Public Libraries Demonstrating Value to the
Organisation.

Fingal County Libraries and Fingal County Council
– a case study.

Thesis submitted for qualification of MSc Information & Library Management

Dublin Business School

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Student Number: 10360676

Word Count: 20,071

August
2018
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Declaration.

I, Linda Larrigan, 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: Linda Larrigan.

Date: 20th August 2018.
Acknowledgements.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank some people who supported and encouraged me during this dissertation process.

Firstly, my employer Fingal County Council and in particular the staff in the Libraries Department who have always been a source of support and friendship and always will be – no matter where this journey leads me.

It is also important to acknowledge the contribution of Fingal County councillors, senior management and library management for their time and patience with the interview process, particularly in view of the time of year and their busy schedules. Without their co-operation this dissertation would not have been possible.

I would also like to acknowledge DBS library staff and all of the lecturers on the Masters programme in DBS whose patience, support and advice will stay me beyond this process. The most important person in this group is my supervisor Dr. Marta Bustillo. Her advice and guidance have been invaluable, and her gentle encouragement was instrumental in the completion of this project.

My classmates’ sense of fun and support cannot go unrecognised – especially the research into the best places to go for lunch and breaks.

Finally, thanks to all my understanding friends and family – you know who you are.
Abstract.

This study explores the perception of councillors and senior management of Fingal County Council of the contribution and value Fingal Libraries Department adds to the organisation. The aim of the research is to get an in-depth understanding of what councillors and senior management feel the role of Fingal Libraries is, the value of the service to the Council and whether library management is doing enough to demonstrate and communicate this value to this important group of stakeholders.

This was primarily a qualitative case study involving face to face and e-mailed interviews with Fingal councillors and senior management. Members of the library management team were also interviewed to ascertain their views on the issue.

Overall it appears that councillors and senior management are very much aware of the role of Fingal Libraries and the department’s place in the organisation. In terms of measuring and evaluating the service to demonstrate value the consensus appears to be that economic evaluation should be approached with caution as Fingal County Council is a public sector organisation providing services to the community. Traditional statistics combined with measuring outcomes and social benefit were the preferred measures of value.

The role of libraries in the provision of physical resources, access to technology, economic development, promoting literacy, art and culture are all considered to add value. The concept of the library as a ‘space’ and collaboration with internal departments and outside agencies emerged as continuing ways of libraries showing value in to the future. An interesting insight in to respondents’ views on the value of library staff to the organisation also emerged during interviews.

The overall conclusion is that councillors and senior management feel that the Library Department demonstrates and communicates its contribution and value to the organisation but agree more could be done – echoing the views of library management.
**Abbreviations.**

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>ALIA</td>
<td>Australian Library and Information Association</td>
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<td>CILIP</td>
<td>Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals</td>
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<td>EBLIDA</td>
<td>European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations</td>
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<td>FCC</td>
<td>Fingal County Council</td>
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<td>IFLA</td>
<td>International Federation of Library Associations</td>
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<td>KPI</td>
<td>Key Performance Indicator</td>
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<td>Library Association of Ireland</td>
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<td>LGMA</td>
<td>Local Government Management Agency</td>
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<td>LIANZA</td>
<td>Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearo</td>
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<td>LPT</td>
<td>Local Property Tax</td>
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<td>MLA</td>
<td>Museums, Libraries and Archives</td>
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<td>NALA</td>
<td>National Adult Literacy Association</td>
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<td>NOAC</td>
<td>National Oversight and Audit Commission</td>
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<td>OCLC</td>
<td>Online Computer Library Center</td>
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<td>ROI</td>
<td>Return on Investment</td>
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<td>SPC</td>
<td>Strategic Policy Committee</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
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Chapter 1. Introduction.

Public libraries have a long tradition of providing a diverse range of services to local communities in Ireland. The Public Libraries Act 1855 was the legal basis for the establishment of libraries in Ireland, while the Local Government Reform Act 2014 is the most recent legislation covering Irish Local Authorities and libraries.

The Department for Rural and Community Development establishes national policy and strategic direction for public libraries while the Library Development Unit of the Local Government Management Agency implements strategy at national level.

There are currently 31 Local Authorities across the country tasked with operating the public library network of 330 branch libraries and implementing policy at local level. Libraries Ireland is the new national identity promoting the public library service (Department of Rural & Community Development, 2017).

2016 statistics show that over 750,000 people are library members with over 17 million visits to public libraries and a 15% increase on expenditure on stock since 2012 (Department of Rural & Community Development, 2017). Libraries are a non-generating income stream of the Local Authority system and rely on tax payers funding to operate.

In view of this continued usage, investment and level of accountability following the Local Government Act 2014 it is important to investigate how public libraries are measuring the outcomes and value of their services and communicating this value to the organisation, to councillors and senior management.

Library management have recognised that it is no longer enough to rely on the assumption that public library provision is an investment in the community. Evidence based policy making has led to the need to demonstrate and communicate value to both the community and the organisation (Moore, 2017; Kelly, Mulgan, & Muers, 2002, p. 11).

The purpose of this research project is to investigate if Fingal Libraries Department is doing enough to demonstrate that it is contributing and adding value to the organisation that is Fingal County Council. The research is intended to analyse ways in which the department:

- currently measures and evaluates services
- the perception and awareness of councillors and senior management of the role and services of Fingal Libraries
• if they consider Fingal Libraries Department adds value to the organisation and if they are shown enough evidence of this contribution

This will be a qualitative study and will further examine the future potential for Fingal Libraries Department to demonstrate value and ensure that the department is at the top table when decisions are being made about resources, funding and the strategic objectives of Fingal County Council.


This thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 1: an introduction to the study explaining both the researcher’s background and the background of FCC and Fingal Libraries.

Chapter 2: will provide a detailed explanation of the aim of this study, the rationale behind it and the importance of the topic.

Chapter 3: the literature review will examine literature relevant to the research question. The aim is to put this research in context with national and international studies. It will go on to identify gaps in the literature in relation to Ireland.

Chapter 4: explains the methodology adopted and reasons for the researcher’s choices regarding philosophy, approach and strategy. It will go on to describe the data analysis process, ethics considerations and any limitations identified.

Chapter 5: presents the findings and analysis of the qualitative data.

Chapter 6: involves further detailed discussion of the findings in relation to the research questions and in comparison to the existing literature.

Chapter 7: conclusions will be drawn and the significance of the research will be presented.

Chapter 8: recommendations will be offered to address the research problem and further areas for research will be identified.
1.2. Researcher’s Background.

It is important for the researcher to state up front that she is an employee of Fingal County Council’s Libraries Department. Having seen and been involved in the changing landscape of Local Authorities and public libraries over the past number of years the researcher is in a unique position to conduct an investigation into the ways in which Fingal Libraries demonstrates value to the organisation as a whole. A detailed explanation of the research question is expanded on later in this dissertation.

1.3. Fingal County Council.

Fingal County Council is in North County Dublin and is one of the fastest growing Local Authorities in the country with a diverse population of 296,020 (CSO, 2016). It is in a prime location for business, situated on the Dublin-Belfast economic corridor and has a continuing tradition of horticulture, agriculture and fishing due to its diverse landscape (Fingal County Council, 2016).

The Council’s 2018 revenue budget is €227 million and funds the day to day spending and operational needs of the community. Budgets are prepared following discussions with Directors of Service and allocated budget holders, while elected members vote to adopt the budget. Funding comes from:

- Commercial Rates
- Local Property Tax
- Irish Water
- Government Grants
- Pension Contributions
- Rents and Loan Repayments
- Income from Goods and Services

The capital budget is set at €324 million over the period from 2017 to 2019 and funds larger infrastructure projects.
1.4. Fingal Public Libraries.

Following the take-over of the water supply infrastructure by Irish Water and other services outsourced, libraries are one of the few ‘front-line’ services operated by the Council and as such, the ‘public face’ of the organisation.

The library service comprises 10 branch libraries, 4 mobile vans, a housebound service and a Local History and Archives Department and operates an average of 45 hours over 6 days per week. 41% of the population are members of Fingal libraries with almost 1.8 million visitors and 1 million items borrowed in 2017 (Fingal Public Libraries, 2018).

The 2018 budget is €12,917,700m with the book fund increasing by 6% to €800,000. The estimated income is €415,000, down €100,000 (Fingal County Council, 2018). This figure will be significantly reduced in 2018/2019 following the nationwide abolition of fines.

The move to a nationwide library management system and catalogue allows borrowers to access resources from whatever Local Authority area they are in.

Resources include:

- Books, DVDs, magazines
- E-resources - online courses, e-books, magazines, newspapers, databases
- 132 staff, many with a qualification in Library & Information Studies. The organisational structure consists of a County Librarian, 3 Senior Executive Librarians, senior librarians, assistant librarians, staff officers, senior library assistants, library assistants. a clerical officer, drivers, library attendants and cleaners.

Programmes initiated by the Library Development Unit of the LGMA and operated at local level:

- **National reading and literacy programme** – The Right to Read
- **Work Matters** – resources to help job seekers and entrepreneurs
- **Healthy Ireland at your Local Library** – information and talks on health and well being
- **Europe Direct Centre in Blanchardstown Library** – an information point to inform citizens about the EU.

Fingal Libraries organises programmes of activities to coincide with various yearly events:
• **Bealtaine** – celebrating the older citizen

• **Battle of the Books** – encouraging primary school children to read and sponsored by the DAA (Dublin Airport Authority)

• **Science and Engineering Week** – events tying in with the government’s STEAM initiative

• **Seachtain na Gaeilge** – celebrating the Irish language

• **Heritage Week** – promoting and celebrating Ireland’s unique heritage

• **A Decade of Centenaries 2012 – 2022** – events and exhibitions marking key moments in modern Irish history

• **Creative Ireland 2017 – 2022** – a culture-based programme promoting individual, community and national well-being

Ongoing baby, children’s and adult book clubs as well as talks and arts and crafts sessions.

**Chapter 2. Research Topic.**

2.1. **Rationale for Topic.**

The increased commitment and investment in Fingal Libraries together with more robust reporting mechanisms makes it necessary to investigate if the service adds value to Fingal County Council as an organisation, which in turn may inform future policies regarding investment in public libraries. Staff in the Library Department may take it for granted that the service adds value, but this may not be apparent to decision makers within the organisation (Kelly, Mulgan, & Muers, 2002).

Commentators in the field of library management believe that although public libraries are moving away from the focus on outputs of the service such as circulation figures, computer usage, footfall and attendance at events as a measure of value, they need to place more emphasis on investigating outcomes to show value to the organisation (Abram S., 2018; Lison & Riep, 2016; Poll, 2012).

Measuring and communicating outputs is important to explain the activities of an organisation and to look for future trends but they do not look at the value of the service to the organisation or the community. Qualitative outcomes are important in showing value but are less tangible benefits and tend not to be measured. An outcome of a programme can be
defined as ‘a level of performance or achievement that occurred as a result of a service provided’ (Kelly, Mulgan, & Muers, 2002, p. 1; Knill & Tosun, 2012, p. 29).

The definition of value will differ from person to person and depend on their experience or knowledge of a service. The concept of ‘value’ in relation to the public sector and this dissertation is discussed in the literature review.

2.2. Research Question.

The driving force behind this research is to investigate if Fingal Libraries Department is doing enough to show that increased investment and support for the service is adding value to the organisation, leading on to the research question:

‘Is Fingal Libraries Department doing enough to demonstrate that the service adds value to Fingal County Council?’

The researcher has identified further areas to be explored that ascertain the extent to which senior management and elected members of Fingal County Council are:

1. Aware of the services of Fingal Libraries Department.
2. Feel the Libraries Department contributes positively to the organisation.
3. Think Libraries as a non-income generating department justify continuing investment.
4. Think Libraries show and communicate their value to the organisation.

Addressing the issues above will contribute to answering the research question.

2.3. Importance of the Topic.

The role of public libraries is constantly changing to adapt to the current social, cultural, economic and technological environment so the need for ongoing research, analysis and development is essential if the public library is to keep pace with changing demands. Previously public libraries may have been viewed as having the monopoly on providing
information services to communities but with their roles and services in the digital world questioned more and more this has changed (Lison & Riep, 2016).

As well as the need for funding this will also require continued support from Fingal County Council’s management team and more importantly elected members as ultimately, they approve the budget. The results of this research will be of interest to Fingal County Libraries management team, Libraries Ireland and the Library Development Unit of the LGMA, Fingal County Council’s senior management team and most importantly, elected members.

