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A Battle for Identity: Public Libraries in England and Wales 1850-1943

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Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is to consider the nineteenth century origins of public libraries in England and Wales, and their development up to the mid-twentieth century, in order to examine how the informational role of the library established a dominant position within the library profession. It suggests that the history of libraries has focussed on the informational role of the library and that as a result significant areas of library history have been neglected. It also argues that government and library users rarely viewed the role of libraries in terms of information but as having a broader social role and impact. The main conclusions drawn from this study are that the promoters of public libraries were motivated by the desire to improve the social and economic conditions of the working-class, that governments often viewed libraries as a means of maintaining social control, and, at times of war and social crisis the library played an important role in maintaining social cohesion. Ultimately, the emphasis placed on the informational and educational role of the library played an important role in establishing librarianship as a respected profession, and helped to differentiate public libraries, as well as proving to those who funded them that they were of value and importance.
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Chapter I
Before the Public Library Act of 1850

Introduction

The establishment of public libraries during the nineteenth century was not the result of one particular ideology or set of circumstances. What can very loosely be described as the Public Library Movement, was a diverse group from across the political spectrum which supported the creation of public libraries for a number of different reasons. At the same time, there were also those who opposed the creation of libraries, and feared that they would become instruments for social change. Nevertheless, the nineteenth century experienced rapid technological and economic progress which resulted in the
exacerbation of existing social problems and the creation of others. This increase in economic development was also responsible for increasing the demand for access to knowledge and information which was reflected by the emergence of professional journals. All of these factors had a significant role to play in laying the foundations for the public library service.

**The Problem of Working Class Leisure Time**

Throughout the nineteenth century how the working-class chose to spend their leisure time was viewed with apprehension. The central role of the public house and the level of drunkenness was of particular concern and viewed as being at the centre of many social problems. Furthermore, rapid economic development resulted in the creation of many new towns which had been constructed with little thought or consideration to the social needs of inhabitants. As a result, whilst the opportunities to undertake leisure activity were limited, provision often centred around the public house which were often used as the venue for radical meetings, and a place where newspapers of a radical nature were widely read. The popularity of the public house and associated drunkenness reinforced concerns about the immoral nature of much of the leisure activity in which the working-class participated. In the case of the wealthy and business owners it raised the unexpected issue of absenteeism as a result of drunkenness (Snape, 1995). Consequently, there was widespread support for the belief that there was a need for the reform of popular leisure. This coincided with the emergence of the concept of rational recreation which was aimed at bringing working class leisure into line with the middle-class, and public libraries were suggested a means of reforming working class leisure (Hayes and Morris, 2005)

**The Public Library Movement**

The movement was heavily influenced by Utilitarianism which viewed the library as an important institution in the movement towards a society that was more progressive and democratic. It believed that the library would provide some people with more power than
they had had previously, and it was hoped that they would become powerful allies in the
challenging of the power and values of traditional social elites. There were many within
the movement who were motivated by Idealism which saw the benefit of providing public
libraries in social terms, and saw it as a solution to some of the worst of the social
conditions associated with the Industrial Revolution (Black, 1991).

As public libraries emerged, Utilitarians drew a distinction between what were considered
higher and lower pleasures. Higher pleasures were associated with activities closely
related to learning, and those deemed lower were those closely associated with
happiness, such as recreation. These higher pleasures were viewed as being of greater
value and more worthwhile. Ideologists and Utilitarians were responsible for an emphasis
on the idea of social harmony and considered the library as an important means of helping
to produce the responsible, good citizen. Idealists viewed providing access to literature
as part of a broader social duty, whilst Utilitarians viewed libraries as providing the
opportunity for the educated to pursue their own self interests, and helped to ensure a
better use of limited resources (Black, 1991).

At the same time, both of the ideologies considered government to have a central role to
play in the setting of standards for welfare and education and both movements actively
campaigned for barriers to self improvement to be removed. Both Utilitarians and
Idealists saw libraries as a means of maintaining social control. The Utilitarians believed
that the library was a means of minimising social agitation, and helping to produce content
and highly motivated workers. Idealists were responsible for heavily promoting public
libraries during and after the 1870s when the country experienced a significant economic
slump and there was the risk of political and social agitation (Black, 1991).

The movement attracted its membership from the wealthy and the middle-class. It was
felt that the absence of libraries, that were available to all classes of society, was
unacceptable (Murison, 1971). The middle class also viewed the Public Library
Movement as being dedicated to the dissemination of knowledge amongst the poor
(Minto, 1932). The development and advance of the library movement benefited from the
creation of The National Society for the Education of the Poor in 1811, and the British and Foreign School Society in 1814, which were responsible for providing basic education for the working class. As the provision of education spread it was responsible for increasing the demand for reading material (Minto, 1932). At the same time the economic and social impact of the Industrial Revolution was also responsible for creating an increased desire for access to knowledge and information (Murison, 1971).

Moreover, the many religious societies of the nineteenth century were also an important source of support for the movement. They viewed the development of libraries in terms of the prospects of social and moral improvement. In particular it was the hoped that the appeal of libraries would be sufficient to lure people away from the public house. Unsurprisingly, they also viewed the library as the ideal vehicle for the promotion of organised religion (Murison, 1971). These religious societies had also been active in campaigning to raise awareness of the appalling social conditions of many in society, and hoped to pressure the government to address these issues (Murison, 1971). Black (2000a) has suggested that the emergence and demands for public libraries was greatest at a time of social, political, and uneconomic unrest was not coincidental.

Nevertheless, the emergence of the Chambers Journal in 1832 reflected not only the growing demand for reading material but also for information and knowledge. Within two years the journal circulation had increased to around eighty-thousand readers. In 1836, the Government reduced the rate of Stamp Duty imposed on newspapers which was responsible for an increase in the number of published journals, although in contrast to Chambers, many of these journals primarily contained fiction. The emergence of these fiction journals was responsible for increased concern regarding the type of literature being read by the working-class. A clear distinction was drawn between works of literature that could be regarded as respectable and those that were not. Consequently, the content of those journals which was deemed mainly fiction was discussed at the 1849 Select Committee. It was suggested that much of their character was undesirable and anti-social, and the creation of public libraries where better literature was available to
readers would mean that the public would be less inclined to read these journals (Minto, 1932).

Educationalists and humanitarians also had a significant influence on the Public Library Movement. Both of these groups were committed to raising awareness of the conditions which many people were forced to live, supported the demand for universal education, and campaigned for government action. The provision of books was viewed by educationalists and humanitarians as a crucial tool in supporting the social betterment of the working-class, and believed that improving the social and economic conditions of the working-class would be beneficial to society as a whole. Considering the level of support for public libraries derived from educationalists it is unsurprising that many of the first librarians had scholarly backgrounds (Murison, 1971).

The Legislative Background

The House of Commons Select Committee of 1849 was established to investigate the best means of establishing libraries that would be freely accessible to members of the public (Munford, 1951). The evidence presented to the Select Committee was notable for the strong emphasis that many of the witnesses placed on the social role that the library could play in maintaining order and the promotion of greater moral values by providing the working-class with access to a better form of recreation. However, the suggestion that public libraries would have any recreational role provided those who opposed their creation with a critical line of attack (Snape, 1995).

One of the most important witnesses to provide the Select Committee with evidence was Edward Edwards, who at the time, was the Assistant of Printed Books at the British Museum. He was asked by the Committee to provide a definition of the term public as it related to libraries. He stated that, “I would take it as embracing, first of all, libraries delivering support from public funds, either wholly or in part, and I would further extend it to such libraries as are made accessible to a greater or lesser degree” (Minto, 1932). In his evidence, he emphasised the inadequacy of library provision, and perhaps most
importantly, that library provision lagged significantly behind those of the United States and parts of Europe. Edwards evidence played an important part in the creation of the final report of the Select Committee, and appealed to the Committees sense of national and economic rivalry. Nevertheless, the accuracy of the evidence he presented has been challenged. Edwards omitted to state that the majority of free libraries in mainland Europe were scholarly in nature, and as a result tended to be used by the most highly educated members of society. Circulating and subscription libraries were also either understated or ignored completely (Sturges and Barr, 1992).

However, the majority of witnesses who provided the Committee with evidence were more concerned with the role that libraries could play in helping to alleviate undesirable social behaviour, rather than the educational and recreational benefit that libraries may have provided. The evidence presented to the Committee by the Secretary of the Religious Tract Society, for example, focussed on demonstrating the moral value that could be gained through the provision of books (Murison, 1971).

Whilst the Select Committees proposals are radical they did not advocate the creation of a universal library service. The Committees final report supported the implementation of legislation to grant town councils the necessary power to implement a levy in order to financially support the provision of a public library (Munford, 1951). The report highlighted the Committees concern that poor access to libraries had on the work of scholars and suggested that the provision of public libraries could result in social transformation, and emphasised the benefits that continental Europeans experienced that were not available in Britain (McMenemy, 2009).

The contents of the Select Committee report was debated in the House of Commons the following year (Munford, 1951). These debates provide a useful insight to a wide range of attitudes regarding public libraries at this time, and in particular, those who opposed any attempt to establish libraries. There were a number of Members of Parliament who feared the consequences of providing any sort of educational material to those who were considered to be the lower orders of society. They considered it dangerous to provide
them with any form of education, and when the possible provision of lectures was discussed, they suggested that libraries risked becoming centres for agitation and social unrest. The Bill was also opposed by those who were unconcerned by its educational implications. Some viewed the Bill as an attempt to secure a general increase in the level of taxation. Those who believed most strongly of the beneficial effects of the free market opposed the Bill as they believed that it would be detrimental to private enterprise. However, there were those who opposed the Bill who were not opposed to the concept of public libraries, but instead, were aware of the obvious inadequacies of the Bill. The Member of Parliament for Cambridge University, for example, opposed the Bill because it failed to make any financial provision for the purchase of books (Minto, 1932).

Furthermore, there were many supporters of the Bill in Parliament who did so without any strong commitment to education, providing access to knowledge or information, and the social betterment of the lower orders. Instead, they viewed the Bill with regard to the impact it was likely to have to alleviate undesirable social behaviour. The Members of Parliament for Bodmin and North Lancashire both spoke in support of the Bill as regards to the beneficial effect it would have on social morality, and consequently a lower rate of crime (Minto, 1932).

Ewart and supporters of the Public Library Movement failed to anticipate that there would be Members of Parliament who would be opposed to their attempts to implement legislation. As a result, Ewart subsequently stated that he would give his careful consideration to the objections that had been raised during the debates, and if at all possible, would amend the Bill to address concerns. In order for the Bill to be passed Ewart was forced to make two significant amendments. These included restricting the proposed act to those areas where the population was in excess of ten thousand, and including the stipulation that the act could only be adopted by councils if ratepayers had been consulted and consented (Munford, 1951). The Public Library Act was passed at its second reading by a narrow margin of seventeen votes (Munford, 1951), and received Royal Assent on the 14 August 1850 (Minto, 1932).
The Aims of the Promoters of the Public Library Act

The wording of the Public Library Act (1850) is imprecise, it does not give a clear indication of what the proposers of the Bill hoped to achieve through the passing of this legislation, nor their views on the role or impact of libraries. Although Ewart and Brotherton provided public statements of their personal views of libraries (Kelly, 1977) it is clear that that there were significant differences.

William Ewart stated his belief that the Act was a means for the economic betterment of the working-class; ‘The labouring population would be far more advanced if they had such opportunities as were afforded by means of public libraries to the working—classes of other countries’ (Kelly, 1977, p26). However, this is challenged by the considerable evidence that the middle-class viewed the libraries as institutions designed to be used by them. George Dawson suggested to the Select Committee that public libraries could be of value to manufacturers and the development and design of their products, and also to the well educated who may have desired to undertake research (Black, 2000a). Furthermore, those who were amongst the first library workers were likely to view libraries as part of an educational service and this view was also reflected by Select Committees during the second half of the nineteenth century (Munford, 1951).

Edward Edwards firmly stated his belief that public libraries should serve the whole community, and that they should not be viewed as ‘professional libraries’ (Munford, 1951). In contrast Brotherton emphasised the impact that the Act would have in terms of social reform, and in particular, he believed that the creation of public libraries would have a significant impact upon the prevention and reduction of crime. Whilst Brotheron and Ewart may have disagreed upon the impact of public libraries they were both in agreement that their creation would primarily be for the benefit of the working-class (Kelly, 1977).

However, whether the public library served the same purpose for all classes of society is also worthy of consideration. It has been suggested (Murison, 1971), that the wealthiest in society viewed libraries in terms of their ability to alleviate social problems. Their
support and interest in libraries was motivated by their desire to address the social conditions of the working-class, and consequently they emphasised the role that the library could play in supporting self improvement (Snape, 1995). In areas of the country, such as Yorkshire, mill owners had played a significant role as the driving force behind the establishment of local libraries. They were not always motivated by educationalist or humanitarian principles, but rather by the belief that a happy and contented work force would result in increased productivity and profitability (Murison, 1971).

