

An Investigation into the Use of Volunteers by Special Libraries in the Republic of Ireland

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement
for the degree of
MSc in Information & Library Management
at Dublin Business School

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August 2020

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Declaration

‘I declare that this dissertation that I have submitted to Dublin Business School for the award of MSc in Information & Library Management is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated, where it is clearly acknowledged by references. Furthermore, this work has not been submitted for any other degree.’

Signed: Ray Gainford

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Acknowledgments

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor, Trevor Haugh, for his guidance and support throughout the dissertation process.

I am grateful to the various library staff who participated in this research and provided me with a wealth of information. This dissertation would not have been possible without them.

To the lecturers and library staff at Dublin Business School, thank you for your assistance and encouragement. Your enthusiasm for and dedication to the field of librarianship were constant motivators for me throughout my studies.

To my family, thank you for your endless support. The “eternal student” of the family is finally finished, for now at least!

Finally, to Mikey, who has been my biggest cheerleader since day one. Thank you for your endless love and patience, and for giving me the strength to carry on.

Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the use of volunteers in special libraries in the Republic of Ireland. The research showed the various effects of volunteers on library services. Seven qualitative semi-structured interviews with librarians and staff at various libraries were conducted. Volunteers' duties varied depending on the services offered by each special library. Interviewees identified a range of positive and negative effects. Volunteers helped libraries to offer improved and additional services and broadened the shared skills within the library team. A higher volume of work was completed. Volunteer networks became available for libraries to consult in future. The training and time required to prepare each volunteer was identified as a challenge. Volunteer policies were not present in every library, which may result in greater challenges for the staff and volunteers. The experiences and opinions of library staff were positive and showed a readiness to recruit volunteers again in the future.

Chapter One: Introduction & Literature Review

1. Introduction

In countries such as the United States of America, volunteers have historically had an important positive impact on the growth of public libraries. In the 1930's, volunteers aided lending services when the public library system was still developing, and many citizens volunteer in US public libraries today (Nicol & Johnson, 2008). In the United Kingdom, volunteers in public libraries are a relatively recent endeavour linked to budget cuts for public library funding (Forbes et al, 2017). Volunteering in school and academic libraries is already in place in a number of countries, such as Australia, Qatar, India, South Korea, Malaysia, the U.K. and the US (Bayat Bodaghi et al, 2014, Bogel, 2013, Forbes et al 2017, Forrest, 2012, Fouse & Ahkmed, 2014, Howlett, Machin & Malmersjo, 2005, Iyengar & Muralidharan, 1981, McDiarmid and Auster, 2005, Mei, 2014, National Library of Australia, 2020, Tikam, 2011).

In the Republic of Ireland, volunteering in libraries is not as commonplace. There is little evidence of public libraries facilitating volunteer services. Though it has been attempted previously at a specific public library branch, it has not been successful due to a number of reasons, including resistance from staff and a lack of available tasks for volunteers to complete (Anonymous, 2020, personal communications, 23 April, supplied in Appendix C). Volunteers can be appreciated for the important contribution that they provide, but there is resistance and hesitation towards giving volunteers duties that may be seen as a method to replace paid staff (CILIP, 2020). Despite this, interest in volunteering has been expressed among library users, especially young people, who believe that Irish public libraries should be making use of this resource (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2013).

While public libraries in Ireland have not had much success with volunteers, special libraries seem to be the exception to this rule. Special libraries such as Marsh's Library, Chester Beatty Library and NCBI Library actively hire volunteers to aid with their services (Marsh's

Library, 2020, Chester Beatty Library, 2020, NCBI, 2020). For the purposes of this research, it is important to explain what is meant by the terms “volunteer” and “special library”.

A volunteer can be described as “a person who does something, especially helping other people, willingly and without being forced or paid to do it” (Cambridge University Press, 2020). Defining a special library can be more difficult than it appears. Dartnall (1998) is of the opinion that “definitions do not wholly succeed because they attempt to define what a special library is, whereas special libraries are really distinguished by what they do, the work that goes on in them”. Nonetheless many efforts have been made to define what a special library is, and what it does. For the scope of this research project, I believe the following definition from Choudhury (2002) is the most fitting:

[A] special library, thus, is an organised collection of library materials assembled to meet the needs of a particular group of clientele. Special libraries built up to supply detailed information respecting some limited subject fields. It is a library that covers a single definite subject, or a definite group or related subjects to meet the information requirement of its users.

Previous research in this area has been based on school, public and academic libraries, but volunteers can also play important roles in special libraries, though admittedly little research on special libraries has been undertaken (Murray, 2015). The majority of research that has been carried out in this area has taken place in the United Kingdom or United States of America (Murray, 2015). This research provided a new insight into this topic from an Irish perspective. An Irish perspective could provide deeper insight into the roles and needs of special libraries in Ireland and what factors cause them to require volunteers.

This aim of this research was to investigate the effects of hiring volunteer staff in special libraries on the services provided by the libraries themselves. This will highlight any benefits and challenges that may arise from utilising this resource. It will also investigate different approaches used by special libraries in Ireland when recruiting volunteers. Is there a “one size fits all”

approach for this resource, or does it need to be tailored to each individual library? In order to explore this research topic, the researcher carried out semi-structured interviews with special library staff in the Republic of Ireland.

The dissertation will be undertaken while focusing on the following research question:

- What effects can volunteer resources have on the services provided by a special library in the Republic of Ireland?

This will examine in detail if volunteers are perceived to be a benefit or challenge to special libraries in Ireland. The following sub-questions will help to further define the main research question:

- Why are volunteers hired by special libraries in Ireland?

As the literature review will show, there can be several reasons why libraries might require volunteers, as well as why volunteers might want to donate their time and skills to a library. Exploring the reasons for both parties will give greater context to the resources available to special libraries in Ireland.

- What duties are expected of library volunteers, and why these specific duties?

Given the differences that can exist between types of special libraries, what are the typical duties that a volunteer could expect? While some special libraries, such as Chester Beatty, keep their volunteer policies general, “to ensure that the goals of the Library are met, to provide assistance in bringing the services of the Library to the general public and to enhance our contact with the local community we serve” (Chester Beatty Library, 2020), the NCBI states specific tasks for their

volunteers “readers (to produce audio books), editors (of pre-Braille documents) and assistants for general library work” (NCBI, 2020).

- What training, if any, is given to volunteers in special libraries?

Training is necessary for staff in any workplace, and the same is true for volunteers in a library. How much training is required in preparation of any library duties? As the literature review will show, it can be a challenge to give adequate training to volunteers in order to carry out more complex tasks, without causing library staff to feel that their own workloads or positions are threatened.

1.2 Literature Review

1.2.1 Literature introduction.

The literature review “identifies and organizes the concepts in relevant literature” and allows the researcher to “identify areas in which further research would be beneficial” (Rowley & Slack, 2004). The literature review is essential to research as it allows the researcher to acquire an understanding of the topic, explore existing material, and become an expert in their chosen field of research (Hart, 2018). Research on this topic from an Irish perspective is very limited, so this literature reviewed was derived from international contexts, mainly American, British and Australian, though material from Canada, India, South Korea, Qatar and Malaysia was also explored. The existing research in this field also focuses on volunteers in public or academic libraries, as this is the most common methods of library volunteering. A literature review of existing and recent research in this field was undertaken to conceptualise the findings and to establish how future research in this area will expand on previous studies (Randolph, 2009). The researcher used a variety of resources (such as databases and library catalogues) and materials (such as books, journals and websites) while undertaking the literature review.

Given the international context of the literature reviewed, the language of the material was identified as a limitation to this part of the research. Keyword searches produced some results in non-English languages, which were therefore not able to be included in the research.

The literature review was divided into five themes: libraries' need for volunteers, volunteers' motivations, duties of library volunteers, benefits of hiring library volunteers and challenges of hiring library volunteers. These themes emerged as the literature review was conducted, and were selected as they gave the greatest context, therefore providing the greatest insight into the research topic.

1.2.2 Libraries' need for volunteers.

There are several reasons why a library might want or need to make use of volunteer services. Depending on how well or poorly the library is funded, budget cuts could mean that library managers are required to hire volunteers to replace staff that the library cannot afford (McDiarmid and Auster, 2005, Department of Rural and Community Development, 2018).

A library may simply wish to increase their involvement in the community and in doing so increase awareness of their services. The library may also have a particular project that needs some extra staff for a temporary basis to complete it (Hewitt & Eve, 2012). A study carried out by Howlett, Machin and Malmersjo (2005) discovered that the most popular reason that libraries hired volunteers was that it allowed them to complete work or tasks that they would not normally do. In contrast to other research, this study also showed that only 18% of libraries hired volunteers because they could not afford paid staff (Howlett, Machin and Malmersjo, 2005).

Some independent and specialised libraries may be completely run and managed by volunteers, such as the Pride Library in Ontario, Canada (Cooper, 2014). In England, severe cutbacks to library funding have forced many local authorities to have "community-managed libraries" which are run entirely by volunteers (Cavanagh, 2016). Libraries such as these may have a dedicated set team of volunteers, but may also have a number of temporary volunteers,

which means the need for new volunteers would be ever-present. School libraries may be run by a small team or even a solitary librarian, and so recruiting student or parent volunteers can help ensure the students' library needs are adequately met (Bogel, 2014).

The reasons for hiring volunteers can form the basis of the volunteer policy and how it is promoted within the library. As other sections will show, the suggestion of hiring volunteers is not always warmly received among library staff. Providing an understandable reason for wanting and/or needing to hire volunteers may make the entire process easier for all staff involved.

1.2.3 Volunteer motivations.

While libraries can have many reasons to hire volunteers, volunteers themselves can also have several motivations driving them to participate in a volunteer programme. Cookman (2001) aptly states that “the reasons why people volunteer are as complex and diverse as the people who volunteer”, and surmises that these reasons combine personal gain and altruism. Oh (2019) examined public library volunteers' motivations in South Korea and found that personal growth, understanding others and altruism were more common motivators than benefits towards career goals, networking or reputation. A study carried out by Carpenter and Myers (2007) showed that a combination of altruistic intentions and reputational concerns were the main motivators behind volunteer participation.

In terms of volunteers' personal gain, volunteering could be a means of gaining skills and experience needed to help them on their career path. As Leonard (2012) points out, the volunteers could be students who are looking to start their library or archival careers, or those people outside the job market who are simply looking to contribute to a community goal. Many secondary schools require students to complete a period of “work experience” during the school year which may result in volunteers at a library. Tikam (2011) investigated a student volunteer programme at an undergraduate college and found that volunteers received special attendance

credits and certificates of appreciation. Indeed, the relationship between student volunteers and academic libraries can be mutually beneficial; providing the library with extra workers to complete projects, while giving the students a chance to develop their skills and career paths (Iyengar and Muralidharan, 1981).

Some volunteers may even participate as a family. Many families view volunteering at their library as a way to spend meaningful time together as a family unit and give back to the community (Johnson-Coffey, 1997). Corporate influence can also have an effect on library volunteers as well, as some US companies offer their employees paid leave to volunteer, or may sponsor a library project themselves to help the library and boost their own corporate image (Johnson-Coffey, 1997).

Research that is not specific to library volunteers has resulted in the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI), which assesses six different functions that are potentially fulfilled by volunteering (Clary and Snyder, 1999). This research interprets the six functions as follows:

- Values: The individual volunteers in order to express or act on important values like humanitarianism.
- Understanding: The volunteer is seeking to learn more about the world or exercise skills that are often unused.
- Enhancement: One can grow and develop psychologically through volunteer activities.
- Career: The volunteer has the goal of gaining career-related experience through volunteering.
- Social: Volunteering allows an individual to strengthen his or her social relationships.
- Protective: The individual uses volunteering to reduce negative feelings, such as guilt, or to address personal problems.

These six functions highlight the different motives that may drive individuals to volunteer in libraries. As later sections will show, volunteers' motivations can lead to both positive and negative impacts on library volunteer programmes.

1.2.4 Duties of library volunteers.

It is important to set out the duties of volunteers at an early stage in the planning process. Despite the year of research, Kuras (1975) is still valid stating that libraries should be "cognizant of the duties and talents it could possibly utilize" via volunteers.

The National Library of Australia (2020) states in its volunteer policy that volunteers only work on "tasks that, without their assistance, would not be undertaken or would not be completed for a considerable period of time". Several studies have shown that many libraries include more mundane tasks requiring little skill among the list of volunteers' duties: straightening books on shelves, shredding, photocopying, and general admin tasks, given that volunteers may not have any background knowledge of library tasks (McDiarmid & Auster, 2005, Gardner Reed, 2010, Forrest 2012). Duties such as these are normally assigned to young adult volunteers as they can be easily taught and monitored; giving paid staff more time to complete more complex tasks (Bernier, 2009) These statements give the impression that volunteers are given activities which will keep them busy but will not encroach on the duties being carried out by the paid library staff. Although it may depend on the type of volunteer and their work preferences, many volunteers derive greater satisfaction from more complex and engaging tasks than repetitive clerical work (Murray, 2015). Evans (2010) stated that while libraries may previously have been selective about the type of duties assigned to volunteers, there is now a real need to expand their roles and responsibilities as this can help them commit to the library's organisational goals.

