An Analysis of Digital Literacy Initiatives in Dublin Public Libraries

Dissertation submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
MSc in Information Library Management
at Dublin Business School

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**Declaration:** I, Sheree Yeates, declare that this research is my original work and that it has never been presented to any institution or university for the award of Degree or Diploma. In addition, I have referenced correctly all literature and sources used in this work and this work is fully compliant with the Dublin Business School’s academic honesty policy.

Signed: _____Sheree Yeates___________
Date: ________21/8/17_________________
Acknowledgements

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my Father, Michael who I know would have been so proud of my achievements over the past two years.

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Abstract

Digital literacy has emerged as a key concept in recent years. The importance of it has been highlighted in recent years in many different publications, including those developed by the government. As a concept it has grown and changed over the years since its inception, its meaning broadening to include the many advances in technology.

This dissertation examines where Dublin public libraries stand on this area and analyses the initiatives that are currently in place in the four authorities. It seeks the opinions of the staff on the importance of having digital literacy skills and these initiatives in place. It looks at the challenges faced when implementing these initiatives and highlights the importance of these skills in the modern age.

The findings surmise that while public librarians know the importance of digital literacy and in having initiatives in place for the public in their libraries, at the moment there is a lack of resources in regards to training staff and a lot of these initiatives are now implemented in public libraries through an outsourced third party.

The study concludes by highlighting the importance of digital literacy skills to a person, giving an overview of the initiatives currently in place in some Dublin public libraries and makes recommendations as to what is needed to ensure patrons of the libraries and staff themselves need to continue to function as a modern citizen.
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Abbreviations

CILIP – Chartered Institute for Libraries and Information Professionals
SLIP – Student Librarians and Information Professionals
USDC – US Department of Commerce
NTIA - National Telecommunications Infrastructure Administration
ALA- American Library Association
PLA – Public Library Association
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

‘Digital Literacy is the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills.’ (Visser, Marijke, 2012)

More and more digital media and technology is becoming a part of our lives; we are immersed in it and use it in all areas unbeknownst to ourselves at times including in our education, social, learning and working lives. It is vital that everyone from the young to the old is able to use and understand technology to the best of their ability. And use it properly and safely so that it will add to their lives and help them become a part of this digital society that has been created and is continuing to expand and develop at an extremely fast rate. Ever changing and improving.

Unfortunately, there are some people who this is not the case for; a recent report carried out by the European commission found that ‘47 % of citizens in the general European population did not have the basic skills to function in the digital society’ (European Commission 2015b) And not only this, 23% of European citizens have no digital skills and so are at risk of falling behind in society.

In an Irish context, the National Digital Strategy for Ireland (Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, 2013), carried out a survey which revealed that 1 in 5 Irish adults had never used the internet and this figure rose to over 50 percent for adults over 60.

Another issue that has begun to emerge is around those who can use technology but the issue is in regards to using it properly, especially in terms of news sites, social media and the amount of information that is at their fingertips. For example on social media sites such as Facebook, ‘content can be relayed among users with no significant third party filtering, fact-checking, or editorial judgement.’ (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017) Meaning a fictional article or story that someone had written could reach millions of people easily and become ‘fake news’. ‘Fake news’ can be defined as ‘news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false, and could mislead readers.’ (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017)
People need the skills to be able to critically evaluate information on the internet so that they can understand the difference between real and ‘fake’ news and also other information they may be searching for. One of these areas of concern is around Health literacy, were people are inclined to search for symptoms online and believe what it is that is returned to them. (Connolly and Crosby, 2014)

Public libraries offer a safe, free environment where users can go to try and improve their digital literacy skills. Libraries themselves have recognised the need for these skills and in their strategy ‘Opportunities for All’ 2013-2017 they have clearly outlined how important they feel these emerging skills are and have included action plans in their strategy to be implemented within the public libraries to help people become digitally literate.

‘The need to read is compounded by the need for digital skill and enhanced information literacy.’(Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2013)

Whether these have been implemented and if the public are using them and benefiting from them is the question.

The researcher considers this an important topic to study as it is a very real and modern topic for today and a relatively new one for Ireland when compared to the literature and studies available in countries like America. Dublin and Ireland as a whole could benefit from more research in this area and also it is a chance for libraries to evaluate their worth in today’s society. In an ever increasing digital society is there a place for a public library, is it still needed and has it got a worth to society? If it can expand its digital literacy services then it may play an important role in this digital society in the future.

The research is also relevant to the MSc in Information and Library Management as it researches an area that is covered in detail in a module of the course.

1.2 Aim of the Dissertation

The dissertation aims to analyse the digital literacy initiatives in Dublin Public Libraries. Below are the objectives of the research.

- To identify the digital literacy initiatives which are currently in place in Dublin Public Libraries.
To investigate the awareness of librarians and library assistants of digital literacy and the importance of it.

To identify if staff feel they have the relevant skills and knowledge to teach digital literacy to library patrons and what training and support to deliver these programmes are available to them.

To identify barriers to implementing these initiatives.

To establish if any improvements can be made for the future of these initiatives.

The researcher has chosen a mixed methods approach that will involve both quantitative and qualitative methods of collecting data to be analysed. The quantitative approach involves a web survey which was sent through a third party to the email addresses of staff members (mainly librarians and library assistants) in the Dun Laoghaire – Rathdown, Fingal and Dublin South authorities.

The qualitative approach involves both an email interview and phone interview with a divisional librarian from Dublin City Authority. A mixed methods approach had to be utilised as the researcher did not gain permission to distribute the web surveys to the staff in the libraries of the largest authority Dublin City.

1.3 Organisation of the Dissertation

Although the overall length of the dissertation is 7 chapters, the actual research will be presented in 6 chapters.

Chapter 1 introduces the dissertation and the research. It gives an overview of the aims and objectives of the research and also outlines why the researcher thought the subject they chose to research is important and relevant to both the MSc they are completing and to the library field in Ireland as a whole.

Chapter 2 is a review of the relevant literature around the topic of digital literacy and public libraries. It begins firstly by giving an overview of the search methodologies used to find these relevant articles, books and other materials used in the literature review. Following on from this there is an overview of what a literature review is and what the chapter entails. Next the term ‘Digital Literacy’ will be defined and then from here it is broken down into the main
themes that the researcher saw emerging through the literature. These themes include; the Digital Divide, the Importance of Public Libraries, Staff Training and Digital Literacy Initiatives in America

Chapter 3 is titled Research Methods and Methodology. The reader will firstly be introduced to what research methods and methodology are and also what approach was used by the researcher to complete this task. Next there will be a reminder of the research objectives as it is important to relate the research methods to the objectives to show it was the right procedure of data collection to take. Next the researcher will give an overview of the philosophies, approach and time horizon that were taken into account when developing the research methods and methodology. Research strategy, population and sampling and the data collection, editing, coding and analysis of the data will all be discussed in relation to the methods and methodology chosen. Finally the ethical issues and limitations of the research will be discussed.

Chapter 4 will discuss the data analysis and findings of the web survey and email/phone interviews undertaken. This chapter will first introduce and give an overview of what is involved in the chapter. From here it will discuss the response rate of the web survey and the completion rate of each question. Next each question will be analysed and the results of these noted. Following on from this will be the analysis of the phone and web interviews undertaken with the Divisional Librarian of the Dublin City authority. And lastly in this chapter, the web survey answers of the divisional librarian will be noted and analysed.

Chapter 5 will discuss the findings of the previous chapter, chapter 4. This chapter will also give an overview of what is discussed within this chapter, followed then by a discussion of the findings of the web survey and the phone/email interview. It will be then broken down into the emerging themes of the analysis. These themes are as follows; the awareness of and defining the term digital literacy, digital literacy initiatives in Dublin public libraries. And finally the training of staff and patrons. Some limitations and how they affected the results will also be discussed to close the chapter.

Chapter 6 is the final chapter in the dissertation process. This chapter is the conclusion and recommendations of the study. This chapter gives a summary of the findings of the study and details where they stand in relation to the literature found and reviewed in chapter 2. It also includes recommendations for further study in the area of digital literacy and public libraries.
The final chapter of the dissertation, chapter 7 is a reflective piece. It gives an assessment of the researcher's experience of writing and researching for the dissertation. This chapter is also split into sections, the first being the background and introduction of the author and how their path led them to choose the topic of the dissertation. From here they will discuss their overall feelings, any issues encountered, or any positives of doing a literature review, the research design and primary research. They will then discuss writing the dissertation and conclude it by speaking about the valuable lessons they have learned during the process and what they have taken from it that will serve them well in the future.

1.4 Limitations

One of the major limitations of the study was the time allocated to do it and the scale of the study at hand. As a lot of components were involved, to ensure that all areas were covered, the sample of the research had to be reduced and also a research method had to be chosen that would reach as many people as possible in the quickest way, but may not have necessarily been the best method for the topic at hand. Also because the biggest authority in Dublin declined to take part in the web survey, it further reduced the sample size, taking it from the proposed 51 libraries (and their staff) down to 25 libraries.

Furthermore, as the survey was distributed in the summer months, annual leave of staff had to be taken into account. This along with the short time the survey could be left open for responses before analyses needed to be carried out reduced the sample size even further.

The research would also have benefitted from interviews from not only Dublin City Authority but also from the other three authorities which are South Dublin, Fingal and Dun Laoighaire – Rathdown. A lot more information was gathered in the email and phone interviews that took place with the Divisional Librarian from Dublin City. This process also allowed for the researcher to expand on anything that may have been misunderstood or in cases were not enough information was given. This process was missing in the web surveys. Furthermore, the researcher acknowledges that the web surveys were sent out under pressure with the time constraints and more questions were needed to get a more in depth knowledge of the area.

Another limitation to the study is the literature available in this area of study. Although a search was done of the literature, it found a lack of related subjects or topics within Ireland.
Not alone this but the search for literature may not have been as comprehensive as it could have been given the time allocated to complete the dissertation. Although there may have been literature from Europe, Australia and Asia etc that may have been a benefit to this study, the researcher had to acknowledge that the majority of what was being found was from America and so it was utilised.

1.5 Major Contributions of the Study

As there is little literature or studies around this area in Ireland, although the study is not as in depth as it could be, this research is a good starting point for further study on the area in Ireland. It gives the readers an overview of the initiatives and programmes which are currently being run in Dublin public libraries and it also gives the readers an idea of the perceptions that staff have of digital literacy and the importance of it. It also may be useful for Dublin public libraries as it talks about patron training and the lack of it at times.

