Analysis of City of Wolverhampton's Engagement on Libraries

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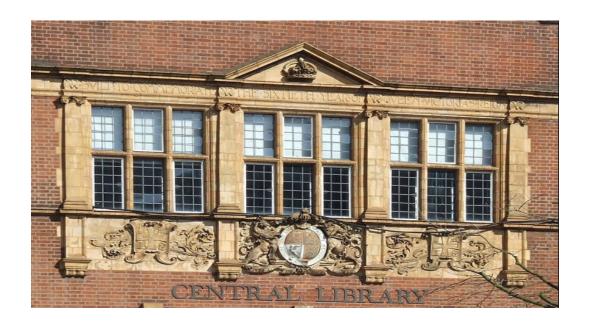Dr Andrew Friesen, & David Scott
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1. Introduction

The City of Wolverhampton Council is committed to delivering a modern, vibrant and value for money library service to their customers.

The following report is an independent analysis of the feedback received by the City of Wolverhampton of both users and non-users of libraries, to help inform the development of a five-year library strategy.

Views were captured from the public in the form of an online survey, available from 23 September, 2016 to 18 October, 2016 which 462 people responded to. Views were also captured in the form of focus groups with members of the public, library staff, wider council employees and volunteers (See section 9). 14 workshops were held in various locations across the city in October 2016.

Survey and focus group questions were based on the City of Wolverhampton's 'case for change' – as a response, in common with most places across the country, to the changing ways in which people are using libraries. Visitor numbers are falling in Wolverhampton and there are fewer active borrowers and book loans, mirroring a national decline. At the same time, there has been a growth in the use of technology and people are also increasingly using libraries to develop their skills, access support services as well as attend events and activities as part of a community. The survey and workshops covered the following four areas:

- Demand for the Library Service
- Quality of Service and relevance to communities
- New ways of working
- The role of the Central Library

Survey and focus group questions were predominantly open ended and as such each question within the areas above has been analysed and grouped according to key themes that were evident in the question responses.

Each section gives the number of participants (N) who made reference to the theme in their open ended response and the percentage of participants who endorsed each theme (%). Participants endorsed multiple themes within each opened ended response. As such, the percentages provided in relation to the questions are an accumulation of the number of times each theme was endorsed, which is why the percentages for each theme may add up to over 100% for each question. Themes are listed in descending order regarding the valid percentage of participants who discussed them (i.e. the most significant themes for each question are listed first). The focus group data does not include any numerical analysis, and instead only discusses the most prominent themes to emerge from the data. Indicative quotes from the participants are also included throughout the report to further illustrate the themes.

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2. Executive Summary

This summary highlights the main issues arising from the thematic analysis. Although the survey questions gave rich data around the themes and there were numerous suggestions about how the Library Service could be enhanced many of the underlying suppositions on which these opinions were based need further investigation. Thus the format of the summary is as follows for each identified theme.

Summary of most highly endorsed theme (s)

Points for consideration/ further investigation.

Demand (for Libraries and their Services)

Why do you think that fewer people are using libraries in the Wolverhampton?

Summary

- **Competition from Technology (N= 148, 32%)**
  The most frequent response regarding reasons for the (decline in) demand for libraries concerned the competition that digital technologies present (32%). That is, people indicated that they are more likely to find information that is available in libraries through the internet, which was considered more convenient and accessible for individuals without the need to visit a library.

- **Logistics (N=44, 9.5%)**
  Approximately 10% of respondents also suggested that logistical issues such as parking (availability, lack of), opening hours (that do not fit with user lifestyles) and the location of libraries hinder may hinder the services that libraries offer to the public.

- **Fewer People Reading (N=30, 6.5%)**
  Participants reported that due to the demands of modern life, individuals had less free time to engage in activities such as reading which was thought to have a knock on effect on the library usage.

- **People or Societal Change (N=16, 3.5%)**

  Participants reported that people's needs pertaining to public libraries have changed over time and fewer visits are a consequence.

- **Other themes/ reasons given for the decline in the use of libraries in this section included:**
  Poor quality of books (3.3%); Marketing (3.0%); Physical Environment; (2.2%) (poor atmosphere); Books have become cheaper to buy (1.9%); Budget cuts (1.9%) blamed for poor service leading to lack of use. Others contradicted the reasons for decline by indicating that they had noticed increase use or that they used other libraries, or that there was a need for more services. (All under 1%)

  Things to consider: Competition with the internet. This may be a response to a digital divide between those who are internet savvy and electronically mobile and those who are less so.

Quality of service and relevance to communities

People are accessing information differently now. Are libraries still relevant to local communities?

Summary

Libraries are still relevant due to multiple benefits and uses (N=227, 49.1%)

- Individuals were very supportive of the library services and believed that it continued to be relevant for a wide variety of reasons. This included: providing access to facilities that individuals might not otherwise be able to access due to the high costs of computers or book purchases. They expressed a view that libraries were especially relevant for those on low incomes and for those who did not have internet access at home.
- There was also a need being met around a place for study for younger people or to access the internet which was seen as a benefit with regard to educational attainment for the city.
- Conversely, libraries were also seen as a valuable resource for individuals who required an alternative to digital technology and for demographics that preferred books (analogue) to digital resources.
- Besides offering educational value, libraries were seen to serve an important role as a social hub.

Libraries are relevant but changes are needed (N=59, 12.8%)

- Respondents indicated that the libraries were relevant or had the potential to remain relevant. However, this group believed that a renewed format was required in order to promote sustainability, encourage increased usage and meet the changing demands of the population.
- One of the major strategies proposed to help counteract the downward trend and decline in usage was an expansion of the activities on offer within the library service (e.g. story time, mother and baby groups). This would also involve working in conjunction with other community services so that they could build upon the current strength as a social hub in order to evolve into a multi-functional facility. It was anticipated that this would cater to a wider variety of groups and development needs (e.g. training/educational needs) while also increasing cost-effectiveness through shared resources, revenue generation (e.g. rent rooms for social activities) and greater usage resulting from the provision of multiple services in one central location. Other issues of note were suggestions around opening hours to suit needs of population and a greater range of services.

The council continues to face a significant challenge. How do you think the library service can be more cost-effective?

- *Adopt a multi-use facility approach (N=93, 20.1%)*
  The largest proportion of respondents believed that the existing service could be optimised and utilised more effectively. Suggestions included adopting a multi-use facility approach which encompassed shared resources, more effective use of communal space and the provision of a diverse range of activities. Several respondents indicated that this would require greater engagement with schools and other educational facilities.
- There was also a strong sense of the function of the libraries as a social hub which could be drawn upon to facilitate the provision of community focused events and activities such as training courses and social events or clubs for residents of all ages.
- Other issues of note were: (N=65, 14.1%) who thought the libraries could not be cut any further; (N=58, 12.6%) who recognised a need for income generation of which there are several suggestions; (N=39, 8.4%) wanted to increase the appeal through creating a better atmosphere and refurbishment and looking again at opening hours which was a recurrent theme as was offering a more digitised provision; (N=34, 7.4%)referred to an inefficient use of resources and felt that cost savings could be made in a number of areas so that the revenue could be reinvested in the library (N=29, 6.3%); an equal number (N=29, 6.3%) suggested service centralisation.

Things to consider: Ways of generating income and assessing the cost benefit of libraries in relation to use of other services if they close.

New ways of working.

What is your experience of libraries that operate in a different way to Wolverhampton libraries?

Do you think we can improve our library service by working differently with other organisations or as part of a shared building?

Summary

- Although a large proportion of respondents reported having never used another library other than a Wolverhampton library (46.4%), the majority seemed to agree that library services could improve if integrated into other organisations, in particular community, health and social organisations (40.1%) and other providers such as Universities and schools.
- This was viewed as potentially establishing a physical community hub which would encourage footfall and stimulate social interactions (17.7%), as would more sociable logistics (9.5%), such as more suitable opening hours and free parking.
- There were also negative views on sharing and suggestions for sharing but with distinct functions so that the library was still a library but in a shared building.

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Do libraries of the future need a building?

- Most participants reported that libraries of the future need a building because they are the hub of the community and motivate people to get out of their houses, relax, and enhance social interaction. (N=103, 37.2%)

What would make you use a Wolverhampton library more?

- The most cited theme under this heading was more convenient opening hours (N=52, 19.6), wider number of services (N=38, 14.3%) and better computing facilities. (N=22, 8.3%)

Things to consider: Function of libraries as a multi-use community hub

Central Library

What services would you wish to see from a 'Central Library'?

Summary

- The majority of participants responded by indicating that they do not use Central Library (N=224, 48.5%), typically because they prefer to use their local libraries, or that they simply did not have a strong enough opinion about it.
- Those who did have an opinion mostly referred to the resources available through Central Library, either in Central Library itself or via links with other institutions, which related to books, computers, E-readers, digital technologies, and cultural or specialist interest materials. Other participants also proclaimed their desire to see more educational and leisure events take place at Central Library, and that they would like to be able to use more educational and leisure facilities (most commonly a café).
- There were some participants who noted that the building itself might benefit from a refurbishment, whilst some felt that the services already provided were sufficient.
- There were quite a few calls for Central Library to be more accessible in terms of transport, such as easier links with public transport, free parking, and more signposts around the City.

Things to consider: Refurbishment and expansion of services at the central library

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3. Equality Data

A total of 462 respondents took part in the survey. Missing responses are denoted by -99 in the descriptive tables. Frequency and percent relates to the number of individuals who endorsed each category along with the corresponding percentage of the sample.. Valid Percent is a percentage that does not include missing cases and Cumulative Percent adds the percentages of each region from the top of the table to the bottom, culminating in 100%. The demographic composition of the sample was as follows:

- Of the total sample of 462 individuals, 233 (50.4%) individuals provided responses in relation to age category. Of those individuals who answered the question, the largest proportion were aged 65 and over (N=54, valid %=23.2%).
- Similarly, only 61% of the sample (N= 282) provided data in relation to gender. Of this group, the sample was predominately female (N=190, valid % =67.4%).
- Data relating to sexual orientation was available for 61.3% of the sample (N=283) with most of these individuals classifying themselves as heterosexual (N=247, valid %=87.3%).
- In terms of ethnic origin, 62.1% of the sample (N= 287) responded to the question with the majority of this group reported as being a white British (N=220, 47.6%, valid %=76.7%). The next largest category was Asian or Asian British Indian (N=19, 4.1%, valid % =6.6%). The third largest was Black or British African (N=6, 1.3%, Valid 2.1 %). A full breakdown is given in table 4 below.
- 61.9% of the sample (N=286) disclosed information relating to religion with the majority indicating that they were Christian (N=161, valid %= 56.3%). See table 5 for further breakdown below.
- For the most part, respondents indicated that they were a member of the library service (N=376, valid %=83.4%) and had used the library within the last 12 months (N=337, valid %=74.7%).
- The bulk of respondents classified themselves as residents (N=369, valid %= 81.5%).

Please see the tables below for a more detailed breakdown of participants by protected characteristic. Due to the uneven distribution across many of the demographic characteristics it was difficult to ascertain whether there were notable differences in views across groups. Further studies should seek to engage with a wider demographic if possible.