Some libraries trust volunteers to carry out their home delivery services, which involves bringing materials to library users who are physically unable to visit the library themselves.

Johnson-Coffey (1997) states that this is an ideal task for families who are volunteering as a group, as it allows them to spend time together on a specific task while learning to help others.

The above literature relates to libraries which may already have established volunteer programmes in place, and thus can rely on volunteers to focus on administrative and clerical duties. However, some libraries may require volunteer services on a more as hoc basis if extra staff are needed for specific projects or events. Foust & Ahkmed (2014) hired student volunteers to engage library users and promote a connection between literacy and empathy in a Qatari school library. Bayat Bodaghi et al (2014) investigated the importance of volunteer readers for visually-impaired users at an academic library in Malaysia. Both of these examples demand a higher level of interpersonal communication and engagement than clerical work.

Volunteering in special libraries could aid with this, as the duties expected of volunteers can be much more interactive and interesting. This is due to special libraries providing services and information that general public libraries may not, for example, special collections and historical texts, historical information, research, tours, etc. This in turn can lead to the volunteers feeling more rewarded and engaged in their duties. The researcher contacted a special library in Dublin regarding this as part of the literature review process. This particular library was established in the 18th century, and houses an impressive collection of 18th century books and manuscripts. The historical aspects of the building draw a large number of visitors every year. Volunteers at this library undertake a wide range of tasks: giving guided tours, supervising and helping younger visitors during children's events, and assisting during events such as festivals, film shots and book launches (Anonymous, 2020, personal communications, 23 April, supplied in Appendix D).

Prior to conducting the interviews with library staff on this topic, little information was available regarding the duties of volunteers at special libraries in Ireland. Volunteers at Chester Beatty Library's volunteer policy states that each volunteer will receive a role description based on the work they will be tasked with (Chester Beatty Library, n.d.). The National Council for the Blind Ireland also house a library where volunteers are required to read texts for audio books, edit documents and assist with general library work (National Council for the Blind Ireland, 2020). Conducting interviews with staff at a number of special libraries in Ireland provided more information on this topic, which will be described in a later chapter.

Given the variety of differences that can exist between special libraries, this research would investigate if a "one size fits all" approach for volunteering in special libraries is appropriate, or if a volunteer policy would need to be tailored to each individual library at its services. This will be done by comparing documents and findings from special libraries which have employed volunteers in the past.

1.2.5 Benefits of library volunteers.

As previously mentioned, funding can greatly contribute to the decision to hire volunteers in a library. Leonard (2012) notes that, depending on the library, there can sometimes be more work than there are people available to complete it. From this it can be seen that an obvious benefit to hiring volunteers is that there are more staff available to complete the work, at no extra cost to the library itself. Indeed, in a case study completed by Hewitt & Eve (2012), library staff stated that the most positive outcome of hiring volunteers was the completion of work which would have remained incomplete without the extra help. Nicol & Johnson (2008) state that volunteers can help extend a library's opening hours through a stronger workforce and stress that in many small libraries, volunteers are often the only staff members keeping the library open. By giving tasks to volunteers, the paid library staff have more time and resources to focus on more

complex aspects of their work which may require an in-depth knowledge of the library world (Smallwood & Sanborn, 2016).

Volunteers can also bring fresh ideas and skills into a library (Nicol & Johnson, 2008). Some volunteers may have skills or knowledge gained from previous work experience or higher education which could greatly contribute to a library's services. Research carried out by Johnson-Coffey (1997) showed how a library in a diverse community benefitted from young adult volunteers, as they acted as translators for library staff when met with non-English speaking library users. On the reverse side of this, by giving volunteers a chance to work on some of the more technical aspects in the library environment, it allows them to gain new skills and knowledge. This increases the individual's employability and leads to an improvement in the community as a whole (Cookman, 2001). Research carried out by Mei (2014) showed that student volunteers at a university library thoroughly enjoyed their experience, with the added benefit of improving their communication and teamwork skills to better prepare them for the career world.

Hiring volunteers in a library can have mutual benefits for the library and its wider community. Contributions from volunteers allow the community to get involved in the library, and brings the library to the community, fostering the idea of community ownership (Cookman, 2001). Given that volunteers come from all walks of life, they can also help promote diversity and inclusion within the library space, further contributing to the idea of the library as a community space (Johnson-Coffey, 1997). The more people who view the library as a shared community space, the more likely they may be to volunteer their time and efforts to contribute to it. As Bogel (2013) states, "framing library functions as shared responsibilities benefits not only the [...] librarian, but all who are drawn to the idea of shared learning".

Though there may be some concerns that volunteers will replace paid library staff, this is rarely true. Nicol & Johnson (2008) state that most volunteers are retirees, homemakers, students

or convicts, many of whom are searching for personal fulfilment rather than paid positions. In fact, the authors go on to say that volunteers can introduce new library services which may receive greater funding in future.

1.2.6 Challenges of library volunteers.

Of course, there are disadvantages and challenges associated with hiring library volunteers. The most common issue is that volunteers may cause library staff to feel that their positions are threatened (Nicol & Johnson, 2008). Some may worry that they will be replaced by volunteers reduce costs. Casselden et al (2017) show interesting figures from a study, where participants were asked if there was a difference between paid library staff and volunteers. All library staff agreed there was a difference, but only 60 percent of library users thought there was a difference. Over a quarter of library users were also unsure if their library employed volunteers, highlighting that more distinction between staff and volunteers may be needed when providing services to library users.

If the volunteer program lacks support from existing library staff, it will have real difficulty getting off the ground. The researcher discussed a previous attempt to introduce a library volunteer program in an anonymous Irish public library branch with the staff member responsible for organising it. The program had little success for a number of reasons. Staff were hesitant and suspicious, despite being assured that there was no threat to their positions (Anonymous, 2020, personal communications, 23 April, supplied in Appendix C). In this case the union eventually got involved which had a negative impact on the volunteer program overall.

Hewitt & Eve (2012) showed how it can be difficult for volunteers and paid staff to cooperate and integrate successfully. Volunteers felt isolated from library staff, while library staff sometimes found volunteers to behave unprofessionally. Casselden et al (2017) highlight unprofessionalism, service quality and working relationships as some of the main concerns when

involving volunteers in library services. Training and preparing both volunteers and staff would be an essential step in combatting these issues. Scepanski and Wells (1997) state that regular training is essential and ensures that both paid library staff and volunteers are reminded of their roles and responsibilities (and their respective limits). Evans (2010) stresses the importance of training for library volunteers, especially for those who may themselves be retired from the library field as they may have preconceived ideas about how certain tasks “should” be done.

From a management perspective, volunteers may require a different tactic than paid library staff. Leonard (2012) states that while most work relationships provide motivation and leverage via the remuneration available, this is largely absent when hiring volunteers. This can lead to a blurring of the line between work relationship and personal relationship, as the usual hierarchy is removed. This in turn can lead to more difficulty in motivating and retaining volunteers as they do not adhere to the same contractual requirements of paid staff.

Maintaining a volunteer’s motivation and interest in the work can be another challenge, particularly if the volunteer is only permitted to perform some of the more mundane tasks mentioned previously. Kuras (1975) states that if an individual’s initial motivation to volunteer is to alleviate boredom rather than contribute to the library’s functions, they may quickly become bored again during their work. The added challenge to this is that library staff should not feel that the tasks they enjoy doing is being given to volunteers instead. In the earlier example of an Irish public library branch, the proposed duties for volunteers had to be significantly reduced as they conflicted with duties that professional staff were already carrying out (Anonymous, 2020, personal communication, 23 April, supplied in Appendix C).

1.3 Literature Conclusion

Through the above literature review, it is clear that there can be mixed opinions on volunteers from those within the library field. Challenges can be expected, both from the

volunteers themselves as well as the library staff that they work alongside. There is a potential link between the reasons volunteers are hired, and how well or poorly the paid library staff will adjust to the new recruits. For example, if volunteers are hired because the library does not have enough funds to hire qualified staff, the existing library staff may feel even more threatened. However, if volunteers are hired to assist with an upcoming event or to give existing staff more time to further their own training, they may be better received. A fine balance must also be found when assigning duties to volunteers: the volunteers should undertake tasks that motivate them, without taking from paid staff's official workload. With adequate planning and training, some challenges can be avoided, with the belief that the benefits outweigh the disadvantages. This researcher aims to shed light on these issues from an Irish perspective. What use do special libraries in Ireland have for volunteer services, and what are they expected to do? The literature review highlighted a need for a robust volunteer policy in libraries – do special libraries in Ireland follow this advice? Ultimately the effects, both positive and negative, of volunteers in special libraries in Ireland are of greatest interest to the researcher.

Chapter Two: Research Methodology

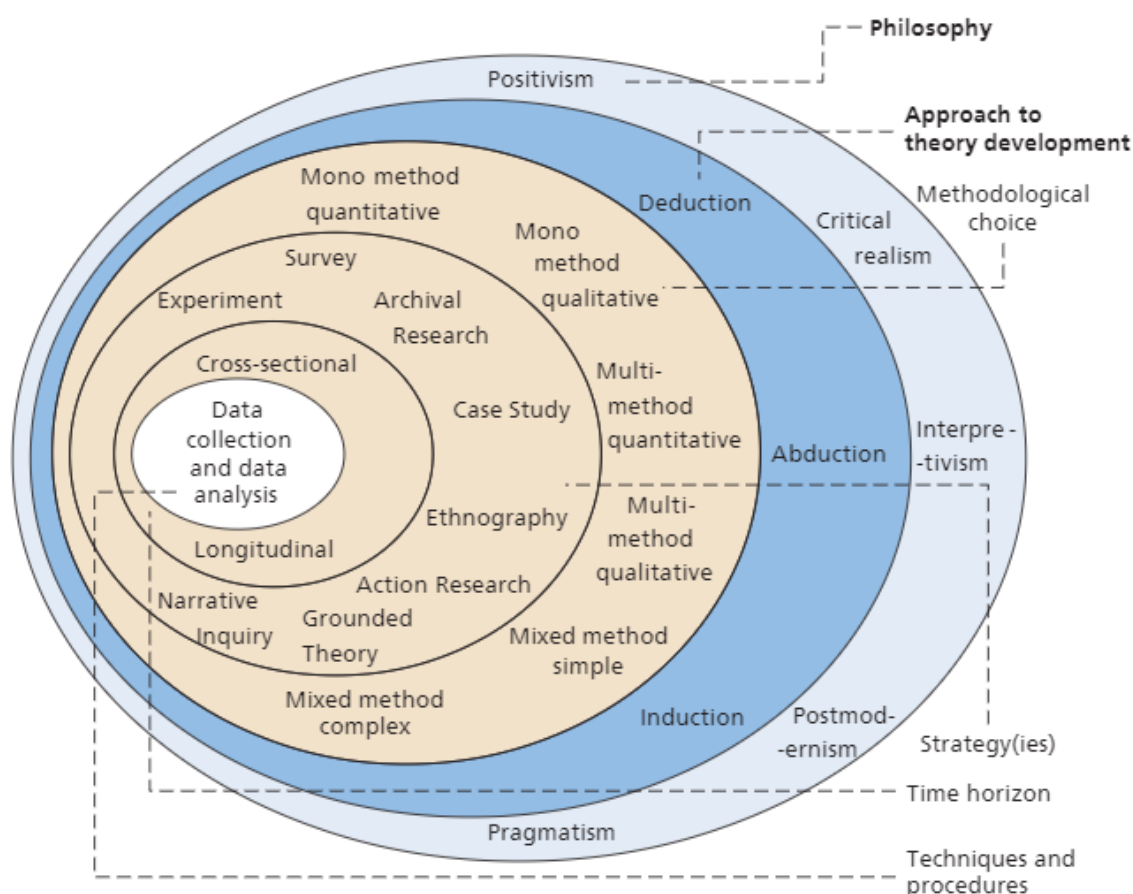
2.1 Introduction

This section of the proposal will outline the research methodology to be used during the dissertation process. It will cover the chosen research approach and strategy, along with the reasons for choosing these methods. It will then discuss sampling, data collection and data analysis methods. To conclude, this section will outline ethical issues as well as some potential limits of the proposed research.

The research process involved several different layers, the first of which is selecting a research philosophy. From this first step, the research must work through the various layers and select appropriate approaches, strategies, and methods for data collection and analysis.