The study may also contribute to public libraries in the area of staff training and needing to up skill now that they are able to begin rehiring staff again and will be less under pressure than they have been in the previous years of the recession.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Search Methodology

(Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015) state that ‘it is important that you plan...search carefully to ensure that you locate relevant and up-to-date literature.’ They also recommend that when starting your search for literature you should already have defined your research questions and objectives and should use these as a starting point to refine your search from the beginning so as not to be overloaded with irrelevant information.

The researcher took this advice into account and began their search for literature by using the proposed research objectives of the dissertation. General digital literacy books were first utilised to gain a greater familiarity with the term, its meaning and to help refine the research objectives even more. Such books included ‘Understanding Digital Culture’ (Miller, V, 2011) and ‘Digital Literacy’ (Gilster, 1998)

The beginning of the search also consisted of defining important terms such as ‘digital literacy’ and ‘digital divide.’ These terms especially since their inception, have had a few different meanings to them and the author needed to know which definitions would best suit the proposed research. And also to ensure that any articles that were found were related to the definition of ‘digital literacy’ that the researcher allocated to the study.

Once a general overview of the subject was gained, generalised searches were conducted using stand out words from each of the objectives such as ‘barriers’, ‘training’, ‘skills’ ‘initiatives’, ‘awareness’. And also the main words from the proposed title of the dissertation, these being ‘digital literacy’, ‘initiatives’ and ‘public libraries’ and also words such as ‘community’. The researcher then turned their search to a more refined search by using academic sources such as online databases.

The databases which were used in this search were found on the Dublin Business School library website. Within the subject guide drop down on the home bar, there is an area designated to the Library and Information course. Databases recommended under here include, Library and Information Science Source, Academic Search Complete, e-LIS: E-prints in Library and Information Science, Emerald Insight, ERIC and ProQuest Central
Social Sciences Collection. Each of these databases was searched for material for the literature review. With the largest majority of articles used being returned from the Library and Information Science Source database. Also on the library website is a list of web resources and journals which would be suited to the proposed dissertation which were also searched for relevant literature. Some of these included The Library Association of Ireland’s ‘An Leabharlann’ journal, LibFocus, CILIP, Library.ie and also some web resources were searched which the researcher had known about including SLIP.

Search terms used for these searches included digital literacy and public library/public libraries/public librarians and also words mentioned previously from the objectives such as digital literacy initiatives, digital literacy training, digital literacy awareness, skills, digital divide, Dublin, Ireland.

No synonyms of digital literacy were used in the search as it would have changed the search completely. There are many different types of ‘literacy’s’ today which include media literacy, computer literacy, information literacy and technology literacy.

As this dissertation is dealing only with ‘digital’ literacy, this was the only literacy term that was used in the search.

Searches were completed though using synonyms of the main objective words. These words are highlighted in the below in table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Initiatives</th>
<th>Awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obstacle</td>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>Abilities</td>
<td>Programmes</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>Curriculum</td>
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<td>Guidance</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

A Boolean search method was mainly utilised during these searches, these operators are AND, OR and NOT. And ‘can be used to combine keywords to effectively search electronic information, return relevant and eliminating insignificant results.’ (Library Services: University of Birmingham, 2011, p. 12)
When searching these databases, within the advanced search option the dates where narrowed to 2011 - 2017 to enable the researcher to find the most up to date and relevant information. No particular type of publication was omitted but the full text button was utilised each time and the searches returned both peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed journals and articles. All journals were searched with the same combination of words and searches.

2.2 Introduction

‘The Literature Review forms an important chapter in the thesis, where its purpose is to provide the background to and justification for the research undertaken.’ (Bruce, 1994, p, 218)

The following chapter will provide the background and justification as to why the researcher has chosen to undertake a dissertation on digital literacy in a public library setting and why it is a relevant and current topic. Through reading of the literature it became apparent that there were five main themes that needed to be taken into account and discussed around this subject area. These are as follows:

- Definition of Digital Literacy
- Digital Divide
- Importance of Public Libraries
- Staff Training
- Digital Literacy Initiatives in America

2.3 Defining Digital Literacy

‘Technology has become essential to success and progress in daily life and public libraries are go to resources for digital access and trusted guides in the increasingly complex digital world.’ (Young, R and Benton, S, 2015)

Digital Literacy is a concept that, since it first emerged, its meaning and how it is interpreted has grown and changed over the years. This has led to some misunderstandings of the term and also some misuses of the term. The literature is at times inconsistent in its use of the term also and ‘some restrict the concept to the technical aspects of operating in digital
environments, while others apply it in the context of cognitive and socio-emotional aspects of work in a computer environment’ (Eshet-Alkalai, 2004, p. 103).

One of the very first definitions of digital literacy and one which helped to bring the term into the main stream was that it was ‘the ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide variety of sources when it is presented via computers’ (Gilster, 1997, p.1). This definition was restrictive and is now very much outdated. It has since grown and expanded through the years as technology has grown, the different usage of this technology has grown and the problems of not having the skills to use this technology i.e. being digitally literate have begun to arise.

Hobbs (2010, pp. Vii) describes digital literacy as ‘a constellation of life skills that are necessary for full participation in a media – saturated information rich society’. Hobbs definition shows a broader understanding of what being digitally literate entails. One of the more modern definitions and the one which would most apply to the proposed dissertation is from JISC (2004)

This definition states that ‘digital literacy’s are those capabilities which fit an individual for living, learning and working in a digital society.’ And goes on to describe it as being ‘beyond the development of functional IT skills...richer set of behaviours, practices and identities involving critical thinking, reflection and life-long learning, communication, collaboration and social engagement.’ And it is this definition which today seems most applicable to society as a whole.

Even something as simple having the skills to access and navigate the internet is essential in today’s world ‘the importance of the internet for gaining access to government online services, education, the job market and civic participation shows the internet access and digital skills, including coding skills are becoming prerequisites for citizenship.’ (Hagen-Mcintosh, 2016)

Not having these skills can create problems in today’s society where technology plays such a big part in people’s lives. This has led to a ‘digital divide’.
2.4 Digital Divide

As the previous definitions stated, being digitally literate is much more than having the ability to use technology but involves a lot more. A lack of these skills and more so resources when discussing the digital divide can negatively affect a person’s ability to access information and services, employment, social inclusion and learning opportunities.

Although it seems like the vast majority of people has access to some form of internet, as part of the introduction to the National Digital Strategy for Ireland,(Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, 2013) the Department of Communications, Energy and National Resources carried out a survey which revealed that 1 in 5 Irish adults has never used the internet and this figure rose to over 50 percent for adults over 60. More recently (2014) The EU Digital Agenda Policy found that 47% of the EU population has insufficient digital skills and 23% had none at all. (Hanlon, 2015)

Like digital literacy, the digital ‘divide’ has also been defined in many different ways.(Jaeger et al., 2012) and (Dolnicar, et al., 2014) discuss how not only has there been different definitions through the years but that currently different nations also have different definitions and ways to approach it. They speak about how this can lead to inconsistency and the lack of policies hinders the bridging of this gap.

The term ‘digital divide’ was first introduced in a series of reports entitled Falling Through the Net by the U.S Department of Commerce (USDC) National Telecommunications and Infrastructure Administration (NTIA ) the first of which was released in 1995 and the last in 2000. And simply stated that the digital divide ‘separated information haves and have nots.’ And through the years extended the concept from access to phone usage to the importance of having access to the ‘internet and computers’(Department of Commerce, 1999) (Jaeger et al., 2012) states that the ‘ubiquitous nature of the internet and the accompanying services and technologies make equal access to and participation in the online environment a necessity for education, employment, finance and civic engagement.’. (Radovanović, et al 2015) define the digital divide as not only a divide in access to technology but also a divide in skills.
A briefing which took place in Washington D.C in 2014 entitled ‘Responding to the second wave of the digital divide’ has stated that although progress has been made to decrease this divide physically by connecting more and more people to the internet. The American Library Association’s president Barbara Stripling has said that the problem is that people do not have the skills to use this technology properly. That being able to find the information that you want and knowing the difference to ensure that the information is real and accurate. (Taylor, C, 2014) JB Horrigan also backed this statement up during this briefing by discussing ‘digital readiness’ (Taylor, C, 2014) and how people are not able to use the resources once they come by them. Public libraries have been recognised through the years as having a place in society to help bridge this gap.

### 2.5 Importance of Public Libraries

(Agosto, D.E, 2016) notes that public libraries (in America), historically had four main roles to play which include ‘acquiring’ the physical materials for the patrons, providing a physical location to house these items, organising these items to make them easily accessible and the library staff ‘providing assistance’ to the patrons to help locate the items that they need.

(Agosto, D.E, 2016) moves on to then explain how these four roles are no longer the norm for a library and are outdated. That libraries today focus on their community needs rather than their collections. Although this article largely focuses on how library services have begun to change for teens, it also highlights how the services are changing for all and how there is now a particular emphasis on digital services and being digitally literate and the importance public libraries have in providing these services.

(Young, R and Benton, S, 2015) have said ‘no other institution rivals the significance of public libraries as technology gateways.’ They also back up the point Agosto made about community involvement by talking about how public libraries are at the forefront of their communities providing the resources that meet their needs which ‘support local economics and build stronger communities.’ From an Irish point of view, (Council.ie, 2014) also supports this view of public libraries, claiming libraries, ‘have been an essential staple at the heart of our communities.’ And also mentions that libraries have grown because of this and recognising that they need to keep on trend with the ‘needs and desires’ of all of those in the
communities they serve. This is particularly apparent with the introduction of e-services into public libraries throughout the years.

(Norman, M, 2012) and (Stevenson and Domsy, 2016) believe that if public libraries are to thrive as technology keeps changing that they must play a key role ‘to bridge the digital divide between those who have access and those who do not’. Others believe that they are already playing a big part in this role and that public libraries are an integral part of the community when it comes to the digital literacy skills of the ‘have not’s. That libraries are the ‘bridge over the digital divide.’ (Manley, W, 2013)

(Morrone and Witt, 2013) lead with how public libraries are open to people of all ages, classes and backgrounds. How they are in the centre of a community and have direct access to those that need help. (Higgs G, 2012) states that public libraries ‘were founded as a way to bring education to those without access to it.’

Irish public libraries within their strategy ‘Opportunities for All’ 2013 – 2017 (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2013) have recognised the role they play in digital literacy and have stated that a goal of theirs was to ‘provide access to online and inlibrary sources...to support digital literacy skills for lifelong learning.’

