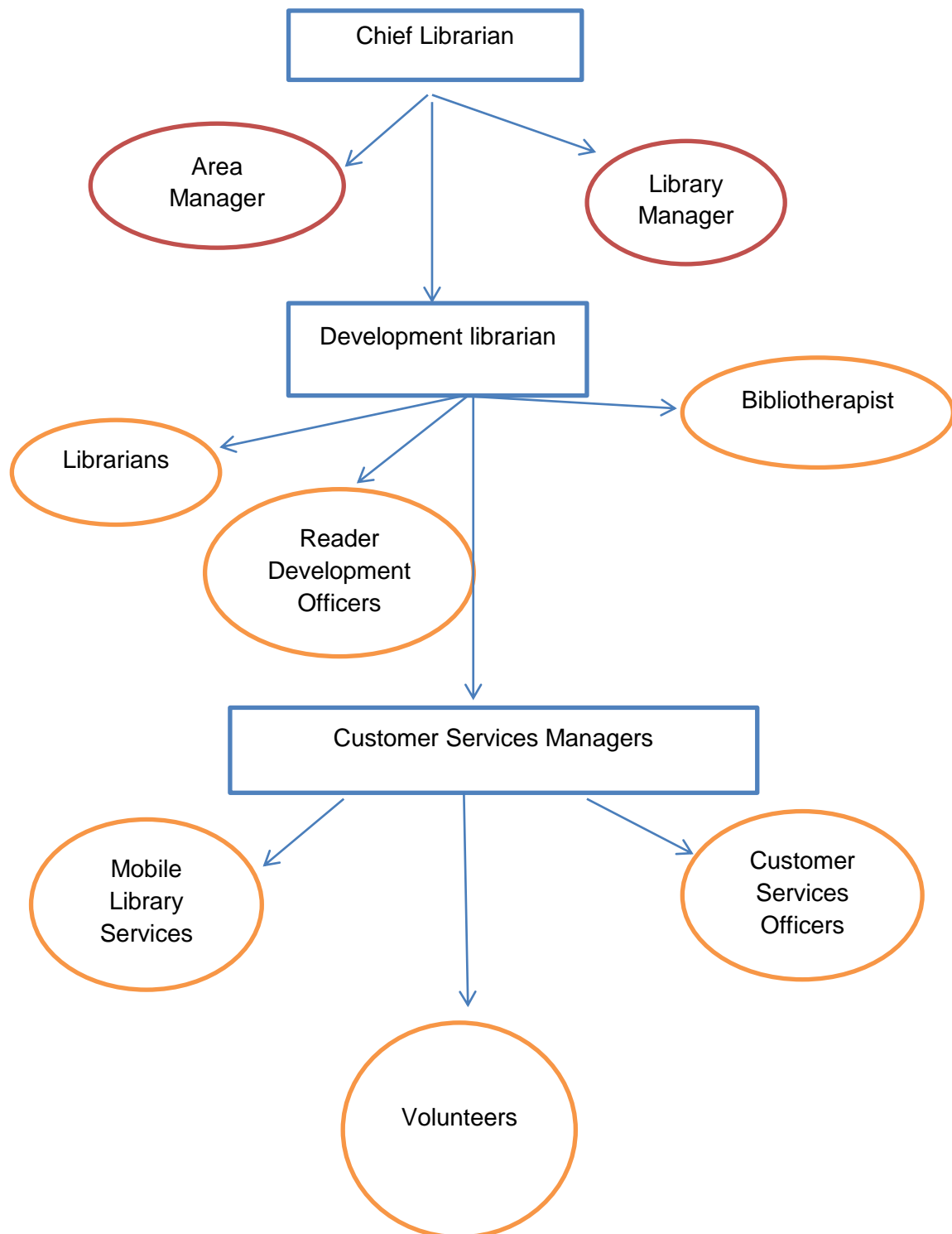
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Appendix 1: Staff Structure



Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet

University of Huddersfield

School of Education and Professional Development

Participant Information Sheet (Adult)

Research Project Title: **An ethnographic case study of the role of public libraries in facilitating lifelong learning activities in the North of England**

Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. May I take this opportunity to thank you for taking time to read this.