Summary

The establishment of libraries was a complex process, and whilst some viewed the library as institutions of information and rational recreation, many viewed them as much broader social institutions. Significantly, for many the creation of public libraries was a means of addressing existing social problems. For the political establishment, they were a means of social pacification and of luring the working class away from public houses and those libraries which promoted radical literature and social agitation. At the same time, the early nineteenth century was a period in which rapid progress was made in regard to the provision of basic education for the working class, which was reflected in the demand for knowledge and information. However, at this early point in the development of libraries, it is clear that they had yet to be defined primarily in terms of information, nor was the suggestion that they should be viewed as a source of recreation met with widespread opposition.
Chapter II
After the Public Library Act: 1850-1886

Introduction

The passing of the library act did not result in an immediate increase in the number of public libraries. Local Authorities were slow to adopt the Act either for financial reasons or because they viewed public libraries as a duplication of the service already provided by subscription libraries. Those authorities which adopted the Act were encouraged to
look at the library model used by academic and other libraries, and were heavily
influenced by Mechanics Institutes and the need to provide suitable material that would
support adult education. Libraries increasingly became institutions that provided access
to knowledge and information, with the support of librarians, although it produced conflict
with Library Committees and the users of public libraries. Library Committees were
conscious of the need to increase the number of people making use of the library, and
were willing to accept the recreational use of the library and the provision of fiction. In
contrast, librarians were beginning to view libraries primarily as educational institutions
and were less liberal regarding the provision of fiction and the use of the library as a
means of recreation.

Librarians and Librarianship

The belief that libraries had a substantial role to play in the provision of recreational
activity, and in the reduction of drunkenness and crime, was one that was not shared by
the library profession (Snape, 1995). The majority of librarians appointed to work in public
libraries represented a wide variety of backgrounds. They received no training, and for
many the pay was poor, and library work was not considered a respectable middle-class
profession (Kelly, 1977). For example, the first librarian appointed to the work at the
library in Bolton was a former policeman. Furthermore, it was some considerable time
before the apprenticeship scheme that was established in some of the larger libraries
began to have an effect, and produced large numbers of librarians fully grounded in the
fundamental principles of library work (Hoare and Black, 2006). However, by the 1870s
a number of libraries employed staff who had developed sufficient experience and
professional expertise, and larger libraries continued to recruit and train assistants, in the
belief that they would at some point be appointed as librarian (Kelly, 1977). At the same
time, although librarians during this period typically considered their role to involve
selection and provision, and the cataloging and curation of stock, reference and enquiry
work did not emerge as part of the profession until the second half of the twentieth
century. Furthermore, the staffing of libraries typically remained inadequate. In Wales,
Swansea and Cardiff were the only libraries that employed more than ten members of
staff. The libraries in Aberystwyth and Holyhead were among the first to employ women, but did so as they were unable to offer the rates of pay that many male librarians expected (Hoare and Black, 2006).

The Library Association

The creation of a library association in the United Kingdom owed a great deal to the activities in the United States that had resulted in the creation of the American Library Association. It is clear that librarians working in the United Kingdom quickly identified that an equivalent organisation would be of immense value (Minto, 1932), and would provide them with the opportunity to meet and share experience, but also reflected the growing emergence of a professional library culture (Black, 2001). The Constitution of the Association stated that its main purpose was ‘to unite all persons engaged or interested in library work, for the purpose of promoting the best possible administration of existing libraries and formation of new ones where desirable’ (Minto, 1932). Nevertheless, the creation of a statement of aims ignored the reality that public libraries were managed and run according to the aims and principles of local authorities, and that the aims of the Library Association could only be met with their cooperation. The Library (Murison, 1971) Associations battle to lobby for the removal of the rate limit, reflected that it would be some considerable time before the Association would become an effective organisation capable of providing the library profession with leadership and representation (Kelly, 1977).

The Users of Public Libraries

In the early years, public libraries were characterised by the absence of national or local standards and guidelines regarding how they should operate and the services provided. Consequently, libraries attempted to provide as broad a range of services as possible whilst their users largely demanded access to works of fiction (Snape, 1995). At the same time, the use of the library, and the development of literacy and reading, were closely connected to social conditions, and in particular to the standard of housing. While the
provision of public libraries slowly increased, those who wanted to use the library needed to have the time to read, and suitable conditions for reading, and for many living conditions failed to meet this last criteria. It was not until the 1860s that employers began to offer time off work and this was increasingly viewed as normal. This coincided with an improvement in the economic position of the majority of the population, housing conditions improved, and this was significant as regard to reading and libraries. Many now found that they lived in housing which provided improved access to natural light and as a result was more conductive to reading (Hoare and Black, 2006). However, during this period the term Free Library was often used as frequently as public library. This had a detrimental impact upon how they were viewed, particularly by the affluent middle-class, who often considered them to be a similar institution to that of the soup kitchen (Kelly, 1977).

Services for Children

The Library Act (1850) provided local authorities with the power to create libraries for young people (Hoare and Black, 2006) and whilst there was an awareness amongst librarians that although those who had recently left school were literate, they did not necessarily have the skills to enable them to fully understand what they had read. However, these services were generally only available for children between the ages of twelve and sixteen, and there were often strict rules imposed aimed at encouraging acceptable behaviour (Ellis, 1967).

Nevertheless, as with many other libraries, they experienced a greater demand for the books than they were actually able to provide (Munford, 1951). In Birmingham in 1871, for example, the libraries collection consisted of four hundred and fifty-six books, whilst there were over sixty-thousand children living in the city (Hoare and Black, 2006). The public library in Manchester can be considered one of the leading institutions regarding the provision of material for children during this period. In 1858, its librarian had supported the provision of material for older children in libraries and the creation of children’s reading rooms (Munford, 1951), and its first children’s reading rooms were opened in 1861 (Hoare
and Black, 2006). However, significantly this was not motivated solely by the desire to work with children, but rather, as a result of an economic depression in Lancashire, and the need to keep younger library users away from unemployed artisans (Ellis, 1969).

At the same time, the Elementary Education Act (1870) was not the first legislative attempt to improve access to education. However, it was a contributory factor in the subsequent rapid increase in the adoption of library legislation. By 1870, only fifty authorities had adopted the Act. By 1898, this had increased to almost three hundred in England and Wales (Ellis, 1967). Furthermore, the number of libraries providing a service for children increased after 1870 (Ellis 1969), and Nottingham was one of the libraries that adopted the model of service provision first implemented in Manchester (Munford, 1951).

However, it is significant that the most successful children libraries were those that cooperated with schools (Ellis, 1967) and the material provided for children often focussed heavily on supporting educational and intellectual development, and libraries often worked closely with teachers and schools to ensure that the correct material was selected (Hoare and Black, 2006). In 1889, a children’s library was established in Norwich and a selection of books was sent to the cities schools and Head Teachers were given the responsibility of distributing them to students. Although, when faced with increasing costs the Library Committee transferred responsibility for the collection of books to the Norwich School Board in 1900 (Stephens, 1917).

At the same time the question of whether public libraries should provide a service for children remained a controversial subject (Kelly, 1977). In those areas where services for children were provided they were often motivated by the middle-class who were concerned that children were taught the correct social behaviour, and particularly concerned about children in the large industrial towns. Additionally, many of the libraries combined the provision of books with strict rules regarding cleanliness and acceptable behaviour. Despite the increasing number of libraries that provided separate reading rooms for children, they were generally seen as luxuries, and this view would persist into the early twentieth century (Hoare and Black, 2006).
Extension Activity

Meanwhile, the adoption and provision of extension work was particularly popular amongst those librarians who had a strong belief that their work was a part of the education system, and already possessed the desire to do whatever was in their power to promote educational work (Kelly, 1977). The relationship between the library and the provision of education was responsible for influencing and affecting the priorities of many libraries and librarians, and was reflected by the lack of enthusiasm for the provision of fiction (Barr and Sturges, 1992).

One of the first libraries to make a comprehensive provision of activities was in Warrington. However, the demand amongst libraries to provide classes was so great that the 1855 Library Act contained a clause giving authority to provide science and art classes. At the same time, the Libraries Act (1884) encouraged library authorities to provide schools of art and science and bid for grants from the Department of Science and Art (Sturges, 1986). However, the provision of technical classes had increasingly been viewed as an activity of little importance within public libraries by 1900 (Kelly, 1977). Furthermore, libraries were forced to terminate much of their extension work of an educational nature by the Education Act (1902). This obliged Library Authorities to pass control of technical schools to newly created Education Committees which had been given responsibility for all of a local authorities education provision (Sturges, 1986).

The Provision of Newsrooms

At this time, the provision of newspapers in public libraries was an important means of accessing news and information. Whilst the earliest pieces of library legislation had not provided libraries with the authority to purchase newspapers many were able to acquire copies through donation from either library users or publishers. The type of material provided during this period was extensive, ranging from foreign newspapers to professional journals and newsrooms became one of the most popular and heavily used
services. Nevertheless, they were not immediately popular with librarians as they were expensive to provide and maintain and often occupied a large space within the library. Furthermore, some public libraries, such as in Liverpool, did not provide newspapers for its users. Many librarians who supported the provision of newsrooms did so in the belief that readers would progress to material of greater literacy value. Consequently, it is not surprising that journals that discussed issues such as temperance were encouraged and deemed desirable reading by librarians (Kelly, 1977).

Reference Departments

Meanwhile, the provision of reference services for library users was an area of significant weakness in a number of libraries. Libraries in the larger industrial towns were usually better equipped than those in smaller towns, where many libraries had collections of significantly less than one hundred thousand volumes, and few were able to offer a complete library service and many had no reference section at all. Furthermore, in Leamington Spa, library users had been allowed to play chess and draughts in the reference library, which reflected that in many libraries reference departments were not yet seen as central part of a professionally run library service (Kelly, 1977).

Library Funding

Local Authorities continued to be slow to adopt the Act, and this reflected that the rate limit had a significant impact on the type of library service that could be provided. In some cases the Act was not adopted as the rate was considered wholly inadequate to support a library service (Kelly, 1977). This was particularly true for those authorities in working-class areas (Munford, 1951). A small number of libraries, such as Oldham, had been able to remove the rate limit in the 1860s. Whilst others soon followed, many lacked the financial resources required to gain the necessary permission, and were forced to rely upon an inadequately small library rate to provide its service (Minto, 1932).
At the same time, it has been suggested that only a limited number of libraries were able to provide a library service that library users in the early twenty-first century would consider adequate. Thomas Greenwood was active during this period compiling figures relating to the number of books contained in a library collection. His figures indicate that even relatively late into the second half of the nineteenth century, only four libraries were able to report that they had collections of over one hundred thousand volumes. It is not surprising that these libraries included Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool which played a prominent role in industrial nineteenth century England (Kelly, 1977).

However, in contrast to these libraries in large urban centres, smaller libraries found it harder to provide such an efficient and comprehensive service. In these libraries users were likely to find that there was a far greater emphasis placed on the lending library and the newsroom (Kelly, 1977). The Parliamentary Return of 1885 provides a useful insight into the nature of the reference sections in public libraries at this time. Three-quarters of those that provided a response indicated that they had no more than five hundred reference books. In 1886, of those libraries which declared that their total collections consisted of fewer than ten thousand volumes, almost half were to be found in areas which served populations of less than twenty-thousand people. The inadequacy of the penny rate was clearly evident and this would have been felt even more acutely in areas such as Norwich, where either through intent or oversight the full penny rate was not levied (Kelly, 1977).

**Book Selection**

The promoters of the Public Library Act (1850) believed that the need for libraries to develop and build their collections and meet the demand for books could be met through donations (Kelly, 1977). However, in 1855 amending legislation had been passed by the House of Commons, which allowed library authorities to purchase books, newspapers and other material. The ability of libraries to purchase newspapers attracted particular criticism from library critics (Munford, 1951).
At the same time the Act failed to have an immediate significant impact. Although libraries now had the necessary powers to enable them to purchase books, many continued to lack the necessary funding to undertake this activity in any systematic way, and remained heavily reliant upon donations from members of the public. The financial restriction that libraries were under was reflected in many cases by the absence of most expensive books from their collections. The Library Committee in Cambridge, for example, implemented a general rule that books that could not be replaced for five shillings or less would not be placed in the lending library (Munford, 1951).

At the same time, the public library in Brighton had created a collection of over twenty-two thousand volumes, which had been obtained entirely by public donation (Kelly, 1977). However, critics rapidly identified the inadequacy of libraries using this method to develop their collections, the risk that the content of collections could become unbalanced, and completely unsuited to the needs of a libraries users. Edward Edwards was quick to advocate the building up of library collections through systematic purchasing based upon carefully prepared lists. In reality however, very few libraries were fortunate enough to have the financial ability to approach collection development in such as systematic way (Kelly, 1977). Comments regarding the adequacy of the provision of reference collections were critical of the lack of funds, the reliance upon donations and poor training of staff (Hoare and Black, 2006). However, as the century progressed libraries focussed on the provision of reference departments as a means of providing access to information and they were increasingly viewed as important (Black, 2001). Manchester library, for example, had begun to significantly alter the composition of its collection. It acquired eighteen thousand volumes in which social science and technical subjects were strongly represented (Munford, 1951). As society experienced rapid change, as a result of progress in the areas of science and technology, librarians believed that they could attempt to help control human progress by organising written records of knowledge. Consequently, it increasingly became a central aim of the library profession (Black, 2001).

Library Committees
At this time it was common for Library Committees to be responsible for the final decision regarding the purchase of books. In the case of some libraries, the librarian would be responsible for producing a list of recommended purchases which would be presented to the Committee. In other libraries, they would have no involvement in the purchase of books (Snape, 1995). Those librarians who were responsible for the creation of book acquisition lists tended to include those titles that the librarian believed that their Committee would accept. In some circumstances expert guides and book reviews would be used by librarians as aids to the selection process. Although, a large proportion of popular literature is unlikely to have been reviewed (Barr and Sturges, 1992).