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Table 1:

Please indicate how old you are:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Under 16	4	.9	1.7	1.7
	16- 24	5	1.1	2.1	3.9
	25-34	31	6.7	13.3	17.2
	35-44	47	10.2	20.2	37.3
	45- 54	48	10.4	20.6	57.9
	55-64	44	9.5	18.9	76.8
	65 and over	54	11.7	23.2	100.0
	Total	233	50.4	100.0	
Missing	-99	229	49.6		
Total		462	100.0		

Table 2:

What gender are you?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	92	19.9	32.6	32.6
	Female	190	41.1	67.4	100.0
	Total	282	61.0	100.0	
Missing	-99	180	39.0		
Total		462	100.0		

Table 3:

What is your sexual orientation?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Heterosexual	247	53.5	87.3	87.3
	Lesbian	2	.4	.7	88.0
	Gay man	2	.4	.7	88.7
	Bisexual	3	.6	1.1	89.8
	Prefer not to say	29	6.3	10.2	100.0
	Total	283	61.3	100.0	
Missing	-99	179	38.7		
Total		462	100.0		

Table 4:

What is your ethnic origin?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	White British	220	47.6	76.7	76.7
	White other European	6	1.3	2.1	78.7
	White and Asian	1	.2	.3	79.1
	White and Black Carribbean	3	.6	1.0	80.1
	White and Black African	3	.6	1.0	81.2
	White – Irish	1	.2	.3	81.5
	Other white	2	.4	.7	82.2
	Asian or Asian British â€" Indian	19	4.1	6.6	88.9
	Asian or Asian British â€" Pakistani	2	.4	.7	89.5
	Other Asian or Asian British	1	.2	.3	89.9
	Black or Black British â€" African	6	1.3	2.1	92.0
	Black or Black British â€"Carribbean	1	.2	.3	92.3
	Other Black or Black British	1	.2	.3	92.7
	Arab	1	.2	.3	93.0
	Prefer not to say	19	4.1	6.6	99.7
	Any other	1	.2	.3	100.0
	Total	287	62.1	100.0	
Missing	-99	175	37.9		
Total		462	100.0		

Table 5:

What religion are you?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Religion	66	14.3	23.1	23.1
	Christian	161	34.8	56.3	79.4
	Muslim	4	.9	1.4	80.8
	Hindu	7	1.5	2.4	83.2
	Sikh	9	1.9	3.1	86.4
	Buddhist	1	.2	.3	86.7
	Any other Religion	4	.9	1.4	88.1
	Prefer not to say	34	7.4	11.9	100.0
	Total	286	61.9	100.0	
Missing	-99	176	38.1		
Total		462	100.0		

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Table 6:

Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	272	58.9	95.8	95.8
	Prefer not to say	12	2.6	4.2	100.0
	Total	284	61.5	100.0	
Missing	-99	178	38.5		
Total		462	100.0		

Table 7:

Do you have a disability which affects your day to day activities, which has lasted, or you expect to last, at least a year

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	224	48.5	79.4	79.4
	Yes	25	5.4	8.9	88.3
	Prefer not to say	29	6.3	10.3	98.6
	Not sure	4	.9	1.4	100.0
	Total	282	61.0	100.0	
Missing	-99	180	39.0		
Total		462	100.0		

Table 8:

Are you a member of the Wolverhampton library service?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	376	81.4	83.4	83.4
	No	75	16.2	16.6	100.0
	Total	451	97.6	100.0	
Missing	999	11	2.4		
Total		462	100.0		

Table 9:

Have you used a Wolverhampton library in the last 12 months?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	337	72.9	74.7	74.7
	No	114	24.7	25.3	100.0
	Total	451	97.6	100.0	
Missing	999	11	2.4		
Total		462	100.0		

Table 10:

Are you completing this survey as a

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Resident	369	79.9	81.5	81.5
	Employee of the City of Wolverhampton Council	45	9.7	9.9	91.4
	City Visitor	9	1.9	2.0	93.4
	Member of an organisation or community group	8	1.7	1.8	95.1
	Student	9	1.9	2.0	97.1
	Councillor or MP	3	.6	.7	97.8
	Business	2	.4	.4	98.2
	Other	8	1.7	1.8	100.0
	Total	453	98.1	100.0	
Missing	-99	9	1.9		
Total		462	100.0		

4. Demand (for Libraries and their Services)

Why do you think that fewer people are using libraries in the Wolverhampton?

Key Theme	Number of Respondents	%
Competition from Technology	148	32
Logistics (Opening hours, car parking)	44	9.5
Less People Reading	30	6.5
People or Societal Change	16	3.5
Poor Quality of Books	15	3.2
Marketing	14	3.0
Environment	10	2.2
Cheaper books to purchase	9	1.9
Budget Cuts	9	1.9
Unknown	8	1.7
People use it more	4	.9
Other libraries as competition	2	.4
Need for more services	1	.2

Four hundred and sixty-one responses were analysed to answer why fewer people were using libraries in Wolverhampton. The most frequently recorded response concerned competition from technology (32%). That is, people believe that information that is available in libraries is more readily accessible through internet via personal devices. Approximately 10% of respondents also cited logistical issues pertaining to library service (e.g., parking, opening hours, location).

Competition from Technology (N= 148, 32%)
32 % of participants reported that technology (primarily in the form of smart phones) provide instant information and literature thereby supplanting the need to visit a library.

"The majority of people seem to have smart phones and access to the internet, hence they can research from home or on the web."

"Cheap access to the internet. People can download books cheaply or read brief articles online."

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"Primarily because of modern technology. In our secondary schools pupils are given tablets to work from and access so they have no need to "look it up" in the Library, in primary school you are now taught to use computers, everyone has access to internet - laptops, computers, mobile phones, tablets, IPads the list is endless."

Logistics (N=44, 9.5%)

Participants reported that people visit the library less often because of logistic issues (e.g., hours of operation, parking, locations, etc.).

"Shorter opening times = fewer people able to use the service."

"Wrong opening times, must be open when people are free, evenings and weekends."

"Opening hours are terrible for anyone who is in full-time employment… The city centre is a nightmare in terms of parking…The city centre does not seem safe in the evenings. The local library is closed on a Monday when most parents who work reduced hours for child care are not in work."

Fewer People Reading (N=30, 6.5%)

Participants reported that due to the demands of modern life, individuals had less free time to engage in activities such as reading which was thought to have a knock on effect on the library usage.

"Fewer people reading as a result of less leisure time"

"Reading for pleasure needs time. Everyone is working hard to keep their heads above water or tied into caring for families."

"People read less and they have computers at home. People work a lot and don't have time."

People or Societal Change (N=16, 3.5%)

Participants reported that people's needs pertaining to public libraries have changed over time and fewer visits are a consequence.

"Mirroring the changes that are taking place nationally."

"This is a social issue. For some young people, it is sadly, 'uncool' to visit a library, let alone read a book. When visits to the library are a regular occurrence when a child is young, it is easier to maintain. I suspect, some parents may never have stepped into a library themselves so encouraging children to do so, will prove to be difficult."

"Parents have started to disengage - so don't encourage children and future generations."

Poor quality of books (N=15, 3.2%)

Participants expressed that the library contains outdated books or books in need of repair.

"In my opinion the choice of books has narrowed considerably in recent decades. There is a dearth of good quality literature and a preponderance of "popular" reading materials. The race to the bottom has resulted in a lack of choice."

"Well I find that there aren't any new books! I have actually read all the ones I'm interested in."

"Small book choice - the bookshelves are not full."

Marketing (N=14, 3.0%,)
Participants expressed that the library is not doing enough to market the services they provide and the benefits of visitation.

"Not enough investment in outreach to let people know what a wonderful resource they have close by."

"They don't realise what benefit they could get from using the library service. It's not all books there's computer time (an Internet cafe?) getting the book or magazine you want, help with research (school students), peace to read, somewhere to learn to write (writers' groups), to meet authors (hopefully), to meet other people, IT NEEDS MASSIVVE PUBLICITY - FACEBOOK, TWITTER, INSTAGRAM EVERY EMAIL ADDRESS YOU HAVE, GET SOMEONE TO DESIGN A REALLY GOOD POSTER. Make it so that it's something to be part of and be proud of being part of - badges, stickers, T shirts, posters on the outside of libraries .... promote the idea that books and being bookish is COOL!"

"Council are not promoting details and services well enough. Promote other services with voluntary sector organisations such as age concern healthy minds etc.. Need more IT support. Provide information through the libraries on what services are available through other organisations."

Environment (N=10, 2.2%)
Participants expressed that the physical environment of the library is not conducive to a welcoming atmosphere and therefore avoided.

"There's not enough fun activities to do at the library for children."

"Not inspiring. Depressing in Central library when trying to negotiate around people using building to keep warm or out of rain."

"The buildings are old and unattractive."

Cheaper books to purchase (N=9, 1.9%)
Participants reported that people can purchase books at cheaper prices (either online or through used book stores) these days supplanting the need to visit a library.

"Availability of cheap books to purchase."

"Cheap books online now available, i.e., Amazon."

"People buy their books instead of waiting for library to buy them."

Budget cuts (N=9, 1.9%)
Participants expressed that services at the library have been subject to budget cuts resulting in a noticeable decline in service and/or product delivery.

"You have less new books so how are loans going to increase? Is it possible that under-funding runs down a service and then you can say it's in decline and have an excuse to reduce it further?"

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"It has been widely publicised about the council cut backs and these cutbacks close libraries also these cutbacks mean less staff or continually changing staff it used to be nice to go in the library and discuss a book or have time to find books they think you would like as they get to know what type of book you read. Now most days there is only one staff member who has to do the job of three."

"Probably the closure of so many local libraries."

Unknown (N=8, 1.7%)
Participants expressed that they are unsure why people are not visiting the library as often.

"Am not really sure."

"Don't Know."

People use it more (N=4, 0.9%)
Participants disagreed with the notion that libraries were receiving fewer visitors.

"In my experience I think the opposite is the case. Like me, people who haven't got access to computers, at home I see regularly in the Libraries making use of these and other facilities."

"I don't think that less people are using the library, I use to go there it was always full of people."

"Whenever I go to the library there are plenty of people."

Other libraries as competition (N=2, 0.4%)
Some participants alluded to other libraries being preferable to Wolverhampton.

"I'm using Wolverhampton libraries a lot less because Sedgley library is so much better. I can go on the Dudley library website a month before a title is published to find 20+ copies are on order and I can reserve it pre-publication and get an email to tell me when it's ready to collect. I can then borrow it for a minimum of one month. I can talk to an excellent qualified librarian who will help and advise. In Wolverhampton a new book eventually arrives on the website months after publication. One I ordered I waited for six months and still didn't get the title, so I gave up. If you do manage to get it, you have two weeks to read it so if you're going on a three-week holiday that's a challenge. If my experience is repeated across the city I imagine that's why fewer people are using the service. It's so very sad, because it used to be excellent in Wolverhampton. We have people in this city who need libraries which function."

Need for more services (N=1, 0.2%)
One participant expressed a desire to have more services offered by the library.

"Libraries could and should be about more than just borrowing books. Co-location of the book collection with other services might be a way forward BUT without losing the heart and soul of libraries."

5. Quality of service and relevance to communities.

People are accessing information differently now. Are libraries still relevant to local communities?

Key Theme	Number of Respondents	%
Yes due to multiple benefits and uses	227	49.1
Yes, but changes are needed	59	12.8
No/Not as relevant as before	20	4.3

Of the total sample, 156 (33.8%) participants failed to provide a response to the question 'Are libraries still relevant to local communities?' The largest proportion of individuals (N=227, 49.1%) who did provide a response reported that libraries were still relevant to the community for multiple reasons (e.g. educational and social purposes).

Yes, due to multiple benefits and uses (N=227, 49.1%)
Predominately individuals were very supportive of the library services and believed that it continued to be relevant for a wide variety of reasons. This included providing access to facilities that individuals might not otherwise be able to access due to the high costs of computers or book purchases:

"Many communities have low income families and the resources from the library make a huge difference."

"There are people who can't afford a computer and need to be able to use one from time to time. Children need to be introduced to books, especially children from homes where educational standards are poor."

"Libraries will always be relevant for those who do not have internet or means to get e-version of books."

"I know internet access is also very important to many people who do not have a computer at home."