(Gerding, 2011) speaks about how being able to use technology is an essential need in today’s society. She also makes the statement about how libraries involved in digital literacy development ‘provide sustenance, visibility and security’ to those that avail of its services. (Balina, 2013) seems to back up this point with findings in a study that that the vast majority of library users thought that the service the library provides improves ‘the quality of their lives.’

Since 2010 around 343 libraries have closed and 8,000 jobs within the library sector have been lost. (BBC News, 2016) To try and put a stop to these closures and to highlight the importance that libraries still have in the modern world, a new report was written in 2016, highlighting this importance and showing to both the government and public that the public libraries still have a part to play in the future of the U.K.
Within this report, seven outcomes that they wish to achieve over the coming years from 2016-2021 have been highlighted and the second outcome is that they want to ‘improve digital access and literacy’ for all. (Department of Digital, Culture Media & Sport, 2016) They’ve recognised the importance of moving forward with technology and the world and bringing the library into the forefront. ‘As the world becomes more digital, access to technology and the ability to operate confidently and safely online are even more important.’

One of the issues encountered through researching of the literature is that although the public libraries are at the centre of providing ways to help people improve their digital literacy, staff sometimes felt they are not trained to help with confidence in the ways in which they are needed.

### 2.6 Staff Training

The American Library Association Office for Information Technology Policy (OITP Digital Literacy Task Force, 2013) has recommended the development of digital literacy ‘competencies for staff’ and has made it a priority. Not only that but that librarians themselves should have the skills to teach the patrons rather than just show them.

(Gerding, 2011) through research has found that librarians themselves would like more time to study, some library staff themselves feel that they do not have the basic digital literacy skills and so are not in a position to help others. They would like the opportunity to shadow more experienced staff and also gain knowledge on the basics of technology competencies.

During the Digital Literacy and Digital Inclusion Teachmeets in London and Leeds (Geekie, 2016) one of the major points raised was the up-skilling of librarians. Staff needed training in how to use certain digital devices properly before they could help the users of the library and also they needed to be kept up to date and trained in new apps and services that are online i.e. government services. Yvonne O Brien, Senior Executive Librarian with Fingal council also speaks about the importance of training staff as technology constantly changes. (Council.ie, 2014) ‘Extremely important to use the channels that people are using every day, Twitter, Facebook...it is very important to up-skill staff.’
2.7 Digital Literacy Initiatives in America

A large majority of the literature that the researcher found during this literature review came out of America. Although public libraries in different states seem to pilot different schemes and programmes, the general consensus from the government down to the libraries themselves seems to be an acknowledgment of the importance of being digitally literate, of bridging the digital divide and ensuring that all citizens of their country have equal opportunities. Young, old and immigrants amongst others have all been included in various different schemes highlighting the importance of digital literacy to everyone.

COX Communications cable and internet provider have teamed up with the ALA (American Library Association) and the PLA (Public Library Association) to help improve digital literacy skills in disadvantaged communities. Pat Esser (Chant, 2017) states one of the reasons why this pilot project came about was because ‘experience with computers and the internet is necessary for competing in today’s digital world.’

This partnership not only launched digital literacy initiatives in Rhode Island libraries but also a website www.digitallearning.org which gives people practical lessons on subjects such as how to book a plane ticket online, protect their security online and also how to apply for jobs online.

Another area which is introducing digital literacy initiatives in Topeka, KS. Topeka public library has been working on a project with the housing authority to try and bridge the digital divide. Their goal is to help people who have no internet connection or any instruction on how to use it which is ‘putting them at a disadvantage.’ (Banks and King, 2017)

Presently they have four main initiatives running. Topeka library has created a computer program where they can sell old, refurbished computers to the public who needs them at a low price. (‘New Americans and the Digital Literacy Gap’, 2012) As well as this, those who buy the computers will have an opportunity to take part in a digital literacy course. Finally, Topeka has also teamed up with Cox Communications to bring low-cost internet to low income families.

Digital literacy initiatives take many forms in the United States. They have recognised that their immigrants may have had less of an introduction to technology than most US citizens.
There have been pilot programmes in libraries to try and rectify this including Idaho’s ‘Train the Trainer’ program. Here the libraries in partnership with the Idaho Office of Refugees have created a program whereby the library trained 12 ‘new’ Americans in digital literacy skills including ‘skills they need to apply for jobs, find information for their family, help their kids with school’ etc (‘New Americans and the Digital Literacy Gap’, 2012) These 12 trainers would in turn train other immigrants in these digital literacy skills.

The training wasn’t specifically for libraries and so the librarians where surprised when their 12 trainers returned to the library 71 percent of the time to use its facilities for their coaching sessions rather than the 25 percent that they were expecting. (‘New Americans and the Digital Literacy Gap’, 2012)

In the San Francisco Bay area, libraries have found that since adapting to and introducing their digital literacy programmes that the libraries have gotten busier. And ‘any rumour of waning relevance of libraries are immediately put to rest.’ (Gross, 2015) The increase in footfall and usage has extended their library hours to opening 7 days a week and the usage of their e-collections nearly doubled in size.

2.8 Relevance of Dissertation

Technology is a major part of the world today. Whether it’s simply watching television, scrolling through a smart phone on the early morning commute, using an ATM or applying for a job online, the list is endless. Without having the skills to use the technology that is encountered on a daily basis, a person will struggle to get by in this modern world.

Digital literacy skills are essential and public libraries are in a good position to offer courses to those who need it most. The vast majority of literature that the researcher reviewed was from outside of Ireland. Much of work done on this subject is in America, Canada and Eastern Europe and although Ireland recognises the need and importance of being digitally literate, there is a definite gap in literature in the country and public libraries amongst others would benefit from a new piece of research in this area. And although the recognition of the importance of being digital literate is there, more needs to be done to highlight it to those who need it most.
Chapter 3: Research Methods and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This following chapter will discuss the research methods and methodology used to help gather the data and how it was chosen and developed to suit this particular dissertation. The term method refers to ‘techniques and procedures used to obtain and analyse data.’ (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015) and methodology refers to ‘the theory of how research should be undertaken.’ (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015)

The difference between these two concepts was taken into consideration and elements of both used to help collect the required data. (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015) outline a systematic approach to gathering data and this approach will be utilised for this dissertation. This approach is known as the research ‘onion’. As seen below in figure 1.1, this approach is a layered approach and data collection is the last step in understanding this process. Research must start from the outside i.e the research philosophy and work inwards through the layers before finishing with data collection and data analysis.

![Saunders Research Onion](https://culcchenz38.wordpress.com/)

The Research Onion (https://culcchenz38.wordpress.com/)

Following this method the following chapter will include an overview of the research objectives of the dissertation, research philosophy, research approach, research strategy, population and sample, data collection, ethical issues and limitations to the research.
3.2 Research Objectives

The research objectives of this dissertation are set in the context of digital literacy in a public library setting and are as follows:

- To identify the digital literacy initiatives which are currently in place in Dublin Public Libraries.
- To investigate the awareness of librarians and library assistants of digital literacy and the importance of it.
- To identify if staff feel they have the relevant skills and knowledge to teach digital literacy to library patrons and what training and support to deliver these programmes are available to them.
- To identify barriers to implementing these initiatives.
- To establish if any improvements can be made for the future of these initiatives.

3.3 Research Philosophy

According to (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015, p. 124) research philosophy ‘refers to a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge.’ Philosophies differ from person to person and influence the way in which research is carried out. Saunders et al (2015) identify five major philosophies; positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, postmodernism and pragmatism.

Through reading of literature and researching these philosophies, the researcher first found that as the method of gathering the data would be mainly quantitative, that a positivism philosophy would best suit the research. Positivism, according to (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015, pg 135) aims to ‘produce law-like generalisations’ and ‘unambiguous and accurate knowledge’. Positivism is rigid and attempts to apply one ‘universal’ rule to all. It is associated with quantitative research as this research is very factual and mathematical and is usually the philosophy that is associated with a web survey such as the one to be carried out during this dissertation.

To take a positivism approach the axiology (role of values) of this philosophy is that the researcher is seen as ‘independent’ from the respondents and keeps an objective stance at all
times. As the research is being carried out with a web survey, the researcher has no contact with the respondents and so will less likely to influence any answers that might be given or show a bias towards any specific option. (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015, p.137)

As the research developed and the method had to take on more of a mix methods approach, the researcher had to determine another approach which would leave a bit more flexibility in their thinking and a bit more freedom in the methods of data collection that could be used and so believes that Pragmatism is most suited to the research.

### 3.3.1 Pragmatism
(Creswell, 2013, p. 11) explains that those who choose pragmatism are ‘not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality.’ According to (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015, p. 143) the view of a pragmatist is that it is ‘possible to work with different types of knowledge and methods…that multiple methods are possible and possibly highly appropriate within one study.’ This applies to the pluralistic/ mixed methods approach that will be undertaken in this research.

Although the primary research method used will be a web survey, the researcher had to include open-ended questions to get the best data from the respondents. Also, an email interview had to be carried out instead of the web survey in one of the authorities, for this reason, a pragmatist approach best served this research methodology as it is less restrictive and gave the researcher the ability to ‘choose the methods, techniques and procedures of research that best meet their needs and purposes.’ (Creswell, 2013, p. 11)

### 3.4 Research Approach
The research approach that was chosen for this dissertation is an inductive approach. This approach starts by ‘collecting data to explore a phenomenon’ (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015, p. 145) This approach is more relevant to this research than a deductive approach as a deductive approach starts with a hypothesis/ theory and then begins to try and test this theory (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015, p. 146)
This dissertation does not have a hypothesis or theory but instead has objectives which are to investigate and identify amongst others, the digital literacy initiatives in public libraries and from this come to a conclusion or theory i.e ‘theory follows data’ (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015, p. 147) Not only this but the inductive approach is less rigid than that of the deductive approach which also means it worked well with the pragmatism philosophy and the mixed method approach that had to be undertaken.

3.4 Time Horizon

There are two time horizons that are normally taken into account when designing research. Whether it will be cross-sectional or longitudinal. This piece of research will be cross-sectional as the limited time available will only allow research of a ‘snap-shot’ in time. (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015, pg. 200)

3.5 Research Strategy

The research strategy for this dissertation began as a quantitative approach, with a web survey as the chosen method to gather the data. There were a large number of recipients initially and so a web survey was deemed the best approach to reach them given the time limitations of the research. Not only this, but a web survey would give the opinions of many more people than a qualitative approach such as an interview or focus group.

The researcher thought that this was important for objectives such as investigating the awareness of librarians and library assistants of digital literacy and the importance of it. And also to identify whether or not the staff of the libraries felt they had the skills to be able to teach digital literacy initiatives. These objectives in particular swayed the need for the research strategy to be a quantitative web survey as they require more than just one opinion.

