

**An investigation into the
provision of ethnic minority
library services in
predominantly
white areas**

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ABSTRACT:

This dissertation examines library services in predominantly white areas, investigating the opinions, attitude and practices of librarians as determined by a literature review, a questionnaire sent to public libraries across the country, and detailed interviews of a few librarians in predominantly white areas. Previous literature in this field has focused only on the provision of services in ethnically diverse settings.

The dissertation considers the ethnic population in predominantly white areas and the potential for the population to increase, the challenges that library staff in areas that are not ethnically diverse, how librarians define ethnic minority collections, how ethnic texts are promoted to white and ethnic users, and finally librarians' opinions of the roles a library in a predominantly white area has to play in society.

The dissertation concludes that meeting the needs of small communities of ethnic groups is a big challenge, especially in the face of increasing immigration. Librarians face difficulties due to limited funds and low expertise, but reduce these problems by cooperation with larger libraries in areas of higher ethnicity and liaising with community groups themselves.

Many libraries in white areas also seek to encourage tolerance and cultural diversity to all their users, by promoting multicultural texts that reflect a multi-ethnic Britain. Librarians are generally enthusiastic about the chance to promote such values, but the work tends to take second place to providing ethnic minority groups with the services they require.

1. INTRODUCTION:	4
1.1 AIMS:	4
1.2 OBJECTIVES:.....	4
1.3 CONTEXT:.....	4
2. METHODOLOGY:	6
2.1 <i>Triangulation:</i>	7
2.2 <i>Design of questionnaire:</i>	7
2.3 <i>Piloting of Questionnaire:</i>	8
2.4 <i>Distribution of Questionnaire:</i>	8
2.5 <i>Selection of interview subjects:</i>	9
2.6 <i>Interview techniques:</i>	10
2.7 <i>Design of interview schedules:</i>	10
2.8 <i>Limitations:</i>	11
3. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS:	15
4. LITERATURE REVIEW:	16
4.1 JUSTIFICATION OF STUDY:.....	16
4.2 DETERMINING AREAS OF STUDY:	18
4.2.1 Role of Libraries in Predominantly White Areas:.....	18
4.2.2 Attitudes of staff & problems faced by libraries:	19
4.2.3 Make-up of stock:	19
4.2.4 Methods of provision & Staffing:	20
4.2.5 Impact of promotions:.....	20
5. RESULTS:	21
5.1 QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS:.....	21
Response Rate:.....	21
Central tendencies:.....	22
5.1.1 <i>Section 1: Library & General Information</i>	22
5.1.1.1 Ethnicity:.....	22
5.1.1.2 Community Profiling:	24
5.1.2 <i>Section 2 – Stock and Promotions</i>	24
5.1.2.1 Type of Stock:.....	24
5.1.2.2 Shelving:	26
5.1.2.3 Promotions:.....	27
5.1.3 <i>Opinions and Priorities:</i>	28
5.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR INTERVIEWS:	31
5.2.1 <i>Library area 1:</i>	31
Interview description:	32
5.2.2 <i>Library Area 2:</i>	34
Interview description:	35
5.2.3 <i>Library Area 3:</i>	36
Interview description:	37
5.3 INTERVIEW RESULTS:	38
5.3.1 <i>Population Increases & Future Immigration:</i>	38
5.3.2 <i>Problems faced by libraries in provision of ethnic minority texts:</i>	39
Financial:	39
Language:	40
Expertise	41
5.3.3 <i>Solution of problems:</i>	41
5.3.4 <i>Barriers Involved for Ethnic Minority Users:</i>	44
5.3.5 <i>Stock Issues:</i>	45
5.3.6 <i>Promotions:</i>	48
5.3.7 <i>Role of Libraries in Predominantly White Areas:</i>	51
6. FURTHER DISCUSSION:	55
6.1 ETHNIC POPULATION:.....	55

6.2 STOCK:	56
6.3 ROLE OF LIBRARY IN ETHNIC MINORITY PROVISION:	56
7. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS:	59
7.1 CONCLUSIONS:	59
7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH:.....	61
8. REFERENCES:.....	62
9. APPENDICES:.....	65
9.1 APPENDIX 1 : QUESTIONNAIRE	65
9.2 APPENDIX 2: TABLE OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS:	71
9.3 APPENDIX 3: SAMPLE OF AN INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT:	73
<i>Interview in library area 1:</i>	73

1. INTRODUCTION:

1.1 Aims:

This dissertation aims to examine librarians' attitudes towards the provision of ethnic minority texts in a predominantly white area and to establish the nature of their current practice. It will be an investigation of the different priorities of librarians working in largely white areas, and their opinions about the role such libraries have to play in ethnic minority provision.

1.2 Objectives:

The following objectives have been set, each with regard to libraries in predominantly white areas:

- To collect details from library staff about the make-up of their ethnic communities, including the possible future demands of such provision;
- To investigate the main difficulties or challenges staff face in providing services for ethnic minorities;
- To investigate the concept of an 'ethnic minority text' by identifying the type of collections held;
- To investigate how these texts or collections are promoted or organised, the reasoning behind such decisions, and the success such strategies meet with;
- To investigate librarians' opinions about the interest of white users in reading about cultures other than their own;
- To investigate librarians' opinions about the role their libraries have to play in the provision of ethnic minority services and who can benefit from such services.

1.3 Context:

9% of library users are not white (CIPFA, 2002), which is roughly comparable to the percentage of non-white people in the total population of the UK. However, a lower percentage of non-white library users than white library users

make use of their library for book-borrowing; in the cases of some communities this figure is considerably lower (CIPFA, 2001). Is this because non-white library users are less interested in using books, or because the books public libraries hold are less relevant to them?

Whilst projects to promote texts from minority cultures are often targeted at areas with mixed or predominantly non-white communities, there have been few investigations into the topic area of the provision of ethnic minority texts in communities that are predominantly white. These libraries are likely to still have some ethnic minorities residing in their area, and many may face increasing numbers in the next few years. Libraries must meet the needs of the ethnic minority users in their communities, and may face particular challenges in doing so when their minority communities are small. Additionally, the needs of ethnic minority communities vary and change over time. Should ethnic minority provision be primarily concerned with providing foreign-language material to those who do not speak English? Or should ethnic minority provision encompass a wider sphere, including material aimed at second generation ethnic minorities, who have less of a dependency upon language materials, but may still have strong cultural ties to other countries or practices?

Additionally, there may be a benefit to non-ethnic users in a predominantly white community reading books that are about ethnic minorities or reflect a multicultural Britain, particularly at a time when there is a re-emerging debate about how best to handle cultural diversity in the UK, and the value of multiculturalism (British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC], 2005). Consideration of this issue is particularly pertinent given that Government research shows increasing segregation and minimal contact between different communities in the UK (British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC], 2006c). The situation allows us to ask several questions of libraries in predominantly white areas. Would white users be more willing to read ethnic minority texts if promoted or selected by librarians? Are ethnic minority / multicultural texts being bought in mainly white areas? How are they being promoted, and what are library users' attitudes towards them?

2. METHODOLOGY:

This research is largely qualitative, since its intention is not to use the results obtained to generalise and build up a picture of ethnic minority library provision nationwide. Instead, the primary aim of the research is to consider ethnic minority provision comprehensively in a few localised settings, and to discover and analyse librarian opinion in those particular areas, to understand what librarians “believe, how they feel, how they interpret events” (Gorman and Clayton, 1997:25), hence justifying the qualitative approach. It is, however, hoped that the findings will be of relevance to and representative of many other libraries in predominantly white areas. An inductive approach is desired, because there was no particular hypothesis to be tested, as might have applied in deductive approaches where researchers may seek to support or contradict “certain assumptions” (Gorman and Clayton, 1997:29), but rather there is an investigation of several factors that may or may not illustrate the nature of the provision of ethnic minority services in predominantly white library areas. Consequently, semi-structured interviews were used as the main method of investigation. In order to create a structure for the interviews, however, it was decided to undertake some more generalised, non-local research in order to illustrate potential issues. The lack of established research into ethnic minority provision in white areas made this important, as it was decided that it was necessary to establish some general practice of ethnic minority provision on which the interviews could be based.

Consequently, the interviews were preceded by a questionnaire with closed or fixed-response questions, which was sent out to a number of libraries across the country. The aim of the questionnaire was very different to the aim of the interviews, and so the methodology used was very different. It was important to achieve a relatively large sample size, because the aim for this phase of the questionnaire was to establish attitudes and opinions of librarians which could be generalised out from the sample set to libraries in similar conditions across the country. A questionnaire was therefore deemed to be the ideal tool of research for this aim, as it is “the appropriate mode of inquiry for making inferences about a large group of people

from data drawn on a relatively small number of individuals from that group” (Marshall and Rossman, 1995:96).

2.1 Triangulation:

The value of using multiple methods to achieve data is obvious: by combining different methods of data collection, limitations in one data collection method can be balanced out because another data collection method has different limitations and strengths (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). Triangulating the methods of using a questionnaire and an interview mean errors deriving from flaws in both methods can be compensated for. Additionally, the triangulation of two techniques allows a qualitative approach to be combined with a quantitative one, which has advantages. In qualitative research there always remains the possibility that results have only been selected that supports the argument of the researcher (Silverman, 2001). Utilising a more quantitative approach allows all the data gathered to be considered. On the other hand, a quantitative approach omits the analysis of why respondents answer the way they do; adding a qualitative approach can seek to address this issue. Finally, collecting data from the questionnaire and then using the data to form the interview schedules results in a method of data collection that is based on the results obtained in an earlier method. Such a methodology promotes a recursive research process (Gorman and Clayton, 1997) of several research stages: establishing a theoretical framework; formulating a research plan; collecting and interpreting data; and reporting findings. These stages are fluid, with movement between them as some stages are revisited as a result of what emerges from later stages of the research process.

2.2 Design of questionnaire:

The aim of the questionnaire was not particularly to discover the reasons behind opinions, as quantitative data from a questionnaire was not deemed to be the most appropriate way of discovering this information. Consequently, a closed, fixed-response questionnaire was used, with all questions requiring answers to be selected from a given range. This allowed for easy and valid quantification of results, though a comment section was also included so that respondents could express any opinions or details which the closed nature of the questionnaire had not allowed. Likert-style

(summated scale) questions, where statements were followed with an agreement scale running from one to five, were used extensively to establish opinions without compromising the quantifiable nature of the questionnaire data. It can be argued that Likert-scale data does not represent an ordinal scale of measurement, as there is no set interval between the scales (Powell and Connaway, 2004) and no numerical relationship between different points on the scale. Nevertheless, for the basic analysis required in this dissertation, mostly means and modes, such questions are still easily quantifiable. The dissertation is less concerned with quantifying the difference between the scales than with quantifying the numbers of people choosing each scale. It is accepted that a more accurate reflection of a person's opinion is likely to be achieved with an open question (Denscombe, 1998), but any such data obtained is much less quantifiable.

2.3 Piloting of Questionnaire:

The questionnaire was piloted before distribution, to avoid the chances of distributing a poorly designed questionnaire which could cause confusion, to ensure the questionnaire was free of errors, and to ensure that the electronic form functioned correctly. The questionnaire was piloted amongst a small group of students undertaking an MA in Librarianship course at The University of Sheffield, and feedback was encouraged by e-mail. The piloting resulted in several small modifications to the wording of questions, and also some additional "Don't know" responses for librarians who might not wish to commit themselves to a particular set answer. The layout, design and length of the questionnaire attracted no negative feedback, and the functionality of the electronic form was indicated by the received data of all responses. One potential limitation of the piloting of the questionnaire was that none of those participating had worked in public libraries. Though this was not essential for most of the feedback, it might have improved feedback about whether questions were relevant and practical, and whether any major topic had been omitted. As Bell suggests, questionnaires should be piloted "on a group similar to the one that will form the population of your study" (1999:128).

2.4 Distribution of Questionnaire:

The focus of this dissertation was on libraries in predominantly white areas. Consequently when selecting libraries to which to send the questionnaire, more libraries were chosen in predominantly white areas than libraries in areas of higher ethnicity. Nevertheless, it was decided that in a quantitative environment where comparisons might be statistically valid, it would be appropriate to send the questionnaire to areas of higher ethnicity, and this approach might ultimately highlight differences in provision and attitude between libraries in areas of different ethnicity, which could be used to good effect in designing the interview questions.