2.4. Explanation of the Research Question.

It is widely accepted that public libraries are important for literacy, lifelong learning, cultural activities and economic development. This is reinforced in the new strategy for public libraries – ‘Our Public Libraries 2022: Inspiring, Connecting and Empowering Communities’. It builds on its predecessor ‘Opportunities for All’ by committing to increasing investment in buildings, resources, technology, opening hours and user experience (Libraries Ireland, 2018).

Fingal Public Libraries strategic plan, 2018 – 2023, reflects this:

‘Fingal Libraries will be a dynamic and inclusive space, supporting culture, recreation, literacy, education and economic development in the County’ (Fingal Public Libraries, 2018)

The plan more importantly aligns with the Council’s corporate objectives of developing, supporting and enhancing the quality of life of sustainable and inclusive communities (Fingal County Council, 2015).

Both library strategies recognise that a key strategy enabler is funding from both local and central government. It is recognised that this will be critical to successfully implementing any programmes in the future. Significant investment will be required to bring buildings up to standard, implement the Open Library initiative nationwide and install new technologies (Libraries Ireland, 2018; Fingal Public Libraries, 2018). According to Abram the primary topic of 2018 will continue to be funding and proving the value of libraries (Abram S., 2018).

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 places increased emphasis on accountability and transparency with robust internal and external auditing a major feature of the modern Local
Government model (Department of Housing, 2014). This places responsibility on elected members and Local Government management to show not only value for money and efficiency but also effectiveness and value to the individual and community a service can provide.

This increased emphasis on accountability means there is now a greater need to prove to Council management and elected members not only how this funding is used to benefit communities but firstly how it benefits and adds value to the organisation as a whole (Aabo, Libraries & Return on Investment - a meta analysis, 2009; Stolarick & Silk, 2013).

**Chapter 3. Literature Review.**

**3.1. Literature Introduction.**

Bryman believes that it is important to establish how existing literature relates to the research question as this will allow the researcher to modify and refine the question (Bryman A., 2016, p. 91). This literature review will highlight issues currently being discussed in recent studies.

It will firstly explore the perceived role and usage of public libraries nationally and internationally. It will go on to investigate the current and emerging ways public libraries measure value and outcomes. It will then look at how public libraries communicate how these outcomes can contribute to achieving the objectives of Local Government and so add value to the organisation as a whole, rather than talking about the library service in isolation (UK Libraries Taskforce, 2016; Peachey, Shining a Light: English data about attitudes and use of libraries 2011 - 2016, 2017).

**3.2. Public Library Role and Usage.**

IFLA/UNESCO guidelines state that the function of public libraries is:

‘……*to provide resources and services in a variety of media to meet the needs of individuals and groups for education, information and personal development including recreation and leisure. They have an important role in the development and maintenance of a democratic*
society by giving the individual access to a wide and varied range of knowledge, ideas and opinions’ (IFLA, 2001)

The ALA views the role as being one of education, lifelong learning and community building. In their 2018 report the role of libraries in combatting fake news by using existing resources to evaluate news sources is also mentioned (American Library Association, 2018). Australian and New Zealand associations emphasise the role of libraries in the development of democratic societies and responding to changing demographics in communities (ALIA, 2009; Public Libraries of New Zealand, 2017).

In Europe EBLIDA supports the ALA view while also recognising the public libraries’ potential to support EU priorities (EBLIDA, 2017; EBLIDA, 2011). The EU 2020 Strategy believes libraries can significantly contribute to the aim of developing smart, sustainable, inclusive communities in a neutral and safe space (EU Commission, 2017).

Lawson believes that the public library is considered the ‘people’s university’ and cites the importance of its role in accessing the skills and technology necessary to become active citizens at a time of increased inequality – providing a level playing field (Lawson, The Role of the Public Library in Today's World, 2016, p. 40). The Chief Library Officer of the New York Public Library explains that libraries were never only about books but were places for conservation – a knowledge tank (Garner A., 2016).

Closer to home, CILIP, the UK body for library advocacy, believes libraries contribute to the social, economic and cultural well-being of communities while also having a role in the delivery of local authority services (CILIP, n.d.). This is echoed in the current strategy for public libraries in Ireland with libraries continuing to have a role in learning, health and well-being, integration, inclusion, economic development and an increased role in delivering the strategic objectives of local government (Libraries Ireland, 2018; Library Association of Ireland, 2017).

‘Shining a Light’, the 2017 policy document on libraries in the UK and Ireland found that 72% of people in the UK think public libraries are important for their community and 46% used a library in the past year. This is at a time in the UK when 340 libraries have closed with 8000 job losses. 42% of non-users think that an improvement in the service would be to co-locate other Council services with library buildings (Peachey, Shining a Light: English data about attitiudes and use of libraries 2011 - 2016, 2017).
The figures in Ireland are slightly higher with 79% of people believing that public libraries are an important community asset. 30% of people who rarely or never read books use the library as a community space or for internet access. Improvements that non-users would like to see and that would encourage them to use a public library differ significantly from the UK and include offering more mobile services, more maker space activities and more events (Peachey, Shining a Light: Irish data about attitudes to and use of libraries 2011 - 2016, 2017).

The most recent public library statistics from EBLIDA, show a varying rate of usage across the EU with Ireland placed in the middle at 19.6% and Serbia at the bottom at 7.5%. Iceland has the highest percentage of users at 41% and Germany has one of the lowest at 9.6% (Eblida, 2015). Statistics also show that public libraries in Europe are still the most visited cultural institutions with over 100 million visitors per year (Lison & Riep, 2016, p. 7).

The 2017 report from the US Institute of Museum and Library Services found that public libraries continue to evolve to meet changing community needs. More than half of the population who live within reach of a public library are registered users while libraries facilitated half a million more programmes in 2016 than 2015 with the number of electronic resources continuing to grow (Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2017).

2016 statistics from Australia show 39% of the population are registered library members, an increase of 4% on the previous year. Expenditure on public libraries is at 1.18bn dollars which represents an increase of 17.3% since 2015. Lending figures are slightly down but there has been an increase of 6.1% in events programming (Regional Access & Public Libraries Australia, 2017).

It is important to show the usage as well as the role of public libraries in the context of this research. The available literature indicates that public libraries continue to have an important role in communities and are a well-used and valued service but are increasingly in competition with other services. National and international reports emphasise the importance of communicating this value to decision makers (LIANZA, 2014; Lison & Riep, 2016; Regional Access & Public Libraries Australia, 2017; Fingal Public Libraries, 2018).
3.3. Value.

Public value relates to the value created by the public sector through the delivery of programmes and services but only the public can determine what is of value to them (Kelly, Mulgan, & Muers, 2012, p. 4).

All public services are value based but identifying this value can be difficult (Moore, 2017, p. 4). Moore believes that the concept of value in the public sector is an idea that can be used to gauge what ‘value’ a policy, programme or department adds to the organisation and community. Unlike the private sector this consists of more than financial costs and benefits as value is also seen in improved social outcomes (Moore, 2017, p. 3; Williams & Shearer, Appraising Public Value: past, present and future, 2011, p. 1). Mulreany notes that the difficulty with the public sector is that outcomes may not be known for some years, for example literacy programmes in libraries (Mulreany, 2005).

The value of public libraries relates to the importance that stakeholders attach to the service and includes both social and monetary value. Poll and Abram suggest that the issue of ‘social value’ is an important concept when evaluating public services. This refers to the positive influence the service – in this case public libraries - has on the community but is often indirect and difficult to measure (Poll, 2012, p. 130; Abram S., 2018). Poll maintains that evidence of the economic value of the library will be more convincing if it is combined with evidence of social value when presenting reports to stakeholders (Poll, 2012, p. 131).

An IFLA commissioned study into the political perceptions of public libraries in the Netherlands found that decision makers believe that the funding library services receive and the volume of interaction with communities prove their value both to the community and policy makers (Vissingen, 2003, p. 3).

Massis emphasises the importance of library management recognising that libraries do not operate in a vacuum but are an integral part of the organisation so to show value it is important to develop a culture of collaboration with other departments and outside agencies (Massis, 2014). The UK Libraries Taskforce report agrees believing that this collaboration will result in a greater awareness of the role and the benefits of having a library service (UK Libraries Taskforce, 2016).

Garner remarks on the opportunities collaborations create to connect libraries to organisations in the community but tempers this with advising caution when engaging in external
partnerships. The author believes that libraries are often treated like the lesser partner when in reality the library may have more influence in the community (Garner A. , 2016, p. 19).

3.4 Measuring and Evaluation.

Emerging themes in the literature agree that while quantitative analysis and metrics such as footfall, opening hours, items borrowed etc are important they do not prove the value of the service to the organisation or justify continued investment in the service. Statistics show trends in demand for services, allowing for service planning but do not provide evidence of the value of the services on the community. This evidence can in turn inform decision makers of the value of the service to the organization as a whole (LIANZA, 2014, p. 8).

Two areas of measuring and evaluating library services are discussed in this review:

1. Economic
2. Social Benefit/Outcomes

Peachey and Nolan believe that the inability to define metrics can lead to a lack of proof of effectiveness, impacting on budget allocation and efficient use of resources. They agree that this can be helped by clearly defining a library service's mission and strategic objectives while linking this to local policies and development plans to demonstrate significant value. The authors agree that this needs to be backed by robust evidence based data while moving away from measuring inputs to developing systems for measuring outcomes and value (Nolan, 2016; Peachey, 2017).

3.4.1. Economic Evaluation.

National and international literature points to the importance of assessing outcomes using ROI and other business metrics that policymakers may be comfortable and familiar with to prove how libraries are helping to achieve the organisation's goals and objectives. They agree that communicating this to policymakers in economic terms can have a bigger impact as they may not see the value of the service otherwise (Aabo, Value of Public Libraries: a socio-economic analysis, 2011; Garner A. K., 2014; Nolan, 2016; Showers, 2015). Jaeger et al agree believe that policy makers look at value from a business perspective, a view that
does not fit in with the ethos of public libraries (Jaeger, Bertot, Kodama, Katz, & DeCoster, 2011).

In Toronto a measurement system was developed to show how funding can have a macro-economic effect by illustrating how much impact $1 spent on public libraries has in Toronto and other jurisdictions (Stolarick & Silk, 2013):

- Toronto Public Libraries: $5.63
- Florida Public libraries: $8.32
- Texas Public Libraries: $4.42
- State Library of Victoria, Australia: $3.26

This is echoed in the 2014 New Zealand Library Association’s report which found that for every $1 spent between $3 and $9 dollars of direct benefit is achieved by the community (LIANZA, 2014).

In addition, literature from Queensland Public Libraries shows that users put an average price of $394 per year on services they received from the library with Norwegian libraries generating 4 times more than they cost (Aabo, Value of Public Libraries: a socio-economic analysis, 2011; Queensland Public Libraries, 2012), leading researchers to believe that it is hard for policymakers to ignore concrete figures such as these when allocating budgets (Stolarick & Silk, 2013).

At EU level the 2016 report ‘The New Role of Public Libraries in Local Communities’ found that library buildings are increasingly being seen as ‘anchors for the high street’, an emerging way that public libraries are measuring value to the organization with the physical building viewed as being of more value than just a financial asset. (Urban Libraries Council, 2010; Lison & Riep, 2016).

This concept is based on visitor numbers to the library and patrons subsequently shopping and socialising in the area with a 2014 Spanish study finding that 45.6% of patrons combine trips to the library with shopping, restaurant visits etc, spending an average of €15.50 per trip (Yanez, 2014). The Queensland report found that users spent $19.70 at other places when visiting the library (Queensland Public Libraries, 2012).

An economic evaluation of the British Library found that for every £1 invested £5 worth of economic benefit was generated. The study also revealed that if public funding for the library was to end the UK would lose up to £419m of economic value per year (Tessler, 2013).
3.4.2. Measuring Outcomes & Social Benefit.

As noted in the Queensland report measuring benefits is not as straightforward as calculating costs as public sector services often benefit both users and non-users, are free and not related to market prices (Queensland Public Libraries, 2012, p. 12). Jaeger et al believe that as a public good the activities of public libraries are designed to add social rather than economic benefits, with the purpose of building a sense of community (Jaeger, Bertot, Kodama, Katz, & DeCoster, 2011). Walker et al describe the concept of social benefit as ‘the benefit the user derives from the service on whatever level’ (Walker, Halpin, Rankin, & Chapman, 2012, p. 8).