"For some families it may be the only way to access a variety of books."

"In times of austerity libraries are needed more as people struggle to purchase luxuries such as books."

"It is necessary for people who do not have access to the internet."

"Not every-one can afford the cost of purchasing individual books."

In addition, it was also seen as a valuable resource for individuals who required an alternative to digital technology:

"Libraries are more relevant to local communities than ever before as many people are not computer literate or glued to their mobile phones."

"For those that have not developed digital skills (and are unlikely to) they are still relevant now and will continue to be for some time."

"Not all people are comfortable with the electronic way of doing things so books are required."

"Definitely not everyone has access to digital technology or the ability to use it."

A small number of the respondents referred to the potential of the service to provide a source of information and advice on community matters:

"Yes!   Community news and information are highlighted."

"Sure start centres, citizens' advice, day care centres have all been hit by cuts, so there's a huge gap for community activity and advice."

It was also considered relevant due to the preference for written text among many of this group:

"Yes. You can't beat holding a book in your hands."

"Still like a good book to read - something which seems to be overlooked or regarded as unimportant."

"Nothing beats a good physical copy of a book, especially when it concerns a niche subject that won't be covered in detail on the internet."

"It is still very relevant as nothing can beat the fun of holding a book, any book, in your hand and reading."

For some of the respondents this preference reflected concerns around the validity of information provided through alternative sources:

"They provide easy access to trustworthy information, in stark contrast to what can be found on the internet."

"The internet doesn't always tell the truth you still need books to find out information."

There was a strong sense of the benefits of the facilities as a useful working and educational environment:

"It's quiet so you can focus on your school work."

"It offers a good service to community-I access emails and apply for jobs."

"You can't job search or make an application for benefit without one so it is essential there are facilities for this."

"Being in the library environment makes you more likely to browse and find new things to learn and read that you wouldn't find if you ordered our downloaded a book at home."

It was felt that the value of this service could ultimately contribute to positive long term outcomes for the city in terms of improved educational attainment particularly among disadvantaged youths:

"It is also essential that young readers are introduced to books they would not otherwise see at school and to broaden their education by their contact with libraries. It is possible that greater co-operation between libraries and schools might extend this use and help to improve reading standards."

"I think that libraries are essential for educational development for all people."

"Getting people to read, giving them knowledge is enormously beneficial to society as a whole."

"They are the gate way to learning and with IT a very valuable asset to our community."

"Libraries are very important resources for encouraging literacy in children."

"I think that the library service is a valuable part of the community and an important way of improving education levels."

Besides offering educational value, it was seen to serve an important role as a social hub:

"Libraries provide a social aspect and important feeling of community that you simply can't get from finding the same information through technology at home."

"The library service can, does and should provide more than just the access to knowledge. It should provide a space where people can access other services, and also have a place where they feel they can sit, read and talk to people."

"Hugely relevant as they bring people together."

"There is clearly an older cohort of people that value the service and also use it as a social reference point."

"YES! They are essential community hubs. Serving those who need them most at different stages in their lives."

In this sense it was viewed as providing benefits over and above the traditional role of a library by naturally helping to address some of the wider social issues within the city:

"For a lot of customers, speaking to a member of library staff may be their only contact with another person in that day."

"Libraries offer a social benefit, particularly to those who are lonely or isolated."

"It brings people together to help each other, helping with mental health issues so people are not just confined to their own houses, developing confidence and avoid depression which is what I am hearing a lot recently."

"Also to older people facing isolation the service means interaction with people is helped.

Yes, but changes are needed (N=59, 12.8%)

A third group of respondents indicated that the libraries were relevant or had the potential to remain relevant. However, this group believed that a renewed format was required in order to promote sustainability, encourage increased usage and meet the changing demands of the population:

"In the light of rapid technological change, their format will need to adapt."

"What is important is being responsive to the needs of the population."

"They need to change and adapt more quickly to changing needs."

"Yes but need to….re-invent themselves."

"Libraries are still relevant, but they need to continue to evolve and offer new services in order to remain relevant."

One of the major strategies proposed to help counteract the downward trend and decline in usage was an expansion of the activities on offer within the library service (e.g. story time, mother and baby groups). This would also involve working in conjunction with other community services so that they could build upon the current strength as a social hub in order to evolve into a multi-functional facility. It was anticipated that this would cater to a wider variety of groups and development needs (e.g. training/educational needs) while also increasing cost-effectiveness through shared resources, revenue generation (e.g. rent rooms for social activities) and greater usage resulting from the provision of multiple services in one central location.

"We should be looking at combining libraries, community centres, maybe even health centres and cafes. Give people more reasons to attend these buildings, or get them attending for one thing, and then using it for something else whilst they are there."

"I think that if libraries could find a way to offer different services to organisations in the community they may become more viable."

"Couldn't they use space to organise lessons or talks to local people who need to get into work or learn a new language?"

"They need to be a place where local groups meet….. Libraries could play this role…. So provision to borrow books is in the same place as the local Zumba class, Tumble tots group etc."

"Libraries like any service needs to look at its service users and adapt and adjust to their needs otherwise they become irrelevant…..Libraries are not all about accessing information, there is the leisure element and the fun element... there should be activities for all age groups to show people how the libraries are important to people's lives and are not just places with some old books on shelves."

"I think they could have a new relevance as a community hub/centre…. Why not Book Reading Clubs and discussions not just on a story but on other topics of news or interest. Computers for use by those who do not have one at home and also help and tuition to get the most from your laptop…. that is the new purpose for libraries that I envisage."

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"Libraries can offer something that soul-less mega corporations can't: human interaction and congregation. I would make this the focal point of what a library does, namely by providing space for people to conduct activities."

A number of respondents discussed the need to make the service more appealing by offering a greater range and quality of services (e.g. more diverse range of books, faster internet) and ensuring access to knowledgeable staff:

"Well if the choices of books were better I would go regularly."

"Some engagement with people who can recommend books to read and show a good knowledge."

"With regards to research more computers and staff trained in complicated search techniques to answer questions."

As well as adapting opening hours to reflect the needs of the population:

"The Penn library is closed on a Wednesday. By mid- week I would love to be able to go and choose an interesting novel, have a chat to the librarian about other books or activities that are on offer for me."

In addition, several respondents felt that it was necessary to appeal to a broader scope of the population and do more to encourage usage through advertising and links with other organisations (e.g. schools). It was felt that this could promote further engagement and increase the sustainability of the service:

"I feel libraries should in some way reach out to the wider population. Ways should be found to attract the very people who need these advantages more than the articulate middle class who clearly have a head start in life from the very beginning."

"I think they just have to be made aware of them and their services."

"Communities need to be drawn into the library not only with summer reading challenges but with access to activities to encourage children and adults to come to the library therefore giving libraries the opportunities to show visitors what they provide."

"They need provide a focal point so more residents know about them and therefore use them."

"Schools should do more to encourage children to use them."

There was also a strong emphasis on the need to embrace new technological advancements (e.g. e-books, wider access to computer facilities) and modernise the service provision in order to increase the relevance of the service particularly for younger groups:

"Increased numbers of people are now reading books electronically. Libraries locally need to reflect the community they serve. If they do this, there will be more users."

"Obviously a modern library has to combine the two ways of delivering this - both paper and digital."

"Libraries have to keep up by investing in technology (e.g. computer facilities) and e-books of various types."

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"I think that libraries have to change as new technology drives different behaviours or they risk becoming irrelevant in the near future."

"High tech needed, as well as the traditional resources."

A final issue that was raised was in relation to desire to update the "old fashioned" image of the service which would involve investment in infrastructure as well as modern facilities:

"We need to create libraries that people want to make an effort to go to - better to invest in libraries that are attractive (which could be because of events held at them, quality of environment, opportunities for studying e.g. for school children/students - a quiet place for people from noisy homes!) and maybe require a walk/bus journey to get to than to aim simply for local as though that in itself was purposeful."

"Yes but need to modernise."

"This will require investment in infrastructure and modern technology; need to modernise."

"Libraries need to be redesigned to reflect the computer / technology age and make them more vibrant."

No/not as relevant as before (N=20, 4.3%)

There was a perception among a much smaller number of respondents that the library services were either no longer relevant or that their significance had diminished in today's society. Among this group, there was a sense that the main benefit offered by libraries was in terms of social interaction and that even this benefit could be easily reproduced in alternative settings:

"No they are obsolete, other than providing a social service to the minority of the City's population."

"Not at all - many of the social aspects could be far better replicated with meeting groups for certain demographics in far more convenient locations."

For others, there was an acknowledgement of the continued benefits of the library service. That said, there was a sense that their utility had lessened in the midst of current technological advancements which enables information to be accessed more conveniently and cost effectively:

"Not on the scale they were prior to the information technology boom."

"No, most households have access to internet which makes books irrelevant to youngsters."

"I know that as an adult, if I were to research something. I would start with Google. 25 years ago I would visit the library."

"Since the advent of technology, how many people actually need to read a book if they can watch the film/programme on television or via the internet or on an e-reader."

There was also a belief among several of these respondents that the service continued to be relevant to only a small cohort of individuals (e.g. elderly groups who are not as digitally savvy). In order to encourage participation in younger groups or diverse ethnic cohorts, it was felt that more work needs to be done to update the image and facilities as well as diversify the current service provision:

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"For the older community it is essential however for the younger ones it is not a cool place to visit with your friends...in terms of being relevant maybe, if we could remove the old fashioned image!"

"Only for a select few - Wolverhampton has a large diverse community - are all these ethnic groups catered for with what is available at libraries?"

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The council continues to face a significant challenge. How do you think the library service can be more cost-effective?

Key Theme	Number of Respondents	%
Adopt a multi-use facility approach	93	20.1
It can't	65	14.1
Income generation	58	12.6
Increase the appeal	39	8.4
Digitalised service provision	29	6.3
Centralise the service	29	6.3
More efficient use of resources	34	7.4
Increase use of volunteers	21	4.5

From a total of 462 individuals who participated in the survey, 271 individuals responded to the item 'How do you think that the library service can be more cost effective?' This means that 191 (41.3% of the sample was missing in relation to this item. For the remainder of the sample, the largest proportion of individuals recommended that libraries should adopt a multi-use facility approach in order to increase cost effectiveness (N=93, 20.1%).

Adopt a multi-use facility approach (N=93, 20.1%)
The largest proportion of respondents believed that the existing service could be optimised and utilised more effectively. Suggestions included adopting a multi-use facility approach which encompassed shared resources, more effective use of communal space and the provision of a diverse range of activities. This would include sharing premises and resources with other council or government bodies in order to utilise the space more effectively and consequently reduce the need for multiple sites:

"Think creatively about ways in which your silos can work together to reduce duplication and pool budgets which are designed to fulfil the same objectives."

"Locating libraries in places like community centres, schools etc. so that you save on expense of running two buildings."

"Maybe job centres and local libraries and citizen's advice can be grouped together as a 1 stop place to progress and develop yourself?"

"Relocating libraries into multi-service buildings."

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"Circulate your books around the various libraries. Shared resources and reduction in duplication of services"

This would also involve increasing the functionality of the service by offering use of available facilities to voluntary groups, community centres, councillors:

"Can be made more multifunctional e.g. used as meeting and advice centre."

"Encourage local councillors & MPs to hold surgeries within the library to maximise use."

"Offer the spaces to community groups to hire the facilities when the library is not operating for the public."

"Many branches still have space which could be used by other organisations, and this should be encouraged."

Several respondents indicated that this would require greater engagement with schools and other educational facilities:

"Encourage schools to regularly take pupils to the local library - they do this in primary school but it should be done with all ages including senior schools."

"Involve the colleges/universities to hold open days- encouraging traffic to the library."