The questionnaire was sent out to 180 public libraries across England. The sample size chosen was large because it was anticipated that the response rate could be low. The questionnaire was sent out by e-mail, and consisted of an electronic form containing twenty questions. This method of distribution was chosen because of the speed and ease of targeting large numbers of public libraries, coupled with the convenience of response that an electronic form had over other methods such as post.

Public libraries were chosen whose e-mail addresses were available on their local authority websites. Three to five libraries in each authority were chosen, depending on the coverage of each library and the size of the local authority. The larger libraries in each local authority were targeted, mainly because they were more likely to have the full range of resources and experiences that would be necessary to answer the questions. In some cases the larger libraries were chosen by virtue of knowledge of the local area, but in many cases they were selected by virtue of their published opening hours, which hopefully gave some indication of the size of the library.

2.5 Selection of interview subjects:

Interviewees were selected, first and foremost, from those respondents to the questionnaire who had indicated their availability and willingness to be interviewed. Three subjects were chosen from these respondents, and these subjects were contacted in order to pursue detailed face-to-face and telephone interviews. It was decided that all libraries chosen would be in low ethnicity areas or moderately low ethnicity areas, since this was the original focus of the dissertation. If a comparison

of provision by ethnicity of library area had been desired, a very different range of libraries would have been selected.

2.6 Interview techniques:

In addition to the detailed, in-depth interviews described above, it was decided that brief e-mail interviews should be conducted with other librarians who had shown a willingness to participate. The reasoning behind this decision was to produce the maximum amount of data possible. This increased the chances of being able to generalise from the results across similar libraries and to gain a wider picture, although it should be pointed out that this was not the primary aim of the dissertation. As a result, the brief interviews were designed to support the data from the detailed interviews of three specific areas, not to be on a par with this data. Structured interview schedules were designed for each library, and were distributed by e-mail, with replies also being accepted by e-mail.

The decision to conduct interviews in telephone, e-mail and face to face format was a recognition of the fact that each method has its own advantages and disadvantages. Face to face interviews might be regarded as superior because it is possible to observe more data (facial expressions, movements). Telephone interviews have a cost, time and convenience advantage, and additionally may allow interviewees to have a greater sense of anonymity and therefore might encourage a greater degree of individual honesty (Losee and Worley, 1993). Both face-to-face and telephone interviews were important because they allowed for a more flexible interview schedule that could adapt to the data as it was emerging. However, there are advantages to e-mail interviews too: the transcribing process, which is prone to errors, misunderstandings and interpretations, is eliminated; and there is no physical contact between the researcher and the participant, possibly encouraging frank answers from the respondent (Powell and Connaway, 2004).

2.7 Design of interview schedules:

The interview schedule was semi-structured, with topics chosen as a result of an analysis of the questionnaire results. Topics and questions were devised and asked in sequence, but with a good deal of flexibility allowed for the expression of the

interviewee's opinions and digressions. The advantage of interviews for extracting qualitative data is that the interviewer is not totally in control of the process. As Marshall and Rossman suggest, in-depth interviews are "more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories" (1995:80). Interviews can be a participative procedure; a collaborative accomplishment (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004), in which the interviewee can often shape the direction. Consequently, the interviews were able to explore emotions, experiences and opinions in a way that the questionnaire was unable to do.

A standardised interview structure was not used, because the questionnaire had already identified different responses from the participants, which could be investigated further at the interview level. Additionally, since the nature of the library area was deemed to be so important to the analysis of the responses obtained, questions were individually targeted at particular areas after the investigation of the census data concerning the areas involved, and the local history of the library areas. One problem with this approach is that at the interviews, participants sometimes identified themselves with smaller or larger areas than had originally been identified and investigated. Although the census data could be reconsidered after the interview, certain questions may have been inappropriately targeted at librarians who covered, for example, a larger area than that which they had identified in the questionnaire, perhaps encompassing two areas with a very different social or ethnic character.

Using non-standardised interview schedules meant that the results of the interviews could not be quantified and compared as easily as if standardised schedules had been used (Bell, 1999). However, should be pointed out that a comparison between areas was not the original aim of this dissertation. It was therefore deemed to be more important to get to the issues that each librarian felt was more important to their area and circumstances.

2.8 Limitations:

Questionnaires were distributed by email, as this was a fast, cost effective method and hopefully required minimal extra effort from participants. The response rate was fairly low, as was expected, but was in fact lower than expected. This particularly impacted upon responses from high and moderate ethnicity libraries,

partly because fewer were contacted in the first place, and perhaps partly because fewer libraries in areas of high ethnicity felt that the questionnaire was relevant to them. In retrospect, when sending out the questionnaire to libraries, more would have been sent out to libraries in areas of higher ethnicity. The small number of replies from these libraries meant that it is doubtful whether the comparisons drawn across different ethnicity libraries are statistically valid, since it is difficult to assume that there is any level of statistical significance. As Bell (1999) suggests, however, significance is dependent upon the consequences of the decision as well as the statistical significance. In this dissertation the questionnaire data is not being used to draw firm conclusions or test hypotheses, but is being used to form interview questions which will produce further data. Additionally, a comparison between areas of higher and lower ethnicity was not the overall focus of the dissertation. It is certainly true, however, that with a greater number of responses from higher ethnicity libraries, more statistically valid conclusions could have been drawn from the questionnaire, which might have impacted upon the interview schedules. To achieve this, reminder e-mails could have been sent to non-responding participants. It has been shown that one reminder can significantly increase the response rate of participants (Bell, 1999). Other reasons for the low response rate are discussed in the results section.

Since ethnic minority provision is multifaceted, it could be suggested that questions asked do not necessarily mean the same thing to one librarian as to another. For example, if some librarians thought of ethnic minority provision as predominantly supplying books in foreign languages, they might answer questions on shelving of stock very differently to someone who thought of ethnic minority provision as predominantly supplying English books to minorities brought up in this country. Such potential differences did not become totally clear until the interview stage. The interview stage was less prone to this limitation, given that understanding is likely to be greater in an interactive data-gathering format, but is not completely exempt. It is clear that librarians can attach very different values and meanings to certain words and phrases, and these may be dependent upon the area in which they work, e.g. in the example given above, a librarian in an area with mostly established second generation minorities may be more likely to include English language stock as ethnic stock than a librarian in an area with newer immigrants. Since

misinterpretations of meaning and different values attached to words also applies to data transmitted to the researcher from the participant, this also becomes a potential limitation, and is this time arguably more likely in an interview situation than in the closed questionnaire format, where the interviewee is restricted to words and phrases that have been chosen in advance by the interviewer.

Arguably the results are skewed towards those libraries that were more sympathetic to ethnic minority provision, since it is probable that these librarians were more likely to give up their time and participate in the study than librarians who were not sympathetic to ethnic minority provision in white areas. Such a suggestion cannot be backed up by evidence (as there is obviously no data from libraries not participating). Nevertheless, a similar logic dictates that those librarians who were more sympathetic or enthusiastic towards ethnic minority library provision in predominantly white areas would also be more likely to agree to participate in interviews than those who were not sympathetic or enthusiastic. The results from the questionnaire did bear out this potential limitation. The last three questions, which assessed librarians' beliefs and opinions regarding the importance of ethnic minority provision in predominantly white areas, were analysed by those libraries who did volunteer to participate further, against those who did not. Those libraries less enthusiastic about ethnic minority provision would have been expected to be: more likely to suggest that libraries in white areas had other more important priorities to focus on (higher score for question 15); less likely to suggest that libraries need to cater even for small numbers of ethnic minorities (lower score for question 16); and less likely to suggest that libraries need to reflect a modern, ethnic British society (lower score for question 17).

Mean responses for opinions about libraries in predominantly white areas

	Question 16	Question 17	Question 18
No further participation	2.33	3.93	4.11
Agreed to participate further	2.10	4.29	4.57

The table above shows that, considering mean responses, libraries who did not agree to participate further did indeed fulfil all the criteria for appearing to be less enthusiastic/concerned with ethnic minority provision in predominantly white areas.

If indeed it can be assumed that those libraries not replying to the questionnaire may have showed, on average, even less enthusiasm for ethnic minority provision in white areas (on the other hand, there could be many reasons for non-responsiveness, as discussed in the results section), then it is clear that the results of the dissertation could have been very different indeed had there been a total response rate to the questionnaire.

3. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

The research involved human participants, and information from these participants was stored and used. Information was only collected from competent adults. Questionnaires were designed to be answered anonymously, with only the library area to be identified to ensure that follow up questionnaires were not sent to libraries who had already participated, and this information was not disclosed within the dissertation. Only those respondents who chose to participate in further interviews were required to provide names and contact details. Again, this information was not disclosed within the dissertation. Specific library areas participating in detailed interviews were not named in the dissertation, as suggested by Holloway (1997), although the descriptions of the areas participating may allow identification of these areas. This reflects a tension that arises in qualitative research where anonymity can be threatened by detailed description of the data and sample (Holloway, 1997). This was necessary to ensure that the data could be analysed appropriately; qualitative research is dependent upon analysing the conditions particular to the respondents, but no data about the individual respondents themselves was collected or used in the dissertation. Data collected from interviews with librarians which could not be collected anonymously was kept confidential. Data was protected, by treating all details of contacts or interviewees as confidential documents, to which no other person had access. A month after the project has been submitted these details shall be destroyed or deleted. Interviews were taped, but the tapes were transcribed only by me, were heard only by me and have been retained under lock and key, until a month after the submission of the dissertation, when they shall be wiped.

Permission was obtained, from the relevant public library authority or library site, before data was recorded and used. No-one has been coerced into participating in my research. Informed consent was obtained by virtue of a declaration of consent at the end of the questionnaire, whilst for individual interviews there was a consent form that was signed prior to any interview. Participant information sheets were distributed to all interviewees, detailing their right to withdraw and the procedure for doing so, and participants were given time to read the information sheets.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW:

4.1 Justification of Study:

Though Croker (1975) wrote about library services to South Asian immigrants in 1975, Clough and Quarmby (1978) conducted the first major research into the provision of public library services for ethnic minorities in Britain. Their research was conducted at a fairly comprehensive level, including participants from a diverse range of backgrounds. They aimed to produce a national picture of services to the ethnic minorities, but appreciated cultural differences between the participants, separating the major categories of ethnic minorities and providing background cultural information for each category. Their research mainly consisted of collecting details about the participant, their patterns of library usage, and their level of satisfaction with the services available. The major limitation of Clough and Quarmby's study is merely that the political and cultural make-up of the country has changed significantly since the 1970s. Clough and Quarmby conducted their research a relatively short time after a period of major immigration, and consequently they were dealing almost exclusively with participants who were born outside the UK. Croker, for example, is able to refer to her subjects as "newcomers", and considers that ethnic minority provision at the time is seen as a temporary affair, with librarians believing that demand will eventually "taper off" (1975:127).

Coleman (1981) writes at a time when librarians are starting to address the permanence of the issue. He also recognises that there are unique issues surrounding members of ethnic minority communities who have been born in this country, suggesting that there can be "an *increasing* emphasis placed on traditional culture, the mother-tongue, and religion" (1981:25). He also begins to formulate the notion, touched upon by Clough and Quarmby (1978), that ethnic minority service provision has a role not just for ethnic communities, but also for white or predominantly white communities.

Through the 1980s and into the 1990s, librarians enter debates about funding sources for ethnic minority provision and community librarian posts. The rise of the

term 'multiculturalism', which is a popular, if at times contentious, expression of the addition of ethnically diverse cultures to a country, is closely allied to seeing provision for ethnic minorities as an "integral part of the system as a whole" (Martin, 1989:126), rather than a simply being a feature of libraries in ethnically diverse communities. Nevertheless, research and studies continue to be based predominantly in ethnically diverse areas, despite government standards and recommendations which encourage all library authorities to increase their ethnic minority provision.

The next major study to hit a high degree of public attention does not arrive until Roach and Morrison's 1998 study, which the authors suggest attracted greater attention after public awareness of racial issues grew through the media attention to the death of Stephen Lawrence and the subsequent MacPherson (1999) report (Roach and Morrison, 1999). Replacing 'multiculturalism', which for the authors implies the management of a problem by a white majority, with a consideration of 'ethnic diversity' and 'anti-racism', their research consisted of an audit and extended case studies encompassing ethnic minority involvement in policy; communication to ethnic minorities; marketing and promotion; and the identification of good practice in library services. Such an approach was deeper than Clough and Quarmby's 1978 study, but was still focused primarily upon libraries "in ethnically diverse settings" (Roach and Morrison, 1998:10). They acknowledge that public libraries have recognised some challenges of ethnic diversity, but suggest that the insularity of a library is a barrier, concluding that "there is little evidence that libraries have developed strategic programmes in response to ethnic diversity" (1998:167).