The 2016 NOAC report reiterates the point that issues in the public sector are different to those in the private sector which is profit driven. The report acknowledges that activities and the environment Local Authorities function in is complex (NOAC, 2016).

The literature suggests that the concept of showing how the library adds value by being used as a ‘space’ is becoming a valid measurement of social benefit. Jochumsen et al ‘Four Space Model’ is a new feature of Nordic libraries (Jochumsen, Rasmussen, & Skot-Hansen, 2012). From this Danish and Norwegian libraries are presenting evidence of the library being used by up to 60% of users as a meeting place and coming in 4 or 5 days per week. The profile of users is:

- Lower income or unemployed
- Immigrants
- Older, retired people

Aabo believes that this is leading to the library being viewed as having a significant role in contributing to citizens’ ability to play an active part in their community regardless of their social, economic or ethnic differences (Aabo, Value of Public Libraries: a socio-economic analysis, 2011).

Bolt argues the case for capturing not only numbers that reflect increased library use but the impact of programmes while Lawson advocates sharing stories about how lives are impacted by services in order to explain the library’s critical role in the community (Bolt, 2013, p. 11; Lawson, The Role of the Public Library in Today's World, 2016, p. 43). Walker et al agree believing the libraries can show economic benefit in a different way by demonstrating how
users find work or are supported and equipped with skills through library services (Walker, Halpin, Rankin, & Chapman, 2012, p. 8).

This approach is supported by the 2010 US report ‘Partners for the Future’. It highlights the Wichita Public Library service where 50% of computer users in a one-month period accessed library PC’s for job or career purposes (Urban Libraries Council, 2010).

The report further defines the outcomes of Seattle Public Libraries programme for businesses and job seeking showing:

- 33% of entrepreneurs who accessed business information in the library started new businesses
- 46% of small businesses who used the library’s facilities located potential customers
- 33% of users who used the library to search for jobs were granted an interview with 19% of them gaining employment

The 2010 US report also found that 18% of computer users in one branch were applying for unemployment benefit, while in Gateshead in Northern England staff found that 48% were looking for jobs and relied on the library to access the internet. This informed policy on collaborating with local job centres and national organisations to develop economic support services, aligning with the Council’s corporate objectives (UK Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 2016; Urban Libraries Council, 2010)

The literature indicates that public libraries can quantify how they add value to the organisation and community by showing how they are being used as a community space, why users access public pcs and outcomes of programmes.

3.5. Communicating Value to the Organisation.

Commentators cite the need to encourage policy makers in to events to show them first hand what public libraries do as they decide on funding, sometimes without ever visiting a library (Garner A. K., 2014; Aspen Institute, 2014). Nolan agrees believing that library programmes have the potential to be popular with members as they usually represent a ‘good news story’ (Nolan, 2016).
It is recognised that decisions in organisations are made by a small number of people, known as ‘core group theory’ (Kleiner cited in Gwyer, 2009). Gwyer goes on to discuss Drucker’s theories of developing ways of ‘influencing up’ which is a feature of a flatter organisational structure.

MacDonald and VanDuinkerken believe this move away from the heirarchical top down model to a more flattened organisational structure will result in a more entrepreneurial environment which is just as suited to a non-profit as profit making entity by substituting ‘profit’ with ‘relevance’, ‘public good’ and ‘increased value’ (MacDonald & VanDuinkerken, 2015).

There is a definite gap in the literature for not only measuring outcomes but how this is communicated to policy makers to ensure continued funding and resources. The UK Taskforce and Lison and Riep’s EU reports recommend developing influence with local councillors and decision makers to secure support and funding by using data and evidence to make them aware of what public libraries have to offer and how they can help achieve wider strategic goals (UK Libraries Taskforce, 2016; Lison & Riep, 2016).

Abram recently wrote about the progress there has been in communicating results to the organisation, but still considers public libraries to be very much focused on numbers and volumes rather than value and impact and do not influence high enough or with enough force or evidence (Abram S., 2018).

Results from the IFLA report in The Netherlands showed a general consensus that the level of funding provided for libraries proves the value of the service in the community although civil servants criticised library management for not effectively communicating what they do with resources and how they are used to add value (Vissingen, 2003).

Vissengen found that most politicians and civil servants judged a library service based on financial results, basic statistics and public opinion but felt they were not provided with enough evidence of the value of the service to the organisation. The survey also revealed that libraries receive more funding than other socio-cultural institutes based on the number of visits, while councillors were prepared to increase funding if libraries communicated how programmes align with broader Council objectives (Vissingen, 2003).

A 2018 OCLC research project discovered that 87% of US libraries cited an increased community awareness of the library by both administrators and politicians as the most
desired outcome from a library’s communication policy. 31% of libraries surveyed received increased funding because of this awareness leading them to believe that the message has got through to decision makers (OCLC, 2018).

3.6. Literature Conclusion.

From reviewing the literature, it appears that the trend both nationally and internationally is that public libraries continue to be well used and relevant, responding to users’ needs and evolving with changes in the social, cultural, economic and technological environment they operate in.

The existing literature also explores emerging methods public libraries internationally are using to research how they add value to the organisation, both in economic terms and more importantly for a public sector organisation in terms of the social and community benefits provided by the service.

Various articles and studies go on to highlight the importance of communicating the results of this research to decision makers to ensure continued support and funding from the management team and elected members.

There is ongoing research internationally on the concept of public libraries showing how they add value to the organisation, but this review identifies a gap in the literature relating to Ireland. The existing literature has helped determine and inform the importance and relevancy of the research question.

Chapter 4: Methodology.

4.1. Methodology Introduction.

Collins English Dictionary defines methodology as a system of methods and principles for doing something, for example for teaching or for carrying out research (Collins, 2018). The purpose of this study is to answer a specific research question – ‘Is Fingal Libraries Department doing enough to demonstrate that the service adds value to Fingal County Council?’

This is a qualitative study to ascertain if Council staff and elected members are:
1. Aware of the services of Fingal Libraries Department.
2. Feel the Libraries Department contributes positively to the organisation.
3. Think Libraries as a non-income generating department justify continuing investment.
4. Think Libraries show and communicate their value to the organisation.

The methodology leads the researcher to ask certain questions and prioritise what issues are more important to study (Hesse & Sharere, 2010). The methodology will explain how the research was carried out and the techniques used to collect and analysis data. It will also address ethical concerns and any limitations that arose.

4.2. Research Design.

4.2.1. Research Philosophy & Approach.

A research philosophy is a belief about the way in which data should be gathered, analysed and used (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012, p. 124). This research project was approached from an interpretive epistemological perspective. An interpretive approach was considered more suitable than a positivist one which is more suited to scientific research.

According to Bryman interpretivism involves ‘an empathic understanding of human action’, fitting well with this research which aims to demonstrate if Fingal Libraries Department is doing enough to show value to the organisation as a whole (Bryman A. , 2016, p. 26). With interpretivism, data collected includes participants’ understanding of an issue as well as uncovering and working with subjective meanings (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 28).

The decision was taken to adopt a constructionist ontological approach where individuals are to the fore rather than an objectivist approach which places the emphasis on formal structures (IPA, 2017). Ontology refers to the way the social world and events are perceived and can include groups of people like the family, a gender or an organisation – in this case Fingal Public Libraries’ relationship with Fingal County Council (Bryman A. , 2016; Matthews & Ross, 2010; IPA, 2017).

Bryman, Matthews and Ross agree that the theory of constructivism involves people gaining a personal understanding of social phenomena based on experiencing and reflecting on them (Bryman A. , 2016; Matthews & Ross, 2010). This approach is linked to interpretivism and was considered particularly suited to the research question as it also involves the researcher bringing their own meaning and understanding to the study, an important consideration as the
A researcher is an employee of Fingal Public Libraries. The objective of this approach is to better understand the problem and factors influencing it, leading to the development of new theories (Aczel, 2015, p. 15).

### 4.2.2. Research Strategy

As advised by Matthews and Ross the selection of a research approach should be based on the nature of the research question, the researcher’s experience, the audience and the type of data being collected and analysed to address the research question (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 113).

In this case the researcher wanted to gain an understanding of how the organisation perceives the value of the Libraries Department to the overall organisation and if the department is doing enough to demonstrate this value. A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate to this study as it is also considered suitable for a topic about which little is known (Creswell, 2009, p. 12). Qualitative research methods are also suited to the research philosophy and approach described above.

As previously stated, the researcher is an employee of Fingal County Libraries so had access to library management, the senior management team of Fingal County Council and elected members. Although this was an advantage it was important for the researcher to be cognisant of the fact that qualitative research is not subjective research so should not be based on one person’s point of view or biased towards one outcome (Hogan, Dolan, & Donnelly, 2009, p. 30).

Common research strategies include experiments, surveys, action research or case studies. A case study on Fingal Public Libraries was used as the issue is contemporary and little is known about it. Using this method can lead to gaining a holistic and real-world perspective (Yin 2014, cited in Gog, 2015). When adopting a case study methodology, it is advised to identify boundaries in the early stages of a project and to establish a limited research problem to achieve focus (Silverman, 2013, p. 142). The study in this case refers to the specific issue of Fingal Public Libraries adding value to the organisation that is Fingal County Council, so boundaries were established from the outset.
4.2.3. Sampling - Selecting Respondents.

For any research project, it is important to identify what is meant by ‘population’. The population frame for this research can be defined as the senior management team of Fingal Public Libraries and County Council and elected members of Fingal County Council. To prevent sampling errors, it was important to select participants that were most representative of that population, in this case senior management and elected representatives (Valerio, et al., 2016; Matthews & Ross, 2010).

Purposive sampling was considered appropriate to the study as it involves the researcher sampling participants in a strategic way so that the samples are relevant to the question. It requires the researcher to think critically about the boundaries of the population being studied while allowing them to select a sample size that contributes to understanding the research question as well as placing the study’s question to the forefront (Creswell, 2009, p. 178; Silverman, 2013, p. 148; Hogan, Dolan, & Donnelly, 2009, p. 33).

A longitudinal design was rejected due to time constraints. This design relates to studying a case over time to see what changes occur. A cross sectional design was used as this looks at a situation at a particular point in time – in this study the issue of public libraries adding value to the organisation and if enough is currently being done to demonstrate this.

Aspects of both representative and revelatory case studies are appropriate to this research question. Representative or typical cases represent other similar cases, in this instance other public libraries in Irish Local Authorities. Revelatory refers to the fact that the case has the potential to shed light on the research topic (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 128).

A limitation of purposive sampling can be that it requires collaboration from others to identify relevant participants (Valerio, et al., 2016). This was not an issue with this study as the researcher has a professional relationship with Fingal County Council staff and access to internal e-mail and intranet.

4.2.4. Research Instrument.

As this is a qualitative research project based on a case study of Fingal Public Libraries and County Council the interview as a research instrument was considered the most appropriate.
Candidates for interview were identified and offered the opportunity to take part in a face to face recorded interview or alternatively an interview conducted via e-mail.

The researcher opted for this approach as she is aware of the busy schedule of participants. It is also a reflection of the fact that the media through which people communicate have changed at a rapid pace in recent years. This has given researchers a broader and more flexible field to obtain information (Silverman, 2013, p. 209; Hogan, Dolan, & Donnelly, 2009, p. 28).

As recommended by Silverman the researcher had a prepared set of questions which were only used as a guide to allow the interviewee to set the pace (Silverman, 2013, p. 205). It is important to recognise that each interviewee is different so open-ended questions which allow conversation to flow are likely to yield greater insights in to the research question.

As this was a relatively closed group the response rate requesting interviews was expected to be high, whereas if the research was going outside the framework of the group the response rate may be disappointing as the level of interest and cooperation may be too diverse (IPA, 2017).

**4.3. Data Collection.**

Interviewees were identified and subsequently e-mailed requesting an interview. Information about the topic and relevant consent forms were provided.

Face to face interviews were held with the following:

- County Librarian Fingal Libraries
- Senior Executive Librarian Blanchardstown Library
- Senior Executive Librarian HR/Finance Libraries Department
- Chief Executive Fingal County Council
- Director of Services Housing/Community/Libraries Fingal County Council
- Director of Services Operations Fingal County Council
- 6 Elected Members of Fingal County Council

E-mailed interviews were conducted with:

- Director of Services Environment & Water Fingal County Council
Senior Executive Officer Community Department Fingal County Council  
3 Elected Members of Fingal County Council

An interview was conducted over the telephone with the Chief Accountant of Fingal County Council. A member of the LGMA was approached for interview but the researcher did not receive a reply. A more detailed breakdown of the profile of elected members interviewed is given in the findings chapter of this dissertation.