"Staff to be more proactive in some places. To go out to schools and having story times etc. as some libraries already have."

"Links with local schools and colleges to pool resources."

"Could you work in partnership with schools to share books and promote visits?"

There was also a strong sense of the function of the libraries as a social hub which could be drawn upon to facilitate the provision of community focused events and activities such as training courses and social events or clubs for residents of all ages:

"The fact, that the centre can be used for other community events is a positive, and I assume cost-effective."

"Use existing spaces to host community/ learning events."

"By extending the range of services that are provided, in order to increase both the number of people accessing services and the overall use of the buildings."

"Combine services to maximum the use of library spaces. Reading groups, coffee mornings to, promote social gatherings and discussions groups, sessions for younger users, storytelling and/or dramatisations."

"Maybe get other services to get involved, maybe do stay and plays for the under-fives, do classes during half terms and school holidays for older children and get the colleges involved to do classes for

adults, maybe even ESOL classes for people that need better language skills, parents also like to learn First aid, maybe get the St Johns involved."

"If libraries become more like community centres the local residents would provide some of the clubs and societies and would be staffing these events themselves."

It can't be made more cost effective (N=65, 14.1%)

A significant proportion of the respondents felt that the libraries had already undergone a number of significant cutbacks and therefore felt as though there was no capacity to sustain further reductions. It was believed that these would ultimately have a detrimental impact on the service by further decreasing usage and consequently led to closure.

"We have seen lots of cuts in our library & Council services but more than this may not be sustainable. The services you provide are the spine of a community but do not allow it to break further."

"There isn't anywhere else to cut money from."

"I can't see where any additional money can be saved."

"If it is cut down any further you might as well close it."

There was a feeling several respondents that there was too much emphasis placed on income generation and this ultimately undervalued the benefits that the service provided to the wider community:

"It is a service, not a profit-making venture. For it to be cost - effective it would probably have to stop being a library as we know it and become something else."

"If you are insistent on measuring the library services worth by the amount of money it makes, or how cost effective it is, you may as well give up now…. Somethings in life are, and shouldn't be, about money."

"The service is never going to be income producing and costs have already been substantially cut by restricting hours, cutting staff and engaging volunteers to replace paid staff."

In addition, several of this group believed that there was a significant financial and social issue which extended beyond the cost of the service itself. There was a strong sense that the failure to provide adequate investment in libraries would ultimately result in greater costs i.e. thorough lower educational attainment and increased isolation in the elderly.

"I think the financial challenge is a wider picture. If children and students fail to read efficiently and well, if the elderly are unstimulated, the result can be a way more expensive need to deal with those problems."

"It is false economy to close libraries…they give free access to knowledge to disadvantaged families."

"You can't put a price on culture and the future of the people who rely upon them to better themselves, particularly those of poorer backgrounds."

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"Provision of a service and cost effectiveness seem to me to be, at times, mutually exclusive. What is the cost of our future generations having to rely solely on Google for their information?"

"If we are not careful, results will be seen few years later when damage has already been done!"

"Surely if they become relevant and help people read and therefore raise literacy this is important in terms of cost effectiveness? It's can't be all about money in and out, there are some things that can only be measured in terms of saving money elsewhere surely."

Income generation (N=58, 12.6%)

Another suggestion was the need for the service to generate income. While some felt that this may detract from the service and led to reduction in usage, predominately people felt that the introduction of a nominal fee for certain services was acceptable including

Membership fees:

"Perhaps a small yearly charge to the borrower would be acceptable."

"Small joining up fee?"

"Personally I would be prepared to pay a small annual charge - it would have to be a small charge I think in order not to upset people and also not to alienate those with limited funds."

Subscription fees:

"Offer more services that people would be prepared to pay a subscription for - electronic copies of books rather than printed."

"Consider charging a small fee for borrowers."

"Offer a Kindle type lending service with a nominal charge at each library, with a month subscription for each book that is downloaded at the library and undercuts how much Amazon charges."

"Charge a small fee as long as it was cheaper than purchasing a book I think people would pay."

"It will help to add minimal fees to certain services to recoup cost."

"Maybe you could offer people a service where they could come to the library and download books onto their device for a small fee".

Payment for internet use:

"Charges for computer use - such as is seen in internet cafes."

"Pay to use the internet let say £1 an hour."

Some however felt that a charge may result in a decline in the numbers of individuals using the service (e.g. particularly low income families):

"Charging for services would make people stop using the services not a good idea."

"People are used to it being a free service and it would affect people if you started charging."

"Income generation through charging would seriously affect usage."

Other suggestions for increasing revenue included:

Selling old stock:

"Regularly have book sales to off load old or infrequently lent books."

"Sell off old books."

"They could sell the books they are not loaning out."

Sponsorship and fund-raising:

"Sponsorship is one idea."

"Look at working with other service areas where libraries could get funding, such as working on Hate Crime initiatives."

"Local cake sales…. Maybe a little fundraising."

"Libraries can solicit for donations from local writers and companies to keep up with the generation of today."

"Local libraries holding fairs/fundraising activities e.g. bake sales, summer fairs."

"They could hold fund raising jumble sales."

Encouraging commercial ventures such as Cafes and local business:

"Host a coffee machine (or where there is space, a small cafe) from a well-known brand such as Costa - which will bring people in."

"Introduce revenue streams - e.g. cafe© at central library (long term)."

"Income generation via a shop, book shop….. Selling refreshments."

"Social enterprises or voluntary sector groups could be invited to transform an area of the building to become a cafe©, shop, craft site or similar, and pay rent to make it income generating."

"What about a coffee shop so people can buy a drink and browse books - could be automated but would generate a profit."

"You could set up a cafe in each library, which would encourage people to both attend and stay longer, as well as bringing in an income source. There is definitely scope for Penn Branch Library near me to include a cafe as I don't think there are any others in the vicinity. You could include a branch of a cafe like Costa within the Library, as Waterstones in Birmingham centre has done."

Renting of space and facilities:

"They can run clubs which contribute to the cost of the library, rent spaces for groups etc. Ask for voluntary donations from those who use the library and more serves which people can pay for such as DVD rentals."

"Spaces/rooms could be hired out, and small events could be promoted at a small charge."

"Renting out space for local groups to meet. Local businesses advertising at the library."

Generating revenue through a small fee for clubs and activities:

"Pay as you go storytime i.e. 50p a child."

"Run sessions at small charge? - local speakers on range of topics."

"Run clubs, charge for them."

"Run more children's group but ask for a small contribution, like £1?"

"Workshops for a small fee such as crafting workshops bases on story books."

"Offer groups for people to attend e.g. Short courses, groups for children. Most people would be happy to pay a fee for these services in my opinion to cover or pay towards the cost."

"Charge £1 for children's activities which I'm sure people would pay."

Finally, a small number of individuals believed that revenue could be generated by recouping losses from outstanding fees:

"Chase up people with outstanding fines- small claims court."

"I think fines should be harsher."

"Straightforward way to pay fines."

Increase the appeal (N=39, 8.4%)

Many of the respondents felt that the service needed several improvements in order to increase its appeal and encourage individuals to use the service more frequently.

"If more people could be encouraged to use the libraries they would immediately be seen as providing better value for money."

This included creating a more inviting atmosphere:

"More relaxed atmosphere."

"They are interested in a vibrant, challenging and innovative environment."

"Make it an experience rather than just taking out a book."

"They need to feel vibrant and relevant not just the same old service cut back and depressed."

"Remove the stigma of a library being a silent / unsociable place."

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It was reported that greater financial investment in renovations was integral to modernising the service and making it more appealing:

"Some kind of investment in an image overhaul to bring it more up to date and 'cool' to reach members of the public who don't go anymore."

"Invest in systems and technology to modernise the service and generate savings over a period of time."

"This would require a revamp of the space. The i10 proved successful in securing new business due to its modern aesthetic and features. If the libraries offered a unique experience to people it would be a USP and bring in a crowd."

"By spending more on the service. At the moment the amount spent on the service is not sufficient to provide the comprehensive service that the residents of Wolverhampton deserve or indeed that is demanded by the Public Libraries."

Other suggestions for increasing the appeal included:

Investment in knowledgeable staff to encourage usage:

"Have enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff who can engage with people and remember who they are."

"Need some knowledgeable, paid staff."

"Ensure that librarians are available during opening times."

Increased opening hours which reflect the needs of the population:

"Could you survey the public and ask them what opening hours would serve them best?   Then you could tailor services to meet the needs of customers, so not necessarily increasing the opening hours, but changing them, making the service more cost effective."

"Varying the opening times to take into account the needs of people working full time".

"Make opening hours more user-friendly - do libraries need to be open all day? Carry out survey on times libraries frequented by users and adapt accordingly."

"Look at when the Libraries are busy and reduce open hours accordingly. Some venues might only open on weekday mornings others at weekends."

"Possibly move opening times later in the day so that people at work can use the facilities."

Re-examination of the content:

"Less buying in of cheap fiction and more concentration on information books."

"Books that are of interest to people."

"Increase stock of DVDs and CDs."

Finally, respondents referred to the need to further promote the service and make the public aware of the range of facilities available:

"More effective 'selling' of the service."

"Maybe advertising the library through free videos and advertising online...Really make a push to advertise the features of the library."

"There should also be a member of staff in each library who is digital savvy and can keep social media such as Facebook & twitter up to date - this would reach more young people/people who don't visit, making them aware of what is on offer."

More efficient use of resources (N=34, 7.4%)

Several respondents referred to an inefficient use of resources and felt that cost savings could be made in a number of areas so that the revenue could be reinvested in the library.

"It is a shame that the Council still wastes so much money and has done for years."

"It's down to the bone yet there is waste in other areas."

"Increase efficiency in provision to cut costs. Look at what archaic practices are most expensive."

"By spending your budget more wisely. It's the little things that matter to people and not making a show of things."

"It could spend less of its financial resources on prestige projects and really think things through before embarking expenditures e.g. the failed computer upgrade."

"Installation of area lighting with sensors that kick in only when a person is in a library section to save on power & replacing bulbs."

There was some evident disillusionment which was reflected in the suggestion to reduce salaries of senior staff:

"The salaries of very senior staff (applies to Councillors too) could be reduced without causing any real hardship."

"Stop paying huge amounts of money to higher up officers; pass on those savings to library service."

"Cutting the salaries of overpaid councillors/politicians and using that money on our library services."

"Pay the execs who work for the council less, that's one very easy way to make very significant savings.....cut costs by paying the top strata of the work force less."

"I have a few ideas but they all involve cutting big pay rises in the big councillors' wages in line with the working people."

"Less managers being paid high salaries."

Further suggestions included a reduction in staff and increased use of self-service facilities:

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"Self-service computer access, self-printing and photocopying services….no reliance on staff."

"Automatic checking in and out of books - saving staff costs."

"There must be more of a self-service method so less staffing is needed."

"Self-serve desks available for lending/returning books."

It was also recommended that a possible reduction in opening hours to reflect current usage would help the service to become more efficient:

"Reducing opening hours…. While it is preferable to walk in any time some system of attending by pre-arranged time/appointment may help."

"Lower opening hours- Limited opening hrs for local libraries."

"Open during busy hours only."

"Libraries should be opened part time or mornings only."

Digitalised service provision (N=29, 6.3%)

A number of respondents advocated the expansion of digital service provision as a means of reducing financial outlays. These included making it easier to order and renew books online:

"Digitalise the library service, so people can order books on line and they can come and collect them at pre-determined times and locations."

"Make it easy for people to order books and collect them - perhaps from non-library venues, if the local library is rarely open."

"There should be an online catalogue of its holdings and there should be an easy way to order and renew books online."

