

***The right 'man' for the job? The role of empathy in community librarianship***

Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2007  
Department of Information Studies  
University of Sheffield

## **Research Workshop Summary**

Please find attached a summary of the recent workshop held to discuss the AHRC-funded research project exploring public library staff attitudes towards the social inclusion agenda. The summary includes key points raised by participants during each discussion as follows:

- Participant feedback - responses to the preliminary report
- Empathy and Cultural Representation – themed discussion groups
- Social Inclusion and Community Librarianship - themed discussion groups
- Skills, Partnerships and Professional Identity - themed discussion groups

This data will be analyzed by the project team and included in the research report and subsequent dissemination. All participants are assured complete anonymity, and all data will be used confidentially for research purposes only.

We would welcome any additional feedback, or further issues you would like to raise, both in response to the report you have read and the workshop sessions. Please feel free to contact us at anytime between now and the research contract end in February 2008:

**Kerry Wilson**

[k.m.wilson@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:k.m.wilson@sheffield.ac.uk)

**0114 222 6345**

**Briony Birdi**

[b.birdi@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:b.birdi@sheffield.ac.uk)

**0114 222 2653**

For more information on our research group, the Centre for the Public Library and Information in Society, please visit:

<http://www.shef.ac.uk/is/research/centres/cplis>



## **Participant feedback: responses to the preliminary report**

### ***Were research findings surprising or entirely expected?***

The demographic profile of survey respondents (i.e. predominantly female, White-British, middle aged and middle class) was not necessarily surprising to participants, but still “shocking” to see in print. We agreed that the sample was typical/representative on the whole.

Participants had heard similar ‘resistant’ comments amongst staff before (negative attitudes towards inclusive agenda), so these matched expectations and experience.

### ***What are the implications for public library management?***

The apparent lack of information and effective communication within public library authorities was also recognizable to participants.

The belief amongst some research respondents that front-line staff do NOT ‘need to know’ about social inclusion policy was a concern for participants, who believe that greater openness and transparency is needed in library services.

It was felt that some Heads of Services are deluded in thinking that existing communication methods are appropriate and effective.

There is also believed to be a lack of true service awareness amongst senior managers, particularly about the experiences of front-line staff in engaging with library users and providing the face-to-face service.

The support from managers for front-line staff was regarded as limited – front-line staff are often underestimated and under-valued.

Some of the related training being delivered within authorities was judged to be superficial and meaningless, and it was felt that the tick-box attitude was being applied here again. More targeted and specialized training is required.

There is an obvious recruitment versus training issue: should authorities now be seeking to recruit people with the right skills/attributes, or rely on training/development when in post? Diversity awareness for example can be assessed at recruitment level.

### ***What are the implications for social inclusion?***



Issues surrounding defining the [socially] excluded were discussed: one or two participants thought that disability in particular was under-referenced in the report.

It was felt that, in order to improve levels of engagement amongst staff, inclusion and diversity issues should be 'sold' as a positive business development approach in terms of thinking about library users of the future, and increased footfall/issues.

As it stands social inclusion is too often perceived as an obligation rather than a good idea or positive agenda.

The prejudices voiced in the report were discussed as common and reflective of public opinion, or at least that of "middle England". Library authorities have the imperative to challenge views.

The relationship between living and working in the same community was discussed, and the fact that higher levels of community awareness might encourage advanced empathic skills and engagement.

Similarly the relationship between moral values (belief in the ethical values of public service) and community pride was discussed, linked to a person's motivation in working for the public library service and its affect upon attitudes to the social inclusion agenda.

### ***Does the research have any positive messages?***

The research in itself, and the fact that issues raised will be aired in the public domain, was seen as a positive thing.

There was discussion surrounding some positive dimensions to the homogenous workforce, including the liberal political ideals of the baby-boom generation (e.g. first generation feminists)

### ***What is the value of the research?***

One participant who conducted/was involved with research in this area in 2000<sup>1</sup> noted that nothing appears to have changed!