Saunders et al utilise a research 'onion', seen in Figure 3.1 to represent the various stages in the research process, a tool which helps the researcher navigate the various steps involved (2019, p. 130).

Figure 1: *The research 'onion'* (Saunders 1 et al, 2019, p. 130)



This chapter will focus on the chosen research philosophy, the research approach, strategy and the method used for population sampling. Each section will be described and the researcher's selection of these topics will be justified. The time horizon, research ethics and limitations of these methods will be discussed.

2.2 Research Design

The research design can be seen as more than just a plan for carrying out research. DeVaus (2001) states that a research design's purpose is to "ensure that the evidence obtained enables us to answer the initial question as unambiguously as possible". Bogdan & Taylor (1975, in Creswell 2007) interpret research design as encompassing the entire research process, from the conception of a problem, formulation of the research question, the collection, analysis and interpretation of data, and the final presentation of results. Furthermore, the objectives, target population, ethical issues and any limitations to the research are also included in the research design (Saunders et al, 2019). The researcher has identified and selected the following steps of the research design as they are best suited to investigate the answers to the previously mentioned research questions.

The research design selected for this dissertation is qualitative, meaning that the data involved will be focused on text and language, rather than numbers and statistics. The research will be exploratory in nature. An exploratory approach was selected by the researcher as the existing literature in this field highlights a scarcity of research from an Irish perspective. As there is no pre-existing hypothesis to test, an exploratory approach is well suited to this study. The researcher aims to contribute valuable information to this gap in the research area. The next step in this research design is to identify the research philosophy being used.

2.2.1 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is an integral part of any research. The term research philosophy refers to “a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge” (Saunders et al, 2019). While carrying out research, the researcher will make a number of assumptions about the world and the focus of the study. These assumptions may be either conscious or unconscious. Crotty (1998) states that these assumptions will play an important factor in how the researcher will understand their research question, the methods used, and interpret their findings. It is important to clearly outline the research philosophy or paradigm when carrying out research. It is advisable for researchers to adhere to their chosen paradigm once the decision has been made (Kuhn, cited in O’Gorman & MacIntosh, 2014).

The chosen philosophy for this research is interpretivism. Interpretivism, which stems from epistemology, emphasises that humans’ interactions with situations create meanings which can vary depending on an individual’s background, circumstances, and experience (Saunders et al, 2019). Creswell (2007) tells us that this perspective allows researchers to “gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and its complexity in its unique context”. As this dissertation’s research question is concerned with investigating the experiences of librarians and library staff who have recruited volunteers, interpretivism was the most fitting research philosophy for this study. Each participant in this study will have a different perspective and opinion on the research question, shaped by both their experience in their institution, as well as their individual outlook and circumstances. The difference in each participant’s perspective and unique situation allow the study to allow with interpretivist values, which are concerned with the uniqueness of a particular situation, and how it contributes to further contextual depth in the findings (Myers, 1997). Interpretivism lends itself towards qualitative research methods such as interviews. In order to highlight the importance of interpretivism to this study, I will briefly contrast it with positivism. Positivism is concerned with objective testing of quantitative data, and posits that reality is static and fixed, which is in direct contrast to interpretivism’s subjective approach and

view that this is no one ultimate or “correct” viewpoint (Bunniss & Kelly, 2010). The subjective approach of this study should return findings that provide a wealth of context and information.

2.2.2 Research Approach

Following the selection of qualitative research and an interpretivist philosophy for this dissertation, an inductive research approach was chosen next. Inductive approaches allow the researcher to explore a topic and develop a theory as the data and results are collected (Saunders et al, 2019). This gives the researcher freedom to explore the chosen topic without being restricted by a previously chosen hypothesis, but also allows them to build on previous research and theories in this field of study (Saunders et al, 2019). Theories, themes and findings have been identified by the research during the literature review. The inductive approach allows the researcher to further contribute to these themes without the need to prove or disprove existing hypotheses.

This approach is well suited to this dissertation as it lends itself to exploratory research, which facilitates more flexibility for the researcher to identify and analyse themes from collected data. Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews, which themselves allow for a more flexible and relaxed approach (Denscombe, 2007). An exploratory and inductive approach not only accommodates flexibility on the part of the researcher, it actively encourages it. Saunders et al (2019) state that when conducting exploratory research, the researcher must be willing to adapt the direction and perspective of their research as a result of new data and insights.

Contrasting this briefly with the deductive approach will give further context to the inductive research approach. Deductive research selects a theory or hypothesis and then examines how raw data effectively proves or disproves that theory or hypothesis (Reichertz, 2007). This effectively limits the amount of flexibility granted to the researcher, as they are

focused on a specific theory. As this dissertation's objectives are not concerned with proving or disproving a hypothesis, an inductive approach was seen as the best fit for the research.

2.2.3 Research Strategy

The research strategy for this study, as previously mentioned, is a qualitative research design. The research strategy is the link between the researcher's chosen philosophy and subsequent choice of methods to collect and analyse the data (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). Qualitative research is concerned with analysing text, language and interpretation. In contrast, quantitative research deals with numbers, figures and statistics. Some examples of qualitative data collection are interviews and focus groups.

As previously mentioned, primary data will be collected from participants through a series of semi-structured one-to-one interviews. Semi-structured interviews follow the interviewers list of questions to be answered but allow room for flexibility around how they are addressed and answered. The key advantage of this is that it allows the interviewee to develop ideas and speak more freely, which can result in greater discussion and elaboration of points of interest (Denscombe, 2007). This will allow both the researcher and the interviewee to speak more openly, facilitating an environment where information and perspectives can be easily identified and discussed. As this is the single data collection method utilised in this dissertation, this study is therefore an example of a mono method qualitative study (Saunders et al, 2019). The interview questions used were a mixture of both closed questions (allowing a yes/no answer) and open (allowing further information to be provided). However, participants provided a wealth of information on all questions, which resulted in a greater context to the collected data.

The semi-structured interview format also lends itself to provide some narrative inquiry to the research. Narrative inquiry involves the research collecting data from interviewees and analysing them as complete stories that reflect the interviewees' experiences and perspectives, rather than viewing them as pieces of data (Saunders et al, 2019). In the case of this dissertation,

the semi-structured interview format allowed interviewees to provide greater context and insight; describing the role and need of their library and the respective experiences with volunteers. The above information contributed to the selection of an exploratory and inductive research strategy.

2.2.4 Time Horizon.

A major decision to make when creating the research design is whether to facilitate a cross-sectional or longitudinal time horizon. A cross-sectional study is a ‘snapshot’ as it examines a particular situation at a particular time, whereas longitudinal research allows the situation to be assessed as a series of snapshots over an extended period of time (Saunders et al, 2019). As this study investigates the current effect of volunteers in special libraries, it is seen as a ‘snapshot’ and therefore a cross-sectional study. This approach is well suited to the research, as it is carried out over a limited span of time. Longitudinal studies are better suited to research that is carried out over an extended period of time in order to examine developments within a situation.

2.3 Sampling - Selecting Respondents

Sampling is used when it is not possible to collect primary data from an entire population (Saunders et al, 2019). For the purpose of this research, the population consists of librarians and/or library staff in special libraries which previously hired volunteers to aid in their services. The researcher identified a number of libraries that fit this description. The researcher contacted individuals at these libraries via email or inquiry submission boxes on their websites. The email addresses were available on the library websites. Library staff members at six different special libraries responded and were willing to take part in the research. An email was also sent on behalf of the research to the Academic & Special Libraries (A&SL) mailing list. This resulted in a further participant, who worked at an academic library. Though this was not seen as a special library in terms of this research, the volunteers were recruited for the sole reason of working on

the special collection at this library. The information collected from this interview was included to give further context to the research and findings.

It is important to choose a sample which will represent the population mentioned above in order to collect the primary data. The sample of librarians selected for this study will provide the researcher with an insight into how library volunteers may be viewed by a wider range of library professionals.

Given the size of the population and sample, it was necessary to use non-probability sampling in order to choose the sample. This allowed researcher to use purposive sampling, meaning that the sample was chosen by the researcher, based on who they thought was best suited for the sample (Saunders et al, 2019). Given that the pool of special libraries in Ireland is quite small, and the number of special libraries who have employed volunteers is even smaller, this was seen as a necessary approach to sampling. Saunders (2012) recommends a sample size with a minimum of four to 12 participants. A total of seven participants were involved in this research.

2.4 Data Collection

It has been mentioned previously that interviews would be conducted with the research participants in order to collect the data. Interviews are well suited to research based on an inductive and interpretivist approach, as they provide data based on the interviewee's own experience and opinions. It was originally planned that the interviews would be conducted face-to-face where possible, and recorded using a smartphone app. However, the lockdown measures introduced in Ireland due to the COVID-19 outbreak prevented this. As a result, all interviews were conducted via Zoom software which also enabled video and audio recording. Some restrictions had been eased during the interview stage, but Zoom was given as the first option for interview so that interviewees would not feel uncomfortable or pressured to meet in person. A

benefit of this was that arranging a location was not an issue for the researcher or the participants. Limitations to this method of data collection will be discussed in the limitations section.

Interviewees were advised that the interviews would last for roughly 30-45 minutes. The actual length of the interviews lasted anywhere from 20 minutes to one hour, depending on the amount of information the interviewees shared and the elaboration required.

2.5 Data Analysis

As previously stated, the interviews were conducted and simultaneously recorded using Zoom software. The researcher transcribed the interviews as soon as possible following their completion.

Qualitative data analysis is based on an inductive approach. This requires the researcher to meticulously read the data collected and draw conclusions which are firmly rooted in the data (Denscombe, 2007). According to Denscombe (2007), there are four principles in qualitative data analysis:

1. “The analysis of the data and the conclusions drawn from the research should be firmly rooted in the data.
2. The researcher’s explanation of the data should emerge from a careful and meticulous reading of the data.
3. The researcher should avoid introducing unwarranted preconceptions into the data analysis.
4. The analysis should involve an iterative process, whereby the theory, concepts or generalisations should arise from the researcher constantly comparing the empirical data with the codes and categories used.”

Saunders et al (2019) advise that great care must be taken when analysing qualitative data, as verbal and visual data can have a myriad of interpretations and meanings gleaned from it. As such, it is important to choose a suitable method to analyse the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) recommend using thematic analysis as a method as it offers flexibility and theoretical freedom, as it is not associated with one particular framework and therefore can be applied with different research strategies. This method requires the researcher to follow the following six steps:

1. Become familiar with the data through transcription and notes.
2. Generate initial codes to highlight important data.
3. Search for themes, and group various codes into these common themes.
4. Review the chosen themes to ensure they correspond to the coded extracts.
5. Define and name themes through ongoing analysis and refinement of the data and code analysis.
6. Produce the report. This should provide compelling extract examples, a final analysis of the extracted data and a link back to the research question and literature review.

(Braun and Clarke, 2006)

Maxwell and Chmiel (2014) recommend using strategies of similarity and contiguity to analyse the data. Similarity-based analysis identifies various topics through comparison of their resemblances and differences. Contiguity-based analysis involves seeing connections between and within data, rather than their similarities and differences, and can add greater context to the research.

The thematic analysis approach was used by the researcher as it is considered appropriate for novice researchers. The flexibility and theoretical freedom of this approach also lends itself to an inductive and exploratory approach. Although this approach may offer less complexity than

the similarity and contiguity approach, thematic analysis allows the reader to gain insight into the themes most important to the research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method was also seen as less time-consuming for the researcher.

Braun and Clarke (2006) state that codes are “pithy labels identifying what is of interest in the data”, which can then aid in the development of themes, “a common, recurring pattern across a dataset, clustered around a central organising concept”. The codes are applied as labels as decided upon by the researcher. These are then connected and grouped into greater categories to produce common themes. The researcher carried out this process with great care and attention to detail to ensure that no important information was overlooked. The initial analysis of the data produced a total of fourteen themes. The process was repeated and refined until a number of core themes and sub-themes remained. It is important to note that it is not possible for a single researcher to consider their qualitative analysis of interview data as complete, as “data may always be subject to analysis from a different theoretical perspective, or may focus on different aspects” (Roulston, 2014).

2.6 Research Ethics

Researchers can encounter numerous ethical issues during their research. Ethics are “principles of conduct about what is right and wrong” and it is extremely important to consider that “what is right for the researcher may not be right for the participant” (Thomas, 2013). In terms of conducting research, research ethics is “a branch of applied ethics focused on the specific contexts of planning, conducting, communicating and following up research” (Punch, 2016). While ethical issues are often considered prior to undertaking research, and factored into the research design planning, it is also common to encounter unforeseen ethical dilemmas while undertaking research (Wiles, 2012).