As the study is exploratory in nature interviews were semi-structured to obtain as much detailed information as possible. Face to face interviews with Council staff took place in their workplace. Interviews with elected members were conducted in either County Hall in Swords or the library closest to the councillor. The researcher contacted individuals to arrange interviews at a time convenient to them to impact as little as possible on their day to day work. Note taking and audio taping was used with a smart phone and a tablet as a back-up device.

Interview questions were e-mailed to participants who were not available for face to face interviews. They were answered in the participants own time and e-mailed back to the researcher.

4.4. Data Analysis.

Qualitative data analysis involves the researcher dealing with meanings as opposed to numbers. It is important to plan research as an integrated activity, not just a group of separate unconnected activities to ensure collection of the type of data required to address the question. This also leads to easier analysis of the information (Pickard A. c., 2007).

Interviews were transcribed and subsequently the Data, Display and Analysis (DDA) approach was used. Bryman, Braun and Clarke agree that transcribing interviews is a very effective way to familiarise the researcher with the data (Bryman A. , 2016; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

A thematic analysis approach was used which involved coding the data to identify themes, or important patterns about the data in relation to the research question. This method of analysis is considered appropriate for novice researchers or where participants views on a
topic are not known. Although some depth or complexity may be lost using this method a rich overall description is maintained and the reader gets a sense of the most important themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 11; Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 373).

It is widely agreed that there should be several instances of a theme throughout the data set, but caution is advised as just because there appears to be a recurring theme it does not necessarily follow that the theme itself is important. Ultimately it comes down to the researcher’s judgement (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 10; Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 322).

Coding involves interpreting and assigning the various elements of the feedback and is a way of providing a form of analysis to qualitative data in a similar way quantitative data can be statistically analysed. It is basically the building blocks that combine to develop themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2009).

A conceptual framework is the usual method adopted for analysing qualitative data. This framework can be created before, during or after data collection. As data collected for this research project was interview based three main types of processes were used, summarising, categorising and unitising (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009, p. 484-493).

1. **Summarising:** this involves reducing long statements or essentially paraphrasing them
2. **Categorising:** developing categories to help extract core themes which can help draw conclusions
3. **Unitising:** involves attaching relevant pieces of data or units of data to the appropriate category or categories that have been devised.

E-mailed interviews were analysed in a similar way with themes extracted and a coding system employed. Written text is usually more structured and considered than spoken text and lends itself to easier analysis (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 44).

The researcher considered using a software package such as N’Vivo but decided against it as the time it would take to become familiar with it might impact on the completion of the project. The interviews were transcribed into a Microsoft Word document and the comment function was used to highlight areas of interest.
Excerpts from the transcriptions are included in the findings chapter of this dissertation as according to Dale, this practice shows the links between the data and the analysis and improves transparency (Dale, 2006).

Ultimately it is important to realise that no matter what method is used to analyse the data collected, a system is only there to assist analysis. It is the researcher’s responsibility to feed in the relevant information and tell the system what to perform.

4.5. Research Ethics.

Ethical issues in social research involve questions such as:

- How should we treat research participants?
- Are there activities we should or should not engage in with participants?

The main concerns relate to harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception (Bryman A., 2016, p. 145).

When considering ethical concerns for this research project the above issues were taken in to account. All participants were over 18 so parental/guardian consent was not an issue. Participants were e-mailed an information sheet and consent form prior to interview and were requested to read and sign this consent/information form (Appendix 1 and 2) which explained the purpose and scope of the research and their rights, particularly considering the recent GDPR directive.

Interviewees who responded via e-mail were not required to sign the consent form as the e-mailed questionnaire was considered similar to a survey where the act of a respondent filling it in is considered to show consent.

In the case of face to face interviews respondents were also informed in advance that interviews would be recorded. No identifying details were transcribed if participants were not comfortable with it. Questions were phrased in such a way as to elicit constructive criticism and participants were assured that honest views would be appreciated to add value to the study so therefore nothing would be construed as being ‘negative’ in relation to the libraries department.

Ultimately, it comes down to common sense – treat participants as you would want to be treated (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 71; Bryman A., 2016, p. 121).
Limitations of Methodology

According to Pickard and Silverman limitations should be expected and explained from the beginning of the project (Pickard A. J., 2013, p. 55; Silverman, 2013, p. 219), while Cooper and Schindler maintain that by acknowledging limitations it adds validity to the study (Cooper & Schindler, 2014, p. 585).

There was a suspicion that Council staff may not be totally honest in their interviews but as anonymity was guaranteed it did not appear to be problematic but ultimately the researcher had to take what was said at ‘face value’.

Bryman goes further with this view by arguing that when qualitative interviews are conducted with a small number of people in an organisation it is impossible to know how the findings can be generalised into other settings (Bryman A., 2016, p. 399).

However, not all writers accept this view. Williams (cited in Bryman) has argued that in many cases qualitative researchers are well placed to generalise from collected data as aspects of the research question can show a broader picture of the problem (Bryman A., 2016, p. 399)

Access to interviewees in Fingal Libraries was not a problem due to the researcher’s connection with the Local Authority. It was more difficult to arrange a suitable time to interview senior management due to time constraints and summer holidays. This was equally problematic in the case of elected members, but the option of an e-mailed interview proved successful.

E-mailing questions to participants could also be considered a limitation as Bryman believes that greater motivation is required for online interviews, so replies are often more considered and detailed sometimes resulting in a lack of spontaneity (Bryman A., 2016). Online interviewing based on replies to a question was considered but due to participants’ busy schedules this was discounted and so the full list of questions was sent together. Again, the researcher had to take participants’ answers at face value.

Transcribing and analysing recorded interviews took more time than anticipated as it was important to show significant extracts from interview data (Silverman, 2013, p. 209).

Perhaps the biggest limitation stemmed from the researcher’s background and knowledge of Fingal County Libraries. Matthews and Ross agree that as individuals we can rarely be
totally objective as we are products of the society we operate in, resulting in a researcher rarely starting from a zero base (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 391).

The researcher had to be aware of the issue of bias or pre-conceived assumptions influencing the project and pay particular attention to it when conducting interviews and analysing the data.

**Chapter 5: Findings.**

**5.1. Introduction.**

This chapter describes the primary data collected for this research. The focus of the chapter is to present the findings of both the face to face interviews which were semi-structured to allow for the flow of thoughts and conversation and the more structured e-mailed interviews. The same basic questions were asked of all participants and can be seen in Appendix 3.

**5.2. Response Rate.**

All 40 councillors were approached for interview to ensure gender, political and geographical balance. Fingal Libraries Department’s 4 senior management team and 11 FCC senior managers were also invited for interview as well as a representative of the LGMA. In total 9 councillors, 3 members of the library management team and 6 FCC senior management team were interviewed resulting in 18 interviews. The 4th member of the library management team was on annual leave. The breakdown of political parties represented can be seen below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDEPENDENT</th>
<th>SINF FEIN</th>
<th>LABOUR</th>
<th>GREEN PARTY</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to summer holidays the response rate among councillors was lower than expected so care needs to be taken in making generalisations about the whole population, but as the goal of a Local Authority is to provide high quality services to the local community some generalisations can be made in relation to the library service (Bryman A., 2016, p. 399; IPA, 2017, p. 52).
The wealth of data received from those who did participate also provides for further investigation into this research topic.

To ensure anonymity participants names will not be used. A system of codes has been developed below which will also indicate if they are Fingal councillors, Fingal library management or senior management of Fingal County Council.

Face to face interviews:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNCILLORS</th>
<th>LIBRARY MANAGEMENT</th>
<th>FCC SENIOR MANAGEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C.1</td>
<td>LM.1</td>
<td>SM.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.2</td>
<td>LM.2</td>
<td>SM.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.3</td>
<td>LM.3</td>
<td>SM.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>SM.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>C.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>C.6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

E-mailed interviews:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNCILLORS</th>
<th>LIBRARY MANAGEMENT</th>
<th>FCC SENIOR MANAGEMENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C.7</td>
<td></td>
<td>SM.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.8</td>
<td></td>
<td>SM.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>C.9</td>
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5.3. Themes.

The primary purpose of this research is to investigate if Fingal Public Libraries are doing enough to demonstrate value to Fingal County Council. As previously explained interviews were semi-structured and conversational while the researcher was cognisant of the core areas that needed to be explored to answer the primary research question:

1. Awareness of FCC senior management and councillors of the services of Fingal Libraries Department.
2. Feel the Libraries Department contributes positively to the organisation.
3. Think Libraries as a non-income generating department justify continuing investment.
4. Think Libraries show and communicate their value to the organisation.
As suggested by Gorman and Clayton the discussion of the findings is structured around 5 main themes identified from the interviews (Gorman & Calyton, 2004):

- Role of Fingal Libraries
- Value of Fingal Libraries to the Organisation
- Measuring and Evaluation
- Communication
- Collaboration

5.4. Role of Fingal Libraries.

A recurring theme was that of the role or function of the Library Department both in the community and within the organisation. All councillors agree that the traditional role of the library still exists, that of providing free and equal access to collections, internet access, a place for information, learning, events. C.4, 6 and 7 emphasise the role of the library being a quiet place for study which enhances its place in communities where students may not have access to a study area at home.

All councillors interviewed see the current role of the library as that of a community space, a cultural space, a public space. C.1, 3 and 6 go further by stating that they see the library as a ‘focal point or centre of the community’ with C.2 and 8 describing it as having a ‘social function within the area’ and being a ‘social hub’. C.1, 2 and 4 emphasise the changing role of libraries as moving away from the traditional model and even more towards that of a community space.

C.3 had perhaps the strongest views about the role of libraries and went so far as to say that libraries are a:

‘source of creation of a village, creation of a community, a meeting place, almost at times I think they’re taking the place of the church.’

These opinions are echoed by FCC senior management but go somewhat further in looking at libraries as a strategic component of FCC. SM.1 believes that libraries fit in to the ‘space for Local Government’ and the role it has in supporting the local economy and building and supporting communities, stating that the library department is:

‘a key element of building local communities and the value libraries can bring to that’
SM.2 further supports the point made by C.1, 2 and 4 regarding the changing role of the library in the community, believing the primary function of the library is at a pivotal or transformational point in terms of what it is recognised as in the community and the types of services it can provide, going on to say that it is:

‘deeply embedded in the community.’

While SM.3, 4, 5, and 6 have a slightly narrower and perhaps more traditional view of the role with books, free, open, equal access, study space, information, online services, arts and crafts and cultural events featuring heavily in their perception of libraries. Although SM.3 agrees that libraries need to look beyond this the participant does not feel they are quite there yet.

Library management’s vision for Fingal Libraries very much concurs with elected members and senior managements’ opinions. They see it as a community space and how individuals and communities use that space:

LM.2: ‘a place to meet, to learn, to engage, to study, to create’

LM.1 supports this view believing that the library department’s function is to foster community, literacy and economic engagement. Both agree that although collections and physical resources are important there is a requirement to move on from the focus on collection development and information retrieval echoing C.1, 2 and 4 and the particularly strong opinion of SM.2.

LM.3 agrees with these views but interestingly has a slightly different take on the role, agreeing with SM.1, insofar as seeing it as part of the broader picture of FCC as an organisation whereby engaging with the community involves promoting the policies of Fingal:

‘because we’re part of the Council’

This participant believes that every community is different, so functions of the local library should be tailored to suit that community while aligning with the overall objectives of the Libraries Department and FCC.

‘engage and promote what people need in the area and I think that’s where libraries come in to it’
SM.1, C.2, 4, 5 believe there is a huge role for libraries in relation to integration and as an information hub for people born outside Ireland with C.5 believing:

‘In terms of integration libraries are universally and fundamentally understood by people as public places.’

C.1 and 4 also emphasise the diverse population including struggling families or lonely citizens and the role libraries play in catering for them.

5.5. Value to the Organisation.

Participants were asked to reflect on how they feel libraries add value and contribute to the organisation, with views of councillors and senior management particularly important. Both groups acknowledge libraries as a high-quality service with huge support within the organisation, but this view needed to be further explored by trying to discover why libraries justify this support. SM.6 feels that libraries:

‘….have an important, I would say essential corporate role in the organisation.’

while C.6 believes that there is a strong sense among elected members that the library department is ‘absolutely crucial to Fingal’.