However, the selection of books was often a reflection of the social and religious composition of the Committee. They were dominated by the middle-class with little or no literary knowledge, although those Committees with little literary knowledge, generally expected to receive guidance from the librarian. However, the relationship that many librarians had with their Committee could often be fraught and complex. The Committees were conscious of the number of people using the library and wanted them to remain as high as possible. This meant that they typically wanted to purchase those books that would be popular, which frequently meant that fiction was prioritised over other types of literature. If the librarian had a strong belief in the educational role of the library these acquisitions would bring them into conflict with the Committee (Snape, 1995).

Concurrently, Ernest Baker criticised Library Committees for being overly impressed by cheap books, and warned that this exposed libraries to accusation that they were too leisure orientated. Nevertheless, regardless of the opposition of librarians, the majority of Committees supported the provision of popular novels. They did not share or were not interested in the professional ideology of librarians. They increasingly viewed recreational reading as an acceptable leisure activity and considered the level of library loans as a measure of a libraries success. One of the most notable examples was provided by the Liverpool Library Committee, who declared its pleasure that fiction accounted for a significant number of books loaned by the library, and that the library was able to provide library users with a socially beneficial pastime. At the same time, Committees had to be
aware that the decision to restrict or exclude fiction from their collections was one that could have a serious impact upon the library. The librarian of Preston library, for example, provided a stark warning that those libraries which had opposed or restricted the provision of fiction, were often those which were the least used (Snape, 1995).

Meanwhile, the censorship of material that was deemed radical, immoral or sensationalist was common in many public libraries (Black, 2001), and some groups such as the very poor were excluded and deemed outside of the remit of the library. Peatling (2004) has suggested that from the 1870 onwards, the provision of public libraries provided government as means of nationalistic and imperialistic indoctrination, and that book selection meant that libraries possessed a powerful tool for distributing patriotic forms of literature and suppressing radicalism.

Nevertheless, from the 1880s onwards libraries were characterised by the growing acceptance that the provision of fiction in libraries did not have to be justified in terms of self improvement and improving social morality. There was a growing recognition that the provision of fiction was an important service for those employed in the new industries where work was often dull and tedious (Snape, 1995). However, in those libraries where those with no relevant skills or experience were appointed to the role of librarian, it is likely that the task of book selection was one in which they lacked the confidence to create and use their own individual process for the selection of suitable material, but rather relied upon the opinions of literacy critics (Barr and Sturges, 1992).

**Fact Versus Fiction**

At this time, the demand from library users for works of fiction was a source of great concern to many librarians and some Library Committees (Kelly, 1977). In particular, the novel was commonly regarded as an inferior form of literature and some librarians continued to echo concerns that novel reading was a waste of time and debilitating. The majority of critics singled out sensationalist novels in particular for criticism (Barr and Sturges, 1992), and women and children were considered to be at considerable risk when
reading serial and romance novels. Furthermore, the majority of librarians did not view the fact that for many, reading was a source of pleasure as a recommendation for the provision of fiction, and in fact, for much of the nineteenth century pleasure itself was a concept that was viewed with suspicion (Ross, 2009).

Nevertheless, the newly literate working-class overwhelmingly chose to read novels, and for some librarians, this provided another reason for these types of books to be viewed with mistrust and suspicion. In particular, mass market fiction was considered a threat to social harmony as it did not promote the moral and cultural values of the middle-class (Hayes and Morris, 2005). Furthermore, the concern regarding novels was not limited to their content and choice of subject but also about the author. There was a frequently stated belief that the writers of novels were uninformed and badly educated, and were ready by the uninformed and poorly educated (Barr and Sturges, 1992). However, as librarians attempted to establish library work as a respected profession, they became increasingly concerned about what should be done about the problem of the provision of fiction (Ross, 2009). The response of many librarians to the issue of the novel was to purchase books by the most popular authors but in quantities that bore no relation to the levels of demand (Barr and Sturges, 1992). However, in contrast Blackburn Library Committees response to the issue of fiction was to attempt to satisfy demand as fully as possible (Snape, 1995).

When faced with the continuing demands from library users for fiction, librarians positioned themselves as those responsible for the setting of standards. They considered themselves to posses the necessary skills to identify and select the best novels, and were responsible for implementing schemes to reduce demand for fiction, such as the two books system, where library users were able to borrow two books at the same time, but the second had to be a work of non-fiction. Furthermore, it was also common for libraries to delay the purchase of new books for six months by which time they hoped that the level of demand would have declined (Ross, 2009). It was a strongly held belief of many librarians that the foundations of the library were built upon its educational purpose, and it was their concern that the continued provision of fiction risked undermining this purpose.
Moreover, it has been suggested that the response of many librarians to the presence of fiction within the library was the attempt to emphasise the educational role of the library (Kelly, 1977).

**Summary**

Throughout this period the view of librarians regarding the nature and the role of the library differed notably from other interested groups. Whilst they were motivated by the need to demonstrate that the library met a social need, they frequently defined libraries in terms of education and what they considered to be better forms of literature. As a result, they adopted a number of approaches to discourage the recreational use of the library and the borrowing of works of fiction. Nevertheless, the influence and important role played by Library Committee should not be ignored. In contrast to librarians, they were more concerned with ways of maximising the use of the library and were less concerned with the purpose for which the library was being used. Consequently, their views regarding the recreational use of the library and the provision of fiction contrasted significantly from those of librarians. At the same time, whilst library users were keen for public libraries to support them to gain technical and administrative skills they also continued to expect the library to provide them with a source of recreation. Newsrooms continued to be heavily used and libraries continued to provide an important service for children. Nevertheless, regardless of whether the library was viewed in terms of information or recreation, the financial constraints imposed upon libraries and the lack of trained library staff, meant that many libraries struggled to perform either function adequately.
Chapter III
Public Libraries from the Victorian Period to the Early Twentieth Century

Introduction

The debate regarding the role and purpose of the library continued to dominate. The majority of librarians viewed libraries as educational institutions, and attempted to restrict the presence of fiction within library collections, and to prevent the use of the library by those that they considered undesirable. At the same time, non-educational services continued to be heavily used and the majority of the users of the library continued to demand access to works of fiction. Significantly, libraries increasingly began to be characterised by the services that they provided for children and the increasing use of the library by women. Amongst the political elite the belief that the role of libraries was to counteract undesirable social behaviour was slow to change and this was most clearly highlighted in the years before and after the First World War when the government had a heightened fear of social unrest. However, as the country was faced with greater economic competition, the government increasingly viewed libraries in terms of education and their value to economic activity, and this was to have a lasting impact on the nature of library services.

Librarians and Librarianship
Librarians were frequently viewed as being responsible for encouraging people into the library who may otherwise have not used them. Additionally, there was a desire for libraries to be seen as welcoming and comfortable places that were aimed at providing a resource for the general public, and not intended to be used by academics (Hoare and Black, 2006).

At the same time, library work when compared to other professions, continued to be poorly paid. Rates of pay ranged from two hundred and fifty pounds a year to as little as twenty pounds. In addition, whilst there was a clear need for library staff to have received formal training, there was an appreciation that it was unlikely that men and women would be willing to undertake a course of training, in return for a salary of between fifty and sixty pounds with the prospect that it would slowly increase to one hundred pounds a year (Ellis, 1981). Furthermore, the profound impact of the penny rate has been widely stated, and prevented libraries from employing competent members of staff who possessed the skills required to enable the library service to develop. Norwich for example, had been one of the first authorities to adopt the Public Library Act (1850) with the library opening in 1857. Nevertheless, the appointment of George Stephen in 1911 was the first time that the library had employed a qualified librarian. Subsequently, Stephen criticised the unsystematic way in which the libraries collection had developed and the inadequacy of its reference collection (Hepworth and Alexander, 1957).

Meanwhile, in many libraries the role of the librarian was regarded as handing out books to library users, and it was widely believed that anyone regardless of their qualifications and level of education was suitable for the role. As a result, libraries were typically required to employ those whose education was limited to an elementary level, something that would have prevented them from becoming teachers, but was considered adequate for their role in the library. At the same time, it has been suggested (Ellis, 1981) that the levels of staffing in libraries on the eve of the First World War were inadequate, and that larger public libraries were weakened as experienced staff were either conscripted into the armed forces, or were required for other forms of war work. In the case of Newcastle library, by 1916 of its thirty-eight staff, fourteen had joined the armed forces or had left to
work in munitions factories (Sturges, 1987). Consequently, in many libraries few of those working in senior positions had professional qualifications.

The Library Association

A formal education and training programme was not established for librarianship until 1885, and in 1902 an agreement was reached with the London School of Economics to provide a course of instruction which continued until 1917. However, this was replaced in 1919 when a full-time library school was established at University College London, which would remain the only full-time library school in the country until 1945. Nevertheless, it is clear that many library staff did not consider library work as a profession, and that many were unwilling to undertake professional training, particularly at their own cost, when gaining professional qualifications was no guarantee of either career progression or an increase in pay (Kelly, 1977). Furthermore, the Association continued to struggle to establish itself as an effective or credible organisation. Significantly (Murison, 1971) during this period, it had little on no involvement with the movement to establish the creation of county libraries, and similarly, its attempts to secure legislative change to remove the rate limitation continued to be unsuccessful (Kelly, 1977).

Books and Library Collections

As had been the case since 1850, only a limited number of libraries had the financial resources to enable them to rapidly increase collection size (Kelly, 1977) and consequently public libraries during this period continued to be plagued by a shortage of books. Additionally, libraries continued to rely heavily upon donations or gifts. It has been suggested that as much as fifteen percent of library books were obtained by donation, and this increased to forty-one percent for journals and periodicals. Consequently, for many public libraries the results of relying upon donations was unsatisfactory, and impacted detrimentally upon the efficiency and adequacy or the service that they were able to provide (Kelly, 1977). In Wales, the needs of those whose first language was
Welsh were typically ignored by public libraries, and in some smaller libraries no provision was made for Welsh language material in their lending collections. In the case of Pontypridd, where in 1901 about thirty-three percent of the population spoke Welsh, the library had a total collection of two thousand books and other material, only two of which were in Welsh (Hoare and Black, 2006).

However, it is significant that during this period public libraries were identified by the government as a means of distributing propaganda. Newspapers that were critical of the conduct of the war ran the risk of being withdrawn from libraries, criticism of Lord Kitchener in both The Times and the Daily Mail resulted in the Library Committee in Bradford considering the withdrawal of both publications (Black, 2007). At the same time, librarians also censored or filtered the types of material contained within their libraries collection. The Daily News, for example, was removed from some public libraries after a change in editor led to the paper opposing the Boer War (Peatling, 2004). In Leamington Spa, the public library celebrated providing access to material denouncing and attacking Germany’s war aims, and those that encouraged British patriotism (Black, 2000b). Furthermore, many other libraries followed this example and removed German material from collections, and many others also restricted socialist literature (Peatling, 2004).

Nevertheless, there was a notable shift during this period of the type of material that library users expected the library to provide. During the war, libraries were subject to demands from readers for material on the causes and consequences of the conflict (Black, 2000), and increasing number of users also requested material relating to technical education, and commercial and industrial information (Kelly, 1977).

At the same time, it is clear that many libraries, didn’t or were unable, to provide the services and facilities that may have been expected for comprehensive research. Furthermore, for those libraries who struggled to provide a service with low levels of funding, it was not practical or realistic to have expected them to provide access to a large reference collection. The expectation that libraries could provide both a lending and a reference department was unrealistic and, consequently, in the case of most libraries the decision was taken to prioritise the lending department (Ellis, 1977b).
Library Funding

The difficulty in providing and maintaining a library service that library users would have considered adequate was reflected in areas such as Oldham and Bury, where the Library Authority had gained permission to increase the rate they were able to charge. However, obtaining permission to charge a higher rate was a complex and expensive process and an option that was available to very few Authorities (Kelly, 1977).

Nevertheless, by the turn of the twentieth century, many libraries found that once their fixed costs had been accounted for they had little funding left for the purchase of books and periodicals. Between 1900-10, public libraries experienced a reduction in the level of funding that they received and it has been suggested (Ellis, 1977a), that in 1912 more than twenty percent of public libraries were expected to operate on an annual income of less than two hundred pounds. Furthermore, in some instances, libraries were not the sole beneficiary of the library rate. In the cases of Derby and Liverpool, the library rate was also used to provide financial support for a museum and an art gallery. In general, libraries that struggled to provide a service were typically forced to resort to hiring parts of their collections, typically from subscription libraries. Consequently, the recognition of the inadequacy of public libraries resulted in a growing consensus for the need of reform (Kelly, 1977).

At the same time, it continued to be the efficiency of libraries in small towns or villages that were most adversely affected by financial constraints. In many cases they did not attempt to establish their own independent library service, but instead wherever possible they sought to cooperate and collaborate with larger neighbouring local Library Authorities. However, in those small towns and villages where libraries were provided, they would not be comprehensive, but rather a reading room and a few hundred books (Kelly, 1977). In Wales, the progress of public libraries was dependent upon the Carnegie Trust. By 1914, more than twenty-six library authorities had received grants from the Trust, with a combined total of over seventy-thousand pounds. As in many areas of
England, smaller authorities with limited financial resources were only able to provide library services of limited quality (Hoare and Black, 2006).