In the late 1990s, after Labour's 1997 General Election victory and in the aftermath of Roach and Morrison's study, the literature seem to take a slightly different approach to the topic, considering that libraries should not just better their ethnic services provision, but may have a role to play in building a society that is more aware and more understanding of differences to the majority culture. It becomes a library's role to introduce people to "communities other than their own" (Train et al., 2000:487), or to assist in "the creation of a more equal, tolerant and pluralist society" (Roach and Morrison, 1999:113) and therefore contribute to "harmony and to social enrichment" (Sturges, 2004:300). Given this new emphasis on the library's role in building or assisting communities, the time seems right to

investigate the provision of ethnic minority texts in areas that are not ethnically diverse by national standards, and to see what role they could play in the community.

4.2 Determining areas of study:

A literature review can be used to formulate questions that require further research (Taylor and Proctor, 2006), and in this dissertation will assist in the construction of questionnaire and interview topics. Previous studies and writings have identified challenges and issues that arise in ethnic minority provision, and these can be tested against practice and opinion in low ethnicity library areas.

4.2.1 Role of Libraries in Predominantly White Areas:

Western attitudes to immigration, and consequently ethnic minority provision, can be differentiated by ideological persuasion. Berger (2002) identifies three phases: *Laissez-faire*, where there is little formal policy; plural integration, where new cultures sit alongside existing mainstream culture and cultural diversity is promoted; and assimilation, which encourages incoming ethnic minorities to adopt facets of the mainstream culture. In practice, there is not a clear cut division between the three phases. All cultural transition is likely to involve a balance of pluralisation and assimilation. Nevertheless, the debate usually proceeds as if an action, i.e. promoting a book, must fall into one or other of the three categories. Critics like Barter promote multiculturalism, where people are exposed “to a diversity of cultures and heritages ... and learn to respect others and their ideas” (1996:13), whilst others such as Elbehausen and Skov (2004) argue for integration, or assimilation. A question that arises is whether the public library service’s role in predominantly white areas should be to promote pluralistic integration (generally referred to as multiculturalism) or to assist new cultures with assimilation into the mainstream. The question also affects at whom ethnic minority provision is aimed. A multicultural approach, in focusing on the “enrichment of society as a whole through the expansion of cultural horizons” (Sturges, 2004:297), would seem to suggest that ethnic minority provision should be targeting all users of libraries, whilst the assimilationist arguments might encourage specific targeting of ethnic minorities.

4.2.2 Attitudes of staff & problems faced by libraries:

Roach and Morrison (1999) discuss those library workers who have not responded positively to the challenges of ethnic minority provision, claiming that their arguments generally revolve around four categories:

- People do not know what to do;
- There are insufficient funds to do anything;
- There is no need to do anything as ethnicity will fade as an issue through cultural assimilation;
- They have already responded adequately to issues of ethnic diversity.

This raises questions about whether libraries with low ethnic minority provision in predominantly white areas fit into any of the above categorisations, and if so, how widespread these problems may be.

4.2.3 Make-up of stock:

Pettingill and Morgan (1996) tested the ethnic composition of a library's stock by comparing the library's holdings against titles listed as multicultural texts in bibliographies. Such an approach is unsuitable for the broader investigation this dissertation will carry out, but raises questions about the nature and composition of ethnic minority stock collections, and whether they should match the profile of the community using the library. Meanwhile, Elliott (1999) drew on her own research and that of Clough and Quarmby (1978) to suggest that ethnic minority communities often organise their own forms of language teaching and reading material, rivalling the foreign-language services of the public library. Whilst Tyerman (1996) found that the provision of a multi-lingual service was considered to be essential by some ethnic minority groups, Berger (2002) concludes (in his study of Danish libraries) that it is mainly older users who demand language materials in their mother tongue, and younger users generally do not. If, in many ethnic minority communities, mother-tongue language provision is not the service most required of libraries, questions are raised as to whether emphasis needs to be placed on providing English language fiction that promotes or reflects a multicultural Britain, and whether this has additional benefits or support in libraries of low ethnicity.

4.2.4 Methods of provision & Staffing:

Roach and Morrison (1999) also raise the issue of ethnic minority influence over the way libraries work, a theme which is taken up by Durrani et al. (1999), who write of the establishment of the Black and Minority Ethnic Sock Group (BSG), a body in Hackney consisting partly of ethnic minorities who made several alterations to ethnic minority service provision: raising the spending on a variety of ethnic minority materials; administering and monitoring the spending; maintaining supplier links; maintaining community links; and ensuring adequate publicity and promotion work for these materials. The activities of the BSG group raise questions about the specific methods of provision in predominantly white library areas, as well as raising the issue of increasing ethnic minority participation in the library service as a whole.

4.2.5 Impact of promotions:

Train (2003) set out to evaluate the impact of the 2003 Black Bytes promotion across libraries in the East Midlands. She rejects the idea that only libraries in mixed communities should stock and promote Black and Asian Fiction, pointing out that books written by Black British authors are not of interest only to Black British readers, and suggests the effective use of themed promotions to allow white readers to engage with books written by people from other cultures. Analysing the impact of Black Bytes as an example of such a promotion, Train found that between the two questionnaires there were several differences between responses and attitudes to black fiction, specifically in the following areas: the percentage of users seeking black British fiction in the library increased; the percentage of users indicating they usually read black British fiction increased; and the percentage of users who would not consider reading black British fiction books decreased. Furthermore, the changes were greater than in control libraries who had not run the promotion. Train's study raises questions about the impact promotions can have on encouraging library users to read ethnic minority or multicultural stock.

5. RESULTS:

5.1 Questionnaire Results:

Response Rate:

The questionnaire was sent out to 180 public libraries, and 48 responses were received, indicating a response rate of 26.7%. This was a relatively low response rate, and may be accounted for by a combination of several factors:

- The questionnaire was sent out in electronic form, and a lower response rate is usual for electronic questionnaires, but their advantages in terms of ease of reply and low costs meant it was still the most appropriate method for this project;
- The questionnaire was sent out during the summer, and therefore may have coincided with many librarians' holiday leave;
- The questionnaire was sent to individual libraries rather than to library authorities. Whilst some libraries were willing to respond themselves, other libraries referred the questionnaire to appropriate personnel at the library authority level. Consequently many responses represent more than one of those libraries that had been contacted initially;
- One library authority revealed that staff were forbidden to complete questionnaires since funding cuts had put extra time pressures on librarians;
- Some libraries may have felt that the questionnaire was not appropriate to them, either because they were small libraries with no recognisable ethnic minority population, or because they were ethnically diverse libraries and the questionnaire focused on predominantly white libraries. Evidence was found for both these opinions in e-mail replies and the comments field of the questionnaire;
- Two questionnaires were returned by e-mail attachment with blank data, rather than through the form processor. Technical difficulties may have therefore prevented some libraries from participating.

Central tendencies:

Measures of central tendencies were deemed to be the most useful way of interpreting much of the questionnaire data. A limitation of using central tendencies, such as mean, mode and median figures, is that the variability of scores around the mean is not considered (Burns, 2000), whereas analyses such as the standard deviation are more effective for measuring dispersal. Nevertheless, the nature of the data in this investigation, where respondents were mostly answering fixed-response questions with a limited range of answers meant that measuring central tendency was deemed to be more valuable than measuring dispersal. Additionally, since there were no set intervals between different scales, particularly on Likert-style questions, many methods of statistical analysis were inappropriate because the data could not be classified into discrete categories (Burns, 2000:212).

5.1.1 Section 1: Library & General Information

5.1.1.1 Ethnicity:

The majority of libraries who responded to the questionnaire identified themselves as being situated in predominantly white areas (58.3%). This was perhaps partly because these libraries were targeted more than libraries in non-white areas, as this was the focus of the dissertation, but may also reflect a national balance that leans towards areas with low or moderate ethnic populations, as many ethnic groups tend to be concentrated in certain urban areas.

The decision was made to create three categories of ethnicity on the basis of the results obtained. A response of level 1 was classified as a low-ethnicity library area, responses of levels 2-3 were classified as moderate-ethnicity, and responses of levels 4-5 were classified as high-ethnicity areas. Choosing only one level for low-ethnicity, and two for other classifications was justified because the term 'ethnic minority' already suggests that the ethnic population of the area will probably be low, at least in relative terms. Since a low number is the 'default', a librarian who chooses their area as 2 is probably suggesting that their area has more ethnic minorities than that default, so the response is categorised as moderate-ethnicity.

1. Ethnic minority population of area compared to proportion of ethnic library users

	Ethnic minority users higher in library than in area served	Ethnic minority users lower in library than in area served	Roughly the same
Overall	12%	38%	50%

Half of the libraries (50%) felt that the number of ethnic minority users in their library was roughly similar, whilst 38% felt that the number of ethnic minority users in their libraries was less than the ethnic minority population in the area the library served (Table 1). It is probably a widely accepted opinion that libraries should accurately reflect the population of their area, but although many felt their library did do this, a sizeable number felt that their libraries, for whatever reason, were not attracting ethnic minority users from the area.

2. Percentage of librarians believing ethnic population will change in next few years

	Ethnic minority population will increase	Ethnic minority population will decrease	Ethnic minority will stay roughly the same
Overall	85.4	0	14.6
Low ethnicity libraries	87.5	0	12.5
Medium ethnicity libraries	72.7	0	27.3
High ethnicity libraries	100	0	0

This question (Table 2) was deemed useful because it explored librarians' awareness of immigration, and the results impacted upon how concerned librarians should be with engaging with ethnic minority populations. Absolutely no library indicated that they felt that the ethnic minority population in their area would decrease over the next few years, and the overwhelming majority of all libraries who responded (85.4%) indicated that they felt the ethnic minority population in their area would increase. Dividing the results by degree of ethnicity of library area, it can be seen that 100% of libraries in high ethnicity areas felt that the population would increase, whilst the percentage was lower in areas of lower and medium ethnicity. The reason for this is probably that there are certain areas which have had small amounts of long-settled immigrants, and these areas, perhaps rural areas in particular,

are not expected to be targets for new economic migrants from Eastern Europe. Those areas which have already experienced mass immigration, on the other hand, and therefore have a higher ethnic minority population, are probably more likely to attract new ethnic minority immigrants.

5.1.1.2 Community Profiling:

3. Libraries who have a community profiling policy that impacts upon stock selection (%)

	Community Profiling (%)	Do not carry out Community Profiling (%)	How important is community profiling (1-5, Mean scores)?
Overall	92.9	7.1	3.7
Low ethnicity libraries	96.3	3.7	3.6
Medium ethnicity libraries	77.8	22.2	3.5
High ethnicity libraries	100	0	3.4

92.9% of libraries suggested that they or their library authority conducts some form of community profiling which impacts upon book buying policy (Table 3). Surprisingly, it is libraries in an area of moderate ethnicity who are least likely to carrying out community profiling. Yet it should be noted that decisions here might well be made at an authority level, so an authority-wide policy of not carrying out community profiling might skew results where more than one library from one authority has replied to the questionnaire. Support for community profiling was fairly high at a mean of 3.7, and did not vary extensively by ethnicity category.

5.1.2 Section 2 – Stock and Promotions

5.1.2.1 Type of Stock:

4. Languages of stock held by libraries (%)

	Overall	Low ethnicity libraries	Medium ethnicity libraries	High ethnicity libraries
Majority of ethnic stock in English	37	42.3	38.5	14.3
Majority of ethnic stock in other	45.7	34.6	53.8	71.4

languages				
Roughly equal numbers of English/foreign language ethnic stock	17.3	23.1	7.7	14.3

The results (Table 4) show some diversity in the nature of books held in ethnic minority collections. Over a third of libraries said the majority of their stock was in English, whilst an even higher percentage said the majority of their stock was in languages other than English. Such results indicate that there is much openness in the definition of an ethnic minority book. Obvious regional differences were expected, as some communities face large numbers of relatively recent immigrants, who might well require stock to be in their own language, whilst others are facing long-term immigrants or their descendants who might well require books about ethnic minorities or by writers from an ethnic minority background, but are more likely to have a need for books written in English. If the results are broken down by the ethnicity of the areas of the respondents, another pattern emerges: the percentage of ethnic minority stock classed as English language decreases as the ethnicity of the library area increases. Indeed, the drop is very marked, with 42.3% selecting majority English books in the least ethnic areas, and just 14.3% selecting majority English books in the most ethnic areas. Such figures probably reflect the needs of libraries in ethnic areas to serve entire communities of ethnic minorities who may mostly interact within their own community, with their English language skills suffering as a result. However, the statistics also pose questions about the role libraries in predominantly white areas play, and whether ethnic minority books in predominantly white areas are targeted at general users rather than just ethnic minority users.