Both groups agree that the role of libraries in itself adds value in terms of it being a source of arts, culture, education, a community space. Councillors and senior management further cite the value of the library service’s key role in community issues such as diversity, integration, mental health and overall quality of life, aligning with local and national policies.

C.3 stated that libraries are the ‘good face of the Council’ with SM.1 agreeing, believing that due to the nature of libraries being out in the community they are the Council’s ‘eyes and ears’:

SM.1: ‘I think that’s the real value for me – at the top level – where does it fit in terms of serving the community, where does it fit in with what we’re trying to achieve as an organisation’.

This participant has very strong views of the value of the library service being a key element of community building and goes on to state:

‘…..what’s the organisation for but to add value to the community?’
Both groups agree overwhelmingly that the level of interaction and Fingal Libraries having the highest membership in the country is evidence of their value to the community and organisation with C.3 and 8 believing that this:

…..gives me an awful lot of confidence that it’s money very well spent……I think you do enough to show you add value to the organisation.’

Attendance at programmes and events libraries run were also cited as showing value with C.4 and SM.1 agreeing that the library service’s involvement in national events such as the 1916 commemorations showed their strength and continued participation in such events out in the community shows value.

This leads on to the level of interaction with schools and libraries going out in to the community and the value this brings. All councillors remarked on this, in particular C.2:

‘……best thing the library is doing is going into the schools.’

C.2 and SM.2 emphasise the value of the new mobile libraries vans visiting schools and attending major community events:

C.2: ‘……the mobile library is fantastic – it’s everywhere – best PR things.’

SM.2: ‘…. positivity around the mobile vans is enormous. Even beyond our expectations of the reputational value we thought would come of it.’

SM.3, 4 and 6 further believe that alignment with Council policies adds to this value:

SM.4: ‘……..being involved in initiatives such as STEAM which align with Council and national policy.’

SM.3: ‘…..good work with family hubs trying to do stuff around integration.’

SM.3 further elaborates on this point believing that by libraries taking their place at the table in relation to strategies such as reading programmes, integration, the cultural agenda, age friendly initiatives etc. makes the organisation realise their value.

Councillors also agree that libraries have been progressive in adapting to changing technologies, so remaining relevant and adding value in this way:

C.4: ‘….have a lot of interactive services that weren’t there years ago – changes in technology have been taken on board.’
SM.4 agreed with the introduction of technology but was doubtful about the addition of 3D printers in 3 branches:

‘I would be more dubious about 3D printers ………..I’m not sure they add value – in monetary or social terms.’

C.7 and SM.4 agree that the fact the library budget was quite well protected during the recession combined with further significant investment in services such as 3 new mobile library vans costing €750,000 is evidence of the value the organisation places on the service with C.5 and 2 believing this is an investment in communities and the future:

‘…..by investing in libraries, you’re investing in the community.’

Library management believes the value the department brings to the Council is the space it offers in terms of Council strategies around integration, culture, arts. LM.2 particularly emphasises the point that €41 spent on the provision of library services per head of population in Fingal is a really good judge of a society and a County and:

‘…..speaks really well of our Council and councillors’.

Another point that was made particularly by councillors was that if the service added value to the community then it follows that it adds value to the organisation.

C.1: ‘You have to prove yourself to the Council as ultimately they give the funding but if you’re not proving yourself to the community they’re not going to support you’

LM.2 believes it is good that communities are happy with the service as that is how we contribute to the organisation but feels this is a passive approach:

‘………don’t want to be in a situation where by reducing hours we’re proving value because of the subsequent outcry. We have to have more creative ways of showing value’.

C.3 and 4 alluded to libraries opening hours and perhaps having more convenient hours in view of today’s varied working hours:

C.2: ‘So extend those hours so it becomes more of a community hub than a library.’

In contrast, they were against the idea of the Open Libraries initiative and did not feel this would add value:

C.2: ‘I now we’re going down the road of no staff in the library which is a thing I’m not mad about.’
C.4: ‘I think it’s a down grading of the service.’

SM.4 was concerned about the insurance implications of the initiative and the possibility of reputational damage to the Council. Interestingly C.3 was very much in favour of Open Libraries citing the proposed increase in funding for the initiative.

Public opinion was understandably important to councillors and interestingly equally important to library and senior management:

SM.1: ‘I’m not being dismissive of councillors at all, they would be a good source of public feeling, but the public would be the most important.’

5.5.1. Staff Value.

Within the theme of value, the issue of staff value emerged. Across all groups of interviewees, it became clear that staff in the library department made a significant contribution to the organisation and their value cannot be underestimated but sometimes is, as the service and they themselves do not realise how good it is.

C.3 strongly believes the reason Fingal has one of the best library services in the country is in part because of the excellent staff. C.1, 2 and 4 agree believing that the one to one interaction staff have with people helps build relationships with communities:

C.2: ‘People who work in libraries work very hard at that function and work way beyond what their remit is.’

C.2 goes on to say that the reason FCC is so proactive in libraries might be to do with the staff who manage the library service.

This is echoed by SM2 who believes that Fingal libraries is ‘punching above its weight’ adding that this is to ‘be admired but the staff who are there’. This interviewee sees this value at a higher level within the organisation and considers library management to be key members of the management team with transferrable skills due to the services provided and the vision they have.

Library management agree with LM.3 believing that the staff and their varied backgrounds allow for the variety of services and creativity in Fingal Libraries adding:

......I think we’re very lucky.’

Participants were asked to discuss their views on the importance of proving value and accountability to remain relevant and secure sustainable funding. The themes of measuring and evaluating the library service were very evident during analysis. Current and future methods were discussed by all participants. There are two distinct areas of evaluation:

1. Social/Outcomes
2. Economic

Findings show the perception of evaluation, what participants feel should be measured and what activities they think lend themselves to measurement.

All three groups agree that it is difficult to measure the service but on further discussion concede that there is a constant need for ongoing evaluation. SM.1 and 2 agree that it needs to happen at organisational level and is something the wider Council needs to do while LM.2 thinks it needs to be done strategically at a national level by the LGMA. SM.2 agrees but thinks there may be a reluctance to do this as it may show some authorities in a better light than others, leading to better achieving authorities being held back.

5.6.1. Economic Measurement.

Initially councillors were particularly opposed to measuring libraries in an economic manner with C.1 stating:

‘it’s hard to objectify libraries in a monetary way’

SM.4 and C.5 held the opinion that measuring in economic terms might lead to a race to the bottom to see if the service can be provided cheaper or by someone else:

SM.4: ‘local authorities are not there to make money...........there to provide a service.’

C.5: ‘by putting in a measure of proof........you’re almost ceding ground.’

However, although C.4, SM.1 and 3 strongly believe that the work local authorities do would not stand up to a business case as the activities are not a business but a community service, they do not agree with SM.4 as they feel the private sector would not provide similar services:
SM.1: ‘a lot of work we do would not stand up to any business case……the private sector would not touch it……but we should still do it.’

C.8 agrees believing that libraries are cost neutral because of how they benefit the community.

When given evidence of international surveys participants conceded that it would be a useful exercise, particularly considering increased accountability following the introduction of the Local Property Tax:

C.1: ‘LPT is making people appreciate where their money is going.’

C.3: ‘since LPT……Council is very much concerned about putting money into facilities the public associate with the Council.’

C.4: ‘when LPT came in……the pennies have to be accounted for.’

SM.2 agrees that although libraries do not have a mechanism to economically translate the value of the service it would be worth articulating particularly in terms of the introduction of LPT. SM.6 feels that surveying users in terms of the local economy would be useful. SM.3 has a more focused opinion believing it would be more useful in a specific location where there is a large population growth, aiming it at larger libraries as smaller branches may not stand up to an economic evaluation.

C.3, 4 and 5 feel that some councillors would take more notice if the economic value of libraries was quantified.

LM.3 believes in a combination of evaluation methods:

‘We have to make a business case but there has to be a social element as well.’


Current measurements consist of statistics such as footfall, pc usage, number of attendees at events etc. All participants recognise the value of statistics with C.8 believing it is important to quantify this and the strength of statistics is being able to identify the numbers coming in and what services they use. SM.4 agrees that being able to quantify 1.8m visitors to Fingal libraries is a good measure of the service.
Library management agree that although metrics matter there is a need to move away from statistics:

LM.1: ‘stats are ok but don’t say how they relate back to whether something was well received or not.’

LM.2: ‘further along the line it’s not just metrics anymore.’

All three groups agree overwhelmingly that although statistics are important they do not tell the full story and there is a need to measure and show outcomes of programmes. C.4 had an interesting take on the use of statistics stating:

‘I’m not opposed to statistics……what are they to be used for? If it is a tool to minimise improvements I would be worried – it should be a tool to see how we can continually improve.’

C.3, C.5, C.8 would like to see more research in to what socio-economic groups are using libraries and why, with C.3 interested in what needs to be done to reach those who do not use the service. C.5 articulates this opinion very well believing it is important to build strong narratives around individuals that relate to how the library helped them going on to say:

‘soft qualitative stories are more important than ceding ground to counting – technocratic data in, data out.’

This view is echoed by LM.3:

‘when you’re making a business case maybe interviews from the public might be part of it – rather than just financial stats.’

Senior management concur with this view with SM.4 stating the importance of looking at outcomes from a user’s point of view while SM.5 believes it should not be done ‘aggressively’ but there should be a constant review and updating of services.

SM.2 considers that it has taken a number of years to put a range of diverse programmes in place and libraries are now at a point where the question needs to be asked ‘are we doing the right thing?’, while LM.2 agrees believing outcomes are important to secure sustainable funding.

C.8 had an interesting view whereby libraries should ask outside agencies such as NALA if library literacy programmes are making a difference.
5.7. Communication.

Councillors and senior management agree that the role of Fingal Libraries is moving towards that of a community space, but it is important to ascertain if library management market and communicate it to this important group of stakeholders and decision makers.

In general, both groups were relatively well informed about activities of the library service which is evident from how they perceive the role of libraries. Participants were asked in various ways if they think the library department communicates and markets itself enough within the organisation.

C.1 and 2, 3, 5 and 6 are big advocates for libraries but believe that perhaps all councillors may not be familiar with what goes on in libraries with C.3 stating:

‘for myself I am provided with enough evidence of the department’s contribution but for those reps who might be less inclined to invest in culture, the arts etc there could probably be more evidence provided’

In addition, C.2 expressed the opinion that not everyone attends library events because they do not feel it’s anything to do with them.

C.3, 5 and 6 believe there has been a lot more output from the department highlighting what is being done. SM.1, 2 and LM.1 and 2 agree and cite the greater use of social media as an element of this with LM.2 recognising the importance of this stating:

‘it’s important to sell our message so other departments can see what we’re doing’

LM.1 feels that while libraries have improved in communicating and articulating their vision, there is still an uphill battle with libraries featuring very little in corporate documents.

C.2 and 3 also looked at the bigger picture and feel that the Council in general is bad at internal communication, marketing and generally selling itself. This view is echoed by SM.1 who believes it is a challenge across all council departments.

C.6 did not feel libraries communicated their contribution enough to the organisation with C.9 agreeing stating:

‘It’s been my experience and I say only mine that the Library Department could be more to the forefront to get their mission statement to
whereas C.7 did not feel the need to be convinced. C.7 and 5 replied that they do not read all the information they get from libraries as there is a fight for attention between departments.

This contrasts with the view of C.8 who believes that library management’s reports are well detailed, good quality and show the amount of work that goes on:

‘facts and figures are documented very cleverly to make you take notice – so yes, I think they (library management) do a very good job of making their case.’

C.1, 2 and 5 believe libraries need to target councillors at a more geographic level and as C.5 put it ‘be more brutal about it’. C.5 also feels that targeting a particular councillor with information from the library service about a ‘good news’ story in their area would be effective – as at election time they could use it to their advantage.

All councillors agree that social media can contribute to getting the message to them but should be combined with booklets and the written word as sometimes e-mails do not stand out enough.


An emerging theme, and one that has the potential to show value in the future is that of collaboration with both other Council departments and outside organisations. SM.2 cited the growing collaboration between libraries, community and operations particularly around integration. This participant believes there is a lot to be gained by collaborating and using community organisations and their resources.

The value of a recent collaboration between libraries and a local Institute of Technology was discussed where a module on a teaching programme was introduced from which students produced a children’s book. The interviewee also feels collaboration with the Institute on conducting surveys and evaluations for libraries would show value.