Providing greater access to alternative forms of digital content to attract a broader range of groups (e.g. university students):

"There are also many online resources that the library can subscribe to e.g. Academic journals for fairly low rates that may increase library usage."

As well as increased investment and provision of books via digital media:

"Offer a Kindle type lending service."

"Use of new technology such as loaning e-books perhaps where a book is loaned for a period of time and then the digital rights expire which would mean that the book does not have to be returned."

"Make books and material available online, so that they can be viewed in the home situation as an e-book or online streaming of DVDs."

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"I would not want to lose the opportunity to borrow books but these may not always be paper; how about a system for loaning kindles and making e-books available?"

It was felt that this would ultimately lower expenditure in two ways; firstly, by reducing spending on expensive physical resources and by implication lead to downsizing of spaces required for libraries:

"Steer more towards online and self-management, reducing building sizes to house books, and utilising space for other activities which happens in most libraries but not central?"

"Reduce expenditure on physical books and invest in computers."

Respondents also referred to the need to promote the service and encourage usage through digital media and provision of digital facilities. It was felt that if the service was utilised more frequently that this in itself would make it more cost-effective:

"To make it more successful, improve the online presence, linking the libraries with social media pages and e-newsletters with info on new books, events, local writers etc."

"This means installing PC equipment and staff to assist. PC should not be just for students to do their studies or for those who do not have access to internet at home."

"Expand computer/Wi-Fi access opportunities."

Centralise the service (N=29, 6.3%)

A number of respondents referred to the potential for consolidation of multiple smaller services into one larger centralised library. It was thought that this would minimise expenditure via shared resources and reduction in the running costs of multiple building.

"Regrettably this is likely to require some of the least used branch libraries to close, concentrating the facilities on the smaller number of remaining libraries."

"Perhaps close those that are in closer proximity to each other."

"Less branches perhaps whilst ensuring that there is always a branch accessible to everyone. Locating libraries in places like community centres, schools etc. so that you save on expense of running two buildings."

"Instead of having small libraries you could have one big better library like the one in Birmingham."

"Having a library for every village is a thing of the past. The service needs to offer more in a single place than lots of little, unused spaces."

"Fewer buildings - reduce the overheads - focus in a central library."

Increase use of volunteers (N=21, 4.5%)

There was some suggestion that the use of volunteers would help reduce staff costs. However, it was felt that if volunteers were not sufficiently knowledgeable that the quality of the service and by implication the usage would also decline:

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"I suppose using more volunteers instead of paid staff might help in the short term but, I fancy, that in the long term the quality of the service would deteriorate."

"Outsourcing the work- using cheaper staff on flexible working arrangements, offering students work experience, offering voluntary experience as labour is the most expensive overhead."

"People who wish to volunteer should be encouraged, but they need to be trained to do the job of a "proper" librarian, not saying "I can't do that...I'm only a volunteer", otherwise why have them at all?"

6. New ways of working

What is your experience of libraries that operate in a different way to Wolverhampton libraries?

Key Theme	Number of Respondents	%
Never used other library	89	19.2
Libraries with additional recreational facilities	27	5.8
Experiences based on the building	19	4.1
Experiences based on the website and internet access	23	5.0
Experiences based on staff and interpersonal relationships	20	4.3
University Libraries	11	2.4
Accessible for people with various needs extended opening times	6	1.3
Educational support for students, kids, adults	6	1.3
Locality	5	1.1
Experiences based on variety of books	6	1.3
Quite place ideal for studying	1	0.2
Lower cost	2	0.4
Experiences out of UK	1	0.2
Missing Data	282	61.0

There is a high percentage of the participants who have never used other library than Wolverhampton Library.

Never used other library: (N=89, (46.4%)).
"Haven't used others"

Libraries with additional recreational facilities (N=17, (8.9%)).
"The library I use in Staffordshire has rental spies for community events and I think they do a lot more with kids. This may happen with Wolverhampton library but I am not as aware of it".

"A couple of city centre libraries I've visited have other things than just the library area within the library building. E.g. A cafe, an art gallery, a shop, a sports facility, etc. I realise that this wouldn't always be practical for a small library but perhaps some of the Wolverhampton libraries could incorporate something else that would encourage more footfall and possibly some spending".

"They have dedicated space with comfy chairs for baby/toddler groups, friends of the library groups etc. to meet…You can involve the community more: drop in facilities, group meeting places, coffee shop and a much needed community exhibition space…Birmingham City Centre library has, social spaces, a coffee shop and comfortable chairs to use. We need more of this"!

Experiences based on the building (N=13, (6.8%)).
"I have been to Birmingham Central Library which appears huge, modern, and impersonal (but staff is available), bright and airy".

"It caters for varying needs on different levels".

"It resembles a more adult university type library where you conduct your own research".

"The children's area is bright and cheerful, but teenagers hanging around to congregate".

"It's a very interesting building but my views have been voiced by many others that when you enter it you have no idea that its purpose is books, information etc. - you could be going into a shopping mall".

"No experience - I don't like e-books as I'm on a computer every day at work and much prefers the feel and smell of a real book (and no, I'm not elderly)..! Many of my colleagues feel the same.   Perton library is a newer purpose-built building that has rooms for hire, etc. but a shorter lending time for books, which is why I changed to Tettenhall".

Experiences based on the website and internet access (N=13, 6.8%)
"Their websites work. That's very helpful"!

"I think all libraries are suffering, hospital and school libraries. But using the knowledge and IT available to access information in both places will be a way forward".

"The ones that I know of are much the same Internet access for all".

"My main experience is of academic libraries that use extensive digital resources and have access to the internet, to Wi-Fi, coffee shop, meeting rooms and social areas".

"Digital provision is far more extensive, with well trained staff and plenty of instruction sheets to aid users. The actual systems are also much more up to date, with digital book tracking, automatic emails sent to patrons, accurate online catalogue information, and good online feedback and request services. I've also had fantastic experiences with libraries with study spaces that create the perfect environment for revising or essay writing. Spending time in the library in this way made me more likely to use the other resources and more engaged with the success of the library in general".

Experiences based on staff and interpersonal relationships (N=13, 6.8%)
"The staff were very helpful but the newness of the current building gave teething problems with its technology – roller racking storage, taking books out, signage, etc."

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"Only the old fashioned beautiful libraries where you had well trained staff and not volunteers!"

"Town centre library for "quick choice" borrowing and many other libraries open outside normal working hours. I was recently in Bury St Edmunds and they opened all day on Sunday. You are a service industry only opening when most of the population are at work or school".

University Libraries (N=10, (5.2%)).
"If you see university libraries they always seem to be busy"

Accessible for people with various needs extended opening times (N=6, 3.1%)
"London libraries provide refreshments "

"Work with police fire schools voluntary organisations to locals"

"Need to work with several different organisations"

"Disabled users need to be helped to access"

"Opening times need to extended"

Educational support for students, kids, adults (N=5, 2.6%)
"My library is in a village and part of the community. It is opposite the school my son goes to. As part of the summer reading challenge, the school took the children to the library to choose their first 3 books. As a result of this, the school had a record number of children that completed the summer reading Challenge in 2016".

"Maybe, this would be difficult to replicate in the city centre but I don't know how closely schools work with their local library".

Locality (N=5, 2.6%)
"I also visit a library in a small market town. It seems to me that it is a hub for the locality".

Experiences based on variety of books (N=4, 2.1%)
"The library I have visited offers more than books to attract customers".

"Birmingham Library It is a great place to want to learn and ask questions to study and be involved in your community. It is a hub of many different cultures and diversity is great to see".

"My only recent experience of other libraries is the old and new Birmingham ones. I used them to borrow sheet music when learning clarinet as Wolverhampton did not have such a good music section".

"Embassy library abroad: books reserved via the Internet (website shows the total stock list, cross-referenced, a synopsis of each book held). Ordered Books prepared for collection at specified times and location. Thus library needs neither wide aisles, nor browsing areas, nor constant staff attendance, etc."

Quite place ideal for studying (N=1, 0.5%)
"Go and do your own homework and find out"

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Lower cost (N=1, 0.5%)

 "I consider that Wolverhampton sets a good example to other local authorities and provides a better service at a lower cost".

Experiences out of UK (N=1, (0.5%)).

"Participants who have used other libraries especially in America reported having access in all of their facilities on Sunday evening".

Do you think we can improve our library service by working differently with other organisations or as part of a shared building?

Key Theme	Number of Respondents	%
Yes, can be improved	101	21.3
No it can't be used	25	5.3
Community organisations/health and social	22	4.8
Educational Organizations which might contribute on the improvement of our library service	18	3.9
Cost effectiveness purposes	17	3.7
Art/Music Other Organizations	19	4.1
Involvement of other people	13	2.8
Coffee shops or recreational centres	13	2.8
Staff resources	9	1.9
Better online resources	5	1.1
Stand-alone library, improve the library	4	0.8
Supermarkets/Shopping centres	3	0.6
Attracting more people	4	0.8
Mobile services	2	0.4
Park space	1	0.2
Missing Data	222	46.8

The vast majority of the participants reported that the library service can be improved in a shared building with other organizations especially when the other organization is a community/health and social organization.

Yes, can be improved (N=101, 40.1%)
"Yes".

"Shared buildings can work but only if each use has a defined space and staff who are specific to each service".

No it can't be used (N=25, 9.9%)
"No. Bilston library shares a building with the craft gallery but I understand all that's to close, so clearly it didn't help. If libraries operate in shared buildings, there is a real danger of reduced facilities being available to users".

"No. Have seen the libraries in other buildings and they are awful, with no dedicated staff. The one at Blakenhall doesn't look as if it cares for books at all".

"No. Where is the value of the "Librarian" That's like saying people who work in a shoe shop would know what to do in a hospital Not at the expense of putting books on shelves and librarians in place".

"The whole idea of a branch library is that it is self-contained, and has everything in it for the community. Shoving libraries into other buildings, usually as an after-thought, means they already feel neglected".

Community organisations/health and social (N=20, 7.9%)
"More could be made of community hub facilities. Connections with health, employment, charity services and education services should be encouraged so there is always something happening at the libraries. Ideal locations for evening/ weekend support groups for various issues".

"Probably.......Citizens Advise, free legal help, entertainment for children - plays, participation in learning workshops, special evenings of promotion of authors, guest speakers, better marketing etc. perhaps you could site them in community hubs and use digital delivery methods - i.e. librarian free self-service of books".

"Possibly - sharing with community centres or cafes for example would work Shared buildings idea is good - cost savings I don't know. Care need to be taken as to who uses the sites because books are easily damaged. Sharing buildings is a good way of bringing different sections of the community together we do as a hub at hub Yes, community hubs are an example of how this can work well".

Educational Organizations which might contribute on the improvement of our library service (N=18, 7.1%)
"Why not share with the local schools, colleges and university".

"You could use drama sessions to retell stories do workshops for children maybe some after school or Saturdays. Most definitely, from my recollection there is a lot of space within this area. Utilising some of this with front facing services such as homeless or schools service". ". "Working closer with local schools or organisations that cater for elderly members of the community you could share with the school so more children can use it".

"Yes definitely as part of a college or education centre".

"Incorporated with children centres or in colleges/unis".

"Absolutely, I think that the library is Ann ideal venue for adult education course for example Join up with colleges and universities. Bring citizens advice bureau into the service Links to schools/educational facilities".

Cost effectiveness purposes (N=17, 6.7%)
"Yes. I don't think this would improve the service but in these financially stretched times it would be more cost effective".

"A library should be a separate entity. However, the building can be shared to economise on costs".
"A shared building would cut costs but needs to be big enough to hold the various events and library".

"Probably, the building is old and will require expensive maintenance".