Such results are, of course, dependent upon what is perceived as an ethnic minority book. It may be possible that librarians in ethnic areas are more likely to identify foreign language books as ethnic minority material, and English books as being outside ethnic minority collections.

5. Type of stock (fiction/non-fiction) held by libraries (%)

	Overall	Low ethnicity libraries	Medium ethnicity libraries	High ethnicity libraries
Majority of ethnic stock is fiction	61.4	69.2	45.5	57.1
Majority of ethnic stock is non-fiction	2.3	3.8	0	0
Roughly equal numbers of fiction/non-fiction in ethnic stock	36.4	26.9	54.5	42.9

The majority of libraries indicated that their ethnic minority collections were primarily fiction, and a mere 2.3% indicated that their collections were primarily non-fictional. The wording of the question was perhaps responsible for this; by asking about books rather than resources, many sources such as newspapers or language learning materials were implicitly excluded. The results of the questionnaire do suggest a healthy non-fiction ethnic collection, however, by virtue of the relatively high proportion of libraries (36.4%) selecting mixed collections as their answers. Most libraries, however, consider that ethnic stock is primarily fictional. Libraries in predominantly white areas have a higher proportion of fictional materials in their ethnic collections, and this is perhaps consistent with the idea that ethnic stock in low-ethnicity areas is not targeted only at ethnic minority users (since those users may be few and far between) but also at white users, since fictional books may have a broader appeal than, for example, foreign-language newspapers.

5.1.2.2 Shelving:

The purpose of this question was to investigate how ethnic minority materials were displayed in libraries. Separating ethnic collections from general collections might increase ease of use by ethnic minority members, and might even make a positive impact upon the proportion of ethnic minorities making up the libraries user base. On the other hand, separate collections can run the risk of ‘pigeon-holing’ users into certain categories. Their effect on white readers can also work two ways. On the one hand a separate collection draws attention to that stock, but the effect might not

be beneficial, raising a potential barrier as users see ethnic minority books as specialist or somehow different from their ‘own’ fiction.

6. Shelving of ethnic collections by libraries (%)

	Separate Collections	Shelved in General Collections	Both General & Separate Collections
Overall	50	14.6	35.4
Low ethnicity libraries	46.4	17.9	35.7
Medium ethnicity libraries	53.8	15.4	30.8
High ethnicity libraries	57.1	0	42.9

It would seem that libraries favour to hold ethnic minority collections separately from general collections, regardless of ethnicity. Again, the decrease in separate collections as ethnicity decreased could be accounted for by stock in white libraries being intended to have a broader appeal than just ethnic minorities.

5.1.2.3 Promotions:

82.2% of libraries responding to this question had run promotions recently, a figure which remained fairly constant regardless of the ethnicity of the area in which the library was situated (Table 7).

7. Ethnic minority interest in ethnic book promotions by library (%)

	High level of interest	Some interest	No real interest
Overall	16.2	73	10.8
Low ethnicity areas	5	75	20
Medium Ethnicity areas	33.3	66.7	0
High ethnicity areas	20	80	0

The results suggest that promotions of ethnic books often do appeal to ethnic minority users, although the interest levels generated are not particularly high. Certainly promotions of ethnic minority books could be helpful for getting new ethnic minority users into the library, and also for satisfying those users already present. Yet questions could be raised as to whether promotions that sought to target ethnic users would be capable of covering new ground, or whether they might be, as

such, ‘preaching to the converted’. Consequently, the fairly substantial percentage of libraries in low ethnicity areas who indicated that there was minimal ethnic interest (20%) could indicate a failure to attract new ethnic users inside the library during the promotion, yet it might also indicate a perceived futility in promoting books which are so specialised, since library users already know how to find these books.

8. White interest in ethnic book promotions (%)

	High level of interest	Some interest	No real interest
Overall	11.1	63.9	25
Low ethnicity areas	9.1	63.6	27.3
Medium Ethnicity areas	20	60	20
High ethnicity areas	0	80	20

The results in this table (Table 8), combined with the results in the previous table (Table 7), seem to show a cautious optimism with regard to promotions generally, as the majority of libraries suggest that users show some interest in them, if not a great deal of interest. The figures remain similar when considering white users and ethnic users (9.1% higher for ethnic users), although more libraries indicate that there was no real white interest than those who indicate no real ethnic interest. Train (2003) mentions that the Black Bytes promotion was not targeted specifically at ethnic users, and the website of another recent ethnic book promotion (The Reading Agency, 2005) seems to suggest a similar focus, choosing to celebrate “the diversity of UK African, Caribbean and Asian writers”. It is unknown who the target audiences were for the promotions referred to, but the results obtained here suggest that ethnic book promotions can appeal to people across all racial types, although librarians feel they fail to generate a high level of interest in both these groups, and there may always be a substantial proportion of the population who remain uninterested.

5.1.3 Opinions and Priorities:

This section was designed to investigate what librarians felt about the role of libraries in predominantly white areas, and to give them a chance to express their opinions of how much white readers can and do benefit from reading ethnic minority

texts. In effect these questions tested what librarians perceived their own opinions to be, and sought no evidence of practice to underpin these opinions.

9. Mean figures for opinion questions by ethnicity of library

Mean figures	Overall	Low ethnicity libraries	Medium ethnicity libraries	High ethnicity libraries
Interest of white readers in reading ethnic minority books	2.8	2.7	3	3
Usefulness to people of reading about cultures other than their own	4.2	4.3	4.3	3.8
Predominantly-white libraries having more important priorities than ethnic minority books	2.2	2.4	1.8	2.1
Predominantly white libraries need to cater for small ethnic communities & attract new ethnic users	4.1	4	4.3	4
Predominantly white libraries need to provide ethnic books to reflect modern British society	4.3	4.4	4.1	4.4

10. Modes for opinion questions by ethnicity of library

Modal figures	Overall	Low ethnicity libraries	Medium ethnicity libraries	High ethnicity libraries
Interest of white readers in reading ethnic minority books	3	3	2	3
Usefulness to people of reading about cultures other than their own	5	5	5	3
Predominantly-white libraries having more important priorities than ethnic minority books	1	3	1	3
Predominantly white libraries need to cater for small ethnic communities & attract new ethnic users	4	4	4	5
Predominantly white libraries need to provide ethnic books to reflect modern British society	5	5	5	5

The mean values of the data reveal there to be little difference across the ethnicity of the libraries responding. White interest in reading books by or books about ethnic minorities tends to be rated as moderate. Librarians felt that it was beneficial for people to read about cultures other than their own, and consequently placed

importance on the role of libraries in predominantly white areas in helping people to do this. The relatively low mean scores for the question about libraries in predominantly white areas having other, more important priorities received little acquiescence across all types of libraries, whilst possible reasons for ensuring ethnic minority is of a high standard even in predominantly white areas were generally agreed upon: the fact that even low ethnicity communities are likely to contain some minorities and need to attract new ethnic users (in hindsight this question contained two distinct topic areas that should have been separated); and that libraries should promote ethnic minority materials to reflect a modern, increasingly diverse culture that does exist at a national level in many communities.

Arguably, the modes are more informative than the means for these questions, since they reveal the values that occur most often, and therefore the opinion of most libraries who participated. The modes also show a slightly different picture to the means. For the question about other priorities, it can be seen that many libraries in high and low ethnicity areas showed some ambivalence about this question by picking the middle value, whilst many libraries in medium ethnicity areas picked the lowest value to indicate strong disagreement. This raises some questions about whether some libraries in predominantly white areas place less importance on the issue of ethnic minority texts. Although only two low-ethnicity libraries indicated any strong level of support for this statement, it should also be pointed out that only six of the twenty-eight low-ethnicity libraries who answered the question chose to indicate the strongest level of disagreement. A greater degree of doubt on this issue amongst librarians working in low-ethnicity areas is not unexpected; the statement was in some respects an obvious recognition of the fact that libraries have to meet the needs of most of their users, and in low-ethnicity areas the majority of users are not from ethnic backgrounds. The level of disagreement might well have been even greater had the question been phrased differently, for example if respondents had been asked to rank a given set of priorities in terms of their importance to low-ethnicity libraries. Given that there was some ambivalence over this issue, however, this does raise questions about how important libraries feel it is to ensure services are provided for all their users, and also about whether librarians understand the potential benefits to all users of promoting a diversity of cultures.

For the final two questions the means indicate that the level of agreement with both statements is fairly equal. The modes, however, show that very definite agreement (level 5) with the final statement (that libraries need to provide ethnic services in order to reflect modern British culture) is more widespread than very definite agreement with the penultimate statement (that libraries should cater even for small communities of ethnic minorities). Nevertheless, such differences should not be overstated; the main conclusion to draw from both the means and modes is that most libraries generally agree with both these statements.

5.2 Background Information for Interviews:

Since this is a qualitative analysis, the particular context and circumstances of each library area interviewed is of particular importance. Consequently background information has been researched on each of the three areas where interviews take place, with a special focus on issues of class, size and ethnicity. Information is drawn largely from the 2001 census data (Office for National Statistics, 2001), the 1991 census data (Office for National Statistics, 1996) and Wikipedia entries (<http://en.wikipedia.org/>) [Accessed 02/08/2006]. Comparisons of local figures are made to national figures, in an attempt to consider the character of the area the library serves in comparison to the character of the rest of the country, i.e. in what ways the area served differs from national characteristics.

5.2.1 Library area 1:

The first library is situated in a small town in the East Midlands, with a pre-Roman history and wealth based on quarrying, mining and textile industries. The wider district has a population under 100,000, and the town which contains the library hosts about a quarter of this population. The district is extensively white, with a 98.3% white population at the 2001 census, compared to the 90.2% English national average. The figures show a small increase in ethnic minorities between the 1991 census and the 2001 census, as in the 1991 census the region was 98.8% white. The largest ethnic group registered in the 2001 census figures is the South Asian (Asian or Asian British) contingent, and the majority of these descend from India

(0.4% of local population). People of Caribbean and Chinese descent make up the next two largest, roughly equal, ethnic groups. Whilst half of the Indian-origin population were born in India (50%), a significant proportion were actually born in the United Kingdom (38.7%), suggesting that many of the ethnic minorities in this area are second generation who have probably been brought up in this country. Most of the Indian population are adults, in the age group between 25 and 59, as 59.4% are in this age grouping.

However, 0.45% of the district population list their country of birth as being in Eastern Europe, which is a larger figure than any one individual ethnic minority population.

37.7% of the population aged 16-74 are considered to be economically inactive, which compares unfavourably to the national average (33.1%), and the district has a relatively unskilled population, as 38.2% of people aged 16-74 have no qualifications (28.9% national average), and has a higher percentage of people employed in routine occupations, 14.3%, than the national average (9.0%). Large numbers of the workforce are employed in manufacturing (19.0%; national average 14.8%) and also in retail.

These statistics are not reflected in the largest ethnic minority group, however, where 30.5% of the Indian population are economically active. The main industries for the Indian population are Health and Social work; and Wholesale and Retail, and the main occupation for the Indian population is that of a Health Professional. 28.4% of the Indian population aged 16-74 have no qualifications, comparable to the national average of 28.9%, and considerably lower than the figure across the population as a whole.

The librarian here chose to describe the area served as one of low ethnicity (level 1).

Interview description:

My whole area is a coalmine, ex coal mining area, so it's got the usual problems associated with ex-coal mining areas, which are reasonable levels of unemployment, lack of community cohesion, and ... dissatisfied youth.

The areas themselves – we don't have a massive amount of um, ethnic minorities, that's substantial, but I was thinking about – well, one of the things I was talking about before lunch, is we've got a lot of Eastern European people coming.