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<sup>1</sup> 'Open to All? The public library and social exclusion' available from <http://www.seapn.org.uk/documents/OpenToAllvol1.pdf>

Another group member observed that some of the terminology used may be outdated ('community librarian' no longer used in one particular authority for example).

It was felt that the project raises fundamental issues and questions about staff values, and why people choose to work in the public library service.

The research also presents leadership challenges for the sector – engagement with policy objectives is dependant upon strong leadership.

## Empathy and Cultural Representation – group discussion

<b>Q1 How would you define ‘cultural representation’ amongst library staff within the social inclusion context?</b>		
<b>Session 1</b>	<b>Session 2</b>	<b>Session 3</b>
<p>It’s easier with urban than rural local authorities to represent the demographic in one’s staffing profile.</p> <p>A hugely complex issue, becoming more so – as new immigrants coming in with more languages, more issues, so how do you reflect that in a library service?</p> <p>To focus on staff is ‘missing the point’: the BME community should be reflected in the personnel, but there is the underlying ethos that whatever your cultural background, you should be able to empathise with anyone.</p> <p>Important to include disability (often considered in terms of mobility, but should also include mental health issues, etc.).</p> <p>Important difference to acknowledge, i.e. between the age of the people behind the counter and the age of the people serving the community.</p>	<p>Developing a staff group that represents the entire community is very difficult.</p> <p>Are we asking for the impossible here? Any professional group will have its own culture.</p> <p>Group felt that empathy is something you can teach.</p>	<p>‘Cultural representation’ a narrow term – disability/sexuality etc. shouldn’t be described as ‘cultural’ issues.</p> <p>Identify groups and engage with them – but how do you identify e.g. LGBT users? You can’t quantify – yet figures are what the SMT wants.</p> <p>Why should people declare disability, sexuality, ethnic origin? So how can you be expected to have numbers (i.e. to please SMT etc.)?</p> <p>It’s almost an impossible question – what does it mean? Recruitment panels – ‘club fisted’ approach by a white establishment (to have a ‘representative BME person’, when often entirely inappropriate).</p>
<b>Q2 Will the cultural staff profile of public libraries be the same in 20 years time?</b>		
<b>Session 1</b>	<b>Session 2</b>	<b>Session 3</b>
<p>The demographic of the country is changing – so this is unavoidable.</p> <p>However, in 10 years’ time – maybe not.</p> <p>29% of births in Sheffield (today) from BME communities – surely will be reflected in future</p>	<p>Pessimistic – 10 years ago was feeling very positive, but the situation hasn’t really changed.</p> <p>[Another speaker]The profile is slowly changing – we’re seeing younger people coming through and moving up the ranks.</p>	<p>Hopefully it will change.</p> <p>We do have to take some action ourselves...without it being positive discrimination [general agreement that positive discrimination ‘doesn’t work’].</p>

<p>employment trends? Research is a catalyst for change – this piece of work and others like it.</p>	<p>Important question that we should ask instead – ‘will the experience of the socially excluded person be better in 20 years?’ i.e. irrespective of the staff.  Attitudes may not be dependent on staff profile.  Section 11 funding affected the situation.</p>	<p>Careers fairs – important to raise the profile of libraries within society.</p>
<p><b>Q3 How does the ‘low level resistance’ to cultural change described in the report affect the social inclusion offer from public libraries?</b></p>		
<p><b>Session 1</b></p>	<p><b>Session 2</b></p>	<p><b>Session 3</b></p>
<p>[Discussing ‘low level resistance’] ‘I am constantly being told that I am being negative about new things coming in...I like to think that I’m realistic, not negative...we’re constantly reinventing the wheel’.  A resistance to change is there because of frequent restructures over the past 10-15 years. ‘As you get older, you do find it difficult to change’.  Some staff feel that IT is ‘taking us away from our real work’.  Not all staff feel that they have the required skills.  Group agreed ‘low-level resistance is there’.  Training is essential – if good feedback, staff begin to buy into agenda (so issues/initiatives no longer challenged). Vital to address ignorance and remove prejudice.</p>	<p>Low-level resistance – group definitely recognized this.  ‘We [managers] can’t police it on the ground’.  ‘The invisible customers’ – humans naturally associate with, and better serve, people they know/recognise [discussed idea of ‘invisible user’ as part of Reader Development movement].</p>	<p>A service is only as good as the person delivering it on the day.  ‘You only have one chance to make a first impression’.  Resistance to change in general, rather than resistance to ‘the socially excluded’.  Some discussion of ‘worthy’/‘non-worthy’ users of the library service – particular problem felt to be in dealing effectively/sensitively with homeless people  Some staff act as a ‘judge’ in terms of ‘who should come in’ to the library.  Group also talked of the ‘invisible users’ – people we’re less at ease dealing with  We need to focus on performance management – we can’t dictate how people think, but we can focus on how they behave.  Front-line staff have a strong customer care ethos – so will usually swallow personal feelings.  Methodological issue - Is there a danger, in</p>