Although it is clear that some libraries were financially better off than others, the crucial factors for many libraries was whether they were the sole beneficiary of the library rate, the size of the population that they served, and whether from the library rate they were required to repay any loans. An attempt was made in 1913/14 to get an amended Bill passed by the House of Commons which proposed an increase in the rate limit to two pence which was unsuccessful. Any further attempts at reform were ultimately delayed by the outbreak of the First World War (Ellis, 1977b).

**Library Users**

Consecutively, there was an emerging demand for public libraries to provide technical, commercial and industrial information. The level of demand resulted in the creation of an information bureau at the library at Croydon and, both during and after the First World War, similar services were established in public libraries in industrial towns and cities. The increase in the provision of information by libraries enabled them to become an instrument of female emancipation and this was reflected in the increasing numbers of women making use of the library during this period. Furthermore, they were also a means of training and education for many women while there remained many obstacles preventing them from participating in more formal education (Kelly, 1977).

**Services for Children**

The Education Act (1902), provided an opportunity for increased cooperation between schools and public libraries. This cooperation took many forms, including the lending of public library books to schools although, it is important to note, that these books were aimed at recreation reading rather than supporting the educational curriculum. The Education Committees encouraged children to read books although cooperation was not always popular amongst teachers or librarians. Furthermore, teachers were often
indifferent to the role of the public library whilst librarians considered that it was not their role to cater to the specific needs of special groups within the community, and that the needs of children of school age should be met entirely by school libraries. However, increased cooperation was supported by some librarians who viewed its ultimate aim as encouraging children to continue to use the library once they reached adulthood (Ellis, 1969).

Nevertheless, the provision of services for children remained a key battle ground for librarians in the battle to promote worthwhile reading as they considered children to be in need of strong guidance and encouragement to read the books that were considered to be of the best quality (Ross, 2009). In 1905, for example, the former President of the National Union of Teachers had provided a list of the types of books that he considered it suitable for libraries to provide for young people, these included academic subjects such as history, but importantly also advocated the provision of fiction. Meanwhile, John Ballinger, the librarian at Cardiff, recognised that for many children the library would be the only suitable place available to them to read, and was unconcerned whether they read their own books or used those of the library. Cardiff was one of the first libraries to appoint a female superintendent with particular responsibility for working with children, which included providing them with skilled advice regarding the choice of books, and helping to ensure they had access to books suitable for reference and home reading. However, the provision of books for young people continued to be reliant upon the motivation of a small number of isolated library staff, who regardless of the financial constraints placed upon the library, remained committed to providing material for this groups of readers which had typically been overlooked (Ellis, 1969).

However, in many areas of the country librarians displayed an increased awareness of the need to encourage children to use the library. In 1907, Norwich Library Committee introduced a scheme to encourage children of school age to use the library using a collection of books selected by school teachers (Stephens, 1917). Similarly, in Peterborough, the librarian authorised the purchase of children's periodicals such as Chatterbox and transferred older issues of publications from the general reading room,
such as the Illustrated London News and The Strand Magazine, providing younger users of the library with access to quality magazines and to serialisations written by some of the best authors of the time (Ellis, 1969). Nevertheless, the rate limit and the First World War were both obstacles to the development of facilities for children, although the provision of material for children had made rapid progress during this period. However, it is significant that by 1914 the vast majority of librarians were prepared to accept the special provisions made for children in libraries (Kelly, 1977).

*Newsrooms*

Meanwhile, the provision of newspapers, journals and periodicals continued to play a significant role in attracting users to the library. However, whilst they were popular and heavily used librarians became increasingly sceptical about their value and place within the library. It was believed by some librarians that rather than progressing onto more worthy works of literature, the readers of newspapers rarely read anything else. This represented an important shift in professional ideology at a time when many libraries continued to provide smoking, games and recreation rooms (Kelly, 1977).

*The Reference Library*

At the same time, the attitude of librarians towards the provision of reference departments did not alter radically from that of earlier periods, although library users wishing to make use of the libraries reference department, were likely to have found it in a state of neglect. Furthermore, in the case of Liverpool library the reference department also contained fiction and was criticised by many within the library profession. In response, the Library Committee argued that as a result of the difficult social and economic conditions the library had a significant role to play in providing the people of Liverpool with a means of entertainment (Kelly, 1977).

*Fact Versus Fiction*
Meanwhile, librarians attempted to develop techniques to enable them to better deal with the issue of fiction within the library. One of the first to do so had been Ernest Baker. He divided fiction into three distinct categories. First, were those authors he thought should be well represented in every public library. Second, were popular authors, who although their literary style was considered unimpressive, should be represented by a small number of titles. Finally, were those authors whose work he considered did not meet the necessary literary standards for inclusion in library collections. This category included some of the most popular authors of the time. However, other librarians attempted to develop their own schemes for assigning literary merit, and throughout this period fiction continued to be an important topic and was widely debated amongst the library profession. At the same time, library users were typically characterised as either working-class or lower middle-class and, as a result, what was being read remained a topic of great interest (Snape, 1995).

However, in 1897, J.Y.W MacAllister had called for an acknowledgement of the legitimate recreational role of the library. The recreational role of the library was also defended by Stanley Jast at the Library Association Conference in 1908, who highlighted that the provision of fiction was responsible for attracting users to the library who would otherwise not enter the library. Nevertheless, the discussion regarding the provision of fiction resulted in the conference adopting the following resolution; ‘That the function of the public lending library is to provide good literature, and the test must be applied to works of fiction as to books in other departments; they must have literary or education value; that every library should be amply supplied with fiction that had attained the position of classical literature; and that the purchase of more ephemeral fiction of no literacy or moral value, even if without offence, not within their proper province’ (Kelly, 1977, p195).

The Anti-Fiction Campaign

Meanwhile, there remained a vocal group within the library profession who opposed any fiction provision within the library, stating instead that the library should only provide services that were either defined as educational or informational (Snape, 2005). It was
claimed by critics that the reading of fiction was responsible for encouraging theft and turning young mothers into slatterns and kept workmen from their jobs. Ultimately, the concerns that many had regarding the reading of fiction were based upon morality and social class. Consequently, librarians limited stock to discourage the use of the library by those that they deemed undesirable. They also instigated rules to discourage the use of the library for meetings and imposed a rule regarding the cleanliness of library users which was a significant barrier to library use for those working in manual professions (Hammond, 2002).

The emphasis on the information and educational role of the library reflected the ambition of many librarians to be seen as educators and their concern that the provision of fiction was damaging to their professional image. Nevertheless, there were many who opposed the provision of fiction and the recreational use of the library for financial reasons and did not believe that one social group should be expected to pay for the recreational activity of another (Snape, 1995).

However, despite this, in Blackburn the issuing of fiction increased, there remained a lack of interest in non-fiction material, and the Library Committee purchased books in close relation to the level of demand. Nevertheless, this policy changed in 1894 when a new Chairman was appointed to the Committee. The purchase of new books reduced significantly and an increased emphasis was placed upon the educational priorities of the library. Meanwhile, as a consequence of the implementation of this new policy the number of books issued by the lending library declined by twenty-six percent (Snape, 1995).

Nevertheless, some continued to criticise the continued provision of fiction by libraries. In 1900, the Daily News lamented that libraries had become a 'storehouse of fiction' and that recreational reading was encouraged at the expense of educational objectives. Furthermore, in a paper presented in 1903, John Churton Collins, Professor of English Literature at the University of Birmingham criticised public libraries. Churton claimed that they were responsible for encouraging the type of reading that represented no other
purpose than to allow readers to occupy their recreational time. At the meeting of the Library Association in 1908, the Chairman of the Brighton Library Committee had proposed that there was no justification for a public library spending money on books that were purely recreational and of no educational value. The resolution was passed with unanimous support (Snape, 1995).

At the same time, one of the stated aims of the Library Committee at Darwen was to encourage and promote the reading of what they considered to be the most accomplished literary fiction. This manifested itself in the proposal to delay the purchasing of new works of popular fiction. However, the Committee chose to go further and decided that no new fiction would be purchased. Although the ban was supported by librarians and other literary figures it was unsuccessful. The Library Committee was attacked by the town's local newspaper who defended the right of working people to read popular novels. Similarly, the newspaper received letters from members of the public criticising the decision of the Library Committee and defending the recreational use of the library. The Committee was accused of cultural elitism and attempting to interfere with how the working-class spent their leisure-time. The Committee finally conceded that their policy had been too idealistic, and whilst it was never formally recorded, the policy was gradually relaxed and novels added to the library collection (Snape, 1995). The Library Committees attempt to control popular fiction failed because it was perceived by many as an attempt at censorship, but also, as a result of the expectation of many library users that the service provided by the library should meet the demands for relaxation and enjoyment.

The First World War and the Threat to Libraries

The early months of the war were responsible for placing Local Government under increased financial pressure to identify areas amongst the services that they provided where cost savings could be achieved. In August 1915, the Local Government Board grouped parks, recreation grounds, libraries, street lighting, as areas of expenditure where "careful investigation with a possible view to possible economies" may be necessary (Kelly, 1977). However, immediately prior to the outbreak of the First World
War, and in the early months of the war, very few librarians and Library Committees appear to have been concerned with their financial position. In fact, the opposite was true, and in Portsmouth and Lincoln the Committees expressed their satisfaction with the libraries finances. Nevertheless, the wartime economies made by libraries were reflected in numerous ways including the closure of departments, the reduction in the length of opening hours, a reduction in the purchase of books and periodicals, and failing to replace staff. It is interesting to note that whilst the rate being generated for public libraries was clearly inadequate, many of the annual reports of public libraries of the time make little reference to financial difficulties. However, the financial crises experienced by libraries contributed to the increased demand for a new Public Libraries Act (Ellis, 1987).

After the First World War

The First World War was responsible for altering the ideology of many politicians, and created a greater acceptance of the need for the government to play a more prominent role in society, and in the management of the economy. Politicians were motivated by the recognition that attempts at social reform to this date had generally been inadequate, and there was a fear that the lack of any social reform would eventually have electoral consequences, as well as a heightened fear of social unrest which had occurred during the later half of the war (Black, 2000a).

The Conservative Party in particularly viewed working-class social unrest as being motivated by revolutionary intent and this fear was responsible for their support of the attempts at social reform being implemented by the Prime Minister, Lloyd George. A broad program of social reform was implemented, but significantly for libraries, a strong emphasis was placed on education. In 1917, Christopher Addision, Minister of Reconstruction, told the Library Association Conference of his desire for public libraries to become more useful than they had been in the past, and urged the forming of working relationships with employers and businesses. Furthermore, the Education Act (1918) increased the school leaving age to fourteen and provided continuation classes up to the age of eighteen. An emphasis on education reflected the belief that it played an important
role in helping to maintain existing social structures and there was also an increased awareness that public libraries could play a significant role in this field. At the same time the library was increasingly viewed by the government in terms of the contribution they made to the economy and their ability to reduce the likelihood of economic and social confrontation. It was believed that by providing improved access to education, the socially disruptive tendencies of many would be reduced, and a greater sense of citizenship and social responsibility encouraged. Consequently, it was believed that people would be more accepting and supportive of existing social structures. Significantly, public libraries would continue to display government material, of a distinctly propagandist nature, as they had during the First World War (Black, 2000b).

**Development of Technical Libraries**

Whilst the origins of technical libraries lay in the nineteenth century it was in the years proceeding the war there was an increased emphasis on the economic role of the public library. The First World War was responsible for placing an emphasis on scientific and technological development, and libraries increasingly attempted to provide greater access to technical and scientific knowledge and information (Black, 2007). Consequently, the Library Association established a committee to consider what actions could be taken to strengthen the provision of technical and scientific material in libraries (Black, 2000). In doing so the Association believed that the status of the public library would be enhanced, and increase the likelihood that legislation would be implemented that would abolish the rate restriction. This shift in focus was greeted with enthusiasm by many librarians (Black, 2007).

Furthermore, in post war Britain there were areas of industry that were concerned by the threat of increased competition and the loss of overseas markets as a result of the war and a belief that Britain's scientific knowledge and infrastructure was significantly lagging behind economic rivals, such as the United States of America and Germany (Black, 2007). It was accepted by both government and business that access to knowledge and information made an important contribution to the economy. Consequently, areas of the
economy that were reliant upon research, such as the chemical industry, began to recognise the need for, and value of research libraries (Black, 2000b). This formed a key element in the planned extension of public library services (Black, 2007). As a result, the Library Association advocated that public libraries commit more of their resources to working directly with industry and, many larger libraries opened technical library departments in the 1920s (Black, 2000b).

**Summary**

Throughout this period librarians continued in their attempts to establish libraries as institutions that were viewed in terms of education and, latterly, of providing access to information and knowledge. However, these attempts were only of limited success due to both the lack of available funding and of appropriately trained staff. Meanwhile, the foundation of the Library Association represented a significant achievement which resulted in the establishment of a formal training process for the profession. Nevertheless, the fiction issue did not disappear completely and librarians views differed considerably from those of Library Committees and library users. Furthermore, the First World War had a significant impact on libraries in terms of funding and the services that they were able to provide although, at the same time, the government began to view libraries in terms of the support they could provide for education and employment. Furthermore, library users were keen for public libraries to support them in gaining the technical and administrative skills they required to gain employment and, consequently, the establishment of technical libraries was one of the most significant developments of this period and hinted that libraries of the future would focus on education.