In the city we've a more diverse range of ethnic minorities, so we've catered for a long, long time for different languages - a lot of Indian languages, Punjabi, etc... And a lot of Polish people. For whatever reasons, whatever the history of immigration we've had in this area, there was already quite a lot of people there, so we already have quite a lot of provision.

Especially in an ex-coal mining area, that have got major problems, just within the white population, because the fact that these communities have been broken down by the removal of industry, there's often ... resistance to immigration, resistance to difference and that's a bad thing.

5.2.2 Library Area 2:

The second library is in a small city situated in Yorkshire, with a population of just under 80,000. Like the first library, mining has a key importance in the history and economics of the area. The area is again extensively white, though slightly less so than the first region, with a population that is 97.7% white (90.2% national average). The figures show an increase in ethnic minorities between the 1991 census and the 2001 census, as in the 1991 census the region was 98.5% white. Again, the largest ethnic group is an Asian or Asian British contingent, which makes up a reasonably large 1.4%. Here, however, the majority of the people descend from Pakistan (1.0% of population). Consequently there is a significant body of people who describe themselves as Muslims (1.1%), though still much lower than national averages (3.1%). The next largest ethnic group is people of Indian descent, and there is also a smaller group of people with Chinese descent, roughly equal in percentage to the first library area.

The majority of the Pakistan-origin community were born in the UK (53.8%), although there is a large number of people (43.1%) who were born in Pakistan. Even more than in the first library area, then, most of the inhabitants of the town are probably second-generation and most have probably been brought up in this country.

As in the first library area, the Indian-origin population are mostly between the ages of 25-59. 55.0% of people are between these age groups. The Pakistani-origin population, on the other hand, is much younger, with 57.3% of people being under 25 years old.

The number of people listing countries in Eastern Europe as their country of birth is significantly lower than in the first library area: only 0.16%.

35.7% of the population are considered to be economically inactive, with an skills deficit even higher than in the first area, as 39.1% of people have no qualifications. As in the first area, large numbers of the workforce are in retail and manufacturing, but here the balance is more on the side of retail (21.7%; national average 16.9%).

Again, the economic circumstances of the largest ethnic minority population do not reflect the general population, but this time it is lower on comparison. 52.5% of the population are considered to be economically inactive. This is a significant difference from the next largest minority group, since in the smaller Indian population only 29.8% are considered to be economically inactive. Many of the Pakistani population are involved in manufacturing, transport and storage, and retail industries (57.6%), as opposed to the large numbers of Indian origin population involved in Health and Social Care, both here and in the first library area. 59.9% of the Indian working population are managers or professionals, whilst in the Pakistani population the highest numbers of people are process, plant or machine operatives (32.4%), then in elementary occupations (14.8%). Large numbers of the Pakistan-origin community (50.1%) have no qualifications, again comparing unfavourably to the national population and the general population of the area.

The librarian here chose to describe the area served as one of moderate ethnicity (level 2).

Interview description:

We're a town library, in a town. We have pretty much a full range of users of all ages. It's an industrial area, there's still a lot of industry, and the groups using our library tend to mainly be migrant workers, a lot of them, currently mainly Eastern European. There are quite a few Muslims in the area. We have a small number of Somali users, who are here with their family and they may settle, it's unknown as yet and also a small number of Indian and Chinese.

It is, yes, it's a mining area, there's the museum here. I don't know what effect that has on the community. There are several council estates here, and recently there have been an influx of travellers. We're very active in providing for travellers and their children.

5.2.3 Library Area 3:

The third library area is situated in a small market town, with a population of under 20,000, which is located in North Buckinghamshire. Again, the history of the town is extensive and it dates back to pre-Saxon times. The major period of growth, however, came in the post war era as commuters from London settled in the area, and the town became a centre for light industry. The wider area includes more of North Buckinghamshire, including two larger towns, and hosts a population of approximately 90,000. The librarian is also responsible for some of this area, so the wider area will be considered here.

The town concerned has a 95.6% white population, making it the most ethnic area of the three detailed studies. The figures show an increase in ethnic minorities between the 1991 census and the 2001 census, as in the 1991 census the region was 97.7% white. The largest ethnic communities are of Asian or Asian British origin (1.4%), but generally the ethnic communities are spread relatively equally across the town. Across the wider district authority, however, there is a fairly substantial Pakistani community (1.6%), and also a relatively large Indian-origin population (0.7%).

As in the second library area, the majority of the large Pakistani population was born in the UK (50.6%), with a large number still born in Pakistan (46.9%). As both the other areas considered, more of the Indian population were born outside the country, though a highly significant 40.7% were born in the UK. Again, the Pakistani population is younger than the Indian population, as the majority (54.6%) are under 25 years old, whilst in the Indian-origin population the majority (56.8%) are between 25 and 59 years old.

0.54% of people in the wider district list their country of birth as being in Eastern Europe, which is higher than any of the other two areas considered.

Economically, this area is different from the previous two areas considered, in that the percentage of the population who are economically inactive is much lower at 30.8%; indeed this percentage is lower than the national average (33.1%). Unlike the previous two areas which had been built up around the strength of heavy industries such as mining, which have since declined, this area plays host to

commuters from London who may be in much better economic circumstances. Here those people with no qualifications only total 18.0% (national average 28.9%). Though retail/wholesale and manufacturing play some part in employment (15.6%; 13.1%), the highest group of people are employed in real estate/renting/business activities (21.7%), which presumably gives them a much greater degree of economic freedom.

The Indian-origin population's economic circumstances largely mirror that of the general community's, and perhaps even improve upon it. Only 26.9% of the Indian-origin population are considered to be economically inactive, only 7.3% have no qualifications, with 22.8% employed in real estate/renting/business activities, although many more are in retail/wholesale (20.6%) compared to the general population. The Pakistani-origin population's circumstances, on the other hand, mirror that of the second library area, and show there are large discrepancies between the economic circumstances of the general population. Over half of the population are considered to be economically inactive (51.6%), 47.2% have no qualifications, and the highest group of people are employed in manufacturing (32.4%), with a large proportion of the population being process/plant/machine operatives (28.2%). However, there is a significant number of people from the Pakistani-origin community who are managers or in professional occupations (22.2%), even if this is dwarfed by the corresponding figure in the Indian population (58.4%).

Interview description:

I'm based in the rural branch library but cover a wider area in North Bucks... there's a large Pakistani community, particularly in the bigger towns, in Chesham. There's also Indian and Afro-Caribbean users. They're mainly in Aylesbury, which is a bit further out. Chesham and Aylesbury are the 2 main centres of ethnic minority users, I think.

This is a reasonably affluent area; it's a satellite town for London now, though it hasn't always been. A lot of people are employed by the pharmaceutical company too.

5.3 Interview results:

Interview findings have been divided into the following categories:

- The change or potential change in the numbers of ethnic minorities
- Problems faced by libraries with regard to provision of ethnic minority materials
- Barriers to using the library service faced by ethnic minorities
- How libraries seek to solve problems or reduce barriers
- The nature and character of ethnic minority stock, and issues surrounding its placement and provision
- Interest levels of white and ethnic minority readers in promotions and ethnic minority books
- The role of public libraries in predominantly white areas

5.3.1 Population Increases & Future Immigration:

It was recognised at one library that ethnic minorities in general were increasing in their area:

[This area] in the past has had only 1% ethnic minority population although by recent experiences I am pleased to say this seems to be changing.

Library 1

A lot of libraries also identified an increase, but mentioned one group, the Eastern Europeans, specifically:

Yeah, and there's a lot Eastern European people coming in. It's happening, more and more and more, but the very small libraries, less so, because they're like small villages, or whatever, but certainly, it's happening across the board now, it is becoming quite a big issue for us.

Library 1

We've got lots of Eastern European people coming so that's providing us with an extra focus

Library 3

In our case the ethnic minorities are largely white – in particular Eastern European at the moment but last year – Spanish.

Low-ethnicity library (level 1).

5.3.2 Problems faced by libraries in provision of ethnic minority texts:

Financial:

For most libraries, budget constraints means that provision was limited:

The biggest factor is cost, pretty obviously. In order to keep collections relevant and current, you've got to throw some money at it. And if you don't there doesn't seem to be much point.... There's no point throwing £1000 at it one year and letting it sit there for 10 years.

Library 1

with very tight budgets and many cultures present within our area it would be impossible and unrealistic to try to supply all manner of work in all languages.

Library 2

The difficulty we have is in providing an equivalent service for all these new and established community groups within a very limited budget ... collections in existing languages such as Urdu and Bengali may shrink as a result, to enable us to distribute funding more equitably.

High ethnicity library (level 4).

Within areas of low ethnicity, difficulties with only having small ethnic minority communities was also recognised:

This is a predominantly white area. There are no sizeable communities of any other particular ethnic group so it is difficult to provide stock in other languages, though we do have some ethnic minority texts in English in our non-fiction stock.

In this library it would be difficult to offer any quantity of printed material as there is no single large nationality.

Library 2

Although we have only small numbers of minority groups (under 2%) this figure includes a large range of languages, making it difficult to buy our own stock cost-effectively.

Low-ethnicity library (level 1).

We do a lot of promotion with community groups. We try to promote our services among the communities concerned, but the communities are often very fragmented here, and small. So because of their fragmentary nature there may be many individuals who are unaware.

Library 3

One librarian suggested that the smaller communities and irregularity of ethnic minority book buying in predominantly white areas led to practical difficulties in purchasing stock:

Suppliers are often a problem as well. It's sort of a niche market to a certain extent, obviously not in the countries that they're coming from, but export/import, the fact that we're tied into certain contracts with our regular book suppliers, that causes problems as well.

Library 1

A library in a higher-ethnicity area, on the other hand, was better able to obtain stock and to update it on a satisfactory basis:

We also have available collections of books in Urdu, Gujerati, Punjabi, Bengali, which are obtained via a subscription service and changed at regular intervals.

High-ethnicity library (level 4).

Language:

Librarians listed communication difficulties with ethnic minority groups who speak a foreign language as a major issue:

Just explaining the little rules and the things we do like how long we can use the computers, how you log on, how many books you can take out. Those very, very basic things ... but

trying to explain to someone whose grasp of English isn't very brilliant is increasingly difficult.

Library 3

We see so many, so, so many Eastern European people coming through the doors, you know, to an extent where we're trying to work out how to communicate with people, who y'know, don't speak English

Library 1

Expertise

A lack of expertise was raised as an issue, particularly because low numbers of ethnic minority staff led to a lack of expertise when purchasing stock or liaising with communities:

Actually knowing when you're coming into a subject and you have absolutely no awareness of the subject, you have to actually sit down and find the information out. Most of the time we just take that information for granted.

A lot of the time, like with the Bollywood films, we're fumbling around in the dark to an extent. And I enjoy that, because it's learning, but I hate to think that I'd done the wrong thing.

Library 1

5.3.3 Solution of problems:

For some libraries, provision of stock for ethnic minorities was not perceived to be a large problem, since ethnic minorities showed little interest in book stock:

We have observed ... that the majority of these users are visiting us to use the People's Network computers, rather than to use/borrow stock.

Low-ethnicity library (level 1).

Most of our ethnic minority library users have become members in order to have access to free Internet service and very few borrow books.... The families that have settled

permanently are more likely to use other services, for example books, CDs, DVD loans.

Library 2

In library area 2 in particular, there was perceived to be little need for provision of ethnic minority book stock for ethnic minority groups who did not express a need for it:

My experience, at this library, it's that the ethnic minority users - they don't take advantage of anything other than the Internet facility and cds or dvds. They haven't really complained, you know, about any shortfall.

Library 2

But whilst many libraries identified a low use of book stock by ethnic minorities, others were less prepared to accept it, instead looking at changing their own provision to attempt a solution:

We have an increasing population of Eastern European migrant workers, who predominantly use us for the Internet but we have also established a small collection of fiction books in Polish to cater for their needs and these are proving very popular.

Low-ethnicity library (level 1).

We have a lot of people from Eastern European countries visiting the library, using the internet to keep in touch with friends and family. I feel we ought to provide reading material as well.

Low-ethnicity library (level 1).

In terms of meeting the cost of buying suitable ethnic minority stock, some libraries were able to afford some provision of materials by subscription, even in low-ethnicity library areas:

We use a subscription service (Bright Books) to provide our minority language books.