Library management’s policy is to take every opportunity to go on internal committees such as communication, procurement as well as branch managers sitting on local community boards. C.1, 2 and 3 agree with this policy of going outside of the organisation. This is reflected in the opinion of SM.1 who sees libraries getting involved in both more cross departmental initiatives and liaising with community groups.
Senior management expressed the opinion that the whole area of Creative Ireland has the potential for libraries to get involved with other departments and community groups and the value this will bring to the organisation cannot be ignored.

SM.6 cites the collaboration between the Sports Department and Libraries on ‘The Big Sports Quiz’ where students learned about the value of sport and nutrition while reading relevant books and meeting the authors, believing ‘the value is obvious’.

On a larger scale the recurring opinion of Councillors is that libraries should be collaborating with community centres with a view to co-locating. C.3. 4 and 5 particularly mention the most recent branch to open, Donabate/Portrane Library, which is sited in the community centre. C.3 believes that this collaboration shows how the service adds value:

‘….library grew out of the community – the centre was underused, in went the library, people were coming to the gym and bringing their kids to the library. It’s that sort of integration where you’re doing one thing something else can happen’.

Chapter 6: Discussion.

6.1. Introduction.

The previous chapter outlined the basic findings of the interviews. The purpose of the discussion is to interpret and describe the significance of the findings in relation to the literature review and what is already known about the research problem being investigated. The primary research question posed in this study is:

‘Is Fingal Libraries Department doing enough to demonstrate that the service adds value to Fingal County Council?’

To help answer this question a further 4 research objectives are explored:

1. Awareness of FCC senior management and councillors of the services of Fingal Libraries Department.
2. Feel the Libraries Department contributes positively to the organisation.
3. Think Libraries as a non-income generating department justify continuing investment.
4. Think Libraries show and communicate their value to the organisation.
The discussion will explore the various themes that emerged in the findings leading to an overall conclusion and recommendations for further action. Due to the nature of the topic some themes may overlap. To recap, the themes are:

- Role of Fingal Libraries
- Value of Fingal Libraries to the Organisation
- Measuring and Evaluation
- Communication
- Collaboration

6.2. Role of Fingal Libraries.

The usage and role of public libraries were discussed at length in the literature review and findings. The literature review highlighted both the traditional and changing roles of public libraries nationally and internationally. The varying degrees of library usage is important to recognise as this is an indication of the continuing importance of public libraries and their role in the community.

Respondents’ views are broadly in line with existing literature and show an overwhelming view of libraries being a community space with a continuing role to play in promoting education, literacy, equitable access, art, culture and most importantly community building. While some councillors and FCC senior management focus on traditional activities of public libraries there is still an understanding of the changing face of libraries and their potential in the community.

This is reflected in policy documents from IFLA and EBLIDA where lifelong learning, education and culture are emphasised (EBLIDA, 2011). National library associations support these aims but put an increased emphasis on community, economic development and integration and inclusion. This is also a feature of the new national strategy for libraries and Fingal Libraries 5-year plan where the vision is that:

‘Fingal Libraries will be a dynamic and inclusive space supporting culture, recreation, literacy, education and economic development in the County’ (Fingal Public Libraries, 2018).

Councillors view libraries as a ‘social hub’ or ‘focal point’ of the community, a view supported by both national and international literature. Although statistics for book lending
in Australia have gone down, the numbers attending events has increased while American libraries have invested in more programmes and events (Regional Access & Public Libraries Australia, 2017; Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2017).

This is supported by all interviewees but perhaps articulated differently by library and FCC senior management who emphasise the more strategic element of the role in terms of the Library Department’s place within the organisation – seeing it as a key strategic component of FCC in building local communities. They echo policy documents from CILIP and Libraries Ireland which see libraries as having a significant role in the delivery of services locally while contributing to Local Government objectives (CILIP, n.d.; Libraries Ireland, 2018). By doing this, Fingal Libraries are also feeding in to the broader EU 2020 strategy which believes that public libraries are well placed to support EU priorities (EBLIDA, 2011).

Not surprisingly the role of libraries in relation to integration featured in the findings. Fingal has a diverse population with 23% having been born outside of the country and some areas comprising up to 152 different nationalities (Fingal Public Libraries, 2018). Both councillors and management agree that this is an area of huge potential for libraries, reflecting the Australian and New Zealand Library Associations’ policies of recognising the changing role in demographics to facilitate the development of democratic societies and active citizens, as well as tailoring services to the relevant groups (ALIA, 2009; Public Libraries of New Zealand, 2017). In terms of this research participants identified people born outside of Ireland, older people, families, students, marginalised social groups – reinforcing the role of libraries being a true community space and aligning with FCC’s policy objectives.

In relation to the research objective of discovering if FCC councillors and senior management are aware of the role and services of Fingal Libraries within the organisation it appears that they have a very good understanding of the department and its objectives. Although some participants still focus on a more traditional role they view libraries as being an integral part of the Council. All participants recognise the potential for libraries to have an increased role in the community which is reflected in library management’s vision for the service and ties in with international trends identified in the literature.

As previously discussed the concept of value in the public sector is difficult to quantify or define but it is important to gauge:

1. If councillors and senior management believe Fingal Libraries contribute and add value to the organisation
2. How they do this

The general view is that libraries are highly rated with a lot of good will towards them and a strong sense among elected members that the service is crucial to Fingal. Interestingly library management feels this view does libraries a disservice as it is quite a passive attitude perhaps leading to complacency because this may not always be the case – with local elections in 2019 the face and priorities of the Council or senior management could change. Library management agree that the department needs to stay ahead of the game and continuously show evidence of value.

Library management believes the space libraries offer, not just physical space but the concept of it being a community space and the services provided from there is a big part of the value the department adds to the organisation. This vision of the service is in line with what is happening in the Nordic countries and Wichita and Seattle Public Libraries in America (Aabo, Value of Public Libraries: a socio-economic analysis, 2011; Urban Libraries Council, 2010; Jochumsen, Rasmussen, & Skot-Hansen, 2012).

The theme of adding value and contributing to the organisation very much overlaps with the role of Fingal Libraries within the organisation as all respondents consider the roles identified in the previous section to be the value libraries add to the organisation. On further exploration participants elaborated with most councillors referring to the fact that library budgets were relatively well protected during the recession and the continued investment in buildings and mobile vans is evidence of the value the organisation places on libraries. This opinion mirrors the study from the Netherlands on political perceptions of library services (Vissinghen, 2003).

The number of programmes and events, particularly nationwide initiatives such as the 1916 commemorations and involvement in the STEAM programme were also cited as showing how libraries add value. SM.2 viewed libraries involvement in a reading programme around the family hubs and integration as being a big factor in how the department shows value.
This aligns with national and international policies on the development of democratic societies and encouraging active citizenship as well as contributing to the broader strategic objectives of the organisation (ALIA, 2009; EU Commission, 2017; Public Libraries of New Zealand, 2017; Libraries Ireland, 2018).

The level of interaction with communities combined with Fingal Libraries having the highest membership levels in the country was a measure of the contribution of the service to the organisation as several councillors feel this is a great source of pride to the Council, again agreeing with opinions from the Netherlands.

Senior management believe that libraries’ value also lies in the fact that it is a frontline service, but the general view of management is that the organisation is there to add value to both the community and FCC. This opinion is revealing as it indicates that Fingal Libraries is not an isolated department but an integral part of the organisation which is a measure of proof of the value the organisation places on the service.

One aspect of ‘value’ that was not fully explored was the concept of something not adding value, but it was touched on in the interviews. SM.4 felt the addition of 3D printers was not necessarily adding value, either monetary or social value. However, the Peachey report discovered that service improvements Irish public library users want to see includes the introduction of more Makerspaces, a component of which is 3D printers (Peachey, Shining a Light: Irish data about attitudes to and use of libraries 2011 - 2016, 2017).

If Fingal Libraries want to continue showing value to the community and subsequently value to the organisation, it is important to take cognisance of users’ needs – within reason and aligning with policy objectives. Makerspaces fit in to national and local policies on STEAM initiatives.

The other area that emerged around the issue of not adding value was the Open Libraries initiative which has been piloted in other Local Authorities and is due to be rolled out nationwide. 3 councillors remarked on it, 2 against and 1 in favour, although they agreed that libraries would add value by having longer opening hours to enable the space to be better used. Ultimately, all respondents agreed that if libraries are showing value to the community then it follows that they add value to the organisation.
6.1. Staff.

One interesting sub-theme that became apparent in the interviews was the issue of library staff and their contribution to the organisation. This was not evident in the literature review but is nevertheless important to include in this discussion as both councillors and senior management commented on it.

Library management acknowledge the contribution of staff and are aware of how highly qualified and professional they are. The community also value library staff as can be seen through various surveys and public consultations. However, the perception of councillors and senior management was not previously considered.

Positive opinions were offered without prompting from the interviewer with councillors believing the success of the service is due to the staff and the fact they work beyond their remit to deliver a high-quality service. One councillor believes that the reason FCC is so proactive in libraries is due to library management and their engagement with councillors.

SM.2 agrees going further by stating that library management play a key role in the senior management team of FCC. This contribution and concept of staff adding value to the organisation is one which has the potential to influence decision makers in a positive manner, a point made by Kleiner and Grant et al (Kleiner cited in Gwyer, 2009; Grant, Tan, Regan, & Nesbitt, 2014).


According to Walker using metrics to show the value of public libraries is necessary but complex due to the multidimensional nature of the service (Walker, et al., 2012). Measures that matter most to decision makers and stakeholders are outcomes that show how the library is contributing to achieving strategic goals and objectives (Aspen Institute, 2014).

2016 KPI’s from the LGMA for Irish Public Libraries focus on the number of visits to libraries, items borrowed, events, pc access etc (LGMA, 2016). This is reflected in the Fingal Libraries development plan with key figures listed as footfall, items borrowed, membership, opening hours (Fingal Public Libraries, 2018).

All 3 groups of respondents agree with Walker et al that measurement is difficult but necessary. Senior management believes it has to happen at an organisational level as the
Council in general needs to do more in terms of measurement and evaluation. Again, this opinion infers that libraries are considered very much a part of the organisation as a whole rather than just an ‘an add on’ or an isolated unit. Library management feel that in terms of just the library department it should be done at a national level with the LGMA and perhaps the LAI. This opinion is reinforced by Walker et al who advocate that CILIP lead the process in the UK (Walker, Halpin, Rankin, & Chapman, 2012).

6.4.1. Economic Evaluation.

In marked contrast to the available literature councillors have particularly strong views against measuring libraries from an economic standpoint. This is supported by both senior and library management. This general consensus reflects the activities of Local Authorities as a public good, providing community services which would not stand up to a business case and where value is considered go beyond economic outcomes to include what is important to the community (Jaeger, Bertot, Kodama, Katz, & DeCoster, 2011; Williams & Shearer, Appraising Public Value - Past, Present and Futures, 2011, p. 1). Senior management agree that the private sector would not and probably could not provide a similar service.

On further probing 3 councillors, 2 senior management and library management agreed that it would be a useful exercise to perform some sort of economic evaluation particularly in light of the introduction of LPT as this has resulted in more accountability.

Rather than aggressive measures the concept of the international studies described in the literature review was considered appropriate (Stolarick & Silk, 2013; Lison & Riep, 2016; Urban Libraries Council, 2010; LIANZA, 2014; Tessler, 2013; Queensland Public Libraries, 2012). It was interesting to note, though perhaps not surprising that 3 councillors believe that some members would take more notice of the value of libraries if the economic value was quantified. This view is borne out by evidence from the literature from Irish and international commentators (Aabo, Value of Public Libraries: a socio-economic analysis, 2011; Garner A. K., 2014; Nolan, 2016).

The public library is a non-income generating stream of the relevant Local Authority and although it is important to quantify and demonstrate the economic contribution it makes to both the community and organisation it is equally important but more challenging to show community and social benefits.

Participants agreed that although there needs to be a move away from metrics as a measure of success. Statistics combined with evaluating outcomes would paint a stronger picture and reinforce each other (Bolt, 2013). In contrast to respondents’ views on economic evaluation, when it came to measuring social benefits or outcomes all gave answers that reflect the findings from the literature review. The concept of building narratives around individual’s use of the service or participation in programmes was particularly well articulated (Lawson, The Role of the Public Library in Today's World, 2016; Walker, Halpin, Rankin, & Chapman, 2012).