		attitudinal research, that you don't always find how people 'really think' (they 'toe the party line')?
<b>Q4 In your experience, how empathic are public library staff?</b>		
<b>Session 1</b>	<b>Session 2</b>	<b>Session 3</b>
<p>Those staff who have been trained are good, there's a direct link between training received and empathy.</p> <p>Most people in libraries have gone to work there because they want to do the job and enjoy it.</p> <p>'We're in there because we want to do it, and we want to get better at it.'</p>	<p>Home delivery service (outreach) – staff very empathic, fantastic skills. Not all staff will be the same.</p> <p>General feeling that there are some 'sections of society' that most people are able to deal with, others less so: comes down to those groups we 'have more experience of dealing with'.</p> <p>When talking about social inclusion, there are such a wide range of services and tasks involved.</p> <p>Recently work with e.g. looked after children – heightened awareness, staff with greater empathy there.</p> <p>Group asked the question 'how selective are we in choosing training for our staff?'</p> <p>Tension exists – focusing on mass audience/diversity – as a manager, do you go for the easy numbers (mass audience), or try the harder to reach (diversity)? 'the culture of numbers is working against you'.</p> <p>Would it be appropriate to have a member of the NF working on your staff?</p>	<p>Empathic? – they try to be.</p> <p>Libraries attract people with a vocation – they try to be nice to people, in general.</p> <p>Sometimes, people are trying hard to help, but a lack of training means that they get it wrong.</p>
<b>Q5 Is intuitive empathy more important than cognitive empathy when working with disadvantaged groups?</b>		
<b>Session 1</b>	<b>Session 2</b>	<b>Session 3</b>
'We are what we are'.	Genuine empathy is better, but if you can	If you're not naturally disposed to it (being

<p>'Intuitive empathy takes you away from serving a broader purpose'.</p> <p>Danger of intuitive empathy – we shouldn't bring the issue back to focus on ourselves, should say 'I want to help you' (i.e. irrespective of my own issues and experiences)... 'I can tell you I'm sorry, but I can't be expected to understand'.</p> <p>[With asylum seekers/refugees, for example] 'You don't need to speak the language, but you do need an understanding, for example, of the political situation in their country'.</p>	<p>train someone to do the task – 'that's what we're looking for'.</p> <p>Someone who is sensitive to the issues.</p> <p>Someone who can 'put on the mask of competence'.</p> <p>At the end of the day, all issues are to be dealt with (above all) by frontline staff – but it's the librarian who must communicate the need to his/her staff, say why it's important.</p> <p>'We need to communicate'.</p> <p>'It's about having "concerned detachment" – we can't pretend to know fully what someone is going through'.</p> <p>Analogy – doctor's 'bedside manner' (and systematic training to develop this).</p>	<p>empathic), your behaviour can come across as a little stilted.</p> <p>Yet it's better than not doing anything – 'we can't send our library staff to war zones!'</p> <p>What effect would reading about other people's experiences have? – suggestion to use literature (fiction) to help to develop empathy, 'to put yourself in another's shoes'</p> <p>Cognitive empathy can often be fine – we can't ask for more of our staff.</p> <p>'Professional detachment' – 'a genuinely empathic person would act naturally, quite simply'.</p>
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## Social Inclusion and Community Librarianship – group discussion