**Chapter IV**

**English and Welsh Public Libraries during the Interwar Period**

**Introduction**
The First World War had a significant and lasting impact upon public libraries. It would contribute to the securing of legislation that would provide some relief to the financial pressures that had impacted upon the development of libraries. However, the library profession would continue to be characterised by low pay and lack of professionally trained staff, which would impact upon the service that libraries were able to provide. Nevertheless, the public library would fulfil a greater role and have a greater social impact than it had previously achieved. Whilst the recreational use of the library was an issue that refused to go away, as the economic environment deteriorated, the library was increasingly used by the long-term unemployed and those who could no longer afford to use subscription libraries. For the government the library would be identified as a crucial tool in the economic regeneration of the countryside. Meanwhile, the public library would also find itself the subject of a number of independent reviews, which would highlight the inadequacies and deficiencies of the service provided and would lead the calls for much needed improvement.

**Librarians and Librarianship**

Throughout much of the interwar period librarianship struggled to establish itself as a widely respected profession. The level of qualification held by library staff, their status and salary varied considerably from library to library and, consequently, there remained a significant gap between the level of service provided by the best libraries and that offered by the worst. However, by the end of the 1930s there were indications that significant progress had been made, as the pay for Chief Librarians had shown a considerable improvement, and the selection of books was increasingly left to librarians (Kelly, 1977).

**The Library Association**

In the immediate aftermath of the First World War, the attention of the Government had shifted to economic and social reconstruction. A new Government department, the Ministry of Reconstruction, had been created and one of the key areas that had attracted
their attention had been that of education. An Adult Education Committee had been created to give consideration to any reforms that may have been needed, and in June 1919 the Committee published an interim report which contained recommendations for the provision of classrooms that could be used for individual study or the provision of lectures. The Committee also recommended that students should be provided with additional library tickets to enable them to borrow additional books which reflected the strong belief that the role of the public library should be seen in terms of education (Minto, 1932).

Nevertheless, this did not prevent the proposals from being opposed by the Library Association. They believed that the interests of the general public were also the interest of the library and stated that any attempts to challenge or replace this concept by an increased emphasis on education would not be supported (Minto, 1932). However, the Act firmly placed County Libraries under the remit of County Education Committees, and these libraries were acutely aware of their educational purpose which was reflected by the emphasis that was placed on the work aimed at supporting the needs of teachers and students (Kelly, 1977).

Belatedly, the library profession began to discuss the adequacy of the library service. At the Library Association Conference of 1934, delegates debated the progress that had been made since the Kenyon Report of 1927. Whilst the vast majority of delegates chose an optimistic view of the state of public libraries, Lionel McColvin was less generous (Kelly, 1977). He proposed that taking an enrolment rate of ten percent of a Library Authorities population, and a level of spending of one shilling per head of population as the minimum required for the provision of an efficient service, he suggested that sixty authorities failed to reach the former standard and one hundred and forty failed to reach the latter. He also expressed concern regarding what he considered to be the poor quality of library services provided in London and claimed that many were inferior to provincial cities, reserving particular criticism for reference, technical and scientific sections of libraries (Kelly, 1977).
In 1936 the Library Association commissioned the most significant review of the condition of British public libraries since the Kenyon Report. The review, which was edited by McColvin, was primarily concerned with the condition of libraries, and consequently the functions that libraries were attempting to perform received little attention. Nevertheless, the most significant finding of the review was the continued inequalities that existed in library facilities and the adequacy of the service that was provided. The level of criticism directed at some libraries provoked considerable discontent but many of the themes highlighted in the review would also later appear in the McColvin Report (Murison, 1971).

Books and Library Collections

The interwar period was an era when conservative politicians attempted to exert influence over the types of books that were published and included in the collection of public libraries. Although there was no law relating to the control of the content of library collections they were covered by the content of the Obscene Publications Act. One of the most notable examples of a politician attempting to apply influence was that of Sir William Johnson-Hicks who was Home Secretary between 1924 and 1929. It has been suggested that he attempted to exert influence over publishers and librarians, following the publication of Radcliffe Hall’s, The Well of Loneliness. Johnson-Hicks threatened legal action against the books publisher unless it was immediately withdrawn (Ravenwood and Feather, 2010).

However, in some instances the decision of Library Committees to exclude or restrict certain types of material was more understandable. In 1934, as a result of the views of some of its Committee members, Conwy library removed any material relating to Hitler or Russia from its collection (Hoare and Black, 2006). Nevertheless, in 1935 a Magistrate had ordered that an education book on birth control should be destroyed, as they considered that it was 'not fit for people of the working class to read'. Furthermore, it was suggested by Stanley Jast that books of a questionable nature should be stored away from the main public collection, and that any young person wishing to borrow them should be required to present a letter of recommendation from either a parent or teacher.
Moreover, concerns about the impact and effects of literature were not limited to morality. There was concern during the 1920s and 1930s that the work of authors such as George Orwell had resulted in the politicisation of the novel (Ravenwood and Feather, 2010).

The subject of the librarian performing the role of public censor was widely discussed within professional publications of the time and typically attracted condemnation and acknowledgement that it frequently occurred. At the same time, libraries were frequently attacked in the press for providing access to cheap fiction at the expense of the taxpayer. Consequently, many librarians considered it necessary to demonstrate the use of literary standards while compiling library collections in order to justify the expenditure of public money. As a result, librarians found themselves having to meet the competing demands of their role as public servants, and their professional desire to increase levels of reading and use of the library (Ravenwood and Feather, 2010).

**Fact vs Fiction**

Throughout this period the majority of librarians defined their role as being that of a guide to books and helping to direct library users to the types of books they wanted to read. It was generally felt that through the use of these methods they would ensure that the best literary books were read and that as a result the quality of general reading would improve. Despite these professional goals, librarians remained aware that the type of library user differed considerably, with varying level of needs and reading ability. They remained aware that the library needed to meet all of these needs if it was to be seen as socially inclusive. Furthermore, one of the most influential librarians of the interwar period, Lionel McColvin, maintained that the role of the public library was not merely educational, but was also an important means of recreational enjoyment. His views were reflected in the Kenyon Report which would signify the increasing acceptance of official bodies of the recreational role of the library (Ravenwood and Feather, 2010).

At the same time the idea of the purposive reader, who read to learn, was one that was widely supported within the library profession. The purposive reader model, proposed
that the types of material read progressed and eventually consisted of what was considered the better forms of literature, something that was already deeply rooted in the ideology of the library profession. Consequently, supporting and advocating this type of reading meant that the library could be more closely identified as an educational institution, rather than one of recreation. Those who supported and embraced the model of a reader with a purpose were typically likely to view those who read for recreation or pleasure as lacking in purpose and likely to be easily distracted away from educational purpose towards popular culture. The belief in the better forms of literature was reliant upon seeing books on a single scale of value, the concept of the best as unchanging, and did not take into consideration to differing needs, ability and motivations of readers (Ross, 2009).

Nevertheless, the utilitarian idea of useful recreation continued to influence public librarians during the 1920s and 1930s, through the belief that access should be provided to knowledge and information without using barriers to prevent the use of recreational material (Ross, 2009).

It is significant that librarians were part of a new profession that was continuing to develop, and at the same time, book selection was one the areas where the Library Association was unable to provide strong guidance and leadership (Ross, 2009). However, the end of the 1930s marked the end of use of Book-Sub Committees, whose role had been to scrutinise the books included in acquisitions lists by their librarians. Although these Committees played an important role in the building of library collections they also had the unfortunate consequence of delaying the libraries purchase of new books (Munford, 1951). At the same time, the economic and social conditions of the 1930s resulted in the increased emphasis on the social pacification role of public libraries. The reading of public library books was advocated as a means of keeping people in doors at night, and away from social disorder (Black, 2000b).

*Library Funding*
Throughout the years 1928 and 1933 the level of expenditure on public libraries changed very little, and for some libraries this had a profoundly detrimental impact. In Manchester, for example, the Library Authority was forced to close some of the young peoples rooms in order to enable them to reduce staffing costs. This coincided with a general increase in the number people using libraries, partly as a consequence of the economic depression, and the rapid increase in the numbers of the unemployed, who were no longer able to afford to use subscription libraries (Kelly, 1977).

Library Users

Throughout this period the economic depression was responsible for altering the way that libraries were viewed by many and the types of service that they were expected to provide (Kelly, 1977). The library was used for job seeking, as a place of shelter, and as means of escape. For the long term unemployed the library was of immense value and in the case of many libraries the use of reference departments increased in line with deteriorating economic conditions. Furthermore, they provided many with the opportunity to occupy their time and to improve their technical skills. In areas that were most severely affected by the economic downturn, such as Liverpool, libraries found that their roles expanded to include offering shelter to the poor (Black, 2000b). One unemployed library user went as far as to state that the library had been “the means of holding on to sanity during months of despair” (Kelly, 1977, p257). Whilst in the past librarians may have viewed the use of the library by the unemployed with hostility, and some may have gone so far as to try to exclude them, during this period the majority of librarians tried to do as much possible to provide them with assistance (Kelly, 1977). However, the increase in the use of the library was not restricted to the unemployed, and they also became a resource for the middle-class who found that they were no longer able to afford the purchase of books (Black, 2000).

Services for Children
Throughout this period the number of librarians appointed to work with children increased (Hoare and Black, 2006) although their methods were frequently criticised as amateurish and haphazard (Ellis, 1971). Nevertheless, many were motivated by the desire to increase the numbers of people using the library, and were aware that encouraging children to use the library may have resulted in them being more willing to make use of the library as an adult. It was also often accepted that the library was an important means of escapism and protection from the harsh realities of life during the interwar period. However, it was often difficult to meet demand and the type of material was often labelled inferior as a result of the insufficient levels of funding. The acceptance and respectability of providing services for children benefited from the creation of the Carnegie Medal in 1937 to recognise the outstanding book for children published the previous year, and it is significant that by the end of this period the most progressive libraries had established distinct and separate reference collections for children (Ellis, 1971).

**Newsrooms**

The provision of newsrooms had been adversely commented upon by the Mitchell and Kenyon Reports, both having drawn attention to the physical space taken up by newsrooms and their associated costs. There was a significant change in attitude towards newsrooms during this period, and both librarians and library committees viewed their value with scepticism. Furthermore, in libraries, which were either newly built or refurbished the space allocated for the use of newsrooms was reduced or removed completely. Librarians were also concerned that as a result of the economic depression newsrooms were being used by those who wished to pass the time, rather than by those seeking information, and that this represented a disruption to the proper work of the library. As a result, some libraries adopted a variety of draconian policies such as the blacking out of betting news. Nevertheless, library users continued to expect libraries to provide newsrooms and they remained one of the most heavily used of the libraries services. Ultimately, the Kenyon Report supported the provision of newspapers and periodicals in libraries as long as expenditure in this area was restricted to five percent of a libraries total expenditure (Kelly, 1977).
Music Libraries

Liverpool was one of the first public libraries to develop a music collection and by 1900 music libraries were widely available for both loan and reference purposes. However, it was not until the interwar period that the use of music libraries greatly increased. It is significant that having emphasised the educational and information role of the library that the provision of music does not appear to have provoked widespread opposition amongst librarians. Although in some libraries an emphasis was placed upon the provision of classical rather than other forms of popular music. Furthermore, progressive and enterprising librarians displayed an awareness that the provision of music was a means of extending the range of library services and, consequently, could result in an increase in the use of the library and general readership (Kelly, 1977).

Extension Activity

At the same time, traditional library extension activity continued to be provided during this period. Lectures were still popular amongst library users, and authorities such as the London County Council, had been successful in securing the legislative power to enable them to provide the necessary levels of funding. Nevertheless, toward the end of this period attendance at lectures and other activity began to decline as library users were attracted away by other sources of entertainment. Librarians, such as Eric Leyland, suggested that the nature of library activity needed to move way from what had traditionally been provided. He suggested that libraries which continued to provide general lectures would be unable to compete with other forms of popular entertainment, and should instead aim to meet the specific needs of library users, such as those associated with hobbies. It was Leyland’s vision that altering the nature of extension activity would enable libraries to be transformed into cultural centres (Kelly, 1977).

The Public Libraries Act (1919)
Throughout the First World War the financial position of many public libraries continued
to deteriorate, and in the most extreme cases libraries closed, or Library Authorities were
forced to reduce the level of library provision (Minto, 1932). Consequently, the library
profession lobbied the government to introduce an amending piece of legislation that
would address these financial issues. When an amended library act was introduced,
financial restrictions that had impacted upon the development of public libraries, and
severely affected the efficiency and adequacy of the libraries was only partly addressed.
However, the Act would subsequently be seen as the most important piece of library
legislation passed by the House of Commons since the Public Library Act of 1850 (Minto,
1932).

Background

During 1919, a delegation of librarians had with the President of the Board of Education
to make them aware of the financial position of many libraries. They were sympathetic,
but highlighted the difficulty of getting legislation passed by the House of Commons that
would have abolished the rate limit. Nevertheless, librarians continued to lobby and call
for rapid and radical reform and received valuable support from the Carnegie Trust. The
Trust were also lobbying Government for a reform of existing library legislation so that
County Councils would be provided with the necessary power to become Library
Authorities. Representatives of the Trust had been granted a meeting with Sir Herbert
Lewis, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education in March 1919. At the meeting
Lewis also highlighted the difficulty in getting a Bill passed but agreed to prepare a draft
bill to be presented to the House of Commons (Minto, 1932).