"Could save money sharing buildings as long as the library service itself is not significantly reduced"

Art/Music Other Organizations (N=17, 6.7%)
"Nothing new there - Surely many a library includes the Tourist Information Centre or CAB".

"Yes definitely. What about including a library in the Art Gallery and/or the Lighthouse cinema? Both of these are linked to Arts and culture and it would mean 2 services in one location".

"Police presence would be good".

Involvement of other people (N=13, 5.2%)
"Involvement of young families and the older population should be heavily promoted".

"Possibly. Perhaps a Library service in The Way where there is access to other services for young people".

Coffee shops or recreational centres (N=11, 4.4%)
"Possibly. Maybe offer a coffee shop type of facility offer craft sessions but timings are a factor if you work full time in the day you are unable to use the facilities".

"Added attractions such as a cafe would draw more people Libraries of old were places were you had to be quiet".

"Cafe facilities. Definitely look to share like above example (arts centre) and coffee shops".

"Yes, include a cafe within the library to get more people coming in regularly Libraries could be part of community centres or cafes so people can meet friends and get a coffee at the same time".

Staff resources (N=8, 3.2%)
"If suitable buildings can be found and staffing stays the same and facilities offered remain the same (i.e. Number of books, computers and size) and the library is manned at more times than yes if the overall cost is less".

"Where appropriate sharing buildings and/or facilities is to be recommended but care must be taken to avoid restricting space available for borrowers and staff".

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Better online resources (N=5, 2%)

"Yes, if users need access to IT rather than books for accessing information they don't need to be in a traditional library".

"Offer free Wi-Fi ha-ha!   Or a toy library? I feel that it was better when the library was just a library plus computers as you have people wandering in and out all the time doors are for ever opening causing a draft which must put up the heating bills".

Stand-alone library, improve the library (N=4, 1.6%)

"I prefer a stand-alone library; this can often lead reduced book stock you would need to be more specific about any proposal before a sensible answer can be given".

"The library needs to retain that feel of a "gathering space" that is facilitated and not just a selection of shelves in the corner of another facility. Some of the smaller libraries do not have the space to share with anyone else, but it is the smaller local libraries that elderly people use as it is far too inconvenient to visit the Central Library - as I said, too far out of the "centre" of town".

Supermarkets/Shopping centres (N=3, 1.2%)

"Libraries in Supermarkets and Shopping centres would be great for those that do not wish to be "dragged around" but do not wish to sit on a "bench with a paper".

"In Stourbridge the library is in a building with a major supermarket and a coffee shop, as well as the 'town hall'".

"I often pop into the library when I do my shopping. Could the library be shared with a supermarket maybe? We shop in Sainsbury's for example, they have a large car park and it would be ideal to shop then visit an on-site library on the same trip".

Attracting more people (N=3, 1.2%)

"If you share a building you could generate more interest in what each other does. You are increasing your audience if you can get them as they accessing other services Yes! Waynesfield Library is a great example of this".

"Get people in the building for, say, a yoga class and it may spark a renewed interest in the rest of the building/library".

"Yes. People can access different things with one visit by all means ask other services to join the central library, but be mindful that it is a listed building: iconic, beautiful and a credit to the city centre".

Mobile services (N=2, 0.8%)

"Seems to work at Collingwood   Mobile service for those with mobility issues a trolley service to the residents in Collingwood flats that cannot access library would be good"

Parking space (N=1, 0.4%)

"Ashmore park is a failure parking in town is a cost and could put people off going into town. Parking and even opens on a Sundays"

Do libraries of the future need a building?

Key Theme	Number of Respondents	%
Libraries of the future need a building	103	21.7
A building is need for historical purposes/touristic attraction	28	6.1
They are the hub of the community and motivate people to get out of their houses, relax, and enhance social interaction	50	10.8
Not sure if in the future library needs a building	19	4.0
People still looking for hard copy books	16	3.5
Shared building could serve better this idea	14	3.0
Library building might be a meeting point for elderly people or people with disabilities or people who can't access online	14	3.0
Library service is in line with the place	9	1.9
EBooks might also require a building	9	1.9
Online library might work fine without building	6	1.3
Libraries will enable children to develop a love for reading books and also will enhance their reading skills	7	1.5
Library building can serve people when they want to borrow/return books easily	5	1.1
Mobile services	5	1.1
Not sure for economic purposes is not cost effective	3	0.6
Its cost-effective having a library	2	0.4
Library safe place of learning	1	0.2
Missing Data	197	41.6

Most participants reported that libraries of the future need a building because they are the hub of the community and motivate people to get out of their houses, relax, and enhance social interaction.

Libraries of the future need a building

"My first instinct is to say yes. As far as I am concerned most definitely yes"!

"Yes if they are to fulfil the potential that they could have".

"For the foreseeable future Yes! Somewhere warm to go and read the papers".

A building is need for historical purposes/touristic attraction (N=25, 9%)

"Yes, there should always be a main Library Building in a building of historical value, this highlights the history of the Library as a place of learning and Knowledge",

"Need a building Mobile libraries are good for remote places but not cities"

"Probably not but in Wolverhampton we need to preserve that beautiful building and find innovative ways to keep it alive".

"Good point- I still believe yes as it's a symbol of a town/city. Yes - even if they occupy a space in somebody else's building"

"They can a really good tourist attraction (as mentioned - see Liverpool and Birmingham)".

They are the hub of the community and motivate people to get out of their houses, relax, and enhance social interaction (N=49, 17.7%)

"Yes, somewhere for local people to get out of the house"

"Absolutely! They are the hub of the community. More should be made of them".

"Depends on how the libraries want to evolve- They will still need place to sit and relax, have books, computers and other things".

"Yes, mostly for the human interaction that is necessary to support those seeking to develop their knowledge/skills base".

"Yes for the Community Yes, they are still important places where people can meet in person". "Definitely. A place to get away from it all sometimes".

Not sure if in the future library needs a building (N=19, 6.9%)

"Not sure"

People still looking for hard copy books (N=15, 5.4%)

"Yes Real books are much easier"

"Possible not, or just small amount of storage for items that people to want a physical book"

"They need a definite space where books can be protected"

"Libraries contain books, whatever else is provided within the service, books will need a building".

Shared building could serve better this idea (N=13, 4.7%)

"A shared building could work. But there should be some libraries with buildings as they help foster the excitement for reading and books".

"Mobile libraries are great but need to be readily available".

"Combined services work better so yes a building will be needed, there needs to be a physical space, but this could be within another facility".

Library building might be a meeting point for elderly people or people with disabilities or people who can't access online (N=12, 4.3%)
"Yes I think they do".

"If only as a focal point meeting place for local residents".

"Especially Senior Citizens and the Disabled".

"Yes, I think so, it's a useful resource, particularly for the 30% (?) of non-Internet population. It's also a focus for the community for, e.g.: leaflets access, reading newspapers, study areas".

Library service is in line with the place (N=9, 3.2%)
"I think it's important to identify a library service in a particular place".

"Certain areas where library usage is lower could be served by a mobile library".

"Yes but we have to think carefully about the location, type of building and other facilities... shared buildings are helpful".

EBooks might also require a building (N=8, 2.9%)
"There is almost certainly going to be an ongoing if reduced demand for hard copy books into the future, and if this is the case some buildings will be required".

"Yes, there must be a printed book repository! More convenient in a building as you know where it is"

"To cater for those who do not have access to IT – yes".

"A digital library could be made available online from where books can be searched, reserved and collected or delivered or content made available online i.e. scan content to web pages"

Online library might work fine without building (N=6, 2.2%)
"No, there are plenty of business models which run online via delivery".

"This could be the same for student textbooks, order have for a specified time and be either returned by the borrower free of charge, collected at an additional cost or if lost a penalty charge that can be enforced".

"Probably not. In the near future all books could be accessed electronically. It will be unnecessary to visit a building to access a book or to research information"

Libraries will enable children to develop a love for reading books and also will enhance their reading skills (N=5, 1.8%)
"Personally I think so because adults may respond fine to using technology to find reading material but I think children are different".

"They're very technologically adept and will have no problem with the ability to use technology to gain reading material, but I think the problem will be in encouraging the desire and love of reading".

"For a young child the setting, the feeling, the physical book in their hand is a big part of developing that love of reading and learning, and a library offers them that".

Library building can serve people when they want to borrow/return books easily (N=5, 1.8%)

"Yes because where would you return books? It may be a place to collect and return since most service can be done on line".

Mobile services (N=3, 1.1%)

"We still need books; eBooks cannot replace library maybe an add on"

"Services on trains would a good idea for travellers"

Not sure for economic purposes is not cost effective (N=3, 1.1%)

"Not really - a lot of money could be made by selling the beautiful central library".

Its cost-effective having a library (N=1, 0.4%)

"Yes, how else could there be a service; a mobile service would be expensive and limited".

Library safe place of learning (N=1, 0.4%)

Some respondents alluded to personal issues that they encountered as a young adult and reported that the library provided a safe environment in which to escape from these difficulties.

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What would make you use a Wolverhampton library more?

Key Theme	Number of Respondents	%
More convenient opening hours	54	11.7
Nothing I use it already	46	10.0
Broadening services provided	52	11.0
Computer/online facilities/social media	25	5.4
Community events	28	6.1
Parking space and building layout-space	24	5.2
Recreational/café facilities	25	5.4
Leisure/free time	13	2.8
Friendly and efficient service staff	16	3.5
Educational activities for kids and adults	19	4.1
Nothing can be done	11	2.3
Create and craft activities	4	0.9
Missing Data	209	44.1

Participants reported that more convenient opening hours and broadening services provided would make them use the Wolverhampton Library more often.

More convenient opening hours (N=52, 19.6)
"Local with after work opening, I struggle to get to our local library because of the opening hours".

"Saturday's and school holidays are main days I can use it. But when you're busy. Some of the suggestions above would make me and my family use the library more"

Nothing I use it already (N=44, 16.6%)
"Already use a lot"

Broadening services provided (N=38, 14.3%)
"A broadening of services provided, so long as they reflected my interests and needs".

Computer/online facilities/social media (N=22, 8.3%)
"More sensible opening hours, more computers"

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Community events (N=21, 7.9%)

"More community events would bring my family and me into the buildings"

Parking space and building layout-space (N=20, 7.5%)

"I am a regular user of the Library; I do prefer some Library to others".

"I would rather use Pendeford than Tettenhall as I prefer the building and layout although the Tettenhall Library is better to park although the Tettenhall Library is an important part of the local community"

Recreational/café facilities (N=18, 6.8%)

"Cafe facilities - just a cup of coffee and a biscuit. This could also help generate an income".

Leisure/free time (N=12, 4.5%)

"More time to read".

"I use the library as much as I can dependant on free time available for reading"

Friendly and efficient service staff (N=12, 4.5%)

"More colourful surroundings, learning opportunities (classes for adults of which not many now exist in W'hampton) refreshment areas, friendly and welcoming staff - not the rather cold and anonymous experience of library visits I have found in recent months".

Educational activities for kids and adults (N=11, 4.2%)

"More education orientated activities that we could take the grandchildren to".

Nothing can be done (N=11, 4.2%)

"Sadly, not anything Wolverhampton can do anything about - an improvement in my sight".

Create and craft activities (N=2, 0.8%)

"Knit and natter"

What do we need to improve?