As the research began and the prospective recipients contacted, it became clear that another approach would have to be taken also. With this a pluralistic/mixed methods approach would have to be used to help to gather the data.

This approach was chosen after careful consideration of both the quantitative and qualitative methods and it was chosen for the reason that it ‘provides a stronger understanding of the
research problem or questions’ (Creswell, 2013, p. 226). Using a mixed methods approach means that the dissertation can ‘overcome the limitations of a single design,’ (Biddix, 2009) which had become apparent to the researcher as they began to gather the data through the web survey.

3.6 Population and Sample

3.6.1 Quantitative Research Population

The final quantitative population and sample is as follows:

Elements – Librarians and assistant librarians

Units – Dublin Public Libraries

Extent – Fingal authority, South Dublin and Dun Laoghaire - Rathdown (25 libraries in total)

Time – 26th June 2017 – 24th July 2017 (within this time all surveys should be completed and collected and the web survey will be closed on the 24th July)

The researcher had first proposed to distribute web surveys to all authorities in Dublin. There are four Dublin authorities which include; Dublin City, Fingal, South Dublin and Dun Laoghaire - Rathdown.

Dublin City declined to circulate the web survey and so the proposed population of the questionnaire which had previously been (51 libraries) had to be decreased to 25 libraries.

A differing amount of people was reached within each of the authorities.

South Dublin Authority sent the survey to 83 staff members – this included library cleaners, attendants, 15 mobile drivers and 2 staff who are absent from work due to long term illness.

Dun Laoghaire - Rathdown Authority shared that they sent the survey to 87 staff members but did not give a breakdown of who was included in this 87 and whether or not it was just librarians and library assistants that received it.

Fingal Authority sent the survey to 10 staff members of which a high proportion where on annual leave at the time, approximately 20% when the survey was sent out.

South Dublin Authority and Dun Laoghaire - Rathdown also advised that staff members would be on annual leave during the period when the web survey would be distributed.
Also, because of the nature of how the web survey was distributed, it reached and was responded by more than just librarians and librarian assistant. Those recipients include staff officers and a divisional librarian.

3.6.2 Qualitative Research Population
The qualitative research population is Anne-Marie Kelly, Divisional Librarian, Library Development and Marketing from Dublin City Library and Archive. As the Dublin City Authority declined to distribute the web survey amongst their staff of the 26 libraries in the authority, Anne-Marie Kelly took part in a short email interview and also answered the web survey, she then followed up a few weeks later with a short phone call to explain some figures and information that she was forwarding in a second email. Some of these figures (2014) can be found in appendix one.

3.7 Data Collection, Editing, Coding and Analysis
3.7.1 Web Survey
A web survey instrument has been chosen as the primary data collection method as it ‘allows the collection of standardised data from a sizable population in a highly economical way, allowing easy comparison’ (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015, p. 181)

The main reason this collection method has been chosen is due to time constraints and the logistics of approaching and gathering information from 26 different libraries over a large area in a very short period of time. It also gave the opportunity for a broad range of data to be collected, with the opportunity to ask numerous different questions to numerous different people without having to physically be in each location. It is important to get the views of as many staff in the libraries as possible to see what differences might arise between the 26 libraries and the reasons for these differences.

The survey was created and distributed using Survey Monkey (www.survey monkey.com) and data was collected using the same. The monthly plan of 35 euro was chosen as it allows an unlimited amount of questions in the survey and up to 1000 replies can be received per month. It also has the option to analyse data and create graphs. It is with this that the researcher analysed the closed ended questions.
The open-ended questions however were manually coded using techniques suggested by (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015, pg 579 - 617) and then analysed using Microsoft Excel. Graphs of the results were also created using Microsoft Excel.

The survey contained 15 questions of which 3 were opened ended and 2 contained the ‘other’ option meaning they also had an open-ended option.
A copy of the survey can be found in appendix two.

3.7.2 Email Interview
The email interview was also manually coded and analysed through Microsoft Excel. This interview was not conducted like a usual interview. The interviewee took questions from the survey and sent information to the researcher on each of these questions. A few weeks later, after initial contact, the interviewee took part in a short phone call were she offered some statistics on the information that had been previously supplied.

3.8 Ethical Issues and Procedure

‘In the context of research, ethics refers to the standards of behaviour that guide your conduct in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of your work, or are affected by it.’ (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015, p. 239) Ethical concerns arose throughout all areas of the planning and implementing of the dissertation and to ensure they are dealt with appropriately and in a way that all ethics are upheld, Saunders et al (2015) has outlined a set of principles that identifies a number of ethical issues that can arise and these principles, were applicable, will be used throughout the process of this dissertation.

These principles include but are not limited to:

- Integrity and objectivity of the researcher – ensuring that the researcher is honest and open at all times and also that findings will be reported accurately and data is not altered in anyway.
- Respect for others/avoidance of harm – Ensure the rights of all those involved are respected. Participants will not be put under any pressure to take part in either the interviews or the questionnaire. They will be assured that participation is voluntary and they can withdraw from either at anytime and decline to answer any questions which they feel may be intrusive.
Privacy of those taking part - Ensuring that all personal details of those taking part are respected and kept secure. No identifying questions such as age, name etc will be asked for on the questionnaire as they are not needed for the research.

Informed consent was gotten from participants of the survey. A cover letter was added to the beginning of the survey, informing participants that the survey was completely voluntary and that they could choose to withdraw from it at anytime.

The questions were also prepared in a way that any individual question could be abstained from without affecting the rest of the survey. This was also highlighted to the participants in the cover letter provided.

No identifying questions were asked within the survey and no email addresses were shared to the researcher at anytime.

A consent form was sent to Anne – Marie Kelly, explaining what was involved in the research and asking for permission to use her name and the information she provided within the research. As with the surveys, she was informed that her participation was completely voluntary, that she could choose to stop participating at anytime and also not to have her name or any other identifying details included in the dissertation. The consent form was signed and returned and is located in appendix three.

3.9 Limitations to the Research

There are a few limitations to the research which need to be identified and taken into account. One of the major limitations of the research was that Dublin City declined to distribute the questionnaire out to staff. Although information was received and utilised for the study it did not contain personal opinions from staff and it also meant that the largest authority in Dublin did not take part and as such 24 libraries in Dublin were left out of the research.

Another limitation is the time frame in which the research and analysis is to be carried out. Not only is 12 weeks a short period of time to carry out the research but it also falls during the summer holiday period and a number of those to be surveyed were on annual leave at the time. As this was an issue, a request was sent to the three authorities to resend the survey or a reminder email about it. Two of the authorities resent the survey while the third declined to do so. This reminder resulted in 10 more surveys from the two smallest authorities.
(Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015, p. 441) identifies that the response rate to questionnaires can be as low as 30 percent at times and this must be taken into account as it can affect results.

Questionnaires themselves have limitations which people must also be made aware of, these include the participants not being able to input any extra information that they would like to unless there were specific comment boxes available and as well, the recipient can also choose not to answer questions which happened in a few cases during this study.

Not having direct access to all the staff of the libraries and having to rely on a third party to send out the questionnaires and follow up if they have not been filled out is another major limitation. The time was limited when having to rely on emails back and forth as a method of communication.

The researcher also acknowledges that the web survey may have been sent out a bit prematurely to participants with the pressure of the time restraints and that a question asking which authority they were from should have been added to the survey so that each authority could have been examined on their own and also a question about the ‘Opportunities for All’ strategy is missing.

Furthermore after receiving the depth of information that Dublin City authority sent through their email interview, perhaps a qualitative method would have been a better method for this dissertation and with more time allocated to carry out the research, the researcher would have chosen to interview participants or would have created a focus group within each of the authorities.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis/ Findings

4.1 Introduction

In the following chapter the results of both the web survey and e-mail interview will be analysed and the findings for each question will be presented. An overview of the response rate of the questionnaire will first be given, followed then by the findings of each question and also some examples of answers received which the researcher considers important to share. If any themes linked to the literature review and objectives emerge this too will be included. The second half of the chapter will then state the findings of the e-mail and phone interview and also figures that were received in a follow up email.

4.2 Response Rate

The survey was sent to 180 staff of three Dublin authorities. Fingal, Dun Laoghaire – Rathdown and South Dublin. The survey was distributed by a third party within each authority. 83 of these surveys were sent to Dublin South Authority and included in this mailing list were library cleaners, attendants, 15 mobile drivers and 2 staff who were absent due to long term illness.

87 staff was reached by the survey in the Dun Laoghaire- Rathdown Authority. It is not known what the breakdown of staff reached was as it was not provided by the email correspondent.

Fingal Authority sent the survey to 10 staff members of which 20 percent were on annual leave at the time.

Overall 180 web surveys were distributed and 62 replies received giving a response rate of 34.4%. Progress was slow at the beginning and a reminder email was sent to two of the authorities which resulted in more replies. Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown advised that they do not send reminder emails and so this second opportunity for more responses was missed in the biggest authority out of the three web survey receivers. Also, the researcher was advised that staff members would be on annual leave at the time the web survey was distributed and so this may also have impacted the response rate.
4.2 Completion Rate

Some of the respondents chose to exercise their right to not answer some questions within the web survey. Although all respondents finished the survey 12 of the 15 questions have missing responses further decreasing the rate of the response in some instances.

4.3 Job Title

The first question of the web survey asked the respondents what their job title was. One of the objectives of the study was to speak to librarians and library assistants. As the survey was sent out too all employees of the libraries, some replies were received from other staff.

The largest majority of those who replied to the survey were library assistants with 44% percent of all respondents. The second highest respondents were senior library assistants at 20%. 8 respondents chose to skip this question, leaving 54 replies. A full breakdown of respondents can be seen in the graph below, Figure 2.
4.4 Full or Part-time

Question 2 of the web survey asked respondents whether they were a full time or part time employee within their library. 95.16% of those who took part in the web survey were full time employees, with 4.84% part-time. All respondents chose to answer this question. The results can be seen below in figure 3.

![Figure 3: Full or Part Time](image)

4.5 Number of Years

The third question of the web survey asked respondents how long they have been working in their current area of employment. The largest majority were those who had been working in their area of 12 years or more at 32.26%, secondly were those working for between 1-3 years which came in at 24.19%. 17.74% of those had been only in their current place of employment for less than a year. Between 4-8 years was 14.52% of respondents and 8-12 years came in last at 11.29%. All respondents answered this question and results can be seen below in figure 4.