Q1 Do public libraries fully understand what is meant by social exclusion?		
Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
<p>Professional documents are using the term 'social exclusion' in a much broader sense to reflect all aspects of inclusion</p> <p>"I think it is a good idea to not just focus on socio-economic deprivation"</p> <p>There is different understanding of the concept at different levels – staff working in management and/or strategic roles need to be more aware of legal compliance</p> <p>There are a number of different definitions and phrases in use – depends what's 'fashionable'</p> <p>It is important to generate more understanding amongst frontline staff and people who deliver the service</p> <p>Understanding is linked to a sense of moral obligation and belief in equality of access</p>	<p>Heads of Service probably do [library service at highest level]</p> <p>Public libraries can't stand alone from local authorities: if the authority is focused then there will be greater understanding communicated to relevant services (e.g. Closing the Gap in Sheffield). All has to be linked to council agenda and relevant targets [policy cohesion]</p> <p>Understanding amongst library staff will differ according to PLA approach, training and communication methods</p> <p>Public libraries can't be divorced from wider [national] political agenda</p> <p>Staff will be familiar with the term but not the details surrounding/informing it – effective training is essential</p>	<p>Social exclusion considered to be an "outdated" term – now predominantly talking about community cohesion. Inclusion objectives are frequently "repackaged"</p> <p>Community cohesion was described as a "subset" of social exclusion</p> <p>MPs [Milliband] beginning to talk about links between different parts of social exclusion</p> <p>Libraries need to understand and define what part(s) of the inclusion agenda they can support or do anything about</p>
Q2 Does the conceptual blurring of 'inclusive' political objectives have an impact on library service outcomes and effectiveness?		
Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
<p>Having a positive impact in 'opening up' the inclusion agenda and not just focusing on one facet of exclusion</p> <p>But this creates problems in choosing the correct term</p>	<p>Short-termism linked to blurred political objectives has a negative impact. Libraries are suffering from "pilot-it is" (i.e. starting things and not finishing them)</p> <p>Models of inclusive policy seem to change too frequently (e.g. from 'diversity' to 'cohesion'),</p>	<p>The research agenda [social policy] is governed by where and when money is pitched – certainly in Thatcher years – which has an impact on public service responses and effectiveness</p> <p>There is a huge influence in terms of needing</p>