Key Theme	Number of Respondents	%
Logistics	44	9.5
Additional books	24	5.2
Improved or additional technological services	21	4.5
Public image and advertising	20	4.5
Improved physical environment	17	3.7
Currently satisfied	17	3.7
Unknown	13	2.8
Unspecified services	8	1.7
Additional staff	7	1.5
Unspecified improvements	6	1.3
Activities for younger populations	6	1.3
Improved community outreach	5	1.1
Volunteer training	4	.9
Staff friendliness	3	.6
Budget costs	3	.6
Improved IT support	2	.4
"The library experience"	2	.4
Improved library rules and regulations	2	.4
Improved lending services	2	.4
Author events	1	.2
Printing services	1	.2
Closure	1	.2
Separation from Council	1	.2

Four hundred and sixty-two responses were analysed to answer what might the library do to improve. The most frequently recorded response (9.5%) concerned improving aspects of logistics (e.g., parking, opening hours, location). That is, people prefer a library that is convenient and accessible to their own schedules and locations. The second most frequently recorded response (5%) suggests that increasing the number of books at the library would improve services.

Logistics (N=44, 9.5%)
Participants expressed a desire for improved logistics (e.g., opening hours, parking, etc.).

"Opening times for working people."

"Opening hours"

"More opening hours not less, and share building with other groups."

Additional books (N=24, 5.2%)
Participants expressed the desire for an expanded and/or updated book collection.

"Newer books. Some books are dated now. Keep up with trends and repurchase old books. You can make lots of beautiful things from old books."

"Book stock especially new ones"

"All parts of a series of books to be available"

Improved or additional technological services (N=21, 4.5%)
Participants expressed a desire for improved technological interfaces and services.

"Consider possibilities for downloading new releases to kindle for a fee for a limited borrowing period."

"EBook access, ensuring better access to new books released and popular and new authors."

"Computers-hardware and software."

Public image and advertising (N=20, 4.5%)
Participants expressed a desire for the library to market itself more and gain more public exposure.

"Publicity of events/activities and services on offer at libraries. Not everyone has access to the internet - there are advertising boards all around Wolverhampton but these mostly advertise events happening in Wolverhampton city centre! Could these be used for library events?"

"Communications - what is the library doing? How would I be notified of this? When polling cards, or other letters go out to all residents, there could also be information about local events."

"People's perception of what happens there."

Improved physical environment (N=17, 3.7%)
Participants expressed a desire to see improvements to the physical structure or interiors of the library to make it a more welcoming environment.

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"Introduce a garden? Make the inside of the buildings more appealing -just a lick of brightly coloured paint goes a long way!   Create specialist areas to link in with book themes -for young and old.   Try to make it a more exciting and inspiring experience to visit the library by doing the above."

"To make sure the space is used, there used to be mother and toddler sessions, story time and these always brought in people and there is now even less provision for these people."

"Buildings are dreary and dull and need some investment to modernise the facilities and surroundings"

Currently satisfied (N=17, 3.7%)
Participants reported being satisfied with services as they currently are.

"Nothing"

"I think things are fine"

"For me little."

Unknown (N=13, 2.8%)
Participants did not know how to improve the library.

"Don't know as don't use it"

"Not sure."

"Difficult to say since I do not use the library at present."

Unspecified services (N=8, 1.7%)
Participants were unspecific in their desires.

"Services evolve and suit what is required"

"Offer more things going on within the library to attract people who may not have considered going to a library before."

"Linking services together under one roof in the local areas."

Additional staff (N=7, 1.5%)
Participants expressed a desire for more library staff.

"Staff are helpful but don't have time now"

"More staff"

"More help within the building."

Unspecified improvements (N=6, 1.3%)
Participants requested unspecified improvements to the library.

"It's not about improving the service needs to fundamentally challenge what its purpose is. By simply improving what it already does it risks being the world's best gas lamp in the age of the electric light bulb."

"Keep up with the times"

"Not improve, but change so that library services are used more."

Activities for younger populations (N=6, 1.3%)
Participants expressed a desire for more services directed at younger populations.

"Encouragement of children to use the service, to get them started"

"More initiatives to encourage children to use the library. My local library used to have a story and playtime which the children really enjoyed, but this was stopped due to the number of staff that left. Things like this encourage children to go into libraries and to enjoy listening to stories."

"More activities for younger people such as; Coding Clubs: https://www.codeclub.org.uk/   Minecraft Clubs: http://my.christchurchcitylibraries.com/minecraft-club/   Libraries could be venues for reading clubs and community activities, as well as things such as paid school holiday courses and activities. More examples: http://my.christchurchcitylibraries.com/events-for-school-children/"

Improved community outreach (N=5, 1.1%)
Participants expressed a desire for more community events and outreach.

"More "events" to draw people in - not just children, but retired people during the day - perhaps invite speakers as the WI do or demonstrations of flower arranging, etc."

"More community events."

"Make it more appealing e.g. more activities and clubs"

Volunteer training (N=4, .9%)
Participants requested additional and/or improved training for volunteer library staff.

"Better training for volunteers and some more support at Collingwood"

"Continuous education of current and new staff regarding changing systems to help disseminate to customer how to use systems and find relevant info."

"Training for volunteers support for volunteers."

Staff friendliness (N=3, .6%)
Participants expressed a desire for friendlier library staff.

"The morale of the staff"

"Staff attitudes. If a custom wants serving by a person, serve us!"

"Staff attitude"

Budget costs (N=3, .6%)

Participants expressed concerns pertaining to budget costs of the library.

"Your running costs"

"I think it is more a question of surviving the current financial storm. Could libraries close to schools promote use of the library in co-operation with the school?"

"Invest money elsewhere"

Improved IT support (N=2, .4%)

Participants expressed a desire for improved information technology (IT) service and support.

"IT access"

"More IT?"

"The library experience" (N=2, .4%)

Participants expressed a desire for an improved library experience.

"The whole experience of visiting the library."

"The provision of what customers/public want, not what we expect they might want based on previous experiences of the traditional library experience."

Improved library rules and regulations (N=2, .4%)

Participants expressed a desire for stricter enforcement of library policies

"Being more stringent about expectations of behaviour in the library and enforcing it. I get fed up of mobile phone conversations and the librarians being ignored when requesting they are not used."

"'Dossing' should be more strongly discouraged."

Improved lending services (N=2, .4%)

Participant expressed the desire for improved lending services and procedures.

"Trying to get books back that people have borrowed and not brought back. When I've tried to reserve ones, I can't get a lot as people haven't brought them back."

"If books in store in central library take weeks for anyone to get the book you reserved out"

Author events (N=1, .2%)

Participant requested more events featuring authors.

"Wider opportunities. Invite authors."

Printing services (N=1, .2%)

Participants expressed a desire for improved printing services

"Printing services, local library has been unable to use printer for at least four weeks which has been an issue for my daughter printing off items for homework. We have had to visit another 2 libraries in the area to get what we need. This has been very inconvenient."

Closure (N=1, .2%)

Participant expressed a desire for the library to close.

"Get real and make the hard decision, look at the age range of people using the library. If they are over fifty close it down"

Separation from Council (N=1, .2%)

Participants expressed the desire for the library to extricate itself from Council administration.

"You need to be separate from the council. Your fortunes shouldn't be dictated by a bunch of political idiots, who are more interested in scoring points over their political rivals than the actual benefits of a working library system."

7. The Role of the Central Library

What services would you wish to see from a 'Central Library'?

Key Theme	Number of Respondents	%
Don't use, prefer local library or n/a	76	16.5
More access to books/resources	70	15.2
More events	56	12.1
More facilities	54	11.7
Décor/attraction/building improvements	41	8.9
Fine as it is	26	5.6
Did not answer	224	48.5

The majority of participants responded by indicating that they do not use Central Library (N=224, 48.5%), typically because they prefer to use their local libraries, or that they simply did not have a strong enough opinion about it. Those who did have an opinion mostly referred to the resources available through Central Library, either in Central Library itself or via links with other institutions, which related to books, computers, E-readers, digital technologies, and cultural or specialist interest materials. Other participants also proclaimed their desire to see more educational and leisure events take place at Central Library, and that they would like to be able to use more educational and leisure facilities (most commonly a café). There were some participants who noted that the building itself might benefit from a refurbishment, whilst some felt that the services already provided were sufficient.

Don't use, prefer local library, or n/a (N=76, 16.5%)
"Don't use Central Library and have no opinion."

"I've not visited the Central Library for some time."

"I don't feel Central Library should offer services / activities exclusively as lots of people aren't willing or able to travel into the city centre to access them."

More Access to Books/resources (N=70, 15.2%)
   a) Greater use of computers and technologies

E.g. E-books and Downloadable books, computer use to order and search for books, E-readers to loan.

"Access to borrow books on kindles etc. "

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"Kindle downloads"

"I would envisage a ' Central Library' as a physical hub - attracting any visitors to a central location - housing reference materials but also being an 'electronic' hub."

"Extensive computer facilities"

b) *Availability for obscure and specialist interest areas*

E.g. reference books, magazines, national specialist in specific area, foreign films, audiobooks.

"Access to order obscure reference books "

"More provision of Spanish language films."

"Access to wide range of books on offer or to order, audiobooks, DVD Films"

"Becoming a national specialist in a particular subject area, such as inter-faith/inter-cultural issues, where Wolverhampton already has a rich tradition"

c) *Greater links to other libraries and facilities*

E.g. inter-library loans, links to University, links to art gallery.

"Providing books to peripheral libraries to enhance their lending scope."

"Access to textbooks and books on technical / research topics, including books obtained through inter-library loan."

"More closely integrated with the University"

"Close to uni and college, should be a student hub"

More Events (N=56, 12.1%)

a) *Talks, lectures and visiting speakers*

E.g. authors, poets, politicians.

"More fun activities like an author reading their book, acting out a story with children "

"Exhibitions and talks from famous Authors/poets"

"Book signings, local talks on a variety of topics.

b) *Educational events*

E.g. English lessons, homework clubs, adult education.

"Events with an educational focus for students and young children"

"Tracing your family tree workshops"

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"More education facilities..get people to self-serve. More job clubs and training and study opportunities. Places where people can go safely.. homework clubs etc."

c) Leisure events

E.g. Writing groups, poetry groups, open mic nights, theatrical performances, craft groups.

"Exhibitions, talks, theatrical performances, interactive workshops, involvement of schools, computer workshops, free English lessons, things to appeal to all walks of life. "

"Children's groups, Writers groups Debating society? Poetry group, Book group "

"Film Club, Music Club, Chess etc."

d) Themed events

E.g. Historical artefacts, genre events (e.g. thriller nights), events targeted at age/minority groups.

"Further events for different age/minority groups "

"History nights with historical objects, Horror/fiction depicting items from the history of horror and great horror/ suspense writers? Hitchcock, Bram Stoker etc."

More Facilities (N=54, 11.7%)

a) More research facilities

E.g. Genealogical resources, reference and research sections, archives, specific computer rooms, quiet reading room, USB use, conference facilities.

"More genealogical resources"

"Specialist reference service"

"Reference and research facilities "

b) More leisure facilities

Café, music library, performance spaces, games rooms (e.g. chess).

"I'd like to be able to pick up a decent cup of coffee whilst browsing books or using computers. I'd also like to see space in Central Library used for events "

"A place to relax in with comfortable seating and good food/drink"

"Venue for arts and literature events."

c) More civic facilities

Job seeking/career guidance, post office, counselling services, delivery service, homeless services.

"Career guidance, advice "

"Post office facilities; an information/CAB-type service"

"Easy access to job seeking, help for students to look for work, Counselling services, Delivery service"

"Homeless service representation"

"More council services being run from library"

Décor/Attraction/Building improvements (N=41, 8.9%)

    a) *More attractive building*

E.g. More welcoming façade, refurbished interior.

"A general overhaul as the building looks shoddy"

"I don't like the building it's drab and intimidating because it's so big and hard to find things. I wouldn't want to spend time in there"

    b) *More facilities to enable accessibility*

E.g. More inviting for children, parents/grandparents and children, reserved disabled access.