![Figure 4: Number of Years in Current Library](image)
4.6 Familiarity with the term Digital Literacy

Question 4 then asked respondents if they were familiar with the term Digital literacy. The majority of those surveyed, 95.16% stated that they were familiar with the term. All respondents chose to answer this question and results can be seen in figure 5.

![Figure 5: Familiarity with the term Digital Literacy](image)

4.7 Definition of Digital Literacy

As a follow up to question 4, question 5 asked respondents to briefly outline what being digitally literate meant to them. Two respondents chose not to partake in this question. As shown previously in the literature review, the term digital literacy has had many different meanings and definitions throughout the years resulting in some confusion, misunderstanding and misuses throughout the years as to what it means.

The very first definition spoke about how it was the ability to use all the resources that were connected to a computer only. (Gilster, 1998) More modern definitions talk about not only being able to physical use an electronic device but also speak about the behaviours and practices of using these devices, being a critical thinker and being able to interpret the information they are seeing. (Jisc, 2014)

As can be seen below in figure 6, numerous different responses were received. This question was left open-ended and all responses were different with no same definition being used by any of the 60 respondents. Although some of the responses received could be grouped together under a similar heading, some were entirely unique to the others.
28 percent of respondents said that being digitally literate was a person being competent in using computers and other digital devices such as smart phones, tablets and IPods. 20% of those surveyed thought that being digitally literate was the ability to use online services (such as banking) on digital devices.

12% thought being digitally literate was the ability to find and use the information you require on a digital device and 10% of respondents said it was having the ability to navigate the internet alone.

7% of respondents consider being digitally literate as having the ability to read, write and learn on a digital device and 3% of respondents believe it to just be a familiarity or awareness of digital technology.

3% of those surveyed consider being digitally literate being competent in the use of computers only and a following 3% believe it is having confidence in using computers and social media.

2% considered the phrase to mean a person could not use any technology and another 2% spoke about how it is having access to digital devices.

3% consider the phrase to mean a person could understand the programming of a digital device and 2% of respondents felt being digitally literate was being able to communicate using a digital device.

2% believed it was being able to use a keyboard to access information online, while another 2% felt it was the ability to use new technology. And lastly, 2% felt it was the ability to critically understand information. These figures can be seen below in figure 6.
These findings seem to be similar to what can be found in the research around this area. There seems to be no one definition that Dublin Public Library staff know or use within their practice. And some of those who replied seem to be using the oldest version which discusses being able to use a computer only and is very much outdated in this modern, technological society. (Gilster, 1998)

4.8 Importance

Question 6 asked respondents whether or not being digitally literate was an important skill to have. One recipient declined to answer this question. As can be seen below in figure 7, 74% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement that digital literacy is an important skill to have. 1.64% disagreed with this statement, while the remaining 24.59% agreed.

Q6 Digital Literacy is an important skill to have.
4.9 Libraries Position

Question 7 then asked respondents if they thought public libraries were in a good position to promote digital literacy to the public. One recipient declined to answer this question. As can be seen below in figure 8, almost 100% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. 49.18% strongly agreed and 47.54% agreed. 1.64% of the survey population were unsure about this statement and another 1.63% disagreed.

These findings seem to be in line with the literature in the area. (Young, R and Benton, S, 2015) discuss in their article about how libraries are ‘technology gateways’. (Agosto, D.E, 2016) also spoke about how libraries have begun to focus more on the community’s needs than in the past and have recognised being able to use technology as one of these needs.

(Council.ie, 2014) from an Irish perspective have also mentioned how libraries have become the ‘heart’ of the community and have recognised they have to keep up with the ‘needs’ of that community.

The results of this question seem to indicate that librarians, assistant librarians and the other staff surveyed in the three authorities acknowledge what the literature has begun to say around the need for libraries to work with the technological world rather than against it and see their libraries as important when it comes to the promotion of digital literacy skills for the public and that they are in a good position to do so.

**Q7 Public libraries are suitably positioned to promote digital literacy to the public.**

![Figure 8: Position of Public Libraries for Digital Literacy Promotion](image-url)
4.10 How often do patrons of the library approach for help with technology?

Question 8 asked the respondents how often they were approached by a library patron for help in regards to a technological/digital issue i.e. help with email or printing. Two recipients declined to take part in this question.

A large majority of those who responded, 65% stated that they were approached by or helped a patron with a technical issue more than 3 times a day. 10% were approached less than 3 times a day.

18.33% were approached 2-6 times per week. 5% were approached less than 2 times per week and 1.67% were never/almost never approached. Results can be seen below in figure 9.

![Q8 How often are you approached by a library patron for help in regards to a technological/digital issue i.e help with email, printing etc?](chart)

**Figure 9: Frequency of patron requests for technical assistance**

4.11 Providing help with other technology

Question 9 was a follow up question to question 8 and asked the respondents did they provide help with other technology? They were given the opportunity to tick all the devices that they applied and also an open-ended ‘other’ category if they needed to write something which was not listed. One recipient declined to take part in this question.

Smart phones and tablets were the most popular devices that librarians helped with coming in at 75.41% and 77.05% respectively. 8.2% helped patrons with cameras and 9.84% of the
librarians had helped with music devices. 13.11% stated that they had not helped with any other devices.

Within the ‘other’ category, some of the respondents shared that they had helped patrons with laptops, e-readers, computers and iPods. One respondent stated they often help with something ‘as simple as attaching an email.’

Other tasks that librarians have helped with included helping patrons search the internet, print from the libraries systems, saving documents and screen capture on a device. They have also helped with audio books and the libraries online catalogue. Downloading documents and books to a tablet was another popular response and the most frequent in the ‘other’ section was helping patrons access the Wi-Fi in the library and use the printers to scan and photocopy documents.

Also another respondent stated how they often need to help patrons with ‘some of the online services that we offer, such as One Click Digital or Zinio.’ These results can be seen below in figure 10.

**Q9 Do you provide help with other technology? Please tick all that apply.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>Answered</th>
<th>Skipped</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smartphones</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tablets</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameras</td>
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<td>Music Devices</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 10: Assistance with other technical queries*

**4.12 Digital Literacy Programmes**

Next question 10 asked respondents to list what digital literacy initiatives are currently being delivered in their library. Seven respondents declined to answer this question. 17% of those surveyed stated that there were no initiatives taking place in their libraries. One of those respondents who stated that they had none also said:
‘Delivery of digital literacy programmes must be linked to adequate staff numbers. It’s impossible to deliver such worthwhile initiatives with inadequate staff numbers.’

Another 17% claimed that Vodafone Smart Phone classes took place but no other program. 11% stated that there were computer classes in their libraries but that these were done by an outsourced organisation and not the library staff. These organisations include Age Action Ireland, ‘Tea and Teach’ from Bank of Ireland and the VEC (Vocational Education Committee).

11% of libraries had their own computer skills/courses/e-reader classes and 4% of those surveyed said that they had TTRS classes in place (Touch-type, Read and Spell) for students with dyslexia.

4% had creative/programming classes which included coding for children, 3D Printing, scribble bots, makey makey, website design, Learn languages online, Zinio, One Click Digital.

6% had e-services in their libraries including an online catalogue. 4% said they had programmes but did not list them. 26% of the libraries had two or more of the programmes in their library. These results are below in figure 11.

Figure 11: Extent of Digital Literacy Programmes in Public Libraries
The results from this survey question seem to fall in line with what has been written in recent literature. In America, they seem to have also started outsourcing a lot of their digital literacy programmes. This can be seen in (‘New Americans and the Digital Literacy Gap’, 2012) and (Banks, R and Lee King, D, 2017) where libraries have teamed up with the government or private companies who are funding digital literacy initiatives for the libraries.

4.13 Advertising

Question 11 asked the respondents if these programmes were advertised within the library for patrons. Seven respondents skipped the question. As seen below in figure 94.55% of recipients of the web survey said that they were advertised within the library, while the other 5.54% stated that there was no advertising within the library.

![Figure 12: Internal Promotion of Digital Literacy Programmes](image)

**Q11 Are the programs advertised within the library?**

4.14 Advertising continued

Question 12 was an extension of question 11 and asked the respondents if the digital literacy programmes where advertised outside of the library, and if so, where? 7 respondents skipped this question. As can be seen below the question was not asked correctly and the majority of the respondents chose to reply in the ‘other’ category.

As seen below in figure 13, 18% said yes that they were advertised outside the library and 20% said no that they were not advertised outside.
61% chose to state were these programmes were being advertised, some of these places included online on the libraries website, in the libraries brochure and on websites that offer the outsourced training e.g. Age Action Ireland.

Some other places that were mentioned include the library mailing list, posters put up around the local area and one respondent stated that their library advertised in UCD and another library advertised with direct contact with some schools.

The outside agencies such as Vodafone, also had their own advertising for the initiatives in their shops and on their websites. One of the respondents also said; ‘Facebook, which is ironic as you need digital literacy to access it’

Other areas included the local radio station, events guide, www.boards.ie.

Out of the 34 responses in the ‘other’ section, 4 respondents stated they did not know if their library advertised outside.

Q12 Are the programs advertised outside of the library? If yes, where?

![Bar chart showing the results of the question](image)

**Figure 13: External Promotion of Digital Literacy Programmes**

4.15 Online Services

Question 13 then asked the respondents if their library offered training to the patrons of the library for their own online services. 50.85% said that their library did offer training, while 49.15% said their library did not offer this service. 3 respondents skipped this question.

Please find the results of this question below in figure 14.
4.16 Comparison

Question 14 asked respondents to rank digital literacy programmes in importance in comparison to regular literacy programmes. One respondent skipped this question. 77.05% of respondents ranked digital literacy programmes as important as literacy programmes. 3.28% said that they were more important, 8.2% said that they were unsure and 11.48% said that they were not as important. Results can be found below in figure 15.

4.17 Staff Training

The final question of the web survey, question 15, asked the respondents if they themselves had received training in how to delivery digital literacy initiatives to the patrons of their libraries. One respondent skipped this question.
72.13% stated that they had not received any training and 27.87% of respondents stated that they had received some form of training in delivering digital literacy programmes. These results can be seen below in figure 16.

The literature surrounding this area talks about the importance of the staff in libraries being trained in digital literacy skills. The topic was raised at recent TeachMeets (Geekie, 2016) were they spoke about the importance of up-skilling staff. They argued that with the constant change taking place in technology that the librarians own skills may fall behind as well and that they will not be able to offer help in the future when asked. Librarians themselves spoke about the need to up skill and having the confidence in their abilities when asked to help. (Gerding, 2011)

4.18 Digital Literacy Initiatives in Dublin City Authority.

Anne-Marie Kelly is the divisional librarian, within the Library Development and Marketing area of Dublin City Library and Archive. As the web survey could not be distributed within the Dublin City Authority, Ms Kelly provided information on behalf of the authority to coincide with the questions of the web survey.