What is the purpose of the project?

The aim of this study is to examine the role that public libraries play in delivering lifelong learning activities. It will focus on the perceptions and perspectives of the public librarians in order to examine their role in facilitating lifelong learning activities. It also will study the users' perceptions, perspectives and experiences in order to understand the role of public libraries in improving their lives socially and economically. This is ethnographic study which means that the field work will be conducted in the library during a period of nine months. The data will be collected for this study by using observation and interviewing users and librarians.

Why have I been chosen?

It is totally your decision to contribute to this research, however, the research's main aim is to study the conceptions of librarians and users in an attempt to develop a new understanding of the role of public libraries in facilitating lifelong learning activities and to highlight the way which could help in improving the library services. So it is worth to listen to your opinions and experiences about the library activities.

Do I have to take part?

Participation on this study is entirely voluntary, so please do not feel obliged to take part. Refusal will involve no penalty whatsoever and you may withdraw from the study at any stage without giving an explanation to the researcher.

What do I have to do?

You will be invited to take part in the interview. This should take between 20-30 minutes of your time.

Are there any disadvantages to taking part?

There should be no foreseeable disadvantages to your participation. If you are unhappy or have further questions at any stage in the process, please address your concerns initially to the researcher if this is appropriate. Alternatively, please contact the research supervisor, Dr

Martyn Walker at m.a.walker@hud.ac.uk School of Education & Professional Development, University of Huddersfield.

Will all my details be kept confidential?

All information which is collected will be strictly confidential and anonymised before the data is presented in the study, in compliance with the Data Protection Act and ethical research guidelines and principles.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of this research will be written up in on the thesis and presented for assessment in **October 2017**. If you would like a copy please contact the student.

Who has reviewed and approved the study, and who can be contacted for further information?

Dr Martyn Walker, School of Education and Professional Development, University of Huddersfield.

Safaa Naji

Email: Safaa.Naji@hud.ac.uk

You will be given a copy of this information sheet to keep. You are required to sign a consent form before you are interviewed.

Thank you for taking part in this project.

Appendix 3: The Consent Form

The consent form

University of
HUDDERSFIELD
Inspiring tomorrow's professionals

THE AWARDS
AWARD WINNER
UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR

University of Huddersfield
Queensgate
Huddersfield
HD1 3DH

The Project title: *An Ethnographic investigation into the contribution of UK public libraries in facilitating lifelong learning activities in the north of England.*

My name is Safaa Najji; I am a PhD student at the University of Huddersfield. My doctoral research aims to investigate the role of public libraries in facilitating lifelong learning activities as a response to the social, economic, and political changes. In order to achieve this aim, my research involves interviews with librarians and library users, which will help me to understand the librarians' perspectives and experiences about the role they can play in terms of facilitating lifelong learning activities and their suggestions to improve this role. The research involves interviews with librarians first and then with users.

I would like to thank everyone for being a part of this interview, and to remind you that you have the opportunity to ask the researcher any questions about the study, you can withdraw at any time without giving a reason, and that the data which will be gathered in this study may be used in another publication or presentation. Your name will be anonymous, and every effort will be made to protect your confidentiality.

Participant's name (in CAPITALS)

Date:

Participant's signature:

Researcher's signature:

Date:

Thank you for your help

Safaa Najji

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Patron: HRH The Duke of York, KG

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Appendix 4: Sample of observation: field notes

Observation: 4

Location: Light room- reading group

Date: 27.2.2015

Time in: 12:30

Time out: 3:00

Librarian: Jill

When I arrived there were Jill, the librarian, Marry and Richard. Jill was helping Richard with a letter; she was reading it to him as he is blind

Robin came in, he was choosing books from the library from Lending Department. At 1:00 Jack arrived; Jill brought the books that the group changed the book they were reading last week and they did not like it. Jill said 'I have got just six copies for today I will request more for next week'.