"More inviting children's library. I find it feels cold and uninviting "

"Disabled clients can't access (lifts and WC are a problem). Specific disabled customer use computers on ground floor used by some drunk people and staff don't take action "

    c) *Better amenities and access*

E.g. More computers/chairs/desks, better car parking, more plugs/charging stations, longer opening hours, better toilets, more staff, mobile library.

"Free transport/parking "

"Mobile library"

"Good opening hours"

Fine as it is (N=26, 5.6%)
"Remain as it is "

"Pretty happy I only need books"

What would improve the location setting of Central Library in that area of the City?

Key Theme	Number of Respondents	%
Ideal location already	67	14.5
Not sure or n/a	65	14.1
Better access and signage	60	13
More aesthetically pleasing	25	5.4
Closer to other amenities	16	3.5
In a different part of town	12	2.6
Bigger building and more space	4	0.9
Did not answer	231	50

The key themes mostly relate to participants indicating that they like the current location of Central Library, or that they did not have a strong enough opinion about the issue. There were quite a few calls for Central Library to be more accessible in terms of transport, such as easier links with public transport, free parking, and more signposts around the City. Some participants also referred to improving the physical appearance of Central Library, and suggested that it be either moved to an area with more public footfall (i.e. closer to other shops and cafes), or to attract more footfall by having other amenities available close by.

Ideal location already (N=67, 14.5%)
"Current location is excellent"

"The current library is a beautiful historic building; I would be upset if you made any drastic changes to it."

"It does seem to be well placed as it is"

Not sure or n/a (N=65, 14.1%)
"Don't use central library and have no opinion"

"I don't see why we need a city centre library; many people don't live in walking distance of the library."

Better access and signage (N=60, 13%)
   a) *Better parking/bike racks*

"Free parking – to visit the library would mean to pay for parking if not using public transport. This is off putting for many people."

"Easiest access to the lift and covered cycle stands."

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"Have a free car park with a limited stay (30 minutes max) with a token entry system, exit tokens given out by library staff on producing a receipt from the car park."

   b) *Better public transport links*

"Be able to reach at by bus, or by shuttle bus from the bus station"

"I find it a little bit of a walk from the Civic centre which would preclude me from using the library"

"Easier access to the building, you have to cross busy roads to get there."

   c) *More signposts and directions*

"Better signposting is needed so people can be aware of the location."

"Better direction signage so people can find it easily."

"Could be signposted more prominently."

More aesthetically pleasing (N=25, 5.4%)
   a) *Modernised building*

"It's a poor building. Need a custom built library"

"An old building, needs updating"

"Modernise the main lending library which is depressing. A good interior decorator is needed."

   b) *Less imposing décor*

"Make it more inviting. Less forbidding entrance."

"The current building doesn't draw you to it, it has to work within the confines of the architecture of the past."

   c) *More attractive exterior and features*

"Clever use of lighting at night, a digital screen positioned outside the library advertising events at the library. Something to encourage people inside."

"Clean it up. Its aesthetic appearance is a big part of it. It's a big old building with rundown streets around."

"I love the library building! If they landscape that part of the city with grass and trees, how good would that be!"

Closer to other amenities (N=16, 3.5%)
"All fun places nearer to each other, so as a family people can go out and do what they wish. So if activity centre, swimming pool, markets and library are near each other and have nearly same opening time, people will use it more often"

"Proper cafeteria/gift shop and tourist information hubs close by please!"

"If there were more shops close by you might be passing when shopping, or if cafes or restaurants nearby."

In a different part of town (N=12, 2.6%)
"It's slightly 'out of town centre' now, I rarely use that part of town. I would sell the building off if possible and use a building in the centre."

"I feel it is on the outskirts of the city and would not feel comfortable walking around the area on a night."

"Snow Hill area has too many closed shops and derelict ex-Netto site, it's in a real drab part of Wolverhampton."

Bigger building and more space (N=4, 0.9%)
"Range of working spaces – quiet zone, workshop areas, noise areas, comfy seating for congregation. A bigger building basically."

"The building needs to be extended"

"Bigger is better and more sitting space, and places where I can plug my computer in."

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8. Focus Group Themes

Appeal of the Library Space

The physical environment of the library was noted by several participants as needing an update. Although the architecture of the Central Library building was appreciated, most people commented on the dullness and sense of coldness of the interior:

"Our building is beautiful, we just need to invest in it…it is dated compared to other libraries. Aesthetics are important, needs to attract attention."

"The building needs brought up to date. It is a dreary building. It needs lighting for night time, lights that brighten up the building, could commission an artist to do a light show and make it look amazing."

This was described as being off-putting to potential users, in particular children and teenagers:

"My kids don't like Central library, we have been in but it's cold and not welcoming. It might be that Central is an older building…Central library is very traditional and maybe that can be overwhelming."

"Young people don't feel libraries are relevant when actually they could fill a gap."

The general consensus seemed to be that a more vibrant, colourful and artistic setting would be more appealing to younger generations, with some citing the example of the newly-refurbished Birmingham library as being attractive to a wide range of generations:

"What I really like is Birmingham is a lovely space to do your own thing, take your book and read on the balcony, the building is very modern and practical…it is a massive improvement on what it was previously."

"The Birmingham one is good, it has the space, clean and fresh, it is a lot more modern. It has fun space for kids and music practice rooms where you can play the piano. They have really good libraries and outdoor space on the top floor. Maybe we could have that?"

Investment in Resources

The most commonly cited area of concern was the lack of resources within libraries, which mainly referred to books and computers:

"I had a customer who wants to learn languages. He was 12 years old and I had to offer him a VHS tape, he didn't know what I was talking about!...I think it has got to be future proofed in terms of technology, books on prescription and mental health. Looking at things like exam stress and making much more of a promotion of self-help sites."

"The ICT suite needs to be revamped, and we need staff to try support people. More e-services that give people equipment to access services is needed."

However, other resources were also noted as lacking, ranging from audiobooks to comfy chairs and tables:

"Needs an overhaul, movable shelving, some comfy chairs, counter area needs changing to make it more efficient…a lot is about seating, if you want to have circular tables where you can face each other, in quieter areas there could be doors so it could be silent."

"I use the libraries, but the availability isn't good enough, when a new book comes out it is hard to get hold of, the same with e-books and audio downloads."

It was largely agreed across the workshops that additional resources should focus on educational materials through digital technologies:

"Learning is a theme. They should bring all the partners who are bringing services together and all consider the spaces together – University, adult education, college. It is a platform to speak about principles, about rethinking library services so we can invest in education."

"Education is the cornerstone of our community. The library is crucial to this and should be judged on value in this way. Investing in technologies would help this."

Staff and Volunteers

Participants frequently commented upon the importance of staff at libraries, and how the role of both staff and volunteers requires substantial investment:

"Staff are cut to the bone, we need to use staff better and invest more in them. The customer service is great when they're around, but we need staff to try support people."

"Even if we marginally increase staff capacity it will massively improve our service. Going around the branches, you don't have the support. We need sufficient number of well trained staff."

A perception of staff being overstretched seemed to reflect upon a lack of services within libraries, such as no front of house receptions:

"Staff can't cope, there are volunteers to help, but to deliver services through the library we need staff in order to do it. Reduction in staff size means that we've lost a lot of this."

"We are short of staff to do outreach. Maybe we can put more training into volunteers to go into local schools, but we can't train new staff now so how will we train volunteers?"

Overall, the "personal touch" appeared to be of upmost importance to users, with common referrals to instances where conversations with knowledgeable individuals made a significant difference:

"In most local libraries you get a rapport with the staff or clients, you know people and you know which books they like."

"There is so much to offer in the library system, but you need the personal touch. Without that they are going to fail."

Community Services and Events

The purpose of a library was generally viewed as being wide-ranging, with frequent calls for additional services and events to be offered by the library to increase interest:

"I think it would be nice to have more cultural events, people coming from universities to give talks, links into literature, things you wouldn't have access to otherwise. Cultural groups make links with the Lighthouse, more events, cultural events."

"Libraries having events is a great idea. It attracts lots of different people, lots of families and inter-generations. Books evenings, readings, where people bring food, and children's evening ghost stories, night at the museum, things like that would work well."

It was also mentioned several times that combining the library with other leisure services could lead to increased footfall, and would pique their own interests:

"A café may draw people in, as the geographic location of the café will draw younger people to the library."

"Make it more of a community space, like being able to look at an art gallery and have a coffee."

The inclusion of additional events, services and facilities was argued as being likely to foster a stronger sense of community within the local area, as the library would be more likely to become a focal point for social gatherings:

"Libraries have the potential to be the centre of the community and bring the whole community together. No-one feels that they can't go into a library, it is a proper public open space that has the potential, when used well, to create a good community feeling."

"There needs to be spaces for community activities and to do other things on the premises. Make it more of a community hub, have regular meet up sections to draw more people into the community hub, make it a bit more vibrant, a bit more noise."

Lack of Advertising

One of the main criticisms of the current libraries was the lack of advertising regarding events and services, with either inaccurate or no information frequently being provided, particularly online:

"Information online is not correct…need to email people information, it's really bad as it doesn't tell you that you have a notification that your book is ready to collect."

"Before I go to Central I order books online, but it doesn't work, then I have to go into Central to get the book and I don't know if it's there or not."

Almost every workshop discussed how libraries were missing opportunities for advertising and marketing by not using social media or digital technologies effectively:

"Have a Facebook page, manage events through there. Create an event so it gets in people's diaries. If I tick yes I'm going, all my friends see it and then they might go."

"They should allow staff to go on Facebook and Twitter…or deliver a vlog, let them promote stuff going on."

This lack of promotion seemed to be perceived as significantly holding back libraries in connecting with potential users across all age ranges:

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"Advertising works, have someone who would appeal to younger people…how come libraries aren't advertised at all?"

"If you don't encourage children to come to the library then they won't get that young introduction. Getting the online advertising sorted would be a really big help."

(In)Accessibility

Accessibility was described as being an issue amongst current libraries, with opening times in particular being cited as problematic:

"I'm never sure of the opening hours"

"I went to Central library prior to work to find that it wasn't open. I went to Long Knowle the other day and it was closed…the opening time is a bug bear for me."

Other accessibility issues were also noted, such as car parking and availability for those with learning and/or intellectual disabilities:

"Parking is awful around there…it is awfully expensive."

"Birmingham has a dyslexia section and my son is dyslexic…it would be nice if they considered a dyslexia section here…more large print books are needed."

It was mentioned a number of times that more provision for those who required assistance might lead to libraries being considered a "safe haven" for individuals at-risk:

"Libraries are a good place to reach out to people who need help. There might be something on the adult social care, carers don't need to worry about making noise. Local care homes could come along and meet other people at the library."

"There is something about the environment of a library, it gives that perception of safer spaces. We should be the biggest advocates of civic services, job support, helping the homeless, all those things."

Future of Libraries

The consensus regarding the future of libraries was that a physical building was needed, with mobile and digital libraries being viewed as "possible extras" instead:

"A mobile library could really work for branches and some of the out of town areas, or a 'bookman' who delivers books to workplaces or homes."

"I remember the mobile library service and liked it as a child, but I think the community aspect, special aspect is really important."

However, the opinions on how many libraries should exist ranged from one central library only to maintaining the current sixteen:

"You could reduce the offer in the physical building but make it mobile across the city"

"I don't think the answer is closing libraries, the people who use this library wouldn't go elsewhere…Everybody wants their local library and that is the advantage is to have it local."

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The majority of participants appeared to understand that a compromise might be needed, with slightly fewer libraries being traded off for greater focus on resources and staff:

"Some poorer use libraries need to go. We need quality provision…8 good libraries is surely better than 16 rubbish ones?"

"It's better to have 1 really good one than 3 iffy ones…staff and books could be shared, the 1 site could be open longer, which I would prefer rather than having a library for a short time."

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