Investigating what socio-economic groups were accessing services and for what purposes was also of interest to participants. This goes back to the concept of the library as a ‘space’, adding value and measuring what that space is used for (Aabo, Value of Public Libraries: a socio-economic analysis, 2011; Urban Libraries Council, 2010). All 3 groups agreed that building a business case with soft qualitative stories from library users would have more impact than just basic statistics and would show real community value.

The point was made by a member of the senior management team that it takes several years to develop programmes, but libraries are now in a place where outcomes need to be evaluated. It was emphasised by library management that public libraries are not a research organisation and may not have the resources to release staff to concentrate on the type of research needed to do robust qualitative studies. It was reiterated that this should come from the LGMA, particularly where there are national programmes in place.

6.5. Communication.

Most councillors interviewed are ‘pro-libraries’ and advocate for the service so do not feel the need to be convinced of the department’s contribution to the organisation. Again, this was viewed by library and senior management as a rather passive attitude and not a reason to just sit back and think it’s ‘job done’.
Councillors did acknowledge that perhaps not all elected members are familiar with the activities of the service so need to be provided with more evidence, broadly in line with previous studies which found that as decision makers, elected members need to be encouraged in to events and made aware of activities of the service (Aabo, Value of Public Libraries: a socio-economic analysis, 2011; Nolan, 2016).

Councillors and senior management agree that there has been a lot more output from library management with the advent of social media. Library management recognise the importance of getting the message across to the Council and other FCC departments that libraries help achieve the wider strategic goals of the organisation, as recommended by the UK Taskforce (UK Libraries Taskforce, 2016). Councillors in particular believe there is still a place for brochures and the written word, particularly at Council meetings as sometimes online content is just skimmed through.

One councillor felt the department was very good at getting the message across and remarked on the high standard of reports and data produced by library management. In contrast, 2 councillors did not feel libraries communicated their contribution well enough and although they receive a lot of information on the activities of the service, they do not always take notice of it due to other priorities competing for attention, in line with opinions of Dutch politicians and administrators (Vissingen, 2003). However, those councillors were quite isolated in their views.

It was remarked by several elected members that councillors should be targeted geographically with good news stories about the library in their area highlighted (Nolan, 2016). They would in turn put this on their website and use it at election time. It was also noted that this may result in councillors who do not have a library in their constituency taking more notice of the contribution of the department.

The consensus across all three categories of interviewees appears to be that the department is improving but needs to do more in terms of communicating and marketing its value and contribution within the organisation. The point was also made that it is a Council wide problem – again, inferring that libraries are not an isolated unit but considered very much part of the organisation.

The subject of collaboration emerged in the literature review, but it was not expected to feature prominently in the findings. Interestingly it was a topic all participants commented on as a means of libraries showing value to the organisation.

Senior management feel there is huge potential for libraries to collaborate with other departments in delivering initiatives around inclusion and integration, aligning with both Fingal Libraries and FCC’s strategic objectives. This follows a successful partnership in relation with a reading scheme in the family hubs.

Both councillors and senior management agreed on libraries going outside of the organisation and forming external partnerships. One member of the senior management team particularly mentioned working with students and faculty in local Institutes of Technology in relation to research.

Library management acknowledge the benefit of library staff going on committees both internally such as procurement, communications groups and externally such as local community councils or Citizen’s Information Centre boards. Massis believes that this increased visibility will show that libraries are an important part of the organisation and contribute to their influence within the Council (Massis, 2014).

A member of the senior management team referred to the 1916 commemorations where it was felt that libraries really showed their strength and value in the collaborative work they did. This led on to the potential of libraries getting involved in collaborations on initiatives around Creative Ireland as it is a platform particularly suited to libraries and the promotion of culture and arts. The point was made that this type of collaboration would be a ‘good fit’ for libraries as there should not be collaboration just for the sake of it, a point made in the 2010 Museums, Libraries and Archives’ report (MLA, 2010).

Collaboration is an emerging area where libraries can really show their strength and value as they are well placed in the community. With greater accountability, this type of activity has the potential to show not only value to the organisation but also value for money as departments and groups will be seen to pool their resources.

Further down the line the idea of co-locating services with libraries was suggested. This stems from the success of Donabate/Portrane Library, located in the local Community Centre and resulting in a higher footfall and more awareness of the centre. Senior management and
all councillors remarked on this. It will be a feature of the new Swords Civic and Cultural Centre with a library, theatre and arts centre located in the same building, a growing trend internationally.

**Chapter 7: Conclusion.**

The purpose of this chapter is to summarise the research findings and present a conclusion. The significance of the study will also be discussed followed by suggested recommendations and areas for further research.

The aim of this qualitative research project was to ascertain if Fingal Libraries Department is doing enough to demonstrate that it contributes and adds value to the organisation that is Fingal County Council. Face to face and emailed interviews were conducted with councillors and senior management of FCC to:

- assess their level of awareness of the role and services of Fingal Libraries within the organisation and how libraries align strategies with the corporate objectives of FCC.
- to discover if they believe the service contributes and adds value to the organisation and if they are presented with enough evidence of this.

Members of the senior library management team were also interviewed to discover their views on the department’s contribution to the Council and how they feel value can be shown and communicated.

Much of the literature is from Australia, New Zealand, United States and mainland Europe and discusses the usage and role of public libraries, how they add value and how this value is measured and communicated to the organisation.

Following a detailed analysis of the primary data it became clear that elected members and senior management have a positive view of the library service. They are keenly aware of the services provided and the level of interaction Fingal Libraries Department has with the community. While the traditional role of the public library was considered important to both groups of respondents, the changing face of public libraries was also recognised. It is important that those traditional functions of the service such as physical access to resources, education, information and a role in arts and culture continue to be recognised.
Library management have always viewed libraries as having a role in building communities and the concept of the library as a ‘space’ being at the core of the service, but the value of this role is now being recognised by councillors and senior management. This fits with the Nordic concept of the ‘Four Space Model’

1. an inspirational space
2. an involvement space
3. an empowerment space
4. an innovation space

It applies to all library buildings no matter what size as it involves bringing services of the library outside of the physical space. This is evident in the activities of the mobile library vans in the community and collaborations with other departments and external organisations. Senior management and councillors all remarked on the value this brings to the Council. The reputational value of the mobile vans being recognised as contributing value to the organisation is important following the substantial investment in the service.

Respondents, in particular FCC senior management, clearly articulated how libraries contribute to the policy objectives of FCC such as integration, inclusion, mental health and the overall well-being of the community it serves. This alignment of FCC and Fingal Libraries objectives points to a clear understanding by senior management and councillors of the role of the service within the organisation and indicates that library management are effectively communicating their vision for Fingal Libraries to both groups of stakeholders, resulting in senior management and councillors valuing libraries as an integral part of the organisation.

Although the literature advices a move away from traditional metrics as evidence of value participants still rely on statistics to show the contribution of libraries to the organisation. Councillors value and are proud of the fact that Fingal has the highest membership in the country and the level of events and classes that are run. This indicates that statistics are still relevant so should be combined with other measures of value to have a greater impact.

Economic measurement in the traditional way was not a popular option as it was reiterated that Local Authorities are not there to make money but to serve the community. Surveying users on what other activities they were combining with a visit to the library was considered a valid option but for libraries with a larger population base as rural libraries may not stand up to an economic evaluation.
The overwhelming view of all participants was to build narratives around the socio-economic groups that were using the service and why. It was agreed that this sort of qualitative evidence would be a greater indicator of the value of the service and ‘pack more of a punch’ when lobbying for resources.

The aspect of the contribution and value of library staff to both the department and the organisation was interesting and encouraging. Some respondents commented on the fact that staff do not know how good they are. This can be attributed to the fact that because they are public servants, library staff just view it ‘as doing their job’ and do not think of what they do as being any better than any other Council department.

The primary research question was:

‘Is Fingal Libraries Department doing enough to demonstrate that the service adds value to Fingal County Council?’

From analysing the interviews and reviewing the findings, it can be concluded that councillors and FCC senior management have a keen understanding and awareness of the objectives and role of the Libraries Department within the organisation. From this, it appears that yes, the department is demonstrating that the service adds value to the organisation but as with everything more could be done. This will be discussed in the following chapter.

7.1. Research Limitations.

It is important to recognise that this research study has some limitations. As discussed in the methodology chapter the researcher had to be aware of personal bias due to her connection with Fingal Libraries Department. The issue of bias from the respondents also needs to be taken into consideration. This was pointed out by councillors in particular as the 9 councillors interviewed were all ‘pro libraries’. The researcher was asked if she had tried to contact those elected members who may not be so aware or supportive of the service.

All 40 councillors were contacted with a view to providing gender, geographical and party balance. Just under a quarter of councillors responded due to time constraints and holidays. Interviews resulted in an abundance of rich data from both elected members and senior
management and but as noted in the methodology chapter Bryman argues that interviews conducted with a small number of people in an organisation makes it difficult to generalise findings whereas Williams (cited in Bryman) believes that qualitative researchers may be well placed to generalise from collected data as aspects of the research question can show a broader picture of the problem (Bryman A., 2016, p. 399).

As Fingal County Council is a public service organisation with the objective of providing quality community services it can be assumed that councillors and other senior management would have similar views. However, it is recommended that this research project is repeated at a different time of year to get the views of more councillors and compare the findings which will add validity to this study. In the longer term, it would be beneficial to conduct a national study of Local Authority councillors and senior management led by the Libraries Development Unit of the LGMA.

**Chapter 8: Recommendations.**

In the context of this research it is worth noting that Fingal County Council is a relatively new Local Authority having been established in 1994 following the break-up of Dublin County Council. Over the past 24 years the Libraries Department has worked on building up the infrastructure, resources, staffing, programmes and reputation of the service.

This study has shown that the library management team has a keen awareness of the need to demonstrate and communicate the value and contribution of the service to the organisation. To achieve this, library management, councillors and FCC senior management are cognisant of the need for increased evaluation across all departments, particularly regarding outcomes and social benefit. They agree that in the case of libraries this is would be more effective if it was done at national level by the Library Development Unit of the LGMA or the LAI since initiatives such as Work Matters, Right to Read and various STEAM programmes are promoted by the LGMA.

The point was made that public libraries are not research organisations but there is still an appetite to explore options for evaluation as Fingal Libraries fund those initiatives so there is an obligation to show value for money but more importantly value to the community and the organisation.
The recommended suggestions below could be implemented without the need for extra resources and could then be used in presentations to SPC’s and Council meetings:

- Fingal Libraries introduce a more robust evaluation form for participants to fill in following an event or programme asking for more qualitative information.

- conduct surveys, similar to exit polls in politics as users are in the building to ascertain if they are combining their visit with other activities in the area, while being cognisant of GDPR regulations.

- ask participants at an event or programme if they would be willing to take part in a short interview to gauge their level of satisfaction.

In terms of future advocacy, the Queensland and Shining a Light reports recommend library management keep up to date with the broader objectives of the Council, while thinking of new ways the department can help deliver other policy objectives of the Council (Peachey, Shining a Light: Irish data about attitudes to and use of libraries 2011 - 2016, 2017; Queensland Public Libraries, 2012). This is something Fingal library management have always done but is now part of Fingal Libraries Development Plan.

To maximise internal and external visibility the following suggestions were recommended by both interviewees and various reports:

- continue the practice of inviting councillors and staff to all library events as this will promote the broader value of the service (Nolan, 2016; Queensland Public Libraries, 2012).

- continue exploring new possibilities for both internal and external collaborations, particularly with the Creative Ireland and STEAM initiatives as all participants remarked on the potential this has to show real value to the community and the organisation as well as aligning with local and national strategies.

- bring the library to the community in terms of visiting schools and using the mobile library vans to their full advantage. The 3 new vans are considered particularly
valuable in terms of visibility of both libraries and the broader Council. The reputational value they add to the Council was commented on in interviews.

- retain the staff library and advertise this to existing and new staff, something recommended by one of the senior management team. The provision of corporate functions is also recommended by the Queensland report (Queensland Public Libraries, 2012).

- continue the practice of submitting articles on the service to the FCC’s staff magazine – again suggested by senior management.

Councillors commented on how progressive the Library Department is in keeping up to date with technology and providing access to new technologies. This is an important way of demonstrating value but to ensure future sustainable funding investigating what this technology is used for and the impact it has on users’ needs to be explored.