Researchers are expected to adhere to the following while collecting, analysing and presenting the data from research participants:

- “Respect the rights and dignity of those who are participating in the research project;
- Avoid any harm to the participants arising from their involvement in the research;
- Operate with honesty and integrity.” (Denscombe, 2007)

All participants were provided with an Information Sheet and Consent Form, which described the research aims and objectives. It also detailed what data would be collected from them, what methods would be used to collect it, and how it would be used, presented and stored. Participants were required to sign the Information Sheet and Consent Form to indicate that they were satisfied with the information and willing to participate. Participants were made aware that they could withdraw from the research at any time, or remain anonymous if they so wished. All interviewees were willing participants and received no incentive to take part. Participants were not pressured to take part in the research. This was especially important during the Covid-19 outbreak in Ireland, as participants may have felt uncomfortable about meeting in person and risking exposure to the virus. A list of proposed interview questions was provided to the participants for their review prior to the interview. Interviewees confirmed both before and during the interview that they were willing to be recorded.

2.7 Limitations of Methodology

There are limitations to any research project. It is imperative that researchers give adequate acknowledgment and understanding to the limitations of their chosen topic and methods (Price and Murnan, 2004).

The outbreak of Covid-19 globally caused a nationwide lockdown in the Republic of Ireland, with the majority of services, including libraries, remaining closed to the public for several weeks. This made it difficult for some library staff to participate in the research, as they were either focused on providing alternative services during the lockdown phase, or dealing with increased demand once they were permitted to open their doors. Despite this, a satisfactory number of respondents took part in the research.

Though the number of respondents was satisfactory for this study, it was nevertheless a relatively small sample size. In qualitative data research, particularly interviews and semi-structured interviews, the results have less to do with the sample size and more to do with the researcher's own ability to successfully analyse the data (Patton, 2015). Saunders (2012) offers guidance in this respect and suggests that four to 12 respondents is an adequate sample size for research using non-probability sampling for a homogenous group. As this research uses a purposive (non-probability) sampling technique to identify a homogenous group (special library staff who have recruited volunteers), seven participants is seen as satisfactory.

The geographical concentration of respondents to the Dublin area was unforeseen. Though the researcher contacted special libraries in various areas of Ireland, all respondents worked in libraries in the greater Dublin area. This would need to be taken into consideration when analysing the data and identifying common themes, as the pool of volunteers at these libraries could be concentrated in the same geographic area as well.

Time constraints were a potential issue, as the dissertation process will take only three months. It was important for the researcher to ensure that time was managed effectively, and that the schedules of both the researcher and research participants were arranged to have the greatest benefit to the study.

As a result of the Covid19 outbreak, it was not possible to conduct interviews face-to-face. Zoom video software was used to conduct and record the interviews. Thankfully Zoom

quickly became popular and necessary in the wider working world to facilitate meetings with colleagues while working from home, so no participants had any issues with using this software. While video software facilitated the interviews at a time when meeting in person was not possible, it made it more difficult to interpret non-verbal signals such as body language in this medium. This relates to the theory of Social Presence proposed by Short, Williams and Christie (1976), which represents a number of factors when communicating via a certain medium. These factors include both verbal and non-verbal cues, for example facial expression or arm signals, and show that an individual is capable of successfully communicating using the chosen medium. Video calls with software such as Zoom can provide high-quality feeds from all participants, which permits a high degree of Social Presence (Nehls, Smith & Schneider, 2015). However, factors such as internet speed and camera angles can severely impact this if participants are unable to hear or see each other clearly. As participants in video calls are generally visible from the shoulders up, a lot of body language signals are not visible. The absence of these visual clues prevents the interviewer from noticing and interpreting non-verbal communication which can result in a loss of nuance when analysing the data (Denscombe, 2007).

In any research it is important for the researcher to be aware that qualitative research is not subjective research, and as a result it should not reflect or be based on the researcher's own point of view, or be biased towards a single outcome (Hogan, Dolan, & Donnelly, 2009, p. 30). As this research is exploratory in nature and had no hypothesis to prove or disprove, this was not seen as a risk.

2.8 Conclusion

The methodology played a critical role in this research. The above information in this chapter explained the researcher's rationale in selecting the chosen research method and how it was suited to the research topic. As this study undertook an inductive and exploratory approach,

it was necessary for the researcher to choose a methodology that would provide satisfactory insight into the effects of volunteers in Irish special libraries. The results of this research are reported in the following chapter.

Chapter Three: Results

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this research is to investigate the effects of hiring volunteers in special libraries in the Republic of Ireland in order to identify potential benefits and challenges. The study will also investigate various approaches used by special libraries when recruiting and managing volunteers.

This chapter will present the results from the semi-structured interviews with the seven library staff members who participated in the study. The findings detailed below were derived from the interviews. The researcher used a semi-structured format, which allowed for a more relaxed approach. The main research questions asked during the interviews were as follows:

- What were the reasons for hiring volunteers at this library?
- What duties were volunteers assigned?
- Does the work involved allow the volunteers to expand and strengthen their skills?
- What are some of the benefits this library experienced from hiring volunteers?
- What are some of the challenges this library faced from hiring volunteers?

3.2 Response Rate

The researcher contacted 17 libraries to request participation in interviews. Of those contacted, six were willing to take part in the interview process. One respondent forwarded the request to a mailing list for special libraries. A further participant was gained through this action.

The participants will remain anonymous, with codes being applied in place of their names and respective libraries. The codes are as follows:

Figure 2: *List of Interview Participants' and Respective Library Names*

Participant name	Library name
P1	L1
P2	L2
P3	L3
P4	L4
P5	L5
P6	L6
P7	L7

It is important to note that the number of special libraries in Ireland is small, and the sample size of participants for this study is also a small portion of this. As such, the findings cannot be viewed as a universal conclusion for all special libraries in Ireland. The results from this research provide an overview of the effects of volunteers in the special libraries associated with the research participants. This gives some insight into the research topic, but further research would be required to obtain information relating to all special libraries nationwide. A detailed analysis of the research findings is provided in chapter five.

3.3 Role of special libraries

The literature review conducted in chapter two discussed volunteers in various types of libraries. As the interviews focused solely on special libraries, the role of special libraries soon emerged as an important theme. Analysing and understanding this theme gives greater understanding and context to the overall findings. When considering the broad definition of special libraries mentioned in Chapter 1, it is clear to see that this could encompass a wide

variety of libraries, each with distinct roles. The below table offers a quick overview of the special libraries involved in this research.

Figure 3: *General Overview of Libraries involved in Research Topic*

Library	Overview
L1	A library, archive and resource centre for contemporary classical music from Ireland.
L2	A library and information service for a charity which deals with vulnerable children and their families.
L3	A historic library housing a collection of books and manuscripts from the 16 th – 18 th centuries.
L4	A reference library for Irish traditional music, song and dance.
L5	A library service for people who are blind or vision impaired.
L6	A gallery library containing a specialist art collection.
L7	An academic library which was originally a priests' seminary. The special collection contained rare books and early printed books.

All libraries can be viewed as special libraries within the definition provided in Chapter 1, apart from L7, which was an academic library which has now closed. However, as it housed a special collection and volunteers were only involved in this aspect of the library service, it has been included to give further context to the findings.

The services provided by each special library vary greatly. There are some common elements which are expected of libraries, such as reading rooms (L1, L3, L6, L7) and lending

services (L2, L5, L6), however the unique services provided by each library offer great insight into their overall function.

Two libraries are dominant resource centres for Irish contemporary classical music and Irish traditional music (L1 and L4 respectively) and boast large collections of music resources available both in print and digitally.

Some participants showed how their libraries offer specialised information to their users. L2 is a library within a charity which is a leading provider of information on vulnerable children and their families. This is not the only library seen as a specialist in their area of information. L1, L4, and L6 also receive regular research queries from users which require them to consult their collection.

“If a member of the public has a query on anything relating to children [...] the people they think of is ourselves and they'll ring us. And that comes through the library information service. It's a dual aspect service. It's not just a library; it's also an information service.” (P2)

The research aspect of the library contributes to the amount of material acquired in the collection:

“One of the things that we use as our guiding principle for collecting is: because you never know who's going to come in and what they're going to be looking for, you've got to collect everything so you're able to answer any questions. We've a very broad collecting remit for that reason.” (P4)

In the case of L6, the research queries come from the wider gallery staff themselves as these are their main users. The gallery staff member use the library to research information for upcoming events.

“Any project, any exhibition, any display, any education program, that starts with their research in the library. So we play a fundamental role in all of the programs that the gallery produces and we've worked quite hard to make sure that the service is there for staff, and that they have all their information needs met.” (P6)

Given the specificity of the materials available in library collections, many of the libraries are reference only and do not offer a lending service (L1, L3, L4). The libraries that do offer lending also offer a postal service to enable them to reach a wider audience (L2, L5). Some libraries have implemented an online catalogue, databases and reference service to provide service to a wider audience (L2, L4).

Some libraries require a larger digital footprint and online catalogue due to the very nature of their specialist collection. L5 is a library which provides books in accessible formats to blind and visually impaired users. While they do offer books in Braille and on cassette, a large portion of their collection is digital (ebooks, audiobooks, digital Braille files). L4 boasts a large selection of traditional Irish music audio, video and document files with copyright bounds online as they understand not all their users can travel to their location.

L3 is a historical library which houses a collection of books from the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, as well as manuscripts and incunabula. Given the historical nature of the library, it provides tours to the general public.

3.3.1 Special library users.

The interviews showed what services these libraries provided to their users, however gaining insight into their typical users added greater context to the findings.

While the majority of these libraries are open to the general public (L1, L2, L3, L4, L6), in most cases their typical users are closely associated with the subject that the library provides information on. L1 is a popular resource for musicians and composers of contemporary classical music, while L4 is primarily visited by those who are practitioners of or interested in Irish traditional music. The digital services offered by L4 also means that their users are not just

restricted to Ireland. Their online resources are very popular with users in the United Kingdom and United States of America.

Some libraries are often visited by those who have a connection to the material through education. L1 is often visited by students in undergraduate or post-graduate courses who consult the collection for their research. L1 also works closely with some university lecturers in relation to using the library and exposing their students to this subject area. L7 was primarily an academic library which was used by students, but was also visited by the general public. L3 is visited by approximately 120 schools each year who wish to learn the history of the building and its collection.

Some users can be viewed as “internal” users, or staff at the organisation (L2, L6). L2 is primarily focused on providing service to staff within their charity, but they are also in partnership with an official State agency and provide an information service for them. L6 is open to the public but is most frequented by gallery staff themselves.

“We're a primary service for staff. There's about 200 staff. We have a collections and research division, which comprises of about 50 to 60 people who are working specifically with the collections: the curators, conservation, exhibitions, our education team - they would all rely heavily on the library and on the archive.” (L6)

L5 is the only library in this sample which is used solely by their target user – the vision impaired, of which there are over 4000 users.

3.3.2 The need for volunteers.

This theme was identified during the literature review in a previous chapter. While conducting the thematic analysis, it emerged that greater context was given to this topic when included as a sub-theme of a larger theme. In order to gain a more complete understanding of

each library's needs and their reasons for hiring volunteers, it is important to take their services and users into consideration.

The volume of work involved in the library was a reason that each participant gave for hiring volunteers. This can be general library work that requires some extra staff to ensure it is completed (L1, L2, L5, L6, L7), or it can be specific project work that requires temporary extra staff for the duration of the project (L2, L4, L7). Details of the general library duties and projects involved will be described later in this chapter.

Staff levels were also an important factor when hiring volunteers. All the libraries have relatively small teams so volunteers were hired in order to boost their workforce.

“We just didn't have enough bodies to keep going. The library was getting busier, funding wasn't necessarily changing, and it was requiring more and more people to keep everything going. [...] we were all noticing everything getting busier and busier and we didn't always have enough hands. It was tricky to make sure everyone got their breaks, things like that.” (P3)

“We are semi funded by the State, but we always rely on volunteers historically and to help us out with our services, you know, we depend on them, in many situations to help us with the production side of things.” (P5)

“We have always relied on volunteers, in particular to cover the reading rooms and to support the staff.” (P6)

“There was a need for more staff and more money.” (P7)

Some volunteers are hired to fulfil their educational requirements. This includes Transition Year students in secondary education completing compulsory work experience, as third-level students completing work placement as part of their course requirements (L1, L2, L4, L6, L7).

Volunteer motivations can also be considered within this sub-theme. Some volunteers may have a genuine interest in the subject area and wish to contribute (L4, L6). Some volunteers simply wish to provide some support to a library or institution, whether in return for help they have received themselves (L5) or due to the charitable or historical nature of the library (L5, L7).