<p>It is considered acceptable to discriminate against the white working classes, linked to media representation of 'chav culture'</p> <p>Socio-economic disadvantage is 'unfashionable' – the more obvious equality issues (race; LGBT) are more attractive and considered easier to address</p> <p>It depends on self image: "if you feel excluded then you are", but service providers may not readily identify you as so</p> <p>Socio-economic disadvantage is not visible or tangible</p> <p>There are 'economies of scale' to consider: smaller BME groups for example are less likely to be factored in to budgets</p> <p>Have to consider that people do not fit neatly in to pigeon holes</p> <p>Would argue that nobody actually knows what is meant by social exclusion</p> <p>The very existence of public libraries is arguably inclusive: but processes and practices inadvertently exclude people</p> <p>There is an expectation for PLAs to perform: this creates a tension that leads to quick-fix solutions and catering for majority tastes. The amount of resources needed to engage with all excluded groups is unavailable: therefore need to prioritise</p> <p>Quality impact assessments are useful in this context, and in involve some community profiling/involvement</p> <p>Political objectives give a framework to work from: it's good to articulate what we're doing in</p>	<p>and related government speak becomes too confusing (e.g. exclusion model to citizenship model). Are we talking about the same things?</p> <p>Danger that we are pandering to fears in communities, which makes it difficult to engage people, and ultimately affects outcomes.</p> <p>Is it about prevention or inclusion [community cohesion policies]?</p> <p>Changing agendas move ahead too quickly</p> <p>'Community cohesion' perceived as the latest buzz-word for one authority: becomes an excuse for forgetting what came before, or what wasn't completed/achieved. Too cosmetic</p> <p>Authorities suffering from 'terminology overload' – can lose sight of true meaning and objective.</p> <p>Some objectives cause conflict with equal opportunities (e.g. specific opening times/additional hours for Muslim women). Is there equality in this?</p> <p>Requires guerrilla tactics at political level to overcome</p> <p>There are capacity issues concerning what can realistically be achieved: frontline staff know that we're not really performing and become cynical</p> <p>Outcomes [tangible] considered to be more important than activities: needs to change to prove value in this area</p>	<p>to conform to buzz words and targets: affects how we evaluate impact and outcomes. In reality a positive impact on five people is a valuable social inclusion output, but may not be seen that way by "the suits". We need to evaluate experience in this context.</p> <p>Political objectives do have a positive impact: neighbourhood renewal funding [deprivation index fund] projects have had successful outcomes leading to mainstream services</p> <p>Political objectives = "double-edged sword"</p> <p>Stigma attached to some objectives/funding streams: neighbourhood renewal funding encourages negativity from staff in more affluent postcodes</p> <p>Blurring can be interpreted as 'broadening agenda' – making libraries more inclusive for everybody</p> <p>Need to conform to Golden Thread: if council adopting/leaning towards one political agenda, has to run through all services</p> <p>Need to define what culture is, and the cultural value of public libraries [linked to regeneration]</p>
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<p>a transferable way</p> <p>There needs to be a balance between performance measures and true inclusion, there is often vast resources in place for little [measurable] return</p> <p>Quick fixes are reinforced by funding streams that are non-sustainable</p> <p>Short-termism is damaging: should be more of an imperative to make projects sustainable</p>		
<b>Q3 Is there a direct relationship between inclusive organisations and inclusive services?</b>		
<b>Session 1</b>	<b>Session 2</b>	<b>Session 3</b>
<p>Group agreed there is a direct relationship</p> <p>Corporate jargon is damaging the inclusive relationship between policy and practice [and relevant staff groups]</p> <p>It is officially the manager's role to interpret policy and related information, but there also needs to be upwards movement and communication (e.g. working groups across organisational structures; 'lateral groups' in Leicestershire discussed as an example). This would have more of an impact</p> <p>Staff empowerment considered to a good thing in increasing engagement and productivity</p> <p>Group felt that some of the more negative [anti-inclusion] comments made in report are associated with lack of confidence and security</p>	<p>Yes there is – we are wasting resources if frontline staff do not fully understand what social inclusion is about</p> <p>Some service models [non-inclusive] can provide inclusive services: e.g. retail companies are not inclusive of sales assistants in decision making processes but are inclusive of customers' needs</p> <p>Public libraries considered to be more inclusive than they used to be: more training and awareness. There is a greater emphasis on customer care and managers are beginning to realise the contribution of frontline staff as the "shop window" of the organisation</p> <p>There is a direct relationship in best practice examples</p>	<p>American Library Association quote: "without an internal click within the organisation, there won't be an external click". Libraries need to be inclusive to perform</p> <p>Staff need to feel ownership of the service in order to feel pride in what they do</p> <p>Discussion on worthy/non-worthy users: libraries need to re-establish their own identity instead of providing services that are not library activities. Help to avoid bewilderment and cynicism amongst staff</p> <p>Use of internet in libraries [People's Network] considered an 'unworthy' activity by some library staff</p> <p>Libraries must make "value judgements" based on own professional identity and experience</p>
<b>Q4 Can the tick box culture of local government be overcome by public libraries?</b>		
<b>Session 1</b>	<b>Session 2</b>	<b>Session 3</b>