Ms Kelly started by explaining that before the recession started Dublin City used to provide training for thousands of their patrons between the years of 2006-2009. This programme was a computer training programme called WEBSMART which was delivered by Dublin City staff who had been trained in how to deliver basic internet search programmes for the public. The programme was a 4 week module with 1 hour one to one sessions once a week. From 2009 this programme began to go into decline.
2011 saw 1100 patrons partake in the programme and this declined in 2012 to 600 patrons and further declined to 586 in 2013. The figures for 2014 can be seen below in a table in appendix one that Ms Kelly provided. This figures show that between 7 libraries in the Dublin City Authority, there were 802 WEBSMART sessions, 569 of these were one to one sessions, altogether there were 243 modules and only 51 people completed all 4 modules.

Ms Kelly outlined some of the reasons for this decline in usage which included; libraries becoming extremely busy because of the recession, no new staff being recruited from 2008-2017, and during this time new technology began to emerge which the libraries could not afford to keep up with. And with this, the demand was not there from the patrons and staff were not trained on the new software and hardware that was outside of the libraries and so could not train the public in it when it was wanted.

From 2013 to 2017 Dublin City began to look at training from an external provider. Ms Kelly stated:

‘I looked into the possibility of external training provision for the public. I have used The Computer Gym to provide training at various times in the year in various libraries. This training firm receives its funding from Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources and the first training was called Digitise the Nation.’

Digitise the Nation was implemented in four libraries within the Dublin City Authority, these included, Cabra Library, Donaghmede Library, Ballyfermot Library and Central Library. In February and March 160 participants received training on this 4 week course, which ran 1 and a half hours per week.

In May and June of 2015 they also received funding to run a course about the safe use of social media for individuals and families. This course was delivered over 2 weeks in 6 different locations. These locations were Ballymun Library, Coolock Library, Pearse Street Library, Cabra Library, Rathmines Library and Walkinstown Library.

Ms Kelly also revealed that no digital literacy initiatives were ran in any of the 26 libraries in 2016 as the 1916 Commemoration programmes were the main focus of that year.
So far in 2017, 40 people had digital literacy training in Central Library and 30 people were trained in Dolphins Barn. Ms Kelly added to these figures, ‘Feedback was very positive from the public in regard to this course, with people commenting on how included they were and how this contributed to their well-being!’

Currently there is a course being ran over the summer in Pearse Street Library and a further 40 patrons will be trained in Coolock Library and Walkinstown Library in November of 2017.

In recent times, this training is now called Getting Citizens Online and is a 5 week course, 2 hours per week about searching the internet using IPads. Ms Kelly stated that, ‘the public seem to be happy with the way the training is delivered and it is targeted to someone who has never looked at a screen or keyboard.’

Dublin City is also piloting a Coding programme for children from the Dublin Central region called Coder Dojo. Here 30 children attended a 6 weeks course in Charleville Mall library during June and July of 2017.

Ms Kelly ‘feels that digital media can support and also compliment library collections’ and gave an example of a digital history programme that they ran researching 1916. During this programme, 23 children carried out research using the collections with Conor Kostick a historian and author. They then illustrated their own stories with the help of an illustrator called Alan Nolan and from here they then learned how to animate their stories with an animator named Maurizio Figarello.

There seemed to be no pattern as to how the programmes where allocated to each library and some libraries seemed to have had less than others. Ms Kelly was then asked how it was decided which library would benefit from which programme. She responded;

‘I usually circulate an email to offer courses for the public to all branches and the branches that respond to the email usually signify the fact that the public have been approaching them for basic internet courses.’

Ms Kelly also finished by stating that no staff training in this area had been done in recent times and that it was something she would have to review. Currently she is looking at
introducing Information Literacy training to her staff in the last quarter of 2017 on the subject of health information literacy. She wants to make certain that staff are familiar with and know about resources recommended by health librarians so that they can provide this information to the public. She feels this is an important area to look at as,

‘The area of information literacy is an area of great concern to us and we would like to see staff have more skills in this area to impart what are reliable sources of information. It’s also a unique selling point for public libraries in an age where there is such an avalanche of information, people want to know what that what they are reading has been researched/reviewed by experts.’

4.19 Dublin City Web Survey

Ms Kelly completed the web survey on behalf of the Dublin City authority; some of her answers were omitted from the survey findings as they compliment her email interview and the researcher decide the answers would be best used as a continuation of this.

Ms Kelly defined being digitally literate as ‘having skills to navigate software or hardware, to read, learn or use.’

When asked what initiatives/programmes are currently in her library, she gave an overview of some of the programmes and digital activities that take place in some of the libraries in Dublin City Authority.

Included here is the Getting Citizens Online 4 week basic course which is run by The Computer Gym in various libraries at different times throughout the year.

Dublin City Authority has Vodafone Smart phone classes in three of their libraries - Central Library, Walkinstown Library and Donaghmede Library. Coder Dojo programme is being piloted in Charleville Mall library with someone who is not a member of the Dublin City Council staff.

The Digital History programme took place in two libraries, Central Library and Dolphins Barn Library, also with staff who are not members of Dublin City Council. A staff member within Dolphins Barn helped in the digital side of the Digital History programme.
Chapter 5: Discussions

5.1 Introduction

The following chapter will discuss the findings of the primary research of this dissertation in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and also in relation to the research objectives of the study. As a reminder, the research objectives are as follows;

- To identify the digital literacy initiatives which are currently in place in Dublin Public Libraries.
- To investigate the awareness of librarians and library assistants of digital literacy and the importance of it.
- To identify if staff feel they have the relevant skills and knowledge to teach digital literacy to library patrons and what training and support to deliver these programmes are available to them.
- To identify barriers to implementing these initiatives.
- To establish if any improvements can be made for the future of these initiatives.

This chapter will also discuss the limitations of the research which could be taken into account for any future research on the topic of digital literacy in public libraries.

5.2 Awareness of/ and defining the term Digital Literacy

Since its inception in the 1990’s, the term Digital Literacy has been defined countless times in many ways with the literature surrounding the subject in Chapter 2 supporting this statement. From (Gilster, 1998) who’s definition first introduced the term but talks about only needing these skills to be able to use computers, to one of today’s more modern definitions by (Jisc, 2014) who talks about these skills going beyond that of just being able to use the technology being spoken about and also talks about critical thinking, lifelong learning and communication amongst others.

One of the objectives of this dissertation was to investigate the awareness of those who work in libraries about digital literacy. To garner their understanding and to see if there is a greater
perception of what digital literacy is and what it means for people in today’s modern society. As technology surrounds us all every day, and is very much part of our everyday activities, from using our smart phones to make a call, checking the bus time table app or Google the fact you are trying to find. Do people realise the importance of being able to do this? And doing it properly? And if we can use a smart phone or bus app, do we take this usage for granted and leave those who cannot use this technology behind?

The survey showed that there is a lot of confusion towards the term ‘Digital Literacy’ and what it means for people. Although 95 percent of those who replied said that they were familiar with the term. When asked to then expand on this and outline what being digitally literate means to them, out of the sixty respondents who answered this question, all 60 of those replies were different.

And although answers could be grouped together under similar headings such as ‘familiarity with technology’ or ‘competency in the use of all digital devices,’ not one answer was the same. Replies as different as ‘an individual being able to conduct their business and leisure activity as comfortably online as they would off line’, ‘computer literate’ and ‘being a competent and knowledgeable user of digital media’ were received.

It is hard to say why there are so many different definitions of digital literacy and why there seems to be no one definition of the term that public libraries in the Dublin authorities are working under and if there is why is it not more widely known.

The literature encountered only talks about the difference in definitions over the years but none was encountered that surveyed or asked people to give their own definitions. As before, this is a question that if the survey was to be distributed again in the future, it would need to be expanded on. Unfortunately, once analysis of the findings had begun, the researcher realised a large majority of the questions only touched the surface of the topic.
5.3 Digital Literacy Initiatives in Dublin Public Libraries

Another objective of the research was to discover if there are digital literacy initiatives/programmes in Dublin Public libraries at the moment and what are they. 83% of those surveyed said that there were initiatives in their libraries but 26% of them declined to say what they were. Anne-Marie Kelly also went into detail about the initiatives of the Dublin City authority and why they were in place and how the particular libraries were chosen to hold them.

In the literature which focussed mainly on the initiatives that America has implemented, there was an emerging pattern of libraries teaming up with companies or being funded to implement these initiatives with the help of an outside partner. And not only this but different states and different regions within states would pilot and implement programmes irrespective of what other libraries were doing. An example of this would be Cox Communication and Internet Provider who teamed up with the ALA (American Library Association) and the PLA (Public Library Association) (Chant, 2017) to provide digital literacy initiatives for those who lived in Rhode Island.

A similar pattern seems to have emerged in Dublin Public libraries. Out of the 83% surveyed, 62% of libraries have outsourced their digital literacy programmes, relying on government funded initiatives or those ran by a company to offer the programmes to the public. These include Age Action Ireland running classes for the elderly, Vodafone Smartphone classes and TTRS classes for dyslexic children.

The survey did not expand on this area as the researcher had not realised that this would be the case so it is not known why Dun Laoighaire – Rathdown, Fingal and Dublin South Authorities outsource their digital literacy programmes.

Ms Kelly though, spoke about this in her phone interview, explaining that the reasons they have gone down this route and have stopped implementing the programmes themselves; were a decline in usage by patrons, no new staff being hired between 2008-2017 so they did not have the manpower to run them and this was on top of the libraries becoming very busy during the recession.
Furthermore, Ms Kelly explained that the technology in the libraries became out of date and they could not train their staff at the time on up to date technology in order to be able to implement these programmes. From speaking to Ms Kelly it would seem that these initiatives will stay for the near future, as long as their available in Dublin City and that there is a demand for them. They also seem to be ran on a ‘needs’ basis. Ms Kelly spoke about how she would send an email and those libraries which expressed interest on behalf of their patrons would be allocated a class.

This seems to be similar to the American initiatives were digital literacy programmes where funded in places of need, such as a disadvantage area with low income families like that of the Topeka Library. (‘New Americans and the Digital Literacy Gap’, 2012) Here families who could not afford to buy computers or tablets had the opportunity to learn about and use them in the classes in the libraries.