“They want to do it because they want to give back to society [...] They would be registered as blind or vision-impaired and would want to give back to the charity that helps them and has helped them throughout their careers maybe, or in college. They want to give something back to the charity.” (P5)

“The place did run on volunteers for a hundred years, because it was a religious institution [...] they had a massive culture of it in that college.” (P7)

For libraries that are part of a larger institution (L2, L7), the hiring process is centralised through Human Resources. As a result, there have been some volunteers who were hired in reaction to requests from Human Resources. In these cases, the library did not necessarily require volunteers

“That was sort of a reactive volunteering placement. I was reacting to a situation whereby someone was within the organization and was sort of rudderless and we had to find her something to do that she would enjoy.” (P2)

“The other reason for hiring volunteers was that they were kind of fobbed off on me. That category were generally relatives of people who worked in the college.” (P7)

3.4 The Recruitment Process

While the main aim of this research was to investigate the effects of volunteers in special libraries, the reasons for and approaches to recruiting volunteers were also of interest to the researcher.

Many libraries distinguished between “active” and “reactive” recruitment opportunities. Active recruitment opportunities occur when the library identifies a need for volunteers and

follows the steps to recruit them. Reactive opportunities occur when the library is approached by a colleague within their organisation (generally the Human Resources department) and asked to take on a volunteer, or when an individual approaches the library themselves and expresses interest in volunteering. A third opportunity occurs when the volunteer is part of a pre-arranged student placement, as these are generally negotiated and agreed on via the student's school or university.

The number of active and reactive opportunities varied across the libraries. There was no library that recruited purely from an active or reactive approach. All libraries investigated used a combination of at least two approaches. Volunteers at L7 were recruited via both active and reactive approaches. L1 implemented both reactive and student placements. The remainder of libraries (L2, L3, L4, L5, L6) used active, reactive and student placements in order to recruit volunteers.

The promotion of the volunteer programme also varied between libraries. Recruitment of volunteers at three libraries (L2, L6, L7) has become centralised, meaning that volunteer applications are usually recruited via their organisation's HR department and forwarded to the library. Other libraries actively promote their volunteer vacancies themselves, via social media or mailing lists (L3, L4, L5). The network of volunteers and professionals within some libraries' subject fields also resulted in recruitment being promoted via word-of-mouth (L1, L4).

“They've always come to us usually by a recommendation from someone else. Like their music teacher would have been involved with us in the past, or maybe they are involved in a choir or they play an instrument or something, and they would have had some knowledge of us in the past.” (L1)

Libraries interviewed candidates to make sure they were suitable for the position, though not all of them carried out this step. In some cases this is informal (L1, L3) and in others it was a formal process and included reference checks (L2, L5).

Policies directly related to recruitment and management of volunteers were in place at some libraries (L2, L3, L4, L5), but some did not have an official policy on this (L1, L6, L7). Two of the libraries with volunteer policies in place are charity libraries (L2,L5), and as such have more experience with volunteers applying to dedicate their time to a charity. The interviewees were also asked if volunteers were required to complete Garda Vetting. This is “conducted in respect of any person who is carrying out work or activity, a necessary and regular part of which consists mainly of the person having access to, or contact with, children or vulnerable persons” (An Garda Síochána, 2020). Vetting was only required at two libraries (L3, L5).

The frequency that volunteers were recruited varied among libraries. One library only required volunteers every couple of years (L2), one recruited once or twice a year (L1), others recruited several times throughout a year (L3, L4). Two libraries had recruited volunteers who stayed with them for several years, and thus recruited less frequently (L5, L6).

“Sometimes we really need to aggressively push the volunteer call-out and try as best we can from anywhere to find new people, and then other times we'll get four emails in a week from people who were looking to volunteer. There's certainly no kind of a pattern to it that we can safely say, it just depends on the year.” (P3)

All libraries were happy to provide volunteers with references following their placement. It was previously mentioned that two libraries required volunteers to write a short article for their website describing their experience (L1, L4). This was a further reference for the volunteer as proof of their time spent at these libraries.

3.5 Volunteer Demographics and Motivations

As the key aspect to this research, the library volunteers themselves emerged as an important theme when conducting the thematic analysis. Though the proposed interview

questions did not specifically include a question on the types of volunteers who are hired, the semi-structured interview format allowed this question to develop organically throughout the course of the interview.

As mentioned previously, many libraries hire volunteers as part of their Transition Year work experience or third-level work placement (L1, L2, L4, L6). Outside of this compulsory placement, some libraries indicated that a portion of their volunteers are library students hoping to gain experience (L3, L6).

Some volunteers are people either approaching or in retirement who wish to volunteer as a way to keep themselves busy (L3, L6). P6 has indicated that they would like to hire volunteers across a more diverse spectrum.

“There were a lot more people who were either looking for work at the time or who were retired or about to retire, and they were just kind of looking for something to keep themselves occupied.” (P3)

“We just would like to have a broader representation of all ages and all different types of people from different backgrounds, to try and be as inclusive as possible.” (P6)

Several libraries identified some volunteers as university students. A portion of these students are themselves undertaking an MSc in Information & Library Management in order to progress further within the library field (L1, L3, L5, L6, L7). Many recognise that a set amount of work experience in a library is required to complete the MSc in Information & Library Management courses offered in Ireland and are eager to facilitate this. A number of interviewees saw this as a chance to give back to the library field and provide training to the future librarians. The significance of this will be discussed in the next chapter.

“[Music librarians] generally don't start out as librarians and there's no academic path to take to become a music librarian. It's nearly like an apprenticeship that you sort of accidentally stumble upon. I would like to be able to give someone the opportunity to have some exposure to a music library.” (P1)

“It really helped if they were looking for work or going on to do the library course, that they had had some experience working in a library environment as such before they went off to do the library and information course.” (P4)

“We're very happy to do these, we actually consider it part of our role to provide and support the training for the next generation of museum librarians and archivists, because it's a very specialized area so we're very happy to do it. (P6)

“I was aware that skills were dying out. I was very rigorously trained by the keeper of early printed books over a number of years. He would sort of drip down his knowledge to us on a daily basis. I was aware that that's not happening anymore. [...] So it's a way of also giving back and making sure that there's some kind of continuity with those skills. That was important to me. [...] You want to give back.” (P7)

The volunteers themselves can also already be involved in the same subject area as the library and wish to contribute. Volunteers in L4, which deals with traditional Irish music, are often practitioners or fans of traditional Irish music themselves. Volunteers in L1, while Transition Year students, are usually involved in contemporary classical music and are recommended to complete work experience there to broaden their music knowledge. L7 has previously recruited volunteers with knowledge of rare books to aid in some cataloguing tasks.

“Most of them are professionals, practitioners or singers or musicians, or else they are the audience. [...] I think quite a lot of them are people who have spent their whole lives traveling, going around festivals and would know a lot of musicians and this is a way for them to get involved, especially if they're not performers.” (P4)

3.6 Volunteer Duties

The aim of this research is to investigate the effect that volunteers have in special libraries. In order to gain sufficient insight into this, it is necessary to examine the work that volunteers in special libraries are tasked with. In light of this, interviewees were asked to provide information on the work involved. Some examples of the questions are seen below:

- What duties were volunteers assigned?

- Why were volunteers assigned these specific duties?
- Does the work involved allow the volunteers to expand and strengthen their skills?
- What feedback does the library give to volunteers, if any?
- What feedback do volunteers give the library, if any?

These questions allowed the interviews to provide key information to the research. There were similarities among some of the libraries, but the variety in duties reflected the unique services provided by each library.

A portion of the libraries tasked volunteers with duties that may be seen as “typical” work to be expected in libraries: labelling and shelving books, supervising reading rooms, stamping borrowed and returned items (L1, L3, L6). However, L3 actively encourages volunteers to work be involved in the more interactive duties as they want the volunteers to enjoy their experience.

“We try and make it little as possible that the cleaning work and the more unpleasant work is done by the volunteers. They're giving up their time, so we don't want them to spend all their time vacuuming and mopping or something like that.” (P3)

Several duties were unique to each particular library. For example, the tourism aspect of L3 meant that volunteers were often providing tours to visitors and informing them of its history. Some volunteers at L4 have devoted their time to playing and recording traditional Irish music to be used as learning aids on their website. Volunteers at L5 are tasked with producing books in Braille format, and even recording audiobooks.

Project work was a common theme in most libraries (L1, L2, L4, L5, L6, L7), as the library staff felt it was better to assign volunteers a task with a specific beginning and end point rather than a task that would be continued after they leave. L1 tasked volunteers with assessing the collection and cross-checking it against other records, which itself would lead to a larger

project regarding weeding the collection. L2 required volunteers to retrieve materials for their open access resource collection. Volunteers at L4 completed “Sort-a-thons”, where they helped to organise the collection of ephemera that the library had amassed over the years. L7 had an urgent need to volunteers to aid with a project of relocating their special collection, which was getting damaged from leaking roofs.

“When you have a volunteer coming in on a sporadic basis, really the only role that you can get them to work on is a project, because it's something they can work on in their own time and they don't have to chase up anything or be following up emails that were sent a week ago.” (P2)

Cataloguing is an essential element of any library. Volunteers assisted with this in some libraries (L1, L2, L4, L6) but were not tasked with completing the entire cataloguing process from start to finish. Volunteers digitised material that would be added to the catalogue (L1, L2) but did not interact with the software used for cataloguing. Others were permitted to use the cataloguing software, but only to edit a particular field for quality-checking purposes (L4). In L6, volunteers prepared the books for cataloguing through stamping and labelling, while qualified library staff completed the process in the Library Management Software. A similar approach was taken in L7, where volunteers recorded the details of special collection items which would later be catalogued by staff.

Preparing information for the libraries’ social media accounts was also seen as an appropriate task for volunteers in some libraries (L1, L6). Volunteers at L1 posted some details or photos of their work to social media, while a volunteer at L6 created a music playlist in relation to a particular gallery exhibition, which was then shared across social media.

Libraries took volunteers’ own interests and skills into consideration when assigning duties, with many of them tailoring their programmes to accommodate this (L1, L4, L6).

“What they actually do will very much depend on the time of year and on the student themselves as well. If they have particular interest in an area, we'll try to accommodate that.” (P1)

“Depending on the individual volunteers and their areas of expertise and interests, we often would direct them to a particular subject.” (P6)

Volunteers who were on placement as part of their university course were also tasked with writing an article on their experience for the library's website (L1, L4).

3.6.1 Skills, training, and feedback.

The skills required by volunteers varied from library to library. Training and feedback were closely linked to these required skills, and so this emerged as an important subtheme.

It quickly became apparent that the skills required for some aspects of the volunteer work directly reflected the services provided by each library. For example, L1 did not hire volunteers who were not able to read sheet music. As L4 is a bilingual organisation, knowledge of the Irish language can be necessary for some tasks. The music recorded as learning aids on L4's website was undertaken by volunteers professionally skilled in this area. Volunteers wishing to record audiobooks at L5 are often professional voice actors with the necessary skills for this task. The information service and research aspect of L2 and L5 respectively required volunteers to possess or develop skills in relation to information retrieval and evaluation. Providing tours in L3 required volunteers to have some confidence in interpersonal skills and public speaking, though this was not forced on them.

“One of the things we make very clear to them is tours are up to them. Some people are great at introductions and all the rest of it, but they just kind of panic about the idea of doing a tour. So it's not something we force with them.” (P3)

In contrast, some tasks required few skills to complete. The “sort-a-thons” in L4 only required a general knowledge of Irish geography, as ephemera was sorted by county. General libraries duties such as shelving are considered appropriate tasks as they usually do not require specific skills.

“They tend to be doing quite menial stuff like the labelling and the stamping, the stuff that people are quite happy for them to do. [...] They weren’t people with the library background and because they’re a bit older, they wouldn’t be that techy, so they might not have been that comfortable.” (P6)

“Generally I’ll get them to do practical things that they can get to grips with quite easily.” (P1)

Experience and skill working with technology was also required for some duties, such as posting on social media (L1, L6) or Braille production (L5).

It was clear that the amount of training given to volunteers greatly depended on the work that they were assigned. An induction of the library and its operations was common (L1, L3, L6, L7). All libraries provided an “on the job” approach to training, whereby volunteers were given training specific to each task, both before commencing the task and as the need arose during their work. This on the job training could be in relation to the particular software or resources being used (L1, L2, L4, L5, L7), a guide in relation to the library’s history (L3), or updating the volunteer’s knowledge of a process or task (L6).

Some duties required minimal training, such as the sort-a-thons (L4). In L3, volunteers were required to undertake formal online training on interacting with minors, as a large number of tours are given to school groups. This training was provided online via an official State agency.

Feedback on the experience was given from both parties, though not at every library. Upon completion of the work experience placement, L1 was required to provide formal feedback

to the student's teacher or lecturer. In terms of regular feedback, the on the job approach to training was also applied to feedback in all libraries. This allowed the qualified staff to advise and correct volunteers informally as they completed their duties.