<p>Not necessarily – tick-box culture governed by local authorities and libraries are answerable to them</p> <p>May change with local government white paper and move from performance measurement [best value] to best area indicators</p> <p>Discussion on CPA [Comprehensive Performance Assessment]: ‘to truly engage with this will take decades’. Considered ‘not possible’ due to lack of long-termism in policy making.</p> <p>Needs complete cultural change throughout local authorities</p> <p>Will be interesting to see how public libraries cope with joint funding streams such as the Lottery funding programme [merging of two operational cultures].</p> <p>Strong leadership needed to affect cultural change on this scale</p>	<p>Only with guerrilla frontline librarianship – relies on the PEOPLE providing the service</p> <p>The main challenge facing libraries is to ensure that the [necessary] ticked boxes meet and conform to genuine social inclusion objectives, in line with local area agreements</p> <p>There is a need to clearly define and articulate libraries’ roles [what can be realistically provided] in supporting other agencies: needs to conform to other providers’ objectives and influence the centre.</p>	<p>Tick box culture beginning to change: focus on outcomes rather than input/output. Greater requirement to prove value of services rather than just tick a box</p> <p>All a matter of time in terms of what can be proven: will public libraries be given enough time?</p> <p>Politicians are not interested in longitudinal studies: more interested in instant results and photo opportunities</p> <p>Short-termism is something that has to be accepted as part of local government culture</p>
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**Q5 Are policy directives helping or hindering the mainstream concept of community librarianship?**

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
<p>Policy directives are helping the concept and practice of community librarianship by ‘shaping progress’</p> <p>Local authorities have been almost divorced from public libraries: now reclaiming them (“because we tick boxes!”) as can compliment services of other departments</p> <p>All dependent on having elected members who are supportive of public libraries</p>	<p>Better to define community librarianship with a small (rather than capital) ‘c’.</p> <p>The concept is not considered to be out of date by all, it’s what public libraries do every day.</p> <p>Conceptually public libraries as a whole are out of date [the term]: public libraries ARE community libraries [as opposed to specialised library services]</p> <p>It depends on how far the profession is up to the challenge of defending community</p>	<p>Community engagement [lottery funding] – raising extremely difficult issues as compromising professional skills and standards. Some community groups for example have own agenda but are receiving entitlement</p> <p>Community librarianship an outdated concept – use of the term considered to be damaging – new job titles being used to represent political agenda (e.g. development Worker)</p> <p>Difficult to define any mainstream concepts in</p>

	<p>librarianship, e.g. Tim Coates' work in Hounslow whereby opening hours are being extended but outreach work is being reduced; the retail versus community model</p> <p>Community librarianship becoming more challenging in itself: public libraries not recruiting people to the 'nice little part-time job anymore'</p> <p>There are too many targets facing community librarians, who don't know what their role is anymore. Communities no longer treated as a whole as they are so diverse, especially in inner cities.</p> <p>The People's Network [internet access] has proved to be a huge community resource: valued by immigrants and young people. Example of how modern community librarianship works.</p> <p>Authorities are reacting too quickly to policy objectives without really considering what communities want.</p> <p>View of the value of community librarianship can be coloured by cultural differences [i.e. resistance to CL]</p>	<p>public libraries: 149 PLAs all with own agenda and objectives</p> <p>Professional bodies [CILIP; MLA] not informing government of the profession's agenda: directives all coming one way</p> <p>Librarians should be talking about professional values and agenda themselves, but this is often misconstrued as a 'self-preservation' tool</p> <p>Libraries still suffering from poor publicity, marketing and media representation. The Love Libraries campaign described as "an uphill struggle" in trying to promote positive community roles for libraries. There are no positive stories to compensate for negative items about library closures etc.</p> <p>Inclusion may be high on the agenda, but it is only ever the articulate, educated middle classes who defend the public library service by campaigning against closures etc</p> <p>Constantly receiving complaints from middle class users about expenditure on 'non-library' services when, for example, the book collection is not considered to be satisfactory. Libraries need to decide who they are catering for and what kind of service they are providing.</p>
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## Skills, Partnerships and Professional Identity – group discussion