At the same time, the Trust was aware of the financial position of libraries as they had
been approached by library authorities to request financial assistance. In May 1919 they
wrote to all Local Authorities and Members of the House of Commons to highlight the
financial plight of libraries and warned that unless library authorities were given the
freedom and powers to set their own library rate many libraries would close. Although
they were not immediately successful, the rate limit continued to be debated by librarians,
and they continued to be committed to exerting pressure on the Government for reform whenever possible (Minto, 1932).

Meanwhile, at an Executive Committee meeting of the Library Association in November John Ballinger, the Librarian at the National Library of Wales, proposed arranging a meeting with the Permanent Secretary to the Board of Education. At this meeting, Ballinger was informed that the Bill the Carnegie Trust had been lobbying for had yet to be introduced. He informed Lewis of the Library Associations desire to have the rate limit abolished and it was agreed to have a relevant clause added to the Bill (Minto, 1932). The Bill was introduced on the 28 November 1919 and gained Royal Assent one month later (Minto, 1932). However, the Act ultimately failed to offset the inflationary pressure that libraries had experienced during wartime (Ellis, 1977a).

The Birth of the County Library

At the same time, the majority of those who lived in areas where public libraries were not provided were those who lived in rural areas. They were typically reliant on the library service provided by commercial organisations such as that provided by the Yorkshire Village Library. The scheme involved local committees selecting books themselves or relying on the selection of books made by the central organisation (Ellis, 1977a).

In 1915 the Carnegie Trust had commissioned a report on the provision of libraries in rural areas. This also coincided with an increased social awareness of the need to regenerate the agricultural sector (Black, 2000b). The reports author, Professor Adams, highlighted the inadequate provision of public libraries in rural areas and advised that improved provision of rural libraries could not be reliant upon legislation passed by the House of Commons. He advocated the creation of a central library that would be responsible for the distribution of books, and a network of local libraries that would consist of collections of reference and other works, that would also be supported by the provision of a circulating collection (Ellis, 1977b). Despite being one of the most urbanised counties, and having a number of library authorities, Staffordshire was chosen to
participate in the scheme. The distribution of books was dependent upon rail or local couriers although these were both detrimentally affected by the First World War and the introduction of conscription. Furthermore, the war was also responsible for placing increased pressure upon rural workers, and many were conscripted into the armed forces, and there was a resulting decline in the level of reading in many rural areas. However, the Carnegie Trusts experimental scheme was significant in providing clear evidence and support for the need for legislative change to enable authorities in rural areas to become library authorities (Ellis, 1977b).

Consecutively, the report of the Ministry of Reconstructions Adult Education Committee had described rural communities in terms of a workforce forced to accept low pay, poor housing and a lack of social amenities. As a result, a fundamental element of the governments attempts at rural regeneration was encouraging people to relocate from urban areas back to the countryside. Consequently, public libraries were viewed by the government as a having a crucial role to play in the re-establishing of rural communities, and libraries were identified as having a significant role to play in assisting in the regeneration of rural industries and preventing rural depopulation (Black, 2000b). Similarly, it was believed that libraries would help to address the important issues of geographical isolation, and a crucial lack of social and educational facilities which had contributed to the rapid population shift from rural to urban areas (Kelly, 1977).

**Independent Reviews of the Public Library**

Whilst it was sometime before the library profession gave serious consideration to the adequacy of the service that they were able to provide, it was a subject that had been given consideration by other interested groups, such as government and the Carnegie Trust.

*The Mitchell Report*
In 1924 the Secretary to the Carnegie Trust, was asked to provide a report which followed on from the work of Professor Adams. It focussed primarily on the new county library service and library cooperation, although the report was also critical of the adequacy and efficiency of the service provided by many public libraries (Kelly, 1977). Mitchell also suggested that the majority of librarians had little or no understanding of library provision, and instead were more concerned with ensuring that there was no increase in the level of library rates. This was reflected by the inadequate book stocks in some libraries and in libraries where no books had been purchased since the war. Moreover, the report highlighted that the lack of trained staff continued to have an important impact upon the adequacy of the service provided by libraries. Many were financially unable, or unwilling, to offer rates of pay to library staff that were likely to attract men or women who were most likely to be able to carry out roles professionally and satisfactorily. The reports recommendations included urging libraries to provide assistance to schools and organisations involved in providing or supporting adult education. This was a significant recommendation at a time when some librarians continued to argue that the provision of any services to children of school age was not their responsibility (Munford, 1951).

The Kenyon Report

In 1924, Sir Frederick Kenyon was appointed by the Board of Trade to ‘inquire into the adequacy of library provision already being made under the Public Libraries Act and the means of extending and completing such provision throughout England and Wales, with regard being had to the relation of libraries and the general education system’ (Munford, 1951). Although the remit of the report was limited to England and Wales, it did not conceal the deficiencies of the library service, and many of its recommendations were applicable to libraries throughout the British Isles. The report emphasised that many areas of the library service were unsatisfactory and that significant inequalities remained within the library service and that in some areas of the country Library Acts had not been adopted, or had only been adopted for certain areas within some authorities (Murison, 1971).
In the Committees final report, the important role that libraries played in providing industry, researchers and students with access to information was strongly acknowledged. However, it also provided a much wider belief of the functions of the library, and stressed that work carried out by many libraries was central to the daily lives of their communities. The report went on to provide a clear and definitive mission statement for public libraries that, ‘The principle underlying the library service is that it exists for the training of the good citizen. It must aim at providing all that printed literature can provide to develop his intellectual, moral and spiritual capabilities’. ‘The librarian aims, therefore, at supplying recreational literature of as good a quality as his public can digest; at placing at their disposal the information necessary for the ordinary duties of the citizen; and at supplying all their needs for intellectual culture and for the knowledge that they require in their professions and occupations’ (Murison, 1971).

The Kenyon Report was one of the most important reports regarding the state of public libraries in England and Wales during the twentieth century. Furthermore, it was not only one of the first official reports to formally acknowledge that public libraries could justly be considered important education institutions, but, it also acknowledged that they had a significant recreational purpose. Unlike others before them, the report suggested that a successful library was not one that met the educational or recreational needs of the community, but rather one that succeeded in achieving both of these aims. The importance and the impact that this report, would be reflected in the future, by the number of government commissioned reports and House of Commons Select Committees who would refer back to the reports findings (Murison, 1971).

Summary

The interwar period was dominated by the economy and economic depression, and whilst many aspects of public libraries remained unchanged, there were others that changed significantly as a result of social conditions and the needs of library users. The library became an important institution for those seeking to escape the harsh realities of daily life, such as the unemployed, who used them as a means to seek employment, but also
for recreation. Significantly, whilst in the past librarians had opposed the use of the library by the unemployed, during this period they displayed a willingness to do everything within their power to provide them with assistance. Whilst this was not universally supported, it is significant that this changing role and focus was accepted by a number of librarians who actively promoted this work. At the same time, the library service was the subject of independent reviews which, although they were not entirely negative, identified that there was a need for improvements in some areas of library work. As a result, many librarians became increasingly concerned with the adequacy of the service that they were able to provide which would continue into the Second World War.

Chapter V
English and Welsh Public Libraries 1939 to 1943

Introduction

The Second World War was one the most important and challenging periods in the history of public libraries in England and Wales. Whilst librarians were better prepared for the impact of war than they had been twenty-five years earlier and approached the government with proposals of how they could support the war effort of the nation, they were faced with significant challenges which threatened the provision of library services. At the same time, although librarians continued to emphasise the education role of the library, and this indeed met a significant wartime need, the government and the users of public libraries considered the maintenance of morale and recreational role of the library as of greater significance. However, as the war progressed it was notable that many
within the library profession altered their views of the role of the library and, at the same time, the Library Association had the vision to give consideration to the nature of the post war library service, out of which emerged the possibility that future public libraries would be substantially different to those that had gone before.

Librarians and Librarianship

The implementation of conscription had a significant impact on libraries (Black, 2000), and as a result many experienced an acute shortage of staff (Kelly, 1977). By September 1940, one-fifth of library staff had been called up to serve in the armed forces or for other war work. As a result, the Library Association complained that this had resulted in those with academic or literary backgrounds being placed in charge of small rural libraries which they considered to have unacceptable results. Furthermore, the removal of trained librarians meant that professional activities in many libraries stopped, such as, book selection and cataloging (Black, 2000b). At the same time, senior figures within the library profession reiterated the need for properly trained assistants within libraries so that books could continue to be properly selected, catalogued and classified, and that in doing so they would become more easily accessible for library users, and enable library authorities to provide an efficient service (McColvin, 1940). Nevertheless, by the end of 1942, the vast majority of librarians under the age of forty-one had either been called up to serve in the armed forces or had been seconded for other war work (Kelly, 1977).

The Library Association

As a result of the deteriorating international situation the Library Association had begun to consider the impact another war would have upon libraries. In May 1939, the Secretary of the Association wrote to the Lord Privy Seal to make the authorities aware of the functions that the Association believed libraries and librarians would be able to fulfil during a time of national emergency. They suggested that should the government take the decision to close educational institutions librarians could be transferred to government departments. It also stressed that the training received by librarians covered all forms of
recorded information and that they were experts in the maintenance of records. Furthermore, they argued that librarians were appropriately qualified to carry out a number of tasks that could be fulfilled within library buildings, such as functioning as ARP report centres. Moreover, they were concerned that libraries were at risk of being requisitioned and stressed that libraries provided two crucial functions; the collection and distribution of information, and the maintenance of public morale. In addition, the Association emphasised that libraries could become more important if the decision was taken to close other forms of entertainment. It was suggested that if the decision was taken to implement a scheme for the evacuation of the population from urban areas, it would be prepared to create regional committees which be responsible for providing access to services and books. The Association concluded by stating their concern that the role of libraries during wartime may have been overlooked by some local authorities (Letter from Secretary of Library Association to Lord Privy Seal, 1939).

The response that the Association received was disappointing. The Home Office advised that decisions relating to the use of library facilities during wartime would be taken by local authorities, and that arrangements had been put in place regarding the provision of books for evacuees, and transferring specialist librarians to appropriate war work. However, they suggested that libraries could continue to provide an important educational and recreational purpose as far as circumstances permitted (Letter from Home Office, 29 June 1939).

Libraries at War

Meanwhile, the Library Association was not the only organisation which had been concerned by the impact of the war on some functions of the public library. In January 1940, the National Books Council had written to all local authorities expressing concern that during wartime library activities, many of which had been viewed as productive,
would suffer. It was particularly concerned for those services which may have been viewed as of no immediate or physical benefit. They urged, at the very least, for the maintenance of educational and cultural services provided by the public library (McColvin, 1940).

**Government**

In 1940, the Board of Education wrote to all local authorities to stress the importance of maintaining, and where possible, extending existing library services. The production and distribution of the circular reflected concern regarding the importance of the provision of leisure activities, particularly for those working in industries that were essential to the war effort. It was stressed that libraries offered both technical instruction as well as recreation at a time when the possibilities for outdoor recreation were significantly reduced, and that providing access to books could greatly reduce the stress and strain of the war on daily lives. The circular concluded by stating the hope that local authorities would do all within their power to support libraries to make the greatest contribution to the war effort as possible. Significantly Ernest Bevin, as Minister of Labour, was particularly concerned with the welfare of munitions workers and those working in other industries crucial to the war effort. Consequently, it has been suggested that the Board of Education circular was in direct response to his intervention (Board of Education Circular, 1940), (Black, 2000b).

At the same time, the Ministry of Information was particularly interested in public libraries during the Phoney War, and identified its key role in helping to alleviate boredom. They also acknowledged that libraries could play a key role in distributing and displaying material produced by the Ministry, as well a providing an ideal location for meetings (Black, 2000b). This role was enthusiastically embraced by librarians who hoped that this would enable them to prevent the requisitioning of library premises (Black, 2004). However, the government continued to view the key role of public libraries as alleviating psychological stress and it was a view of libraries that was widely shared by the public (Black, 2000b).
Books, Shortages and Damage

Throughout this period it was easy for books to be seen as an important part of British life and books that were of a recreational nature played an important role in helping to maintain the morale of the nation. However, the technical nature of the war meant that there was a clear demand and need for technical books to enable those working in particular industries to be aware of the latest developments in theories and technology (Brophy, 1942).

Meanwhile, as had been the case during the First World War libraries were affected by a rapid increase in inflation. Between 1939 and 1942 the price of books and other library material had increased by ten percent. Some libraries had responded to this rapid price increase by initiating public salvage campaigns and appealed for donations from members of the public and from private collections (Black, 2000b). Furthermore, it was estimated (McColvin, 1940) that during the early months of the war that of the total funding available to libraries, spending on books typically accounted for eighteen percent of the budget, whilst forty-three percent was consumed by staff salaries and wages. The level of expenditure on books was strongly criticised by Lionel McColvin as inadequate. He argued that one of the most fundamental duties of the public library was to provide the users with access to material which they were unable to access elsewhere, and called for sufficient book stocks, which had been properly selected and was suited to the needs of users. McColvin also defended the leisure role the library and the enjoyment it bought to many by enabling them to enjoy their hobbies and pastimes (McColvin, 1940).