"We give them little bits of feedback. And it's basically just about kind of constant feedback and about making sure people are comfortable. We'll correct everything that needs correcting along the way." (P3)

"It's not a question of feedback, there's a constant conversation going on." (P6)

Feedback and suggestions from volunteers were also given informally at most libraries (L3, L4, L5, L6, L7). L1 does not invite feedback from volunteers, though when asked about this, P1 suggested that it might be worthwhile to improve the experience. Volunteers at L2 are asked to complete a formalised survey to provide feedback on their experience.

3.7 Effects of Volunteers

The main aim of this research is to determine the effects of volunteers on special libraries. In order to fully understand the effects and give them sufficient context, it was imperative to explore the themes discussed previously. The interviewees were asked questions that were key to this theme. Some examples of these questions are as follows:

- What are some of the benefits this library experienced from hiring volunteers?
- What are some of the challenges this library faced from hiring volunteers?
- What was the attitude among existing staff regarding the decision to hire volunteers?
- Has a volunteer ever been hired as a paid staff member after they completed their volunteer work, or progressed within the library field?

3.7.1 Benefits for both libraries and volunteers.

It was encouraging to see that all libraries stated positive outcomes from their experiences with volunteers. An obvious benefit that was present in all libraries was the extra support which made it possible to complete specific duties and projects. In the case of L5, they stated this was a huge benefit for a charity library as it did not incur increased costs. This also gave the qualified staff more time to work on important tasks.

Another benefit visible in all libraries was an improvement to the services offered by each library. The collections available in the libraries were expanded (L2), streamlined and therefore more efficient (L1), or benefitted from a new addition (L4). Volunteers in L3 made it possible to provide longer opening hours. The support of having extra people to assist in various duties facilitated an overall improvement in the library service (L3, L4, L6).

“The volunteer program has been very good for us in the library [...] they were a huge support in keeping the general show on the road [...] it has been a very positive thing, it has enriched the experience.” (L6)

A previous theme described the skills needed by volunteers to complete their duties. A benefit for many libraries was volunteers bringing new skills and perspectives (L1, L3, L4, L5, L6, L7). For example, L1 and L6 both benefitted from volunteers' technical skills in terms of using social media. Volunteers at L5 bring unique skills when recording audiobooks, as the interviewee stated that volunteers' voices can be suited to different genres of books. The community of musicians involved with L4 allows them to provide learning aids on their website. L3 finds the skills and perspectives of volunteers of particular benefit to their tours, as they encourage volunteers to give information based on their own experiences in the library.

“What we want is them talking about what they like about the place. It's about their personal connections to the library. There's no point in everyone giving the same tour. [...] people tend to be on average six months involved. It means you also get a turnover of people, that you have people constantly coming in with fresh perspectives on the place and the new ideas as well about how we might do things.” (P6)

Volunteers' skills had a particularly interesting benefit in L7. A volunteer with experience in rare books assisted in cataloguing their items and providing a great amount of detail. Some of these rare items were later stolen, but the level of detail included in the volunteer's catalogue entries made the process of identifying and reclaiming the stolen items much easier.

Some libraries also stated that volunteering also created more interest in their collections, through the volunteers' word-of-mouth (L1, L3, L6) and the social media posts created by volunteers (L1, L6). In the case of L4, the volunteers' enthusiasm and feedback offered a confirmation for how their library is appreciated.

"It was really beneficial for the staff to see the goodwill towards [L4] that's out there. [...] it was really useful for people to see that level of engagement or involvement and the positive way that it is viewed. I think anecdotally we knew it, but it was a real kind of affirmation of how successful this program was." (P4)

Volunteers also reaped some benefits from their experience. All libraries stated that volunteers gained new skills, which were particularly important to students on placement or library students looking for experience.

"They did great work for me and they've got good references from me and sort of certain amount of mentorship." (P7)

"It was basically trying to do things that would give them extra skills, and also that would be more enjoyable." (P3)

While not all volunteers were specifically looking for new skills, they learned new information and gained new interests. This was noticeable in L6, where most volunteers are retirees looking for new interests rather than employable skills. Volunteers gained insight into the respective field or industry (L1, L4).

Volunteering also offered a social aspect, which was appreciated by retirees (L7) or those interested in traditional music (L4).

“I think that was one of the nice things about it for the volunteers, that they were already part of this community and by coming in, they were expanding their network within that community.” (P4)

3.7.2 Challenges for both libraries and volunteers.

Challenges for both parties were encountered during the volunteer process. A common challenge for several libraries was the time commitment required (L1, L4, L6, L7). The preparation, training and management of volunteers required a large time commitment from the library staff.

“It can be a plus and a minus that you have them in for such a short period of time, because I don't have time to dedicate weeks and weeks to them, but sometimes they're only getting the hang of things towards the end of the week.” (P1)

“You can recruit volunteers, but you need to be sure that you have the time to spend with them.” (P7)

The time that volunteers can dedicate to the library service can also be difficult for the library to work around. Volunteers at L1 stayed for a maximum of two weeks, which sometimes was not enough time for them to become confident and comfortable in their work. L5 and L7 experienced problems with volunteers' own schedules interfering with their availability and commitment to the library.

“The main challenge yes, they give you the time commitment, but they can drop it at the drop of the hat.” (P5)

The duties assigned to volunteers and the skills needed to complete them resulted in some issues. Many library staff felt it was important to find tasks which volunteers would find enjoyable and relevant to their needs, but it could be difficult finding tasks appropriate for their skill level (L1, L2, L3, L5, L6). Unmotivated volunteers also made it difficult (L7).

“That can be a little bit of a challenge if you find that your entire work week is suddenly gone down the pan because you're having to hand hold a little bit more than you expected.” (P1)

“For every very outgoing person you have who's less outgoing, and you're maybe having to work with them to develop their skills.” (P3)

For libraries which are part of a larger institution (L2, L6, L7) the recruitment process could also be challenging. For these libraries, recruitment was centralised through the Human Resources department. This meant the libraries had less control over which volunteers were hired, and when. This also led to greater difficulties for L6, as the organisation amended its policy so that unpaid internships were not permitted. Work placement for students completing the MSc in Information & Library Management was interpreted as an unpaid internship, so they were not permitted to hire these volunteers. This is challenging for both the library L6 and the volunteer. The library was not able to avail of volunteer support, and the volunteers could not gain the necessary experience.

“The administration has been kind of centralized, which hasn't actually worked that well in terms of us. It would be preferable for me to keep it under the management of the library, which it hasn't been. People need to apply to the main gallery, then people are referred on to me.” (P6)

Volunteers can also encounter other challenges. Though volunteers were not interviewed for this research, some interviewees provided information of difficulties faced by volunteers. This was based on feedback that they had received. L4 and L7 stated the time commitment was an issue for some volunteers. Some volunteers in L3 were nervous and hesitant to carry out some duties in L3, as they required public speaking.

3.7.3 Impact on library recruitment.

The attitude of paid, qualified library staff towards volunteers and the volunteer programme emerged as theme during the qualitative analysis. This was seen as important as it could have a knock-on effect on the overall volunteer programme.

It was reassuring to learn that staff in all libraries has positive reactions towards the decision to hire volunteers. A real need for extra staff had previously been identified in L3, so hiring volunteers was a necessary solution. For some libraries, this was partly because the volunteers were recruited for a specific, limited purpose and were not perceived as a threat to the staff's positions (L4, L6).

"I think they were pretty happy with it from the start. They saw there was a kind of need for it there." (P3)

"Because they were being recruited for a specific project, it was positive and it was recognized that this was something that staff weren't going to be able to do themselves." (P4)

"Possibly because they're retired older people, they're not seen as a threat in any way. I've never had any trouble where people have felt threatened in any way or resented people coming in." (P6)

For some libraries, hiring volunteers was simply the normal practice and as such the qualified staff saw it as essential to the library (L2, L5, L6, L7).

There were no negative reactions from library staff. In L7, two members of library staff had an indifferent opinion to the volunteers. These staff members were assigned to L7 as a result of a State-run jobseeker programme. The librarian viewed this as a reason for their indifference as they were not qualified library staff.

"They were co-operative, polite, but indifferent. It was just the whole world they didn't know about and weren't particularly motivated to learn more about. They weren't hostile or unhelpful." (P7)

The effect of volunteers on recruitment of both paid staff and volunteers was also investigated. Interviewees were asked if volunteers had ever been hired as paid staff following their placement as a volunteer. Some libraries have hired volunteers as paid staff or offered them positions if they thought they were suitable candidates (L3, L4, L5). In fact, many staff members in these libraries began as volunteers.

“Basically, everyone who’s working in almost all of our roles, all four of our tourism staff, myself included as well, have been volunteers or interns here [...] Our new librarian who started a couple of months ago, actually volunteered here as well before she went into the library programme.” (P3)

“I was originally a volunteer [...] Our current director did volunteer, he came into the studio as a volunteer to play all the tunes and we recorded them on video and then synced them up to the notations.” (P4)

“We often recruit from individuals that have worked within that team into the library service, because they’ve actually done the work, they’ve supported us.” (P5)

It was previously mentioned that many volunteers are library students themselves, which meant that many progress to paid positions in other libraries as a result of having gained library experience.

Hiring volunteers has also led to the creation of an informal network of volunteers that the libraries can consult for future volunteer requirements. For some special libraries, this may be due to an existing network within that subject area (L1, L4). Volunteers spread information through word-of-mouth which results in the libraries having more volunteer contacts. In other libraries with specific duties, such as L5, volunteers provided details for the library to consult them whenever their skills were needed.

“We have this network of people who we know are happy to do things. [...] There were days then when I didn't even have to put [the recruitment notice] into Facebook or anything because from the people who've been there before, I had enough replies from them saying “Oh yeah, we'll come back and do it again”.” (P4)

“For the voiceover side of things, I have a bank of volunteers. [...] So with the voice tests that we do with all our volunteers, we keep them as samples, and then we start using them whenever we need a volunteer.” (P5)

Chapter Four: Discussion

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to carry out an in-depth analysis which will build on the findings presented in chapter four and aim to answer the research questions developed in chapter one. The analysis in this chapter will relate to the themes and information found during the literature review. Chapter five will also address the limitations of this study and make recommendations for any future research on volunteers in special libraries in Ireland.

4.2 Role of Special Libraries

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the role of special libraries was considered an important theme as it allowed the researcher to gain greater insight and context into the effect volunteers had on this topic. Richter (1971) stated that “special libraries must develop and maintain the closest possible correlation with the policies and aims of the institution they serve in order to train their ability to respond most closely to the requirements of the staff”. Each library involved in this research offered unique services, which were described in detail in the previous chapter. The specialised nature of these libraries meant that many librarians are points-of-contact for any specific information related to their field. This correlates with the tendency to view special library staff as “information specialists” (Harrison et al, 2011). The specialised information and services offered by each special library contributed to its role. While libraries shared common elements, each branch was unique and had a specific role via its services. Radha (2012) highlighted the unique role of special libraries and libraries, which is continuously evolving due to users’ needs.

4.2.1 Special library users.

The importance of special library users should not be overlooked in the context of this research. Awan & Soroya (2019) state that special libraries are modified to meet the information needs and expectations of their users by emphasizing the specific needs of a distinct user group, and special library staff are focused solely on meeting the needs of their users.

The findings from the interviews reflect this statement. While many of the libraries were open to the general public, they were generally aimed at fulfilling the information needs of a specific population. This was especially apparent when library users were identified as individuals either studying or working professionally within the respective subject area. The role and services provided by special libraries can be as specific as their target users. L5 for example provides invaluable resources to its visually impaired users, while L2's information service provides a wealth of information related to children and childcare.

In the case of L2 and L6, the libraries were part of a parent organisation and therefore had a common employer with many of their users. This allowed the library to provide services based on a shared knowledge of the subject areas.

Volunteers at the libraries involved in this research provided support to the qualified library staff and allowed them to provide additional and improved services to their users.

4.2.2 The need for volunteers.

The previous chapter outlined the multiple and varied reasons given for hiring volunteers at special libraries.

In a previous chapter, a study by Howlett, Machin and Malmersjo (2005) was mentioned, which showed that the opportunity to complete work which would otherwise be left untouched was the most popular reason that libraries hired volunteers. This correlated with the findings

described in the previous chapter, as all interviewees stated that the volume of work led to the decision to hire volunteers.

Previous studies have also examined libraries which were completely managed by volunteers (Cooper, 2014 & Cavanagh, 2016). The libraries investigated in this research did not fall into this category. It could be argued that this is due to the specialised nature of these libraries requiring qualified staff with a specific set of skills. However, the small sample size investigated during this research limited the findings and conclusions that could be made.

Hewitt & Eve (2012) stated that libraries can require volunteers in order to work on and complete specific projects. The findings aligned with this research as several libraries had sporadic, ad hoc vacancies for volunteers to contribute to project work.