<b>Q1 Those involved directly in the provision of social inclusion services scored higher on the Professional Empathy measure: is this why they are directly involved?</b>		
<b>Session 1</b>	<b>Session 2</b>	<b>Session 3</b>
<p>The professional mindset is communicated through University.</p> <p>Something has drawn people into the job – it isn't well paid</p> <p>"Nice little job" attitude is less so now – though we have PT staff (6 hours 10 hours) who have this attitude.</p> <p>Graduate training schemes give people a different focus.</p> <p>Differences perhaps between prof staff and para-prof staff</p>	<p>Not a given that everyone coming into librarianship has that empathic nature.</p> <p>Some join for other reasons.</p> <p>Those who apply for specific community posts probably have their own agenda.</p> <p>You acquire different knowledge and skills as you move around. But you need that initial ethos before you acquire them. Not everyone enters with the same commitment. There are people for whom it is a "job" – just a "nice little job".</p> <p>Some disagreement – frontline staff can have real dedication. Other reasons to do the job – e.g. convenience.</p> <p>Libraries tend to get people who want a vocation.</p>	<p>Its important to support the people you bring in (staff) to avoid conflict.</p> <p>Strong leadership to share knowledge is important. The ethos to support the community development. Support from training and chartership.</p> <p>Leaders are letting the service down.</p> <p>Definitely people go for these jobs because they feel it is important.</p> <p>You can learn professional empathy.</p> <p>Some people do move sideways into it because they want a job.</p> <p>Some staff don't share the local inclusion agenda.</p> <p>There is a need to support people who perhaps have to change jobs.</p>
<b>Q2 How, if at all, can training be used to develop empathy skills amongst public library staff?</b>		
<b>Session 1</b>	<b>Session 2</b>	<b>Session 3</b>
<p>Yes CAB training, dealing with awkward customers.</p> <p>It should be more than customer care – too superficial.</p> <p>There are links with culture. Attitudes, opinions, organisational values.</p> <p>Training needs to be in the library you work in.</p>	<p>Depends why they don't feel empathy.</p> <p>Information – if the issue is the lack of understanding, lack of knowledge – then training can help.</p> <p>There are issues about training. The council has a cycle of diversity and disability training, but they don't teach you to deliver accessible</p>	<p>Can help with training: Day courses – Afro Caribbean, Bengali etc It helped to have staff understand those communities. There is always a danger of stereotyping communities when doing this training.</p> <p>Religion is important, understanding</p>

<p>Drug users – difficult people – how do you empathise with people like that?</p> <p>Training – where does the money come from to deliver this training!</p> <p>Can learn from other sectors – social workers etc</p> <p>Some issues, librarians are not equipped to deal with.</p> <p>Policy issues, training issues – both important.</p> <p>Can teach empathy.</p> <p>Training needs vary from time to time, from area to area.</p>	<p>services.</p> <p>Have generic training then build on it with specific (library) focused training.</p> <p>Managers and library staff need different issues addressing.</p> <p>Training to managers is not being cascaded. Managers need training to impact on policy. There is a communication issue.</p> <p>There need to be a close link between practice and research. Good research is not disseminated effectively into library practice.</p> <p>Money – there are pressures. If money is an issue then have the specific training not the generic.</p>	<p>what people believe is important.</p> <p>Knowing about somebody else's culture is half of the battle of understanding. If you don't understand you can't empathise.</p> <p>Resources are needed to support ongoing information needs – budget and time are issues with training.</p> <p>If you have a representative workforce it should bring more shared understanding.</p> <p>What is undervalued in the UK is the feeling that we accept people around us.</p> <p>Acceptance is very English – we must support this in everyone.</p> <p>Yet other cultural values influence the ability to accept.</p> <p>In the training, people are encouraged to speak out and they say things without fear of understanding.</p>
<p><b>Q3 How can public libraries draw upon the experience, knowledge and skills of other social service sectors?</b></p>		
<p><b>Session 1</b></p>	<p><b>Session 2</b></p>	<p><b>Session 3</b></p>
<p>There are lots of different types of problems: embarrassment issues – the person who smells, the person you cant understand, deaf awareness, hearing disability.</p> <p>Inclusion can cause exclusion. How do you cope with groups who do not want to come in any more? There can be tensions between traditional users and new users. Frontline staff feel those tensions. Have certain days for certain users – time zoning, physical</p>	<p>Partnership with other bodies is really important.</p> <p>Employ other from outside with the skills. Lib Dev Workers – when we recruit, library skills are desirable but not essential.</p> <p>Libraries have a lot to learn from other agencies, but they have a lot to learn from libraries. It needs to be a multi-party approach.</p>	<p>Already working with other sectors e.g. throughout the local authority. If you have any sense you won't try it on your own. You can learn from them.</p> <p>We bought into Framework in a big way. It has a strength - it says these are the things we are about.</p> <p>How do we engage with those we are serving and work with others who do –</p>