Low-ethnicity library (level 1)

*We have material acquired via a subscription service -
Bright Books*

Library 2

Other libraries described strategies of getting around limited budget provisions, many of which were based around borrowing collections and working with other libraries:

*We make provision in community languages by hiring in
small collections on request*

Low ethnicity library (level 1).

*where books in other languages are available at other
service points we are able to borrow them if asked to do so.*

Library 2

*We think that books in minority languages should be
available from all our libraries. While they're physically
located not in all libraries, only 4 or 5 libraries probably,
they can be requested from any service point.*

Library 3

*In the time that I've been with [Library area mentioned] ...
we've worked together in order to provide a body of stock
we can rotate around, and therefore minimise the cost,
because if each group had to buy stuff, you'd be replicating
the cost, and there doesn't seem to be much point in that.*

Library 1

One librarian particularly emphasised the benefits that greater cooperation between libraries, or some sort of organised link between regions, could have for the provision of services for ethnic minorities:

*What frustrates me about the library service is the fact that
we're so parochial. It winds me up that I can't tap in, apart
from informal methods, into the knowledge base, say from
Brixton. They're gonna know far more about black culture,
Jamaican culture...I'd prefer to have a nationalised library
service. In terms of uniting people, bring people closer
together, I think that could be a positive thing. It would
allow us to spread stock around, spread insights, select staff
from a wider pool.*

Library 1

In addition to cooperation between libraries, librarians stressed the importance of better communication with the ethnic minority user groups themselves, particularly to ease problems of low expertise and not understanding community need:

We try to work closely with the minority communities and involve them in stock selection, and whatever events we might think about.

We survey our users quite a lot, and we try to respond to the issues they highlight.

Library 3

5.3.4 Barriers Involved for Ethnic Minority Users:

Librarians identified that ethnic minority users are often white, but still have needs that are different to those white users born in the UK:

Ethnic minority is not necessarily different skin colour.

Recently our main minority language provision is for the large numbers of Poles who have arrived over the last few years. They don't appear in the census and things like that as a minority group, because they are white European, but the need for material in their language is significant.

Library 3

The groups using our library tend to mainly be migrant workers and are currently mainly Eastern European.

Library 2

We are currently reviewing our provision to all community groups - one of the big issues is immigration from Eastern Europe, with young people coming to work from Albania, Russia, Poland etc. These people become regular library users and expect a good standard of service and provision.

High-ethnicity library (level 4)

Librarians also recognised that challenges arose simply because some ethnic minority groups are relatively newly-settled in the country, and took appropriate action:

We've cut down a lot on the rules and regulations for joining, so that you only need one form of ID, in fact you don't even need a form of ID now.

Library 1

Yet even settled, English speaking, ethnic minorities could face barriers to using the library service. The main one identified by librarians was the low numbers of ethnic minority staff in the library service; having only small numbers of ethnic minorities employed in libraries was perceived to create barriers for ethnic minority users:

The fact that our staff is so, so heavily weighted at white people, to women, I think that's an issue in itself. We've got this massive body of white, English speaking staff, I feel that's a barrier to people of ethnic minorities coming in to use the library, because it may well feel ... a little uncomfortable.

Library 1

Solutions for this problem were difficult to come by, since the librarian was unsure whether to endorse some form of positive discrimination:

Quite how we do it, I don't know. I really don't know how to solve it. Because I genuinely think positive discrimination is a tricky issue.

Library 1

This librarian also raised the concept of institutional racism, although he suggests that such problems are not widespread among the library service and can be overcome with good practice:

There may be an element of prejudice amongst the old guard of staff, it's a kind of institutional thing in a way, but I think generally there isn't a problem, if there's good training and good communication with staff and probably with the customer base as well.

Library 1

5.3.5 Stock Issues:

Many librarians recognised that books were not the be all and end all of provision, and offering other services that were of use to ethnic minorities:

You have only asked about books. We also stock a limited no. of DVDs and cds in Indic languages

Moderate-ethnicity library (level 3).

We also have a large display board which is free to use and recently an Islam organisation have displayed material relating to their culture on it.

Library 2

Some librarians seemed to identify ethnic minority provision as predominantly a foreign-language affair, and when describing their services tended to list these components:

I, personally, would think ethnic minority books would mean a book in another language or one expected to be of interest to any other nationality than British

We're members of a telephone helpline service for non-English speaking users, and we have, um, collections of books in other languages are available at service point where we have known, settled communities are, for example books and videos in Urdu.

Library 2

We have a large collection of Urdu books, small collection of Gujarati books. We also have Hindi films, we've got an Urdu daily newspaper. Then there's Urdu Digest, UrduDigest magazines. And occasionally we have an Urdu storytime.

Library 3

In [Library area mentioned] we are largely not talking about 'white' and 'non-white', but those whose first language is English or 'other'.

Low-ethnicity library (level 1).

Other librarians recognised that ethnic minority texts could often be in English, by authors born in this country, as well as foreign-language material, and adapted provision accordingly:

We do provide a good range of books by authors from British BME communities.... This year we are using the Reading Agency Made in Britain promotion.

Low-ethnicity library (level 1).

The books we hold ... regarding ethnic minorities are generally in English however, we have a foreign language fiction area that is expanding all the time.

Low-ethnicity library (level 1).

we purchase material that reflects multicultural Britain, including fiction and non-fiction texts, and this forms part of our regular book selection of newly published items. We have purchased material to promote ethnic minority reading and promoted these as a circulation collection to our libraries.

High-ethnicity library (level 4).

Mostly older Asians can read their own language but they not very keen on reading. Younger Asians are keen readers but they only read in english.

Moderate-ethnicity library (level 2).

There was some recognition amongst librarians that stock about ethnic minorities, multicultural Britain or by ethnic minority authors could serve a purpose for people who are not from ethnic minorities too, although at this point, it was recognised that there could be tensions in providing stock for ethnic minorities and encouraging people who were not from ethnic minorities to benefit from the stock too. One such area discussed was in the shelving of ethnic minority materials, and whether items of interest to ethnic minorities should be singled out or incorporated into general stock. Most librarians supported separate collections, and justified their claims:

You do want those people who need it – the educational value is a by-product, there is a question there whether you are negating the value of the stock – whilst the educational element is healthy, being in an area that doesn't have big groups of ethnic minorities, I can see the value of it more, but there is more of a benefit for keeping stock together so that people can find it.

Library 1

You need to keep them separate. How else would the books be readily identified by those looking for them?

Library 2

The siting's a tricky one. As a broad generalisation, we find that Asian women often prefer to browse unobtrusively so siting of collection is crucial, and we have it in a bright welcoming area but to the side of the main library. We have tried integrating magazines, but we found that the usage declined.

Library 3

Nevertheless, librarians recognised that the shelving and promotion of ethnic materials offered a chance to increase the diversity of the nation and give non-ethnic minorities a chance to gain exposure to different cultures, a situation that might increase if materials were in some way mixed:

It's just that to label a book when it hits the shelves as being for a particular group is, in my opinion, unhelpful in terms of building a multicultural society.

Library 3

So if you have Bollywood films scattered amongst Hollywood films, British made films, taking out a Bollywood film firstly can give them an insight into a different part of the world, and secondly just help break down any barriers they may have which will cause them to be prejudiced or to act in a prejudiced way.

Library 1

5.3.6 Promotions:

The role of displays and promoted materials was much discussed. Libraries referred to a good breadth of promotions aimed at encouraging a greater understanding of different cultures, with many non-book related promotions occurring as well as book-related promotions:

Recent promotion undertaken - Africa@21 or Out of Africa. [Library area mentioned] was one of only 5 authorities

involved in this scheme and it linked us with Namibia. My library was 1 of the 2 promoting it.

Low-ethnicity library (level 1).

We celebrated Pakistan Day and India Day in our two main Libraries recently. The main aim of this was to bring in more of the minority group, rather than to promote stock, per se. We had Henna hand painting and flag making for all the children, and we did get favourable comments from pretty much all sections of the community really.

Library 3

We recently had the launch of our new Gujarati collection, and we have some Black History events planned for October.

Library 2

In general, promotions were seen to be successful and could have a useful impact upon people's reading:

Promotions, collections of books ... are a powerful thing for us to use; people just see 'New Books', and snap them up, so they're worthwhile.

Library 1

Nevertheless, many of the librarians in the questionnaire reported only moderate interest at best. Amongst white users particularly, interest was often deemed to be low, and library area 2 in particular identified this:

It's the obvious thing, there's not really much interest from white users. It may be that they're not really expressing their interest and they're just selecting those books.

Library 2

For that librarian, even amongst ethnic minority users success was limited:

No, we didn't get much interest – really the collections aren't well used by ethnic minority groups, it's more the Internet they want.

Library 2

Yet some libraries did claim to have discovered some interest, even from non-ethnic and general users:

I've found that there is interest. I do think there is a general interest in material from other cultures. We sometimes feature such writings within a cultural display.

There's sometimes a language barrier obviously. But I think that all users enjoy the cultural events e.g food, dances, traditions etc.

Library 3

One librarian, who admitted to having some former scepticism, was positive about the chance that such promotions might succeed:

I used to think that collections of books and promotions where you put an umbrella over them, could go either way, so you could get someone seeing it and think what's that, and go and investigate, but equally there was a point where I thought it could put people off. The thing that changed my mind about that – [Library area mentioned] is a place where things are done as they always have been done, and we had a collection ... about homosexuality, and I thought that is going to fall flat on its face, it's going to die. Every book went. Everything... It could be that people were a lot more open minded than I gave them credit for.

Library 1

He suggested that librarians could themselves pose a barrier to running successful promotions, as some may assume that such things will be ineffective:

The one thing we need in the profession is open-mindedness. We need to give everything a chance – we need to be open-minded. Questioning, yes, but open to everything.

Library 1

One strategy suggested by a librarian for running promotions was that promotions that might suffer because they fail to attract mainstream audiences could be replaced with intermediate steps that appeal to a broader majority:

We have run promotions about different religions and different cultures, in an educational sense, but I sometimes

think that the more interesting ones ... throw the differences in with what people already know. For example throwing Zadie Smith's view of Britishness alongside someone else's view of Britishness, more traditional, I think that is perhaps more worthwhile. Perhaps a bit more subtle, under the radar. But perhaps that's the beauty of it.

Library 3

5.3.7 Role of Libraries in Predominantly White Areas:

Librarians from higher ethnicity areas suggested that stock needed to accurately reflect the communities of the library area:

I think that library authorities need to put a lot more effort into ensuring that their stock and other services reflect the diverse make-up of their local community.

High ethnicity library (level 5).

Using community profiles should determine the acquisition of stock

High ethnicity library (level 4).

The implications of this for libraries with small ethnic minority populations, however, are less clear. One library in a lower ethnicity area expressed that their lack of demand and of ethnic minorities meant that they had little ethnic minority stock:

In [Area name given], we only stock ethnic minority texts in larger libraries or in libraries where there is a large demand. I have never actually worked in a library that stocks ethnic minority texts.

Low-ethnicity library (level 1).

Other libraries in lower ethnicity areas suggested that libraries in predominantly white areas still needed to have a large interest in ethnic minority provision, for a variety of reasons:

Communities throughout the country could have an influx of foreign workers at any time, and that means they should be aware of the need to cater to all communities.

Library 3

I think having a good variety of multicultural stock in white areas like this benefits society.

Moderate-ethnicity library (level 2).

Interesting subject that gets scant attention or funding in public library authorities with mostly white populations.

Low-ethnicity library (level 1).

For most librarians, building and reflecting diversity in the UK was seen as a positive thing:

I would definitely keep doing them [promotions of ethnic minority materials]. I think it's good to raise awareness of cultural diversity.

Library 3.

I love that kind of thing, that's exactly the kind of thing that makes the UK the UK, the fact that we have this diverse range of interest and whatever else, and it all feeds back into the cultural melee that is the country.

Library 1

One librarian in particular expressed his desire for all people, regardless of their culture, to benefit from stock about different cultures/ethnicities:

I still find the concept of 'items of interest to ethnic minorities' awkward (leaving aside the issue of language for a moment). It's my belief that public libraries are compelled ... to provide a depth and breadth of stock that caters for tastes across the board, and therefore to single out items of stock for a culture/community is unnecessary.