5.4 Training of Staff

During the Digital Literacy and Digital Inclusion Teachmeets in London and Leeds (Geekie, 2016), one of the points raised was the up-skilling of librarians and especially the need to train them in the newer technology of today.

The American Library Association Office for Information Technology Policy (OITP Digital Literacy Task Force, 2013) also back up this point and has recommended the development of digital literacy ‘competencies for staff’ and has made it a priority that it should be implemented as soon as possible.

Considering that 65% of staff surveyed are approached more than three times a day to help with some sort of a technology related query and that at least 75% of the time these query’s are on smart phones and tablets and the ‘newer’ technology of today, training of staff in digital literacy competencies should be a requirement in Dublin Public Libraries also. Yet, 72% of those surveyed have said that they have not received any type of digital literacy training and furthermore it does not seem to be on the agenda for the future.
Unfortunately there was not a follow up question to this question in the survey so we do not know why the Dun Laighaire- Rathdown, Dublin South and Fingal authorities have not been implementing training for their staff in this area.

Ms Kelly spoke about the want to introduce Information Literacy training for her staff in the area of health information literacy, perhaps some element of digital literacy training will also be included in this, in the area of searching for the information and being able to evaluate it critically.

5.5 Patron Training

One area of interest that did emerge and that was not found in the literature that was read, was the idea of training the public to use the e-systems that the libraries have, including their online catalogue and online programmes that can be accessed on here also, such as language classes.

While 83% of those surveyed told of how there were digital literacy programmes in their library, whether from the library themselves or an outside source. 50% of those surveyed said their library did not offer to train their patrons to use their online resources. And considering 74% of those who were surveyed strongly agreed that being digitally literate was an important skill to have, that perhaps it would start from teaching people the most basic thing the library can offer, their own online catalogue.

As spoken about in limitations earlier in the research, the researcher would have liked to have included more questions in the survey than they did. One of these questions would have expanded on the area of training for the libraries own e-services and why or why not it takes place in the respondents library.
5.6 Limitations

The study is limited in that it only takes into account the public libraries of the four Dublin authorities. It would be beneficial to have a nationwide study on the subject of Digital Literacy in public libraries and not only that but the difference between rural, disadvantaged and metropolitan areas. Perhaps it would give a better indication of what sort of programmes and initiatives are needed and a plan of allocation of this programmes could be developed.

The study is also limited in the size and questions of the survey and not being able to ask a person to further explain what it is they meant once the survey was completed. Any future research might benefit from a more qualitative approach or a broader mixed method approach with interviews or a case study. One of the biggest limitations of this research was the time allocated to do it. Any future study would benefit from a longer time frame and not only this but perhaps at a different time of the year when there would possibly be less staff of the libraries on annual leave.

During the literature review, the researcher found that there is very little research done on this area in Ireland and even less so done around the topic in public libraries. Unfortunately it was difficult to make proper comparisons of the results and relate them to Dublin or Ireland as the researcher could not find any similar studies, thus the discussion is perhaps not as in depth as it could have been.
Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

The following chapter will summarise the main findings of the web survey and the email/phone interview with Ms Kelly. It will discuss these finding in regards to the objectives of the study and the literature review, presenting conclusions and offering recommendations for future study in the area.

6.2 Summary of Findings in regards to Objectives

The first objective of this study was to:
- To identify the digital literacy initiatives which are currently in place in Dublin Public Libraries.

83% of those who responded to the web survey claimed that they had digital literacy initiatives within their libraries. Out of these 26% said that they had two or more initiatives in place. The large part of these initiatives are outsourced to government funded or charity organisations and private companies who liaise with the libraries to offer digital literacy programmes on behalf of their patrons e.g Age Action Ireland and Vodafone.

According to Ms Kelly from Dublin City authority, she looks to these companies as they have access to more up to date technology than the libraries, are funded outside the library and it has helped her in the past when her libraries were short staffed so she will stay with them for the foreseeable future as she concentrates on up skilling her staff in information literacy.

One of the findings of the survey was that, although many of the libraries had digital literacy initiatives in place, 49% of those surveyed said that they did not offer patrons training to use the libraries own e-services.

The second objective of this study was to:
- To investigate the awareness of librarians and library assistants of digital literacy and the importance of it.
95% of those who responded to the web survey were familiar with the term digital literacy and 74% of respondents strongly agreed that it is an important skill to have. What is surprising though is that, when asked to define digital literacy in their own words, every answer out of a possible 60 respondents was different. There was no single definition used by any of the respondents from any of the bodies who would have an official definition, e.g ALA or CILIP.

All respondents had their own impression of what digital literacy was and that was what they considered an important skill for people to have. The largest majority 28% of respondents could be grouped under the heading that being digitally literate meant being competent in the use of computers and other digital devices such as smart phones and tablets.

The third objective of the study was:

- To identify if staff feel they have the relevant skills and knowledge to teach digital literacy to library patrons and what training and support to deliver these programmes are available to them.

74% of respondents when asked strongly agreed or agreed that digitally literacy is an important skill to have. Almost 100% of respondents also strongly agreed or agreed that public libraries were in a good position to promote digital literacy to the public. 65 of respondents stated that they were approached more than three times a day to help a library patron with technology. This technology included the libraries own systems, computers, attaching emails, smart phones, tablets and a variety more of devices.

But even though they help the patrons of the library and feel that it is an important skill for people to have, 72% stated they had not received any form of formal training on delivering digital literacy initiatives or helping members of the public with this skill.

Ms Kelly from Dublin City authority spoke about training in her interviews and revealed it was something that had not been done for years due to reasons such as staff shortages through the recession and becoming extremely busy during this period. She stated it was something she wished to look at in the future but her current goal was to train her staff in delivering health literacy advice.
The fourth objective of the study was:

- To identify barriers to implementing these initiatives.

As previously discussed Ms Kelly mentioned some barriers which they have experienced in the past to implementing digital literacy initiatives in the Dublin City authority. During the recession and from the years 2008 – 2017 no new staff was recruited even though the libraries were extremely busy at the time.

Also new technology began to emerge through the years which the libraries could not afford to keep up with. With this, demand fell from the patrons and staff was not trained on the new software and hardware that was outside of the libraries and so could not train the public in it.

It was in 2013 then she began to look outside the library for digital literacy programmes. Unfortunately the survey did not quite have a question directly relating to the barriers. One of those who took part in the survey though spoke about how it is impossible to implement such programmes when there a too few staff in the library.

The fifth and final objective of the research was:

- To establish if any improvements can be made for the future of these initiatives.

Ms Kelly spoke about her desire to implement training to her staff in the area of digital literacy but was uncertain of when it would take place as her goal is to first train them in information health literacy.

From speaking to her it seems that for the Dublin City authority libraries that they will keep looking to outsource the digital literacy programmes and that only libraries who express interest on behalf of their patrons will receive them. She also spoke about how today ‘digital media can support and compliment library collections’
6.3 Summary of Findings in regards to the Literature Review

6.3.1 Digital Literacy Initiatives
In terms of the literature that was reviewed, Dublin seems to be on par with some areas in America which have also taken to outsourcing their digital literacy programmes. Some literature which was found shows that companies such as Cox Communications have teamed up with the ALA and the PLA to initiate pilot programmes firstly in different libraries in different states to help improve the digital literacy skills of those patrons who live in disadvantaged areas. (Chant, 2017)

Although these articles did not cite any reasons such as Ms Kelly did for this i.e. the libraries being understaffed. There was a general consensus in the articles that digital literacy was an important skill to have and it was recognised from the government right down to the librarians and this is why these initiatives have developed through the years.

6.3.2 Digital Literacy Definition
The literature that was reviewed all spoke about the many different definitions of digital literacy through the years, from the very first by Gilster (Gilster, 1998) to more recent definitions from the ALA and Jisc (Visser and Marijke, 2012), (Jisc, 2014).

The literature talks about how like technology which has grown and changed through the years, so too has the definition to accompany it. It seems that through all of these changes that no one definition has emerged and stuck that people recognises.

As stated earlier, all 60 respondents who replied to the survey each had a different definition, although sometimes similar to each other, none of the respondents had an ‘official’ definition which they associated with the term and this is also reflected in the literature.
6.3.3 Importance of Public Libraries

The importance of public libraries was discussed at length in much of the literature that was reviewed. They spoke about how libraries have grown to focus on the needs of their communities rather than the needs of their collections. (Agosto, D.E, 2016)

Libraries have placed a particular emphasis on trying to keep up with technology and to make sure they are still a needed and valuable service to the public.

(Young, R and Benton, S, 2015) speak about how ‘no other institution rivals the significance of public libraries as technology gateways.’ And also commented about how they are at the forefront of supplying resources to the public, for free. Others have agreed with this and spoken about how libraries are the ‘bridge over the digital divide.’ (Manley, W, 2013)

It can be seen from the web survey that staff of the libraries feel they are a very important resource for the public, especially when it comes to providing digital literacy initiatives and programmes to them. Almost 100% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that libraries were in a good position to promote digital literacy to the public.

This may indicate that Irish public libraries since the beginning of their strategy ‘Opportunities for All’ 2013 – 2017 now recognise the role they play in digital literacy ‘...provide access to online and inlibrary sources...to support digital literacy skills for lifelong learning.’ (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2013)

6.3.4 Staff Training

The literature recognises the importance of up-skilling staff and training them in the area of digital literacy. Digital literacy is a skill like any other and if a person does not have this skill then they will be unable to teach it to others.

The American Library Association Office for Information Technology Policy (OITP Digital Literacy Task Force, 2013) has recommended the development of digital literacy ‘competencies for staff’ and has made it a priority.
Not only this but through the literature it can be seen that librarians themselves wish to be able to up-skill in this area. That some do not have the confidence in their own skills to be able to pass the skills to others.

72% of those surveyed stated they had not received any formal training in digital literacy. There was no option for the staff to say if they had the confidence to train others without this training so this is a question that should be asked in a future study.

6.3.5 Digital Divide

The digital divide was another theme which emerged from the reviewed literature. Although in its inception it was a term that described people being physically unable to access technology or the internet, like the definition of digital literacy, it too has grown and changed over time as more and more technology has emerged. And not only this, it has a differing meaning in different countries as it goes through this growing phase. (Jaeger et al., 2012) and (Dolnicar et al., 2014)

Although it needs to be investigated further, it may be that the digital literacy initiatives in Dublin are allocated to disadvantaged areas and this is an area that it would be recommended for further study which will be spoken about under the following heading.

Overall the study completed most of its objectives but as outlined previously, there were a few limitations which affected the overall completion of the study which the researcher would address in the future.
6.4 Recommendations

This study has provided a beginning into the research in the area of digital literacy in public libraries in Dublin. With the array of limitations to this study, it would be recommended that a follow up study took place with these limitations addressed.