Costs and staff levels are two factors which are closely linked. Libraries may have an urgent need for more staff members but lack the funding to hire them. Similarly, measures to maintain lower costs may be prioritised in order to keep a library running efficiently. Budget cuts have been identified as a reason why library managers are required to replace staff with volunteers (McDiarmid and Auster, 2005) or run libraries completely with volunteers (Cavanagh, 2016). In contrast to this, only two libraries (L3, L7) specifically mentioned low funding as a major factor in their decision to hire volunteers. Funding was mentioned by L5 and L6, albeit in the context of a benefit of hiring volunteers.

4.3 The Recruitment Process

This research aimed to investigate the recruitment process for volunteers at special libraries in Ireland. Driggers & Dumas (2002) emphasise the importance of developing a strong volunteer recruitment process as it enables libraries to correctly identify the relevant skills

needed by volunteers and provides volunteers with a clear scope of what will be expected of them.

The previous chapter highlighted the difference between active, reactive and student placement recruitment approaches. Active approaches were the most popular among the libraries investigated, which involved libraries promoting their vacancies via their own websites, volunteering agencies, social media, or word of mouth. Libraries were seen to recognise their own needs for volunteers and what duties and skills would be expected of them.

Reactive approaches were more common in libraries within a larger organisation which had their own HR department. There were a number of instances in these libraries whereby HR would assign a volunteer to the library with little input from the library itself. While this highlighted the libraries' flexibility and readiness to adapt, it showed a gap between a library identifying a need for a volunteer and the process of recruiting them.

The varying approaches to promoting volunteer programmes was of interest to the researcher. Gardner Reed (2010) stated that promoting the volunteer programme will encourage interest in both the opportunity to volunteer and the library itself. The word-of-mouth promotion present in some libraries was effective, though this informal approach could lead to confusion about what will be involved in the role. The use of social media to promote volunteer opportunities can be seen as a cost-effective medium with potential to reach a number of audiences. Research carried out by Abdullah et al (2015) showed that most libraries view social media as an effective tool for increasing inclusion and outreach among their services. The objectives of this research did not include the success rate of these various methods. There is scope for further research in this area.

Interviews were not carried out at all libraries. While this may seem like a glaring omission in the recruitment process, the duties or type of placement may not have required it. For

example, the sort-a-thons carried out by libraries in L3 were carried out over a single day. Conducting multiple interviews for a single working day would have greatly increased the time needed to arrange this project. The need for an interview could be seen as dependent on the type of duties that the volunteer will be working on. One suggestion could be an informal interview via phone or video for less involved tasks and projects. This would allow the librarian to get an impression of the individual and their skills, while also giving the volunteer some personal contact with the library before commencing their duties.

This research aimed to gain an insight into the various approaches to volunteer policies. The importance of a standard volunteer policy has been emphasised a number of times (Gardner Reed, 2010, Drigger & Dumas, 2002, Holt & Holt, 2013), however not every library utilised a policy in their recruitment process. Kuras (1975) notes that a volunteer policy defines the volunteer's position and responsibilities, aids staff in assigning appropriate duties, provides guidelines for providing sufficient training and allows the library's volunteer programme to reach its maximum potential. Creating a formal volunteer policy within each library could have a positive impact on how volunteers are recruited and managed in special libraries. Given that each special library provides distinct services, plays a specific role, and has differing reasons for hiring volunteers, a universal approach to volunteer policies may not be applicable. Some general information could be relevant to a majority of libraries, but the duties and training involved would require some aspects of the volunteer policy to be tailored to each individual library. However, if a sufficient number of libraries develop and share these policies, it could contribute to a volunteer policy template which could form the basis of policies for a variety of libraries.

4.4 Volunteers and Their Motivations

The types of people that volunteered at these libraries, while varied, reflected the role of each library and their typical users. All volunteers had been previously aware of the libraries and their services. This is a valid example of the existing library community getting involved in the library and fostering the idea of community ownership (Cookman, 2001).

The specialised information and services provided by these libraries resulted in many volunteers being individuals who were directly involved in the respective subject area. Several volunteers at L3 were practitioners or professionals within the Irish traditional music scene. L5 recruited a number of volunteers who themselves were regular users of their services for the vision impaired. L7 used their network of library professionals experienced in rare books to hire a volunteer on an ad hoc basis for cataloguing assistance. The relationship between library and volunteer in these cases was based on a shared knowledge of the subject area.

Libraries which were open to the general public (L3, L4, L6) had greater variation and diversity within their volunteer demographics than those libraries who were oriented towards a specific user base. Volunteers came from various walks of life and were at various stages of their careers. This links to Cookman's statement in a previous chapter regarding the complex and diverse mix of people which can be found in volunteer programmes (2001).

Volunteers in these libraries were at different stages of their careers, with students, professionally employed and retired individuals all featuring across the libraries investigated. Several libraries recruited students completing a library course in university.

A limitation of this research is that it only provides insight into libraries' volunteer programmes from the perspective of the libraries. The key players, the volunteers, were not consulted for the purpose of this research. There is scope here for some inductive, exploratory

research into volunteers' experiences in special libraries in Ireland. The information collected from interviewees provided some insight into the potential motivations of volunteers.

The literature review in chapter two described Clary & Snyder's Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI), which outlines the six functions which volunteering can potentially fulfil. These six functions are Values, Understanding, Enhancement, Career, Social and Protective. While the data collected was from the librarians' perspective and not the volunteers', it allowed some anecdotal assumptions to be made regarding volunteer motivations and which functions of the VFI were fulfilled.

The volunteer demographics provided some insight into what the motivations to volunteer could be. The interviewees stated that many student volunteers wished to gain skills and practical work experience that would benefit their future careers (Understanding, Career). Retirees on the other hand were often looking for a social and creative outlet (Social, Enhancement). Some interviewees stated that many volunteers just wanted to give back to the library or society in general (Values). The only function of the VFI that could not be identified through this data was Protective, as this would require personal reflection on the part of the volunteer regarding their experience. These findings, while not conclusive or universally representative, fall in line with the views that volunteer motivations involve a combination of altruistic intentions and personal gain (Cookman, 2001, Oh, 2019, Carpenter and Myers, 2007).

4.5 Duties

The information provided by the interviewees offered a detailed insight into what was expected of volunteers in Irish special libraries. While previous studies (McDiarmid & Auster, 2005, Gardner Reed, 2010, Forrest 2012) have shown that libraries can generally assign mundane and menial tasks to their volunteers, the findings of this study show that duties in

special libraries can be varied and unique. Libraries such as L3, L4 and L5 allowed their volunteers to tasks in tasks closely related to tourism, music and services for the visually impaired. L3 in particular stated their desire to give volunteers tasks that were enjoyable.

The volunteers' enjoyment of their duties and overall experience led to a number of libraries tailoring their programme to include subject areas that volunteers were interested in (L2, L3, L6). These efforts align with statements made by Murray (2015), which showed how volunteers gained greater satisfaction carrying out tasks that were complex and engaging. While volunteers were not interviewed as part of this research, these libraries did receive positive feedback from their volunteers which can be viewed as anecdotal evidence of this.

Project work featured as a primary duty in several libraries. Hewitt and Eve (2012) stated that project work can be a popular reason for hiring volunteers. In many ways this can be seen as an ideal task for volunteers, as it gives them something definitive to work on and enables the completion of work which otherwise might not have been achieved. These projects also ensure that volunteers do not encroach on the duties of qualified and paid staff members.

While some volunteers may be studying for or already possess an MSc in Information & Library Management, many do not. Nevertheless, many libraries permitted volunteers to assist with the cataloguing process, though usually in smaller ways.

4.5.1 Skills, training, and feedback.

It was clear that several libraries identified the skills required by volunteers to complete their duties, but many also identified the skills that the volunteers themselves brought to the library or organisation.

The specialised natures of the libraries were reflected in the skills that volunteers were required to possess. This highlighted the role of special libraries, their services and target users,

and the skills needed to fulfil this role. The more mundane tasks aligned with previous research that posited simpler duties are more suitable for volunteers as they generally lack library skills and experience (McDiarmid & Auster, 2005, Gardner Reed, 2010, Forrest 2012). However, the very nature of the special library required many of them to undertake unique tasks which involved specific skills. Volunteers at these special libraries were required to perform duties which involved tourism (L3), recording music (L4) or carrying out research (L6).

Kuras (1975) stressed the importance of libraries being aware of the skills and talents that volunteers can offer libraries. It was reassuring to see that many libraries took the volunteers' skills into consideration and used them to improve their services. For example, when recruiting volunteers to record audiobooks, L5 considered the individual's skills and voice to ensure they were right for the book's genre and tone.

Training was seen by all interviewees as an essential and important part of the volunteer programme in their libraries. Tikam (2011) states that in order for a library volunteer programme to be successful, the training element should include a handbook or manual, an induction or orientation on arrival, an appointed Volunteer Coordinator, as well as appropriate task training and continuous support where needed.

All libraries took an "on the job" approach to training, which ensured volunteers were appropriately trained in their duties before completing them. This approach works well with volunteers as it allows them to practice the tasks while the information is fresh in their mind, under the supervision of a trained staff member (Driggers & Dumas, 2002). All interviewees stated that library staff were always ready and welcoming to provide further training and support if needed. Adequate training is essential as "undirected volunteers waste not only their own time and energy, but also staff time and energy" (Thomson, 1978 in Huber Frevret, 1997). As volunteers may only be in the library environment sporadically and will not have daily

experience and exposure to their work, they should be provided with sufficient training at the beginning of their placement (Gardner Reed, 2010).

Some libraries included an orientation or induction for volunteers, but not all participants stated that this was provided. Only one library provided volunteers with a guide on the library, as it contained important information related directly to their duties. Two libraries had an appointed Volunteer Coordinator who organised their placement dates, inductions, training, and acted as a liaison between the volunteer and the wider library team. Huber Frevret (1997) states that all staff should be involved in the planning of a volunteer programme, but one person should be assigned as a Volunteer Coordinator to ensure a successful programme.

Feedback on behalf of the library followed a similar approach to training, in that it was given continuously throughout their placement. This was referred to as a “constant conversation” regarding their duties (L3, L6). This gave the library ongoing opportunities to provide input and advice that would lead to improvements in their work. Feedback was given to volunteers at all libraries, in both informal and formal formats.

In contrast, not all libraries received feedback from their volunteers on how the volunteer programme could be improved. Most libraries received anecdotal feedback (L3, L4, L5, L6, L7), one received no feedback (L1) and one library received formal feedback via a survey (L2). This results in libraries missing the opportunity to gain quantitative and qualitative feedback on both their volunteer programmes and their library services. As Gardner Reed (2010) states, “Who better to give you feedback on the quality and effectiveness of your services as seen by those you serve than your volunteers who you’ve recruited from all segments of your community?”.

Through this discussion, a number of recommendations have been identified for libraries which hire volunteers. While the interviewees stressed the importance of training their volunteers, further development in this area could lead to a significant increase in volunteer

productivity and skills. The train aspect of volunteer placement could be developed through the creation of a guide or manual containing any important information regarding the library, the volunteers and the expected relationship between the two. Some libraries already have a designated volunteer coordinator. Appointing a member of staff in this role could be very helpful in managing volunteers' schedules while still allowing all library team members to have input in their experience.

A final suggestion for this aspect of the volunteer programme would be to actively encourage feedback from both parties on both informal and formal bases. This could result in the volunteers becoming more skilled and confident at their tasks at an earlier stage, and allow the library to provide a more enjoyable volunteer programme by adjusting it according to volunteers' feedback.

4.6 Effects of Volunteers

The objective of this research was to investigate the use of volunteers in special libraries in Ireland, and gain insight into the effects volunteers had on their services. The interviewees provided a wealth of information on this topic, which was outlined in the previous chapter.

4.6.1 Benefits for both libraries and volunteers.

The benefits stated by the interviewees in the previous chapter acted as a testament to the positive impact that volunteers can have on special libraries.

The benefit most appreciated by the library staff was the fact that volunteers provided extra support to accomplish tasks. The bolstered workforce also made it possible to improve library services and opening hours. Previous research has highlighted these as some of the main benefits experienced by libraries (Hewitt & Eve, 2012, Nicol & Johnson, 2008, Smallwood & Sanborn, 2016). Wyly (1992) stated that volunteers allow libraries to maintain and extend its

commitment to providing services to users, even when funding and other resources, such as staff, are scarce.

The staff in special libraries are often themselves specialists in a subject area or particular aspect of the service. The findings show that perhaps the most helpful contribution of library volunteers is that they keep the daily operations of the library running smoothly, which allows the paid staff to focus on specialist details and developing their services.

The skills and perspectives of the volunteers also benefitted the libraries. The addition of volunteers meant that the libraries' collective skillset became more diverse and well-rounded. Gardner Reed (2012) states that volunteers with an outside and non-library skillset and perspective can provide libraries with innovative and creative approaches to much of the work involved in libraries. The findings from this study support this statement, as volunteers often brought new and unique skills to the duties involved.