The group was, as usual, having tea, coffee and biscuits. Lady = I have not seen her before= asked if she could drink a cup of tea 'I cannot buy one' she said. The group seemed to know her, she was Jack's daughter; Jill said 'of course you can, you are welcome'. Jill said 'she usually come to sit with a group having drinks and chat with the group'. At the end, I knew that this lady is a job seeker; she usually comes to the library for computer and training for IT skills to find a job.

At 1:18 Jill asked them again 'are you sure that you do not want to finish the story... or you want to start new one?'. Marry opened the notebook= where the group register the details about the group such as the number of people who join in and the page number they were reading= to know where were they, she said we are in chapter five. Then, the group decided to carry on with the story and when Sally=one of the group= arrive they will decide.

Observation: 11

Location: Reference library

Date: 16.09.2015

Time in: 09.30

Time out: 12:30

Today was a bit warm day, the library was quiet; there were only 4 people using computers and about 5 reading books and newspapers. 2 of people who were working on computers, they were looking for a job. This is the first time I see the library quiet that much.

A man who usually comes to the library, sitting down doing nothing, he came today walked toward the table at the same table and had a copy of the newspaper. He put it on the table and he sat at the table, staring at people as usual; then after a while he fell fast asleep.

Lady usually comes to search for a job, she came today and booked computer for searching for a job. A man was reading newspaper complained about the light as not all of them were working and he cannot see properly.

Observation: 3

Location: Local history library

Date: 23.03.2015

Time in: 12:30

Time out: 5:00

When I arrived, I sat at the enquiry desk. All the computers were booked. A man wanted to use a computer they told him 'you should wait 20 minutes; he sat at the table, then when he got the computer he was playing some games as candy crush.

A man asked about a specific member of staff that she helped him last week with tracing his family tree. He wanted her to carry on with his searching they gave him an appointment to see her tomorrow.

1:35 library busier now, a woman was watching Wrestling, she seems happy. A man was using computer for family history purpose. It is 2:10 women using microfilm for family history purpose.

Observation : 1

Location: Talk English

Date: 12. 2. 2015

Time in: 1:30

Time out: 2:30

Librarian: Lisa volunteer

When I arrived there were 4 ladies and one child, the child is under 3 years, then 2 more women joined us. I sat with the ladies at the same table. Child crying disturbed the group as well as the people who are in the room using the computers it was too noisy.

The lady who is a volunteer and responsible for this group asked the ladies to write their names on the sticky paper and stick on them so we could recognise each other, they knew each other and they seem happy. Then the librarians asked them to swipe their places to let them know each other she said 'talk to someone you never talk before.

Observation: 2

Location: Greenaway session

Date: 22.06.2015

Time: 01:30

Time out: 3:15

Librarian: Amelia

Amelia (the librarian) asked the children “what did we do in the last week” they said “we first learn about the library and how we could use it, then we look at the books and covers, but we were not allowed to read them, at the next week we opened them and created pictures, and we designed some covers”. Then Amelia said “today we are going to write reviews about books”. Amelia gave them some of the reviews about the books they have read during the sessions and they should know about which book the review describes. One boy read the review, Amy stopped him and asked children ‘do you know what this word means’, children gave her good answers. After the boy finish reading the review all children knew which book the review described.

Observation: 2**Session: Summer Reading Challenges****Date: 08/08/2015****Time: 10:30****Time out: 02:00**

Next to the entrance door, there is a separate desk the volunteers usually sit there to help people (children and parents) who would like to join the summer reading challenge. On the desk there are the stickers which usually are given to children when they finish reading 2 books, there are some posters to explain the challenge, and there are medals which are given to children when they complete the challenge. One of the staff was talking to mum and encourage her children to take a part in the Summer Reading Challenge.

Appendix 5: Questions for users' interview

1. How often do you come to the library?
2. Why do you come to the library?
3. Do you read for pleasure or for any different reasons?
4. Why do you prefer to read at the library?
5. Why do you choose the library to read the newspapers?
6. Why do you study here in this library?
7. Do you use the library resources?
8. What do you use the computer for?
9. Why do you use the computer here at the library?
10. Do you need any help searching for a job?
11. Why do you choose the library to search for a job?
12. How many hours do spend at the library?
13. How do you find the library?
14. Do you live far away from the library?
15. Do you enjoy sitting at the library?
16. Does the library help you? How?
17. Do you usually find what you want?
18. Do you think the library is important? Why?