Library 3

Multiculturalism, or pluralism, whereby incoming cultures sit alongside existing cultures, was generally welcomed, particularly because it increased mutual tolerance and understanding of cultures:

When you're providing stock with an ethnic minority remit, you've got another opportunity there, which is you've got an educational value for those people who aren't from ethnic minorities, or at least acclimatise people to the fact that

there are other cultures out there and there are other ways of looking at the world.

Integration in this country does generally work very well. Perhaps, if you can put a Hollywood movie next to a Bollywood movie, perhaps in a small microcosmic way it represents how cultures can live alongside each other, and reflect upon each other, and provide better insights.

Library 1

We had a Dorling Kindersley book on Islam, and that's fantastic, in a little place like [library area named] where I can understand why there may be prejudice, and to see someone take a little book out on Islam, I think that's a fantastic thing.

Library 3

Nevertheless, librarians also pointed out the benefits of cultural assimilation, whereby newer cultures are assimilated into the mainstream culture when inhabitants join the new country. Therefore ethnic minority provision also offered a chance to help familiarise ethnic minorities with the culture they had entered, as the librarian in library area 2 pointed out particularly:

We find that they're happy to communicate in English, and they're eager to improve their language skills. Because often this is their reason for coming to work here.

Library 2

I think if I had to change anything, improve anything, I would encourage greater use of mainstream materials and activities by ethnic minorities. Maybe a better take up of our home library service too.

Library 3

For the librarian from area 1, on the other hand, assimilation had less importance than broadening the prevailing western culture's exposure to cultural diversity:

Western society has kind of taken over the globe: Coke, MacDonalds, etc., and as a result I think there is more of an

awareness of Western cultures among other cultures than there is of other cultures in western culture.

Library 1

The librarian did, however, acknowledge that everyone could benefit from increased exposure to different cultures, including ethnic minorities being exposed to mainstream British culture:

I think that what we should strive for as Britishness, and that involves everybody, I really hope that we should encourage open-mindedness. And that's allowing you to engage with other cultures, and in doing so learn more about other cultures and in doing so learn more about yourself.

Library 1

6. FURTHER DISCUSSION:

As a result of the questionnaire and the interviews, some key areas have been selected for further discussion.

6.1 Ethnic Population:

The questionnaire showed that librarians are overwhelmingly aware that the number of ethnic minorities in most areas is going to increase, even in areas which have a low ethnicity, and the interview backed this up as librarians showed an awareness of recent Eastern European immigration (British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC], 2006a). The implication of this finding is that librarians believe the issue of ethnicity will not go away or settle down, as most librarians believe it is an issue that they are going to have to face increasingly over the next few years. Admittedly, not all low-ethnicity areas may experience a wave of immigration in the immediate future, but the issue still affects them. As other areas experience greater immigration, the gap between services that high and low ethnicity areas offer could increase, leaving the few ethnic minorities in low ethnicity areas increasingly in need of services.

Librarians also showed awareness of the ethnicity demands of their particular area. The questionnaire showed that the vast majority of libraries claim to have community profiling policies and regard such a policy as being at least moderately important, whilst the interviews demonstrated that librarians' evaluations of the ethnicity of their area matched up with census statistics. However, a community profiling policy, whilst important, may be based upon the assumption that people only benefit from reading about their own culture. Such a policy would ideally be joined with policies promoting a basic level of ethnic texts, regardless of the ethnicity of the area. Additionally, whilst the librarians, particularly in area 1, seemed aware of both the ethnicity and the economic circumstances of their area, there seemed little indication that they ever linked the two issues. In two of the three areas considered in detail, census data indicated that the main ethnic groups were in considerably worse economic circumstances than the population as a whole, and this could be a phenomenon that occurs throughout the country. The library service

surely needs to view ethnic minority groups' social and economic needs as well as their cultural needs, as one may impact upon the other.

6.2 Stock:

The usage and understanding of the term 'ethnic minority stock' seemed to vary extensively across libraries. The questionnaire demonstrated a high proportion of both English and foreign-language materials, but the interviews showed that some librarians seem to think of ethnic minority provision as being almost exclusively about foreign-language provision. A more rigorous study of statements and policy in relation to this area would be recommended as a topic for further study. Ethnic minority texts must serve a variety of purposes. There is undoubtedly a need for foreign-language material, in both settled communities, and in newer communities such as the Eastern European migrant workers. Arguably foreign-language stock is the most important challenge in most libraries, simply because it can allow minorities to understand what they are reading, and in doing so may help them overcome social problems and integrate more smoothly into this country. Yet it should not be the only factor of ethnic minority provision. The census data for all three areas focused on showed large numbers of the ethnic population had been born in this country. Many may still speak the languages of their mother countries, but their greater command of English as a result of having been through this country's schooling system means that perhaps foreign-language reading is no longer the priority for these users. Instead, second generation minorities may express curiosity and a desire to explore their mother-country culture, or may like to read books that reflect their status as ethnic citizens of this country. Particularly in predominantly white communities, where the networks of minorities may not be as firmly established as in bigger, more ethnic areas, minorities may feel that they to belong to British culture, and wish to see their experiences of a multi-ethnic Britain reflected in books they read.

6.3 Role of Library in ethnic minority provision:

The role of ethnic minority provision in building a more cohesive and culturally-aware society was understood by most librarians. Yet ethnic minority provision seems far from uniform, both in terms of what is provided, and in terms of what

librarians aim for in providing services. Roach and Morrison (1999) suggested that librarians often express difficulties in providing ethnic minority services either because they believe:

- They do not know what to do;
- There are insufficient funds to do anything;
- There is no need to do anything as ethnicity will fade as an issue through cultural assimilation;
- They have already responded adequately to issues of ethnic diversity.

Examples of some of the above were found in the research conducted. Many librarians felt that they had difficulties due to low funding, although given that the study was conducted in areas with low ethnic minorities, it is perhaps unsurprising. There was little evidence that many of the librarians participating believed that the issue of ethnicity would fade away, but some evidence of the belief that issues of ethnic diversity have already been responded to, particularly when concerning second-generation ethnic minorities.

Libraries in predominantly white areas clearly need to balance the roles they play in the provision of ethnic minority services. The questionnaire suggested that librarians are aware of the benefits that non-ethnic users can gain from an increased exposure to different cultures, and overwhelmingly librarians supported the notion that libraries in white areas should provide ethnic minority texts in order to reflect a multicultural Britain. The interviews also demonstrated that some librarians are very enthusiastic about broadening the cultural exposure of their users. Yet there is little evidence in some libraries that such a strategy is pursued, especially in libraries where promotions of ethnic minority texts can be wholly concerned with engaging ethnic minority users, and ethnic minority provision implies foreign-language provision. Both of these functions are clearly important, but some of the libraries participating in this study claimed to have achieved success in promoting multicultural books to non-ethnic users, whilst these books will also serve the needs of second generation ethnic populations who require cultural material rather than linguistic assistance. Increasing cultural diversity in white libraries may ultimately benefit not just ethnic minorities, or white users, but ultimately may promote a

multiculturalism based on diversity (British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC], 2006b) which may benefit society as a whole.

7. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS:

7.1 Conclusions:

The initial objectives set out for this research were:

- To collect details from library staff about the make-up of their ethnic communities, including the possible future demands of such provision;

It was concluded that libraries in predominantly white areas have an increasing challenge to face in terms of increasing ethnic minority communities and migrant workers from Eastern Europe, all of whom have needs that must be addressed.

- To investigate the main difficulties or challenges staff face in providing services for ethnic minorities;

Staff working in areas of low ethnicity face particular challenges because of limited funds, low expertise, and often poor communication structures with ethnic communities, perhaps because the ethnic communities themselves are fragmented or small.

- To investigate the concept of an ‘ethnic minority text’ by identifying the type of collections held;

An ethnic minority text can mean many things: foreign-language material; books from other countries; books written by ethnic minorities in this country; or books reflecting a multicultural British society. Many librarians seemed to consider ethnic minority provision to be predominantly the provision of foreign-language material, and although this is an important aspect of ethnic minority provision, librarians need to engage with the large numbers of second generation ethnic minorities whose needs are cultural rather than linguistic.

- To investigate how these texts or collections are organised and promoted, the reasoning behind such decisions, and the success such strategies meet with;

Ethnic minority stock is generally singled out and shelved separately from main collections, partly because of the weighting towards foreign-language stock, but also because librarians felt their primary purpose was to satisfy the needs of ethnic minority users, who used them less if they were integrated into main stock.

Libraries in predominantly white areas do promote ethnic texts, but meet with mixed success from both ethnic and white users. Promotions seem to be targeted at a range of audiences, sometimes white and sometimes ethnic, but often the value of targeting such promotions at general audiences is missed.

- To investigate librarians' opinions about the interest of white users in reading about cultures other than their own;

It was concluded that librarians generally perceived at best moderate interest from white users in reading about other cultures, although some of the librarians interviewed found that there was interest. Librarians were generally enthusiastic about the potential benefits of people reading about cultures other than their own.

- To investigate librarians' opinions about the role libraries in predominantly white areas have to play in ethnic minority provision, and the importance of such services.

Libraries in predominantly white areas have a number of possible roles, mainly: providing foreign language material for ethnic minority groups who speak little English; providing books by ethnic minority authors or reflecting a multicultural Britain which second generation ethnic minorities in this countries can engage with; encouraging white and non-ethnic users to discover and benefit from texts about other cultures or a multicultural Britain. The dissertation found that librarians appreciate the importance of providing services for ethnic minorities in their area, but feel they are limited by funds and difficulties that libraries in white areas face. Some librarians appreciated the role that libraries could play in providing items of cultural

interest to non-ethnic minorities, but others felt it was more important for libraries to meet specific demand posed by ethnic groups.

7.2 Recommendations for future research:

This study was an initial exploration of ethnic minority library provision in predominantly white areas. Few areas were explored in great depth, and consequently further studies should concentrate on some of the issues touched upon or uncovered in this dissertation. The following topic areas have been identified:

- This study was concerned only with the opinions and attitudes of library staff, including their opinions about library users' attitudes. A full study needs to be implemented to investigate the opinions and attitudes of library users in white areas themselves.
- Given that this dissertation has found vast differences in what is understood by an ethnic minority text, and ethnic minority provision, it would seem essential to investigate exactly what level of provision is available across the country, and at whom the services are targeted. This study would be primarily quantitative rather than qualitative.
- A detailed investigation into the library and information needs of newly-migrating Eastern European workers would be a timely and useful study, since libraries are already experiencing vast numbers of these users, and are likely to experience increasing numbers over the next few years.
- A detailed investigation of one ethnic minority promotion in a library in a predominantly white area would illustrate exactly how likely promotions in white areas are to succeed and what factors might influence their success. Such an investigation might take into account users' experiences of the promotion and how their attitudes towards ethnic minority texts have been affected.

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9. APPENDICES:

9.1 Appendix 1 : Questionnaire

Ethnic Minority Provision in White Areas: MA Dissertation

NB. No responses are favoured over other responses. Please try to answer questions as honestly as possible, as this dissertation is primarily seeking to investigate library attitudes.

Area & Library Population

Name of library/library authority **N.B. This information will not appear in the dissertation.**

1) Within the area that your library serves, how large (on a scale of 1-5) would you suggest the ethnic minority population is?

- 1 (low ethnic population)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 (high ethnic population)

2) Do you think the proportion of ethnic minority users in your library accurately reflects the proportion of ethnic minorities in the area your library serves?

- Roughly the same proportion as in area served.
- Higher proportion of ethnic minorities in library than in area served.
- Lower proportion of ethnic minorities in library than in area served.
- Don't know

3) Do you expect the number of ethnic minorities in your area will increase or decrease over the next few years?

- Increase
- Decrease
- Should stay roughly the same
- Don't know

4) Does your library/library authority conduct any form of community profiling, in order to impact upon its book-buying policies?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

5) How useful, on a scale of 1-5, would a policy of community profiling be / How useful do you think your community profiling is to your library?

- 1 (not at all useful)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 (extremely useful)
- Don't know

Stock/Promotion of stock

NB. The term used throughout this questionnaire, *Ethnic minority books*, indicates fictional or non-fictional books about ethnic minority cultures, books by ethnic minority authors or books that reflect a multicultural society.

6) How satisfied are you, on a scale of 1-5, with the number of ethnic minority books you have available?

- 1 (not at all satisfied)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 (very satisfied)
- Don't know

7) Are the ethnic minority books you have available mostly in English or in other languages?