The Mass Observation reports compiled during this period provide a valuable resource regarding how libraries were viewed and used during this period. Black (2000b) suggests that these reports reflected an increased demand amongst library users for books on topics such as international relations, and current affairs. At the same time, in Sowerby Bridge for example, the number of registered borrowers increased from thirty percent prior to the war to thirty-eight percent. The library in Halifax also reported that its stock was heavily used by both evacuees and refugees. Furthermore, there was a clear link
between the implementation of the black out and in the increase in demand for books, as did evacuation in certain parts of the country. However, in some areas of the country, libraries continued to heavily censor the material that was available to users. This typically consisted of material that was considered anti-social or antiwar, such as The Daily Worker, which was banned by libraries in Stepney (Black, 2000b).

**The Library Association, The War Office and Service Libraries**

In the early months of the war there had been a number of organisations, working in isolation, concerned with the supply of books to those serving in branches of the Armed Forces. A meeting was held by the Lord Mayor of London, at which he intended to advocate that these organisations should be combined into a single entity, resulting in the creation of the Lord Mayor of London's Service Libraries and Book Fund. At the same time, the Library Association had intended to advocate that they should assume this responsibility, and had been unaware of the Lord Mayors proposal until shortly before the formal announcement. Consequently, the Lord Mayor invited the Association to appoint a representative to sit on the Council of Service Libraries and Book Fund. The Service Libraries which the Library Association wanted to be created, were heavily influenced by the libraries that had been provided for serviceman by the American armed forces during the First World War. These had included the provision of appropriately trained staff, study rooms and the adequate supply of books. Significantly, this library model typified the library professions strongly held belief in its role as providing access to knowledge, information and providing opportunities for self-improvement (Hung, 2008).

However, the proposals of the Association, and their unwillingness to compromise or negotiate in anyway, resulted in a deteriorating relationship with the Army. At a meeting in November 1939, senior army officers formally stated their opposition to the creation of traditional libraries as they did not share the Associations ideology that the primary purpose of the library was to educate and inform. In contrast, they regarded books as comforts for those serving, which were to be rationed, and that one book was the equivalent to any other. At the same time, an appeal had appeared in many of the
national daily papers on behalf of the Book Fund appealing for donations of both books and money. However, the appeal gave an equal emphasis to the recreational role of book provision, which as far as the Library Association was concerned was a low priority. The Library Association had hoped to participate in the provision of a nationally organised library scheme, which had sufficient stock of appropriate books, and was staffed and professionally run by trained librarians but this would prove to be unrealistic (Hung, 2008).

The Association was unable to exert any influence over the War Office or the Army. In May 1940, instructions issued by the War Office placed the libraries under the control of the Army, and one of the first decisions taken was that cataloguing of library stock was unnecessary. However, in September 1940, the Army Council took the decision that the provision of educational facilities should be the responsibility of a separate organisation, and that the provision of books of an educational nature were no longer its responsibility. In December, they advised senior officers that the Service Libraries and Book Fund was responsible for advising what books were suitable for distribution to the services. It appeared to be an opportunity for the Library Association to exert an influence. Nonetheless, in reality there continued to be a vast ideological difference regarding the nature of the library service and librarians complained that the libraries provided magazines and paper covered novels. In contrast, the Army complained that the types of books that librarians wanted to distribute were too high-brow. As far as both the War Office and the Army were concerned, unsuitable literature meant undesirable propaganda and they were increasingly concerned by the possibility of those serving in the forces being provided with material that was deemed good for them by librarians, rather than being provided with access to material that they actually wanted (Hung, 2008).

As a consequence, the Library Association became increasingly frustrated, that as far as they were concerned, the Funds aims regarding the provision of educational material, were not being met, and appealed to Lord Trenchard for his assistance, and an Executive Committee meeting was subsequently arranged for March 1941. At the meeting the Association complained that much of the Funds work, for which the Library Association had joined the Committee, appeared to have disappeared. As a result, it was agreed that
representatives of the Committee would meet with the War Office to discuss the issues raised and whether a stronger focus could be placed on the educational role of the libraries. However, regardless of how sympathetic the War Office may have been to the issues raised, the meeting did not result in a change in focus in the way that service libraries operated. Nevertheless, in January 1943, the Library Association called for a meeting of the Executive Committee and the instigation of an investigation into the working of the Book Fund. This was initially resisted by the Funds Deputy Chairman and the Association was informed in February that a meeting would be held in due course. However, in fact, steps were being taken to have the Fund disbanded. In April 1943, the Lord Mayor wrote to members of the Executive Committee seeking their support for the Fund to be closed. This was opposed by the Library Association who continued to present the case for their involvement in the promotion and running of service libraries. Nonetheless, in May 1943, under considerable pressure, the Chairman of the Library Association finally agreed to the closure of the Service Libraries and Books Fund (Hung, 2008).

The Provision of Library Services in London's Public Shelters

In contrast to other areas of the country, in the first months of the war the number of people borrowing books from public libraries in London declined. This has been predominantly attributed to the affect of large numbers of people being evacuated to the countryside, and the restrictions on movement as a result of the introduction of the black out. However, as other forms of entertainment were also affected by the black out the decline in borrowing of books from libraries was reversed. Furthermore, it was estimated that the levels of reading in some London suburbs increased by between twenty-eight and eighty percent, and in central London by more than ninety percent. As a result, libraries were placed under considerable pressure to meet this additional demand and the response of many was an increase in opening hours, opening on additional days, and some provided collections of books for civil defence posts (Russell, 1997).
At the same time, the bombing of London was responsible for causing immense damage to private property and resulted in large numbers of people requiring immediate assistance. It quickly became clear that the government and local authorities had failed to anticipate the numbers of people needing assistance and that it was unable to provide practical assistance to many. The rest centres that had been created by the civil defence authorities had been designed to provide assistance to hundreds of people for short periods of time they had not been designed to meet the needs of the thousands of people who had begun using them on a nightly basis. As a result, Londoners began to feel the impact of the lack of basic amenities and those whose homes had been completely destroyed found that they had little access to clothes or money (Russell, 1997).

At the same time, it was also increasingly felt that access to information was another area that had been neglected by the government. There was a clear need for urgent action and the London Commissioners for Civil Defence was one of the first organisations to consider how the situation could be improved. It was decided that the provision of material comforts alone would be insufficient and they considered what could be done to alleviate boredom. In November 1940, they wrote to local authorities in London in an attempt to gain their support for the provision of reading material in shelters where it was felt that light was adequate. This suggestion was supported by publishers and Penguin donated 50,000 volumes for public shelters. Furthermore, the library profession was already aware of the importance of reading in helping to maintain morale and librarians had debated what they considered to be the best type of material for the alleviation of stress in the Library Journal (Russell, 1997).

These proposals also received support from the British Institute of Adult Education, and in some London boroughs, the development and provision of reading rooms had already been started before the proposals of the Civil Defence Commissioners. However, there were also local authorities who were concerned that the creation of shelter libraries, which they feared would provide a greater attraction for people to use these shelters, was in direct contradiction to the concept of population dispersal during air raids. In some areas of London the provision of shelters was supported as it was hoped that provision of these
libraries would provide shelterers with a greater range of educational and recreational activity, and in doing so, would reduce the influence of the Communist Party in public shelters (Russell, 1997).

Public Shelters in St Marylebone

Meanwhile, the librarian at St Marylebone had established small libraries in the borough’s largest public shelters and by the end of December 1940 the number of libraries had increased to twenty. Although, it should be noted that educational activity was not supported in all shelters. The majority of shelter libraries were run or supervised by volunteers and it was proposed that they should be provided with some training. The volunteers in St Marylebone worked to extend the provision of reading which did not consist solely of paperbacks, but a broad range of titles covering areas such as geography and philosophy. The use of these shelter libraries was also characterised by the constant demand for periodicals which were often in short supply. However, by the end of 1941, the population of London had largely adapted or got used to the bombing of the city, and as a result the use of shelter libraries experienced a rapid decline. In April 1941, there had been a provision of fifty-two within St Marylebone by April 1942 this had reduced to eleven (Russell, 1997).

Public Shelters in Bethnal Green and Hackney

The provision of shelter libraries in this area of London was significant as the books that were provided were drawn from the libraries central stock of books, and at its peak, the shelter libraries contained a collection of over four thousand books. Moreover, as with other shelter libraries the books provided were not restricted to fiction titles, technical manuals were included for the use of students, and books on travel and autobiography were also included. The first shelter library in Bethnal Green opened on 21 October 1941. The shelter libraries were open for two and a half hours per evening, and rather than being staffed by volunteers as we have seen elsewhere, working in the shelter library was part of the weekly rota for library staff. The shelter library provided library authorities with
the opportunity to provide a service for shelters, but also provided the library authority with the opportunity to establish a branch library. Furthermore, during 1940/1 there is no doubt that the provision of shelter libraries provided an invaluable source of education and relaxation. The librarians who worked in these libraries played a key role in the provision of lectures, classes and other recreational activity. Whilst the nature of the shelter library varied greatly across London the efforts and activities of these librarians was highly commended by the Library Association (Russell, 1997).

The public library system of Great Britain: a report on its present condition with proposals for post war reorganisation

Lionel McColvin provided a crucial role in the movement to modernise and reconstruct public libraries. As the Honorary Secretary of the Library Association, he was asked to conduct a survey on the current state of public libraries and their prospects for the future. The purpose of the report was to promote good service, particularly in those areas of the country where it was felt that the service provided could be significantly improved (Munford, 1976). The majority of his work was completed by the end of 1941, and a final report was submitted to the Library Association in April 1942, and published in full the following month (Black, 2004).

The report can be summarised as a lament for the inadequate resources and organisation of public libraries and provided a stark contrast between the best and the worst. McColvin repeated his criticism of reference work as the one of the weakest areas of library work. Furthermore, the insufficient levels of staffing, the lack of library staff with appropriate qualifications, and the inadequate stock and poor condition of many books was also the subject of criticism. McColvin made a number of major recommendations including establishing a real relationship between the material stocked by the library and the level of demand from library users, improved management and significant reform of the professional training and education of the library profession, and urged libraries to have the widest possible vision. The report is arguably one of the most important in the history of public libraries, and unnerved many members of the Library Association with its calls
for far reaching and drastic change. Some were so disconcerted that they even went so far as to try and persuade the Carnegie Trust to publish the report (Munford, 1976).

Ultimately, the Library Association published its own proposals for the postwar development of the library service in 1943. Whilst they closely resembled McColvin’s proposals they also recognised that the library service was capable of having a far greater social role and impact than it had hitherto (Murison, 1971). However, in reality many of the recommendations would not be implemented, due to financial, political and other considerations (Black, 2004).

Summary

Throughout this period there was an increased emphasis on the role that public libraries could play in the alleviation of wartime stress and the maintaining of morale amongst those on the home front and those serving in the armed forces. This was most clearly demonstrated through the provision of libraries in some of London’s stations and shelters. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that the educational role of the library did not disappear entirely. The Second World War was both scientific and technical in nature, and the library was an important source of knowledge and information for those who found themselves required to undertake tasks for which they had no previous training or experience. At the same time, the War Office and the Army were responsible for presenting the most significant challenge and opposition to the library professions belief in the primacy of the educational role of the library. However, it is significant that by highlighting the continued inadequacies of the library profession, McColvin and the Library Association were responsible for producing a postwar vision for public libraries in which they were seen as broader social institutions. Regrettably few of these proposals would be fully implemented by the library profession.

Chapter VI

Conclusion
Introduction

The aim of this research project was to examine the origins of public libraries in England and Wales in order to consider how the informational role of the library established a position of dominance within the library profession. It also set out to examine the motivation of librarians for resisting the use of the library for non-informational or educational purposes and, consequently, the use of the library by various social groups such as children and the unemployed.

Summary of Findings

The origins of public libraries can be found in the social, economic and political turmoil of the mid-nineteenth century. The promoters of library legislation were composed of a broad group which viewed the library as having a diverse role and purpose. On the one hand, there were those who called for greater government social and economic intervention, of which, the creation of libraries was one such example. Similarly, there were those who believed that providing greater access to information and education would result in the economic betterment of the working-class and would help to address social issues. Ultimately, for the public library movement the library was an instrument for addressing social squalor, unrest, and supporting the economic betterment of the working-class.

However, the mid-nineteenth century was also a time of increased demand for information. The Industrial Revolution was responsible for rapid technical and scientific progress, and as a result, many found themselves undertaking work that required greater technical skill and knowledge. As a result, many expected the library to provide them with access to this material. Meanwhile, many library users continued to expect the library to provide them with a means of recreation, and access to novels and works of fiction were in constant demand from library users, and at the same time, newsrooms and music rooms were among the most popular services provided by libraries.
Nevertheless, the government rarely shared this liberal view of the social role of the library. In the nineteenth century, politicians were wary of the power of the urban population, and as a result, they identified libraries as a tool in enabling them to maintain social control. The public library was also used to entice people away from those libraries which provided access to radical literature. Similarly, the government supported the library as a means of discouraging people from using public houses, which were often used for political meetings, and for the reading of radical newspapers. It was not until the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that the government view of libraries changed. In the aftermath of the First World War, the government viewed the library as an important tool in the economic regeneration of the countryside. Furthermore, it identified that through the support of adult education, and the provision of scientific and technical information, libraries had an important role to play in supporting commercial interests and economic activity. However, as the economic environment deteriorated during the interwar period, the government once again identified the library as a means of preventing social unrest by providing the long-term unemployed with a means of recreation and support for those seeking employment. Throughout the Second World War the government recognised the role that libraries could play in supporting the nations scientific and technical war effort. At the same time, it continued to place an emphasis on the library as a means of social recreation and maintaining public morale.