<p>zoning; physical only works in larger libraries.</p> <p>Working with community groups is huge. Working with community groups – engage champions within that community.</p> <p>User expectations of a profession. Ethnicity doesn't make a difference when you want information say in a university library, but in a community ethnicity can make a difference.</p>		<p>there is less blurring now.</p>
<p><b>Q4 Can public libraries deliver socially inclusive services and maintain their own professional identity?</b></p>		
<p><b>Session 1</b></p>	<p><b>Session 2</b></p>	<p><b>Session 3</b></p>
<p>Professional identity is so important. You can go along with customer demands and cease to be a professional. You can educate. Or you can intimidate.</p> <p>Libraries are beginning to provide services that are no longer library services.</p> <p>Librarianship should be a professional responsibility. You can get numbers in, but is it a library!?</p> <p>Corporate/globalisation is taking away our key strengths.</p> <p>Because of negative experiences elsewhere we are becoming more council like – we have lost our neutrality and become more corporate and authoritative.</p> <p>We have to fight for our existence – tick boxes – budget pressure.</p> <p>Everyone is going to have a business plan. Must shout louder about our professional identity.</p> <p>Not all “lights and jingles” – must focus on our key skills; trust, accuracy of information – its not necessarily glamorous. Its not about “20 new computers”</p>	<p>70s 80s – lost own identity – out there doing social things in the community – not n the library. Had to work that way – still do, but need to strike a balance. Librarians lost sight of their values. And consider the economic context. Politically libraries need a recession to bring people back.</p> <p>There is a move from qualification based job descriptions to competencies.</p> <p>‘To say I am a librarian gives a negative image. I say I am from the library.’</p> <p>‘Do you need a library qualification? – Paraprofessionals do an amazing amount of stuff. I did similar job as a paraprofessional as I do now as a professional. However, the qualification has raised my awareness of the wider issues, it gives you a wider view.’</p> <p>The professional qualification should give you opportunity, understanding and confidence.</p> <p>The profession needs a range of skills going into it.</p> <p>Librarians do a lot for very little recompense.</p>	<p>Our USP wasn't so important in the 70s and 80s. We are clearer now about what we are trying to deliver. We know what our job is.</p> <p>I feel the opposite. My main role is going out into the community, very little of what I would call traditional library work is what I do. I have to open the library up for other things. I am a teacher; I am a child minder, not a librarian.</p> <p>Enquiry desk, disabled person, old person, so many hats I have to wear. All things to all men at all times, you can't do your best.</p> <p>Then reputation of the whole service goes down – depressing.</p> <p>I have no time to be in my library. I don't spend time with my stock, which is someone else's responsibility. I can't promote things because I don't know what's there.</p>

<p>Schools are giving the message – the internet is everything. We need to work more with schools, working with people re: reading, emerging readers.</p>	<p>Librarians are not being rewarded for what they do. The artificial division between paraprofessional and professional is outdated.</p>	
<p><b>Q5 What are we really looking for in a community librarian: should the emphasis be on ‘community’ or ‘librarian’?</b></p>		
<p><b>Session 1</b></p>	<p><b>Session 2</b></p>	<p><b>Session 3</b></p>
<p>First impression is very important. Some times we are intimidating. There can be a language problem for some users.</p>		<p>We do need community librarian with a small c- but we need to identify what it is that local authorities want. The public library is the community library service. We should be saying I am a community library. You should not be working in public libraries if you do not want to work with the public. Need both community skills and library skills, both should be valued.</p>