- Mostly in English
- About half and half
- Mostly in other languages
- Don't know

8) Are the ethnic minority books you have available mostly fiction or non-fiction?

- Mostly fiction
- About half and half
- Mostly non-fiction
- Don't know

9) Do you have separate collections of ethnic/multicultural books, or are these books built into general collections?

- Separate collections
- General Stock
- Both

10) Have you within the last few years promoted any multicultural books / ethnic minority books?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

11) Do you think this promotion generated any extra interest amongst ethnic minority users?

- Lots of interest
- Some interest, but not that much
- No real interest
- Don't know / Didn't run such a promotion

12) Do you think this promotion generated any extra interest amongst users who were not from ethnic minorities?

- Lots of interest
- Some interest, but not that much
- No real interest
- Don't know / Didn't run such a promotion

Overall

13) How interested, on a scale of 1-5, do you think your white readers are in reading books about minority cultures / books by authors from ethnic minority backgrounds?

- 1 (not interested at all)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 (very interested)
- Don't know

14) How useful, on a scale of 1-5, do you think it is for people to read books about cultures that are not their own?

- 1 (not very useful at all)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 (very useful)
- Don't know/Have no opinion

Priorities

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

A library that is situated in a predominantly white area...

15) need not place the provision of ethnic minority texts as a particularly high priority; they have other things to worry about.

- 1 (Disagree strongly)
- 2
- 3 (Neutral)
- 4
- 5 (Agree strongly)
- Don't know/Have no opinion

16) should provide ethnic minority texts, to cater even for small communities / to attract more minority users to the library.

- 1 (Disagree strongly)
- 2
- 3 (Neutral)

- 4
- 5 (Agree strongly)
- Don't know/Have no opinion

17) should provide books about ethnic minorities / multicultural Britain, because they reflect modern society in this country.

- 1 (Disagree strongly)
- 2
- 3 (Neutral)
- 4
- 5 (Agree strongly)
- Don't know/Have no opinion

Additional Information

I am hoping to be able to conduct further interviews with a sample of respondents to this questionnaire. If you would like to participate, and are happy for me to contact you please record your contact details below:

Name

E-mail Address

Telephone Number

Preferred method of interview
(e.g. face to face, email, telephone)

Any other contact information
(e.g. suitable times, etc)

Comments

Please feel free to include additional comments here, either to expand upon your answers or to comment upon the questionnaire:

Thank you for your time. Your answers are much appreciated.

Submit Answers Cancel (resets form)

9.2 Appendix 2: Table of Questionnaire Results:

Library	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8
	1	Same	Increase	Profiling	4	4	English	Both
	1	Same	Increase	Profiling	5	3	Non-English	Fiction
	1		Same	Profiling	4	4	Non-English	Fiction
	1	Lower		Profiling	4	3	English	Both
	2	Lower	Same	Profiling	5	3	Non-English	Both
	2	Lower	Increase		5	3	Non-English	Both
	4	Lower	Increase	Profiling	4	4	Non-English	Fiction
	5	Same	Increase	Profiling	5	3	Non-English	Both
	1	Lower	Increase	No	5	3	English	Fiction
	5	Higher	Increase	Profiling	3	3	Both	Fiction
	1	Same	Increase	Profiling	3	3		Fiction
	1	Lower	Increase	Profiling	4	3	Both	Fiction
	1	Higher	Increase	Profiling		2	Both	Fiction
	1	Same	Increase	Profiling	3	2	Non-English	Both
	1	Same	Increase	Profiling	4	3	English	Fiction
	3	Lower	Increase	No	4	2	English	
	1	Same	Increase	Profiling	3	3	Non-English	Fiction
	1	Same	Increase	Profiling	4	3	English	Non-Fiction
	1		Increase	Profiling	3	2	English	Fiction
	1	Lower	Increase	Profiling	4	3	Both	Both
	1	Same	Increase	Profiling	3	3	English	Fiction
	1	Same	Same			2	English	
	1	Same	Increase	Profiling	3	4	Both	Both
	1	Lower	Increase	Profiling	3	4	Non-English	Fiction
	2	Same	Increase	Profiling	2	3	Non-English	Both
	4	Higher		Profiling	5	5	Non-English	Fiction
	1	Same	Increase	Profiling		3	Non-English	Fiction
	2	Lower	Increase	Profiling	3	2	Non-English	Both
	3	Higher	Increase		2	3	Non-English	
	2	Lower	Same		2	3	English	Fiction
	1	Same		Profiling	4	4		
	1	Same	Increase	Profiling	4	5	English	Fiction
	1	Lower	Increase	Profiling	5	4	Non-English	Fiction
	1	Same		Profiling	2	4	English	Fiction
	1	Higher	Increase	Profiling	2	1	Both	Both
	1	Lower	Increase	Profiling		4	English	Both
	2	Same			4	1	English	Fiction
	1		Increase	Profiling	3	5	Both	Fiction
	2	Same	Increase	Profiling	4	2	Non-English	Both
	1	Lower		Profiling	4	3	Non-English	Fiction
	2			Profiling	3	4	Both	Fiction
	2	Lower	Increase	No	4	3	Non-English	Fiction
	4	Lower	Increase	Profiling	5	3	Non-English	Fiction
	5	Same	Increase		3	3	Non-English	Both
	5	Same	Increase	Profiling	5	3	English	Both
	1	Same	Same	Profiling	3	4	Non-English	Fiction
	3	Same	Same	Profiling	4	4	English	Both
	2	Higher	Increase	Profiling	4	3	English	Fiction

Library	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17
	Both	Promotion	Some	Lots	4	5	2	5	5
	Separate	No Promotion			2	5	2	4	4
	Both	Promotion		Some	3	4	1	5	5
	Both	Promotion	None	Lots	3	5	2	4	5
	Both	Promotion	Some			5	1	5	5
	Separate	Promotion	Lots		2	4	2	5	5
	Separate	Promotion	Some	Some	3	3	1	5	5
	Both	Promotion	Lots	Some	3	5	1	5	5
	Both	Promotion	Some	None	2	5	3	5	5
	Separate	No Promotion			4	4	3	2	4
	Both	Promotion	Some	Some		3	3	4	4
	Separate	Promotion	Some	Some	2	4	2	4	4
	Both	Promotion	Some	None	2	3	4	3	3
	Separate	Promotion	Some	Some	2	3	3	4	4
	Both	No Promotion			3	5	2	2	4
	Separate	No Promotion	Some	None	2	5	1	5	5
	Separate	No Promotion			3	5	1	5	5
	General	No Promotion				4	3	4	4
	General	Promotion	Some	Some	3	5	3	4	5
	Separate	Promotion	Some	None	2	4	1	5	5
	General	Promotion	None	Some	3	3	3	5	5
	Separate			None	2	3	5	2	3
	Both	Promotion	Lots	Some	3	5	2	4	4
	Both	Promotion	Some	None	2	3	3	4	4
	Both	Promotion	Some	Some	4		2	4	2
	Both	Promotion	Some	None			1	5	5
	Separate	Promotion	None	Some	3	5	3	4	4
	Separate	Promotion	Some		2	2	2	3	2
	Separate	Promotion	Some	Lots	4	5	2	4	2
	General	Promotion	Some	Some	3	3	4	4	4
	Separate					3	4	3	4
	General	No Promotion			2	4	3	4	4
	Separate	Promotion	Some	Some	3	4	1	5	5
	General	Promotion	Some	Some	3	5	1	4	5
	Both	Promotion	Some	Some	3	5	2	4	5
	Separate	Promotion	Some	Some	4	5	3	4	4
	General	No Promotion				5	4	4	4
	Separate	Promotion	Some	Some	3	5	2	4	5
	Separate	Promotion	Lots	Some	2	5	2	4	5
	Separate	Promotion	None	None	2	4	3	3	4
	Separate	Promotion	Some	Some	3	5	1	5	5
	Both	Promotion	Lots	Lots	3	4	1	4	5
	Both	Promotion	Some	Some	2	3	3	4	4
	Separate				2	5	3	4	5
	Separate	Promotion	Some	Some	4	3	3	3	3
	Separate	Promotion	Some	Some	4	5	1	4	5
	Separate	Promotion	Lots	None	5	5	1	5	5
	Both	Promotion	Some	Some	3	4	1	4	4

9.3 Appendix 3: Sample of an Interview Transcript:

Interview in library area 1:

Interviewer: Could you tell me a bit more about the library you work in? What sort of area is it in?

Ok, Recently, as of about five weeks ago, exactly 5 weeks ago in fact I started a new job, er, and I 'm now area coordinator of, um, five libraries in Nottinghamshire. Im based in a place called [Place Name mentioned], which is just to the side of [Place Name mentioned]. It's all - My whole area is a coalmine, ex coal mining area, so it's got the usual problems associated with ex-coal mining areas, which are um, er, reasonable levels of uemployment, lack of community cohesion, and um – dis – phrase - disenfranchised, youth? Dissatisfied youth. But there's [Place Name mentioned], which is where I'm based, - that's a large library with many of the services that Nottinghamshire offer across the county.

Interviewer: How about the other libraries? Are they similar?

There's [Place Name mentioned], which is a library in quite a pleasant area, recently been refurbished – very nice, I've got [Place Name mentioned], - which is a housing estate, that's got its problems. Lots of problems with surrounding Kids, and what not. Um, um, [Place Name mentioned], which is a very sweet library, which packs away at the end of the day, with all the shelves that fold in on themselves so they can use the room. Is that all of them? Yes, I think it is. Um, but yeah, it's just five standard public libraries.

Interviewer: And you'd say you have quite a small number of ethnic minorities in your library area?

The areas themselves – we don't have a massive amount of um, ethnic minorities, that's substantial, but I was thinking about – well, one of the things I was talking about before lunch, is we've got a lot of Eastern European people coming – across the board at the moment – so that's providing us with an extra focus, um, but, for the course, it's a pretty standard Nottinghamshire library. Very standard ex coal mining libraries – that's my area.

Interviewer: So have you already started to see the influx of Eastern Europeans coming in?

Definitely, Um, more so in my previous library, where I just moved from Worksop. And I work one Saturday in 3 in [Place Name mentioned], the big, big library in [Place Name mentioned]. And there particularly we seeing so many, so many so many Eastern European people coming through the doors, you know, to an extent where we're trying to work out how we can communicate with people, who have no grasp English in Eastern European languages. But even some of the smaller libraries in [Place Name mentioned], which is a large library in itself, but you wouldn't - I mean before realising that it is happening, I wouldn't have picked up on the fact that we would have had a load of eastern Europeans in but it's happening, more and more

and more, [Place Name mentioned], more and more people there. But the very small libraries, less so, because they're like small village or whatever else, but certainly, it's happening across the board now, it is becoming quite a big issue for us.

Interviewer: Is there any particular challenges you think they bring?

Certainly just in terms of communication. We've cut down a lot on the rules and regulations for joining, so that you only need one form of ID, in fact you don't even need a form of ID now, because what we can do is join people, let them use the library for the first time, then send the cards to them. So the actual act of sending the card to the address that they've given is the ID that we have taken that you're using. But, just explaining the little rules and the things we do like how long we can use the computers, how you log on, how many books you can take out. Those very very basic things that I could tell you now in ten minutes, you know, and you know exactly what you do, but trying to explain to someone whose grasp of English isn't very brilliant is increasingly difficult. There's also of course the areas of what services we provide to people.

Interviewer: How about in terms of the stock you provide? Have you had any problems coping with demand from the new migrants?

Yeah, of course there's a problem with er, stock, and information in the languages people need. We've always had a reasonable collection of foreign language material and there's quite a broad base of that, so because obviously it's a county wide service, in the city we've a more diverse range of ethnic minorities, so we've catered for a long, long time for different languages.

Interviewer: Really? What sort of languages were those?

Oh, a lot of Indian languages, Punjabi, etc. Show my ignorance by not knowing many of the languages.

We've always had this – this is something I didn't realise until I moved into [Place Name mentioned] 10 years ago, but there a lot of polish people already set up in this area. There's a polish working men's club set up on [Place name mentioned] way, well, obviously, it makes sense, but for whatever reasons, whatever the history of immigration we've had in this area, there was already quite a lot of people there, so we already have quite a lot of provision. So a number of eastern European languages, a number of um, the Indian subcontinent languages, whatever you want to call it, and um, oriental languages for want of a better word.