Firstly a longer time frame would benefit this study immensely and also a different time period when less employees are likely to be on annual leave. Furthermore the study would benefit from an overhaul of its research methods, whereby a more in depth, longer questionnaire with more open ended questions would be distributed to the staff of the four Dublin authorities. Or if a survey is not possible, a qualitative method of a focus group from each authority or interviews should be utilised instead to gather more relevant data. Some interesting points began to emerge in this study so it would be beneficial to the public libraries of Dublin and Ireland to further study this area.

Based on the analysis of the findings, another recommendation would be to train staff on digital literacy. To give them a foundation and knowledge on the subject and allow them to develop their own skills so that they can teach the patrons of their libraries in confidence.

It is important that all public libraries in the four Dublin authorities work under one definition of digital literacy so that all staff has the same understanding and there will be no confusion in what is important to teach the patrons of the library.

It would also be beneficial for all libraries to train their users how to access the libraries online services. The libraries have a lot to offer and so the patrons should be able to experience this. A short introduction when the user is signing up for the service would save the librarian’s valuable time in the future on queries about how to use it.
Chapter 7: Reflection

7.1 Introduction and Background of Researcher

The following chapter will be a reflection of the researchers experience in the dissertation and journey through the Information and Library Management Masters and as such it will be written in first person. I will discuss my thoughts and feelings, address my strengths and weaknesses that I have discovered and give an overall view of what this journey has meant and done for me.

My background is in childcare. I have had no library experience prior to my work placement. My undergrad was in Early Childhood Care and Education and my places of work through the years have ranged from a preschool in a Community and Family Resource Centre to Full day care crèches. Although they have similarities, they were very different places to work and I gained a wide range of experience in this area. In July of 2013 I took a career break and went to Australia for a year, here I worked in a crèche and took time out then to see some of the country. When I returned home in July 2014, I was offered the role of supervisor in the Community and Family Resource Centre, which I accepted and worked in for nearly a year.

It was during this time of change and through that year that I realised childcare was not a sector I wished to continue working in, I felt I had learned all I could from it and I was not enjoying the work as I once had. From here I began to think of alternative careers, something meaningful to me, that I would enjoy and one day retire happily from. I have a passion for reading and literature as a whole and thought if I could surround myself with books all day that I would be very happy. And so with a bit of searching through Google I found the MSc in Information and Library Management. Within two days I had applied for it and three months later I had left my job in Kerry and moved to Dublin. It is a move I have never once regretted making.
7.2 Choosing a Research Topic

From the beginning of this dissertation journey, I knew it would be a difficult one at times. I had not thought about the dissertation much in first year; it was just something I knew was coming in the future. When the subject began to emerge more so in second year, I began worry as I had no idea for a topic, not even a broad idea of the area I would like to research. Although I had enjoyed every module of the course and had taken something away from each of them, one did not stand out above the rest and no topic had come to mind as a research topic until The Teaching Librarian module.

In The Teaching Librarian module we were introduced to Information Literacy and Digital Literacy amongst others. Information literacy is knowing ‘when and why you need information, where to find it and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner’ (CILIP, 2013) And Digital Literacy as previously ‘those capabilities which fit an individual for living, learning and working in a digital society... being ‘beyond the development of functional IT skills...richer set of behaviours, practices and identities involving critical thinking, reflection and life-long learning, communication, collaboration and social engagement.’ (Jisc, 2014) I found this module extremely interesting, it captivated my attention and it became an area I wanted to know more about.

Coming from a childcare background, I was nervous about researching an area, that apart from that which I had encountered and studied during the Masters, I had no experience in. So at the beginning I tried to bring my experiences together and having witnessed how children are growing with technology today, and how it is such a bit part of their life, I thought it would be interesting to research Digital Literacy Skills and if there was a necessity to introduce some form of teaching around this into preschools and childcare centres.

At the time I began to research this and there was very little literature and then logistically I began to think about how I would carry out this research and finally I came to the conclusion that it was perhaps not the correct topic for a Masters in Information and Library Management and I realised half way through the second semester of second year that I would have to change my topic and very nearly start again. Although stressful, I realised that this was the right action to take, that I needed to focus the dissertation in a way that it may help me as I start my career in this area.
7.3 The Literature Review

As I had changed my topic, I then had to begin the literature process again. I was not very familiar with this process in the first place having never had to do a literature review previously. I did find the process a bit difficult and time consuming and it took me a while to make my way around the databases and other resources that were available. I did find that The Teaching Librarian was an invaluable module for this area as it gave me a lot of information on how to find, evaluate and critic the sources I was looking at.

Once I had changed my topic, although I could still use some of the more generic, digital literacy material I had first found, I then had to set the task to find literature that would now be relevant to my new topic. It was a challenge but I am glad that I had to undergo that challenge as the skills I developed throughout that time will now be invaluable to me as I go forward in my career.

7.4 Research Design and Primary Research

Although I found a text with very logical steps to follow and a lot of information which helped me greatly, there was an aspect of the research design/strategy that I could not move on from for a few days and which worried me that I would not be able to finish that part of the dissertation in a logical manner. This section was research philosophy. I spent two full days trying to write this small section. Words such as ontological, objectivism and pragmatism; I could not get an understanding of them as much as I read and researched into them.

I found I had to take a break from this section, move on completely and when I finally came back to it, something clicked and I knew what I had to write. I think I may have doubted my abilities and the more I doubted the less it was going in until finally I trusted myself enough that I knew I understood what I was reading and that I would be able to write about it.

Another area in the dissertation process I found a little difficult was the primary research, some aspects of the research design and gathering my data. As my topic had changed, so to had my method of research. It was difficult to decide what would best suit the research and I was very conscious about the time constraints for completely the dissertation.
Throughout the second semester my primary research and gone from quantitative methods to mixed methods to quantitative and back again. In hindsight I feel that maybe my confidence prevented me from doing what would work best to gather the information. Interviews came up during the second semester and also during the 12 weeks of the dissertation process and I hesitated until it was too late and I had no time left to change my decision.

I think a qualitative method such as an interview or focus group would have gotten the most information around the topic and would have given the opportunity for follow up questions to have emerged fluidly which I now realise would have given a greater depth to the research and would have given more opportunities for analyse and discussion.

After contacting Ms Kelly between email and phone calls, I realise now my capabilities and will in the future know to follow my gut instinct and not let my confidence get in my way. It was a hard lesson to learn but one which has been learned and will serve me well in the future.

7.5 Writing the Dissertation

Although sometimes, a difficult process, writing the dissertation has been a rewarding process. It was daunting to me at first, the scale of the project. I have never had to write more than 10,000 words at a time and this included my undergrad thesis. And not along this, I had never had to write something with so many different parts that were each as important as the other and as reliant on the other.

My learning style had to change dramatically for this dissertation. I have always worked better under pressure and when I can see the deadline nearing me. Once I realised the scale of this dissertation and what was involved I had to try and improve my time management skills. At the time I was working full time as I had been for the entirety of my Masters. And not alone this, I was only able to book one week off work which meant I had to rely on late evenings and weekends to get my work done. I also went through an interview process and changed my job one week before the deadline of the dissertation. Although, hard and at times very stressful. I am proud of the achievement of researching and submitting this dissertation.
7.6 Conclusion

On completion of the MSc in Information and Library Management and of the dissertation, I realise that my decision back in 2015 to apply for the course and move to Dublin was the correct one. I did not realise the task that was ahead of me at the time, nor did I realise the change in person I would be at the end of the dissertation phase in 2017. Although challenging at times, stressful and more time consuming than I ever realised. I thoroughly enjoyed my time on this course. I have gained a lot of valuable knowledge through some excellent modules and I have also realised a passion that at first I thought was only something that I liked. Being a librarian is now a career path that I fully would like to follow and intend on doing so. Through the course of the two years I have realised that my childcare experience, instead of hindering like I first presumed will instead give me a unique skillset to bring forward to any interview in the future.

Not alone that, but I believe, even though it is not a librarian job but more so a stepping stone towards that career path, that the job I have recently started was awarded to me because of my experience in the MSc, because of the new skills and knowledge I have acquired over the past two years and most of all because of the new confidence in myself and my new and old abilities that I have acquired during my time in Dublin Business School.
Bibliography


## Appendix 1- Dublin City Libraries: Digital Literacy Session Statistics 2014

Dublin City Libraries

### MONTH

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Appendix 2 – Survey Information Sheet

Dear Participant,

This questionnaire is part of a research dissertation which is being carried out by Sheree Yeates, an MSc Information and Library Management Student at Dublin Business School.

The aim of the questionnaire is to analyse the digital literacy initiatives of public libraries in Dublin.

The survey is completely voluntary and if you do decide to take part your anonymity will be maintained at all times. You are allowed to abstain from answering any question and you are free to exit the survey at any time.

The questionnaire is made up of 15 mainly multiple choice questions and should take you approximately 5 minutes to complete.

Thank you for your participation, your contribution is much appreciated.

Next

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See how easy it is to create a survey.
Appendix 3 – Survey Questions

1. What is your current job title?

2. Are you:
   - [ ] Full time employee
   - [ ] Part time employee

3. Please select the number of years you have worked at your current library
   - [ ] Less than 1 year
   - [ ] 1-3 years
   - [ ] 4-8 years
   - [ ] 8-12 years
   - [ ] 12 + years

4. Are you familiar with the term digital literacy?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

5. Can you briefly outline what being digitally literate means to you?

6. Digital Literacy is an important skill to have.
7. Public libraries are suitably positioned to promote digital literacy to the public.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Unsure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

8. How often are you approached by a library patron for help in regards to a technological/digital issue i.e help with email, printing etc?

- More than 3 times a day
- Less than 3 times a day
- 2-6 times per week
- Less than 2 times per week
- Never/Almost never

9. Do you provide help with other technology? Please tick all that apply.

- Smartphones
- Tablets
- Cameras
10. Please list what digital literacy programmes are currently being delivered in your library.

11. Are the programmes advertised within the library?
   - Yes
   - No

12. Are the programmes advertised outside of the library? If yes, where?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Other (please specify)

13. Do you offer patrons training for your online services?
   - Yes
   - No
   - No online services
14. How would you rank digital literacy programmes in comparison to literacy programmes?

- More Important
- As Important
- Unsure
- Not as Important

15. How did you receive any training in delivering digital literacy programmes?

- Yes
- No

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at shereeyeates@hotmail.com

To conclude the survey, please click the Done button.