However, it was the library profession that was responsible for emphasising and reinforcing the informational role of the library. The most important objectives for librarians were the establishment of libraries and librarianship. At the same time they were also likely to view leisure as non-purposeful and undermining to their professional status. At the same time, the library profession ignored that a significant factor in the creation of libraries had been the belief that they could play a role in the reform of working-class leisure. Similarly, it ignored much of the successful work that the library had done which deserves much greater recognition, such as its work with children, the unemployed and disadvantaged.
Nevertheless, whether the purpose of the library is to provide access to information, support for education, or to provide a means of recreation is still unresolved. There is a clear need for a modern vision for public libraries. The current model of the library is one which was adopted during the nineteenth century which supported society as it developed a need for access to knowledge, education and information. However, librarians now face the duel challenge of ensuring that they and libraries remain relevant at a time when society has increased access to information without the need to use the library.

**Recommendations**

The research that has been undertaken for this dissertation has highlighted a number of areas where further research could be beneficial. In particular, much of the research that has been carried out regarding the history of libraries has been narrowly conceived, and whilst it has often reflected the authors respect for the library, the social relevance and impact of the library has often been ignored. There is not only a lack of literature on library history it has also often been criticised for its poor quality. Furthermore, much of the history of libraries that has been written has viewed libraries as independent institutions that exist in a social and political vacuum. When researchers have looked at the library during times of war, they have often focussed on the physical damage to library buildings, the destruction of library collections, and the impact of conscription on library staffing. There appears to have been little research that has focussed on whether the use of the library has changed during wartime. A more detailed research and examination of the public library would be beneficial to librarianship. As Shera (1952) has suggested, established library practice is determined by historical interpretation and librarians should fully understand the origins of the library.
Bibliography


Appendix I
Dissertation Proposal

Working Title


Introduction
The Librarians of the nineteenth century were keen for Public Libraries to be defined primarily as sources of information, education and self-improvement. Whilst this has been one of the most important and fundamental roles of the library, I would suggest that the history of the Public library is far more complex. Governments have used libraries as a tool to modify social behaviour, either because of behaviour of which they disapproved or they feared large-scale social unrest. Similarly, although it was unpopular with librarians of the time, the library has always played an important role in the leisure society. The emergence of a political belief that appears to consider leisure activity to be of no value is possibly responsible for this being overlooked and not treated to greater discussion.

**Aims and Objectives**

The primary aim of this project is to suggest that as library and information professionals, we need to develop and use a definition of the public libraries that goes far beyond providing access to information. I would suggest that the Public Library had an important function in the leisure society, that this has a significant benefit for wider society, and that this is an achievement of which library and information professionals should embrace rather than seek to ignore. I would further suggest that those Public Libraries, which have been the most successful, are those that have been able to provide an adequate balance between the demand for fiction and non-fiction books within their collections.

**Scope and Definition**

This project will be limited to Public/Free Libraries. That is, those publicly funded libraries created as a result of the Public Libraries Act (1850), or as a result of subsequent pieces of legislation. Similarly it is anticipated the project will be limited to an overview of Public Libraries in the United Kingdom from 1850 to 1976. It is possible that the project could be expanded to look at recent developments within Public Libraries; there is the risk that material related to such recent events can neither guarantee objectivity, nor identify the key issues.
Public Libraries provided a broad range of services whose use was primarily for leisure, such as game and conversations. Whilst these may receive some attention as part of this project, the main focus will be on fiction, their increasing use and presence within library collections.

**Definitions**

*Censorship:* This is widely seen as the suppression of speech, public communication or other information, which may be considered objectionable, harmful, sensitive, politically incorrect or inconvenient as determined by governments, media outlets, authorities or other groups or institutions.

*Great Fiction Debate:* This was concerned with the type of fiction that libraries should provide if they should provide fiction at all. It can be split between those who supported the provision of recreational books in response to demand, and those that believed that this was acceptable in the main, apart from the romance genre and sensational titles. There are others who believed that public libraries had no leisure function, and consequently that popular fiction should not be provided at all.

*Leisure:* Time free from obligation/commitment and/or freedom to choose activities.

**Research context and literature review**

**Context**

There is a substantial Library and Information Science literature that has provided a detailed overview of the emergence of Public Library Acts, the Great Fiction Debate, the popularisation of libraries, and the educational and informational role of the library. I would suggest that the majority of this literature has focused upon the educational and information role of the library, and in doing so they have failed to give consideration to the
use of the library as a leisure activity, and those that have appeared to have placed little value upon this role.

**Literature Review**

The Public Library emerged in Victorian Britain as modern institutions, whose role was seen primarily as that of supporting scientific enquiry and cultural improvement. This legacy continued into the Edwardian era when the library is increasingly seen as the source of knowledge and rational information, to provide support for both study and good citizenship.

In a society that was experiencing rapid social and economic change the library played an important role in meeting the educational and industrial needs of society. Both government and reformers saw the library as playing an important role in countering some of the social tensions that emerged as a result of such rapid dramatic social and economic change.

It is a recurrent trend that reformers supported the role of libraries during periods of social crisis. This is clearly indicative that there are library reformers who do not define the library in terms of facilitating access to information and supporting information and self-improvement. They see libraries as having a key role to play in enabling the social and political establishment to maintain control over society.

It also reflects that many are concerned by the political aims of the working-class and their use of libraries, in particular Subscription Libraries, which were widely believed to stock Socialist and Radical literature.

The library during the First World War contributed to social stability. This was achieved through the promotion of civic consciousness and the continuing promotion of education. Secondly, the supporting of the national economy by, facilitating, and promoting access to commercial and technical information.
The debate about whether it is appropriate for the Public Library to play a role in the dissemination of popular literature continues into the Inter War Period. Librarians of this period frequently reiterate what they consider to be their duty of raising the standard of reading material whilst at the same time reaching the masses. However, critics claim that Librarians continue to purchase large quantities of what they consider to be lowbrow literature.

Throughout this period libraries and Librarians continue to define defending high culture as a core element of their role. This is a trend that is evident during times of social disruptions, such as that posed by the threat of mass unemployment during this period. This is also reflective of the role of the Librarian as the censor of public/popular culture.

The Second World War heralded a boom in reading. The absence of husbands meant that women were able to dedicate social time to reading, rather than to the completion of household chores. Similarly, the library becomes a resource to children denied the opportunity to play out in the street. Popular Literature accounts for the vast majority of books read, although Librarians continue to attempt to censor/filter out material that they consider inappropriate or antiwar.

The issue of censorship continues to arise after the Second World War as Librarians continue to consider the oversight of public morals to be an element of their role. In particular, there are large parts of the library profession who are uncomfortable with the popular culture that emerges at the end of the 1950s and throughout the 1960s. The Public Library continues to evolve throughout this period and takes on an increasingly modern appearance. By 1976, they have modernised and evolved to such an extent that they bear little resemblance to the Public Libraries of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

**Methodology**
It is anticipated that the historical analysis of resources will be carried out through the use of a Systematic Review. The definition and justification of those resources used in combination with the use of search strategies and the use of relevance criteria will be important tools in ensuring that the literature review remains objective.

Comprehensive or Selective Review have both been given consideration, but have not been considered for the following reasons. It is unlikely that it would be possible to carry out a Comprehensive Review, which is totally comprehensive. The use of a Selective Review presents the risk the important resources are not identified or used within the project. Whilst this may also be true of a Systematic Review, I believe that it should present a significantly lower risk.

Whilst this is also not intended to be an imperial study, the ability to access and assess library loans, in terms of fiction and non-fiction titles borrowed will form an important element of this project.

**Work Plan**

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<th>June-July</th>
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<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
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**Resources**

It is anticipated that the resources required for this piece of research should be accessible through The British Library, The National Archives, and City University Library. Online databases such as the Web of Science will also be a resource to consult, but it is possible that some material is unlikely to be available in digital format. There is the risk that the
resources that maybe useful for this project are not accessible for a variety of reasons, and that may subsequently be reflected in the aims and content of the project.

**Ethics**

The proposed project is a piece of desk-based research, and for this reason it is not anticipated that any ethical issues should arise.

The Ethics Review Form has been completed and attached below.

**Ethics Review Form: LIS Masters projects**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>If your answer to any of the following questions (1 – 3) is YES, you must apply to an appropriate external ethics committee for approval:</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Does your project require approval from the National Research Ethics Service (NRES)? (E.g. because you are recruiting current NHS patients or staff? If you are unsure, please check at <a href="http://www.hra.nhs.uk/research-community/before-you-apply/determine-which-review-body-approvals-are-required/">http://www.hra.nhs.uk/research-community/before-you-apply/determine-which-review-body-approvals-are-required/</a>)</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>2. Will you recruit any participants who fall under the auspices of the Mental Capacity Act? (Such research needs to be approved by an external ethics committee such as NRES or the Social Care Research Ethics Committee <a href="http://www.scie.org.uk/research/ethics-committee/">http://www.scie.org.uk/research/ethics-committee/</a>)</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>3. Will you recruit any participants who are currently under the auspices of the Criminal Justice System, for example, but not limited to, people on remand, prisoners and those on probation? (Such research needs to be authorised by the ethics approval system of the National Offender Management Service.)</td>
<td>No</td>
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If your answer to any of the following questions (4 – 11) is YES, you must apply to the Senate Research Ethics Committee for approval (unless you are applying to an external ethics committee):
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<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Does your project involve participants who are unable to give informed consent, for example, but not limited to, people who may have a degree of learning disability or mental health problem, that means they are unable to make an informed decision on their own behalf?</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Is there a risk that your project might lead to disclosures from participants concerning their involvement in illegal activities?</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Is there a risk that obscene and or illegal material may need to be accessed for your project (including online content and other material)?</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Does your project involve participants disclosing information about sensitive subjects?</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Does your project involve you travelling to another country outside of the UK, where the Foreign &amp; Commonwealth Office has issued a travel warning? (<a href="http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/">http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/</a>)</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Does your project involve invasive or intrusive procedures? For example, these may include, but are not limited to, electrical stimulation, heat, cold or bruising.</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Does your project involve animals?</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Does your project involve the administration of drugs, placebos or other substances to study participants?</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td><strong>If your answer to any of the following questions (12 – 18) is YES, you should consult your supervisor, as you may need to apply to an ethics committee for approval.</strong></td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Does your project involve participants who are under the age of 18?</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Does your project involve adults who are vulnerable because of their social, psychological or medical circumstances (vulnerable adults)? This includes adults with cognitive and / or learning disabilities, adults with physical disabilities and older people.</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Does your project involve participants who are recruited because they are staff or students of City University London? For example, students studying on a particular course or module. (If yes, approval is also required from the Project Tutor.)</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Does your project involve intentional deception of participants?</td>
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<td>Does your project involve identifiable participants taking part without their informed consent?</td>
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<td>Does your project pose a risk to participants or other individuals greater than that in normal working life?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Does your project pose a risk to you, the researcher, greater than that in normal working life?</td>
<td>No</td>
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**Confidentiality**

The proposed project would limit itself to desk-based research. As it will neither involve the recruitment of study participants, nor the handling of sensitive personal information, it is not anticipated that any issues regarding confidentiality will arise. It is anticipated that all of the resources referenced in this project will be in the public domain.
As the topic for my dissertation I chose to research the history of public libraries in England and Wales. I was interested in how information has established a prominent position within the library profession and felt that this had resulted in the social role and impact of the library being overlooked. As I reviewed my initial dissertation proposal, I was concerned that the historical period I was attempting to cover was too broad, and that I may have insufficient time to carry out research in sufficient detail. This influenced
my decision to amend my proposal, and consequently, libraries in the postwar period were not included as part of my research.

I had anticipated finding a larger proportion of literature on the history of libraries, and as a result, the literature review was more complex and took longer than I had anticipated. Furthermore, I found less material than was relevant to my chosen area of research, and for this reason, it was not possible for the dissertation to be as comprehensive as I had initially intended. As a result, my research question altered significantly from that contained in my original proposal.

Nevertheless, as a result of the literature review I was able to find information relating to the history of libraries of which I had previously been unaware. I believe that as a result of my research I have gained a greater awareness that public libraries have always been a local rather than national service, and as a result, the nature of libraries has varied considerably. At the same time, I was also interested to discover that the library was generally defined very broadly, and that, it was primarily librarians that were responsible for viewing the library in terms of education and information. Nevertheless, there are very clear gaps in my knowledge which could be addressed in a number of ways. I believe that in any future project it would be of value to focus on the history of specific county libraries, such as Norfolk, or to limit the area of research to a much narrower historical period.

Although I have found the dissertation a challenging experience, I have also found it beneficial to my long-term personal and professional development. I feel that throughout the last six months I have developed the ability to manage my time more productively. Similarly, setting achievable goals has also been an important part of the process for enabling me to successfully complete this project.