Appendix 6: Questions for Reading group members (Users)

1. How did you know about the group here?
2. Why did you decide to join in?
3. How long you have been here in this group?
4. Do you come every Friday?
5. Do you enjoy being here?
6. How do you find it, is it helpful?
7. Can you explain how it helps you?
8. Why do love to do that, reading with the group?
9. How this group does help you in your life?
10. Why did you decide to improve your reading?
11. After joining this group, do you think that your reading has improved?
12. Do you encourage people to come here and join the group? Why?
13. Are you studying at the FE College?
14. Does being here in this group support you at the college? How?
15. Is there any difference between the group in college and the group in the library?
16. Do you think reading here help you to find a better job?
17. Do you think the librarians [Jill and Mohammed] are important for this session?
18. Do you prefer if they [librarians] stay with you all times?
19. How about your relationship with friends here? Does it help in your learning?
20. Do you use the library for different reasons? Why?
21. Can you tell me your opinion about the library services in general?
22. Do you think the library is important for our community? Why?

Appendix 7: Questions for children’s librarians (Summer Reading Challenge)

1. I read about the Summer Reading Challenge, but from your view, what is the Summer Reading challenge?
2. What the effect may have on children? Why is it important?
3. What is the role of the librarians in this challenge?
4. You said that ‘the schools have been told about the challenge’, while some parents said that they did not know about it, why do you think that happened?
5. You have mentioned ‘champions’, what is the role of the champions in this session?
6. What is the benefit could the champion have of working here?
7. In general, do you think the library is important? Why?

Appendix 8: Questions for adult's librarian (Reading group)

1. From your review, why do you think this group is important?
2. What is your role as a librarian in this group?
3. As I observed, the group members are from different age, different background and different needs, although it seems they understand each other, do you think it is hard to manage them?
4. About the library in general, why is the library important? Do we still need a library?
5. Do you think that the volunteers can run the library?

Appendix 9: Questions for adult's librarian (Economic responsibility)

1. How the library can help in developing the employability skills for people?
2. How do the business databases support individuals, economically?
3. About the library in general, why is the library important? Do we still need a library?
4. Do you think that the volunteers can run the library?

Appendix 10: Questions for bibliotherapist

1. I read about the bibliotherapy, but can you explain more bibliotherapy and why it's important?
2. Do you use just books?
3. How would the library support you in this session?
4. Do you find any differences between delivering - bibliotherapy in a library and another place like clinic for example?
5. What's the role of librarians in these sessions?
6. About the library in general, why is the library important? Do we still need a library?

Appendix 11: Sample of coded interview and observation

Codes:

Social role, Educational role, Economic role, Build confidence, Mutual engagement (COP), Identity, Role of Librarian

Data extract	Coded for
<p>“we offer LLL activities, home services which we deliver services to people at their homes, people who cannot go out. We have mobile libraries” (Audrey, librarian, 12.01.2015)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Extended the activities outside the library walls (home service) 2- mobile library 3- isolation (social role)
<p>“even if [librarian] cannot come for any reason, the group can come and sit together with each other and discuss with each other, the group always supply with books and CDs so the group open for everyone. This is kind of social role, people come to the library know each other in depth and talk spend time in the library... this group is unique it is grown and grown every time. (Audrey, librarian, 12.01.2015).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1- mutual engagement 2- Social role 3- Provide resources 4- Literacy 5- Reading group
<p>the job centre refer people who looking or jobs to library to support people who keen work, help people who on benefit , people with problems people who need training not just IT skills (Audrey, librarian, 12.01.2015).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Cooperation with job centre 2- Economic role 3- IT skills
<p>IT taster, teach IT basic especially with job seekers, over 50s age group who never used email address and want to use it for any reasons such as emailing grandsons, or people who become jobless, the session welcome any one at any age need help. (Nancy, librarian, 12.01.2015)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Educational role 2- IT skills