There is also the issue of what does not add value that was briefly touched on during the interviews. Monitoring new and existing programmes will lead to a better understanding of the role of libraries in achieving both local and national goals (Peachey, Shining a Light: Irish data about attitudes to and use of libraries 2011 - 2016, 2017). It is recommended that research be carried out by both Fingal Libraries and the LGMA to ascertain which services if any should be discontinued or adapted.

In terms of the Open Libraries initiative it appears from this research that not all councillors or senior management believe it will add value to the organisation, even though they would like to see longer opening hours in libraries. Library management should take every opportunity to explain the initiative to the Council before it is introduced in Fingal by presenting at an SPC or full Council meeting. The LGMA should also get involved with a nationwide communication strategy to inform councillors in all Local Authorities as it is an issue that will affect all City and County Councils.

Library staff’s contribution to the organisation was evident during the interview process. FCC has a policy of offering training and continuous professional development opportunities to staff, so this practice should be continued, especially in areas such as evaluation and research, marketing and strategic planning. The issue of staff value and contribution is
recognised at EU level with Lison and Riep believing in the importance of the guidance of trained professional librarians to help communities make use of the space and resources offered by public libraries (Lison & Riep, 2016)

Ultimately, as articulated by all respondents, the contribution of Fingal Public Libraries to the community and the value the public put on this is what is considered the value to the organisation. Going forward continuing to demonstrate this to both communities and the organisation will ensure future support for Fingal Libraries.
Chapter 9: Reflections on Learning Experience.

9.1. Introduction.

This chapter will be written in the first person as it relates to my experience on this Masters course and particularly the process of completing this dissertation. Having worked for more than 30 years in public libraries I have seen many changes in the sector both within libraries and Local Government. At the beginning of my career technology was not a feature of the service with the old card catalogue and actual cardboard library tickets filed according to the accession number of the book borrowed.

I did not go to college after school so the idea of doing a degree was always in the back of my mind, so I eventually completed a degree and Post Graduate Diploma in Public Management. This gave me the confidence to take on the challenge of studying for a Masters in Library and Information Studies.

Work colleagues had traditionally studied in UCD, but I decided to follow in the footsteps of some colleagues who had studied in DBS. As I had completed my degree while working fulltime I thought this programme would be much more manageable, but I soon realised how naïve I was!

Due to my career and life experience I did not see the need to reflect on the actual learning experience, after all is it not just a means to an end? I thought about it and found Kolb’s Learning Cycle a useful tool to concentrate my mind:

http://skillsforlearning.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/preview/content/models/02.shtml

This theory maintains that we learn from our experiences of life, even on an everyday basis with the process of learning following a four-stage cycle. Initially I would have thought that
I would just attend lectures, do assignments, forget about it and move on. However, I was able to draw on previous experience throughout the first semester and use knowledge gained in one module to help understand another one and eventually lead to the dissertation process.

Meeting fellow students and lecturers and being introduced to new concepts was exciting but by week 2 the enormity of what lay ahead began to hit me. Although I have a lot of library experience I have spent the past 10 years in an administrative role in HR and Finance so had to reacquaint myself with terms such as Information Literacy, Information Retrieval and MARC Records as well as unfamiliar terms such as Information Architecture.

However, rather than letting this overwhelm me I decided to take it one step at a time, one assignment at a time and build up my confidence and knowledge to help inform my decision on my research topic.

9.2. Research Topic.

While working through the Research Methods module I soon realised the importance of choosing a topic that I would genuinely enjoy working on and that had the potential to be of benefit to me in my career. I initially toyed with the notion of choosing a topic related to an academic or special library as it is an area I was not familiar with and found interesting. On further reflection I decided to stick to where my heart lies – public libraries.

I thought choosing a topic would be easy due to my experience but in a way, this was a hindrance as I felt I was slightly ‘institutionalised’! I jumped from one thing to another and eventually settled on the topic of Public Libraries and Economic Development, focusing on the Work Matters initiative in Fingal Libraries and outcomes that have resulted from it. My proposal was successful and as I have access to staff in Fingal Libraries I began the research process immediately.

This proved fortunate as it quickly transpired that the topic would not be feasible due to recent GDPR regulations. I immediately contacted the Research Methods lecturer and my supervisor and quickly submitted a 2nd draft proposal on Fingal Libraries demonstrating value to the organisation. I really connected with this topic because of my background in administration and public management so straight away it was a better ‘fit’.
9.3. Literature Review.

I soon realised that there was a vast amount of literature on the topic – articles about economic, social, community value, measurement and evaluation, communication etc. Through necessity I became proficient at searching DBS library resources and trawling the shelves of Fingal Libraries.

I did not fully understand the need for a literature review but realised it helped to focus the research question and put it in context. I tended to take on board every article I found thinking this proved that I had thoroughly researched the topic. I learned the value of doing a comprehensive review and critically analysing each piece to establish how relevant or good it was.

My supervisor emphasised the need to complete the review early in the dissertation process as this would give a greater understanding of the subject and a better focus moving forward. This advice proved invaluable as it helped narrow down the research question.

9.4. Research Design.

Research design and methodology were terms that I was unfamiliar with. Understanding strategies, philosophies, ontologies proved challenging, so I tried to avoid this part of the dissertation. However, once I took it one concept at a time and broke it down into sections it began to make sense and I could relate it to my topic and how it would fit in.

Early on I knew I would be more suited to qualitative rather than quantitative research and felt the research question leant itself to this approach. I wanted to get a sense of what senior management and councillors in FCC thought of the library service and the value it brings to the organisation. In-depth interviews would result in more honest opinions and richer data than a questionnaire.

9.5. Data Collection & Analysis.

I was anxious to start this part of the process as I felt this was what the Masters programme was leading up to. As an employee of FCC access to library management was not an issue. I
also had access to internal e-mails for councillors and senior management. Unfortunately, due to summer holidays and busy schedules of identified interviewees I did not get responses from all of those that I contacted.

Despite this I was pleased with the response rate for both face to face and e-mailed interviews. Having access to senior management and councillors was vital to the research question and interviews resulted in an abundance of rich data.

I found I was unexpectedly nervous when interviewing library and senior management as I have a both a personal and professional relationship with some of them. The need to be objective was an important consideration and I had to be aware of not letting my opinions interfere with the interviews.

The abundance of data was a double-edged sword as it meant an abundance of analysis. I underestimated the amount of time it would take to code and analyse it and generally do it justice. On the plus side this led to a greater understanding of the research question and provided valuable insights into participants’ perception of the service.


Reflecting on the learning experience has helped me focus on how I learn and what works best for me. I never thought I had a learning style, considering my style rather chaotic with notes everywhere and a scramble at the end to get everything together. Having explored learning styles such as VAKS, visual, auditory, kinaesthetic styles, during the PPD module I found that my preference is for visual learning (South Western University, n.d.).

I need to be able to see the lecturer and tend to sit near the front of a class or presentation. Diagrams and PowerPoint presentations help my understanding of a concept, so DBS lecture styles suited me. I prefer handouts rather than reading texts online and tend to take a lot of notes during lectures and class discussions.

9.7. Personal & Skills Development.

The Masters programme has been a huge learning curve both in an academic and personal sense. Some of the course content was outside of my comfort zone but I realise now that I can learn new concepts and theories and not be afraid of them.
Reflecting on the learning experience has made me realise that I have gained so many new skills, particularly in IT and research skills which I particularly enjoy. I have also improved my time management skills by necessity more than anything else and this will be beneficial to me whatever role I take on in the future.

On a personal level I now know that I am never going to be too ‘old’ or set in my ways to learn new things, for work or pleasure. I have also learned that I am more confident than I realised when dealing with new situations. Although I did not look forward to group work and presentations I can see the benefit of them as the process gave me more confidence in my abilities to believe in my opinions and stand in front of an audience.

This will be invaluable in the work place as I move forward in my career as the role of library management has changed with an emphasis on presenting to committees or the Council and advocating for the service. With public libraries moving into the realm of measuring and evaluating programmes the skills I gained in research from this programme will be of benefit to both myself personally and Fingal Libraries.

This process has resulted in me returning to work with a renewed passion for public libraries and their role in the community. It has also given me a greater understanding of the role and value within the organisation as I have had the opportunity to take a step back and look at the service from the ‘outside’. It has also given me a great sense of pride knowing that the organisation genuinely believes in Fingal Libraries and the contribution and value the service brings to Fingal County Council.
Bibliography


Appendix 1.

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

PROJECT TITLE

Public Libraries adding value to their organisation: Fingal County Libraries Department and Fingal County Council.

You are being asked to take part in a research study on whether Fingal Public Libraries Department is doing enough to show that it adds value to Fingal County Council as an organisation.

The study is being conducted by Linda Larrigan – a student on the MSc in Library and Information Management Programme in Dublin Business School. The researcher is also an employee of Fingal Public Libraries.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN

In this study, you will be asked to take part in either a recorded face to face or e-mailed interview with the researcher, give your views and feelings on the value the Libraries Department adds to Fingal County Council as an organisation and if the Libraries Department is doing enough to show this value, particularly considering increased investment in public libraries.

TIME COMMITMENT

The interview/questionnaire should not take up more than 30 minutes of the participant’s time.

PARTICIPANTS’ RIGHTS

You may decide to stop being a part of the research study at any time without explanation required from you. You have the right to ask that any data you have supplied to that point be withdrawn / destroyed.

You have the right to omit or refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of you.
You have the right to have your questions about the procedures answered (unless answering these questions would interfere with the study’s outcome. A full de-briefing will be given after the study). If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, you should ask the researcher before the study begins.

**CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY**
The data I collect will not contain any personal information about you unless you agree to identifying information being collected. Data collected will be analysed and included in the researcher’s thesis, but no data that can identify a participant will be included or published.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**
I or / and my supervisor, Marta Bustillo, will be glad to answer your questions about this study at any time. You may contact my supervisor at bustillom@gmail.com or DBS on 4177556.
Appendix 2.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PROJECT TITLE: Public Libraries adding value to their organisation: Fingal County Libraries and Fingal County Council.

PROJECT SUMMARY: Traditionally public libraries tend to focus on outputs of the service such as circulation figures, computer usage, footfall and attendance at events rather than outcomes. With existing technology this type of statistical quantitative analysis is relatively easy to obtain and of course important to measure. However, qualitative outcomes are less tangible benefits and tend not to be measured.

The increased commitment and investment in public libraries together with more robust reporting mechanisms makes it necessary to investigate if the service adds value to Fingal County Council as an organisation which in turn may inform future policies regarding investment in public libraries.

The driving force behind this research is to investigate if Fingal Public Libraries are doing enough to show that increased investment and support for the service is impacting and adding value to the organisation, leading on to the research question:

‘Is Fingal Libraries Department doing enough to show it adds value to Fingal County Council?’

By signing below, you are agreeing that: (1) you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet, (2) questions about your participation in this study have been answered satisfactorily, (3) you are aware of the potential risks (if any), and (4) you are taking part in this research study voluntarily (without coercion).

_________________________________________  ____________________________
Participant’s signature                          Participant’s Name (Printed)

_________________________________________  __________________________________
Student Name (Printed)                           Student Name signature

_________________________________________
Date
Appendix 3.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.

- What do you think is the main function and contribution of the public library in the community?

- As a non-income generating stream of Fingal County Council do you think Fingal’s Library Department communicates a clear vision and evidence of how it contributes to the organisation and the objectives of the Corporate Plan and policies of Fingal?

- Public libraries are increasingly in competition with other vital services so how important do you think it is for libraries to make their case in terms of funding/resources etc. Does the Library Department do enough to convince you of its value to the organisation and that it is an investment rather than an expense?

- What evidence do you use to assess the value of the library service in Fingal to the community and to the organisation?

- Do you think we invest in enough research to show hard figures such as Return on Investment, Cost Benefit Analysis to ascertain the economic value of the library? For example, Nordic and US/Canadian libraries regularly survey the community to ask if they combine a library visit with other activities in the area – visits to cafes, shops etc. This has been shown to increase the rates base in the town. In your opinion would this be part of a strong argument to increase investment in libraries?

- Do you think we should do more to investigate outcomes from a user’s point of view rather than just focus on outputs such as footfall, number of events, pc use so programmes that are not working can be changed or resources invested elsewhere?

- In your opinion as a senior manager are you provided with enough evidence to convince you that the section is an essential component of Fingal County Council?

- What are the main ways you keep yourself informed about the needs and attitudes of the community regarding Fingal Libraries?

- Are there any new programmes or initiatives you would like to see introduced to libraries that would enhance the service and add further value?