Data extract	Coded for
<p>Jack showed me the story he is reading (Fall from Grace) he said he loves this story because it is suspension and deductive he said I love this kind of stories, he is happy that he could read he said it is easy (Observation, reading group, 06.02.2015)</p>	<p>1- Achievement Improve reading</p>
<p>Jack started reading immediately Richard knows 'you are in chapter four' Richard is blind but he listens to the story at home, every one followed him, Richard seems listens to the story very well that he correct for Jack and said 'I am only guessing' and Robin said actually that what Jack does (every one laugh) it was funny" as Tracy said (Observation, reading group, 06.02.2015)</p>	<p>1- Mutual engagement</p>
<p>Mohammed tried to know what happened between Jack and Marry. he said "if someone apologies for you will you forgive him" but Marry refused seems that Jack hurts her feeling. Robin said "Middle East peace never happened" (Observation, reading group, 06.02.2015)</p>	<p>1- Role of librarian (support people be an active citizens)</p>
<p>While Shelly was reading, she struggled so much and read very slowly, her head was down all time but she managed to read a small paragraph when she finished they all said "well done" When she heard them she was very happy her face like brighten and her eyes twinkled (observation, reading group, 01.05. 2015)</p>	<p>1- Build confidence</p>
<p>Then Amelia said "when I was listening to your discussions now I was proud of you, when we started the sessions I had concern about you because this year the books are not suitable for children but you are good how to decide and discuss the books which one should win" then she asked "does any book surprised you that it has different score than you really think" (observation, children Greenaway, 29.06.2015)</p>	<p>1- identity 2- Children learn from the sessions 3- children improve their skills 4- support children</p>

Appendix 12: Themes, codes and sub-codes for Research questions

RQ 1: What is the potential for enhancing lifelong learning in public libraries through a community of practice?

Themes	Codes	Sub-codes	Evidence
Significant of the library (criteria for library to be LLL setting)	The environment of the library	Library is democratic, neutral, non-compulsory and safe place	<p>Robin said “the best about this group is not compulsory if you want to come if you do not want ... if you want to read Ok if you do not want it still OK we love this way no need to embarrass yourself” observation, Reading group, 30.01.2015)</p> <p>I come here [library] because I do not feel like shy or something like that if I said I do not know or said mistake(Alia, 12,02.2015)</p>

RQ 2: To what extent do lifelong learning activities, through public libraries affects the users socially and economically?

Themes	Codes	Sub-codes	Evidence
Economic role	Save money	Low paid services	lady asked for photocopier; to copy should pay 10p per sheet if black and white and 20p per sheet if coloured one (Observation, reference library, 23.02.2015)
	Jobseeker	Find job	lady who usually comes for searching for job, she said “I finally found job but I still need computer to print some paper out” (Observation, reference library, 05.03.2015)
Social role	Preventing social Isolation	Home services	Home services helps because it stops people from being isolated. We know that we're serving a lot of people who don't see anybody

			<p>from one week to the next. So our staff going in can be a new face, it can be somebody who will look out for them. We do have staff coming back and saying I'm really worried about this person, she doesn't look herself, can we contact somebody? We can contact family members or GP.. (Dena, librarian, 6.08.2015)</p>
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RQ 3: How much do the services of librarians add to the value of public libraries as learning environments?

Themes	Codes	Sub-codes	Evidence
The role of librarian	Librarian as teacher	Explain	Jill (the librarian) explained the paragraph and she explained the quotation and why it has been written in different font, because “it is quote from philosophy” which means it is not said by the person in the story (observation, reading group, 01 05. 2015)
		Encourage people to read	Librarians encourage us to read, and when we chat with them it's good but they encourage us to do more reading (Tracy, 03.07. 2015)
	Criteria to be librarian	Love their job	I am very glad that I have career and I am really lucky to have my career in

	Challenge librarian	face Volunteers replacing librarian	libraries, (Jody 2, librarian, 22.07.2015) It's the type of thing that we librarians would have normally done, but now, what we're doing is we are training the volunteers to do it. So, in one way, that's a really positive thing because that work will happen. But then sometimes I think well that's really sad, because rather than telling people what to do, I'd rather do it. (Jill, librarian, 24.08.2015)
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