Interviewees stated that the volunteering programmes anecdotally generated more interest in the libraries involved in this study. The use of social media by volunteers was of particular interest, which was stated to have a positive impact on both the library and the volunteer programme. Young and Rossmann (2015) previously showed that social media can be used as an effective method for developing a library's community and building interest in its services. A similar effect is apparent in these findings. Some volunteers aided the librarians in using social media, which is further proof of volunteers providing libraries with new skills.

Many benefits for the volunteers themselves were also apparent. Volunteers gained new skills and experiences, which Cookman (2001) identified as a key benefit from volunteering as it increased the volunteers' employability. Leonard (2012) stated that library volunteers are often students at the beginning of their own career in library and information management. The

findings of this study support this research and demonstrate how important volunteering can be to library students in gaining first-hand practical experience in this field.

Benefits did not just include skills and career growth, as the findings have shown volunteers also enjoyed the social aspects and the opportunity to expand their own personal knowledge. This was especially important to retirees who were looking for new ways to spend their time.

4.6.2 Challenges for both libraries and volunteers.

Nicol & Johnson (2008) stated that the most common issue encountered because of hiring volunteers is that the paid library staff may view them as a threat to their positions. The findings of this research directly contradict this statement as almost all paid staff had positive attitudes regarding volunteer recruitment. Some libraries involved in this study were charity libraries which had a strong history of recruiting volunteers.

The time needed to prepare, train and manage volunteers was identified as a challenge. Scepanski and Wells (1997) stress the importance of regular and sufficient training for both paid staff and volunteers. It was previously stated that many libraries investigated did not have a formal volunteer policy in place. Developing a policy specifically for volunteer programmes could potentially resolve some of these issues, as libraries could be more aware of what preparation and training will be required and plan appropriately.

Some libraries stated that the limited availability of volunteers can be an issue. This was particularly relevant to student volunteers, who may only be volunteering for a set number of weeks rather than on an ongoing basis. This correlated to previous findings (Public Libraries News, 2020) which showed that a community's collective availability for volunteering can be a concern to libraries looking to boost their workforce. Volunteers at some libraries also found it difficult to manage their time commitment to the library outside of their own work or family life.

Difficulties can arise when volunteers lack the skills required to complete a task or project. The findings highlighted a balance between assigning tasks which needed to be completed and acknowledging the limits of a volunteer's skills or abilities. Wandersman and Alderman point out that volunteering may not be suited to every individual and that not every volunteer should be recruited (1993, cited in Rogelberg et al., 2010 p.435). Gardner Reed (2012) conversely argues that part of the librarian's role in managing volunteers is to identify alternative duties that are better suited to the volunteer's skills, or to ensure adequate training is being provided. The latter approach was taken by the libraries investigated in this study. Library staff identified the issues and resolved them either by providing additional training or alternative tasks.

A centralised approach to recruitment was a challenge for libraries which were part of a larger organisation. Librarians had less control over who they recruited in their libraries and when. This was significant as it showed a preference among library staff for them to be responsible for their own volunteering needs. A volunteer coordinator has been recommended by various researchers (Feazel, 1995, Gardner Reed, 2012, Taylor et al, 2012, Driggers & Dumas, 2002) and is seen as essential in effectively recruiting and managing volunteers. It is recommended that these libraries negotiate with their Human Resources departments to regain control over their future recruitment needs.

4.6.3 Impact on recruitment.

It could be argued that sub-theme may not be necessary and could simply be included under the previous theme of benefits for libraries and volunteers. However, as both previous research and the findings of this study have highlighted a general shortage of staff in libraries, it was important to show the effect that volunteers had on this essential aspect of libraries.

Many libraries involved in this study recruited paid library staff from their volunteer staff. Previous research showed that library staff are often threatened by the presence of volunteers and fear that they may be replaced by individuals willing to carry out free labour (Nicol & Johnson, 2008). The findings outline in chapter four oppose this research not only in staff's attitudes towards volunteers, but in showing that volunteers resulted in library staff gaining even further support in their roles via the addition of more full-time permanent staff.

Students undertaking an MSc in Information and Library Management course also go on to obtain paid library positions following their volunteer experiences. Many of them are recruited in libraries other than the branch they volunteered in. For library students, volunteering can be an essential part of gaining employment. Volunteers in other fields may also be inspired to pursue a career in libraries.

Many libraries stated that recruiting volunteers for future projects is much easier as they now have access to a network of individuals who are willing to volunteer again.

4.7 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The sample size involved in this study provides a snapshot of the effects of library volunteers in seven libraries. As a result, it cannot be considered a conclusive insight into the research topic. It was previously mentioned that the interviewees and libraries involved in this research were all based in the Dublin area. Dublin's high population may have made it easier for libraries to find individuals who were willing to volunteer. There is scope for a more in-depth study with a larger sample size in a wider range of areas, for example including special libraries in more rural settings.

A further limitation of this study is that only the views of librarians and library staff were considered. The findings in this study could form a strong basis for a comparative study on the volunteers' opinions and experiences of volunteering in these libraries.

While brainstorming in the early stages of this research project, the researcher considered conducting a case study by volunteering at a special library. Unfortunately, this was not possible due to Covid-19 restrictions which were enforced in Ireland. This approach would offer interesting primary data which could be compared with the data collected from interviews with library staff and volunteers.

4.8 Summary and Conclusions

The focus on this dissertation was to investigate the effect of volunteers on special libraries within the Republic of Ireland; as well as exploring the various strategies used by Irish special libraries in recruiting and managing volunteers. Many libraries outside this study appreciate volunteers and their contributions but are reluctant to assign duties that may be the responsibility of qualified and trained staff (CILIP, 2020).

The use of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to gain a rich insight into this topic and provided strength to this research. This method of primary data collection provided a wealth of information which was crucial in investigating this topic. It is evident from the interviews that volunteers have a positive effect on special libraries, and that the use of volunteers in libraries is welcomed and appreciated by staff. Interviewees expressed positive outcomes in many aspects of their work, including improved library services and opening hours, efficient workload management, enhanced collective skills and increased awareness and appreciation for the library. Challenges associated with recruitment, training and management of volunteers were identified by the interviewees. It is apparent these issues may be linked to an

under-developed volunteer policy, or complete lack thereof. It is therefore recommended that libraries ensure an appropriate policy for recruiting, training and managing volunteers is in place.

Overall, the general attitude of interviewees was that the benefits far outweigh the challenges, with many librarians expressing their willingness to recruit volunteers again in future. The willingness of libraries to continue further volunteer recruitment is mirrored in the presence of a network of previous volunteers who stated their readiness to volunteer again.

This research provides an Irish perspective on the topic of volunteers in special libraries and could be used as a starting point for a nationwide investigation into the use of volunteers in a variety of library types across Ireland.

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Appendix A – Interview Questions

- What services does this library offer, and who are its typical users?
- What were the reasons for hiring volunteers at this library?
- What was the attitude among existing staff toward this decision?
- What duties were volunteers assigned?
- Why were volunteers assigned these specific duties?
- Does the work involved allow the volunteers to expand and strengthen their skills?
- What feedback does the library give to volunteers, if any?
- What feedback do volunteers give the library, if any?
- What training has been given to volunteers?
- What volunteer policy is in place at this library?
- How often does this library hire volunteers?
- What does the library do to promote this programme?
- How are volunteers recruited and vetted?
- What are some of the benefits this library experienced from hiring volunteers?
- What are some of the challenges this library faced from hiring volunteers?
- Has a volunteer ever been hired as a paid staff member after they completed their volunteer work, or progressed within the library field?
- Does this library provide volunteers with any references or acknowledgment of their work?
- Are you aware of any network for in place for library volunteers, i.e. either within your own library or the wider library field?

Appendix B – Information Form and Consent Sheet

Information Form and Consent Sheet

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

An Investigation into the use of volunteers by special libraries in the Republic of Ireland

You are being asked to take part in a research study on the use of volunteers in special libraries. This research will be undertaken by Ray Gainford, a student of the MSc in Information & Library Management course in Dublin Business School. The research supervisor is Trevor Haugh. This project has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN

In this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview (either face-to-face or online) with the researcher. The interview will be recorded to assist with the research process. You will be asked to answer questions in relation to the above research topic. Answers can be based on the participant's own experience with this area. Participants are permitted to decline to answer any questions. The interview will follow a semi-structured format, which includes some proposed questions but allows time for open discussion. The proposed questions are provided to the participant ahead of time.

TIME COMMITMENT

The study typically takes around 30-45 minutes. One session should be sufficient. However, the researcher may request a follow-up session with the participant if more time or information is needed.

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 does not contain any personal information about you, and will be anonymous. Your name and the name of your workplace will not be included in the study. The primary research obtained through interviews and the questionnaire will be securely stored in password protected format, for a maximum of six months after the successful completion of the examination process, to fulfil the requirements of potential appeal or review.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

I or / and Trevor Haugh will be glad to answer your questions about this study at any time. You may contact my supervisor at Trevor.Haugh@dbs.ie or 01 417 0611.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PROJECT TITLE: An investigation into the use of volunteers by special libraries in the Republic of Ireland

PROJECT SUMMARY:

This project will investigate the effects volunteer workers may have on special libraries in the Republic of Ireland. This project will involve a literature review of previous research carried out in this field of study. Semi-structured interviews with library staff at special libraries which have previously recruited volunteers will also be carried out. This project aims to discover if any benefits or challenges may arise from recruiting volunteers in special libraries. A comparison of the findings will be presented in order to examine if a universal approach could be developed for recruiting, training and managing volunteers in this field.

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 C – Emails Regarding Volunteering in a Public Library in Dublin

From: [redacted]
Sent: Thursday 23 April 2020 14:15
To: Ray Gainford 10510942@mydbs.ie
Subject: RE: Volunteering in public libraries

Hi Ray,

That's no problem at all. I'm delighted to help.

I think there are a couple of reasons it didn't work out and probably wouldn't ever work out in a local authority setting. There was very little buy-in from the staff. They were suspicious from day one. You have a mountain to climb trying to convince staff that there is no threat to their jobs, especially when the union got involved. Limiting the roles to just teaching languages and computers was also a factor. It's not that you couldn't get competent people to teach these skills, it was more to do with branch managers having a paid facilitator already in place doing this. Also, duties in public libraries are very fluid. A member of staff with knowledge of a language or computers may run a class in their own branch, so a volunteer coming in to take over wouldn't exactly be welcome. That's why very few branch managers took up the offer of volunteers.

I'm not too sure about insurance. I think that could well be a handy excuse by management to not take on volunteers. Public places are covered by public liability regardless.

It's very difficult for large public service organisations to be flexible in work practices and I think, looking back, it was probably just a step too far. It's easier with smaller private or voluntary organisations. I had a much different experience running the same programme in voluntary organisation prior to this. It was welcome by management and supported. It was also needed, as funding wasn't guaranteed.

I'll see if I can find any materials related to this. If I do, I'll pass them on.

Best of luck,

[redacted]

From: Ray Gainford 10510942@mydbs.ie
Sent: Thursday 23 April 2020 13:49
To: [redacted]
Subject: Re: Volunteering in public libraries

CAUTION: [EXTERNAL EMAIL] Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi [redacted],

that's a huge help, thank you so much. I really appreciate it!

It's a shame it didn't get to progress very far as it was a great initiative and obviously had a lot of work put into it. In my research it has seemed that there can be challenges with hiring volunteers, particularly if any staff feel like it might infringe on their own work.

I had previously been chatting to a staff member of a Fingal library branch who mentioned that insurance can be another big reason why volunteers aren't used - only employed staff are covered by the council's insurance so it would be a risk.

You have been really helpful with this. At the moment I'm just writing my research proposal, which will then have to be reviewed. Following this I will be discussing my topic with my supervisor so I might be in touch again after that point if we have identified any areas that might need a follow-up. In the meantime if you happened to stumble across any publicly available documents relating to this, it would be a big boost to my referenced material.

I hope you are keeping safe and well during these times.

Thanks so much again
Ray

From: [redacted]
Sent: Thursday 23 April 2020 12:37
To: Ray Gainford 10510942@mydbs.ie
Subject: RE: Volunteering in public libraries

Hi Ray,

I'll do my best to give you as much information as I can.

Firstly I was asked to do this by the county librarian at the time. It was something which had been suggested by the then county manager that various departments look at as a way of involving the wider community into the delivery of services. I suppose this came from central government although there was no clear and definite directive about it. I think it was a case of see how it goes. I had already set up volunteer services for libraries in the voluntary sector before so said I would look into it.

It involved working with a couple of people from our (libraries) HR office. I developed a policy and we identified roles which volunteers could perform. It was important that any role developed was something that was not performed by a paid member of staff. It also needed to be very specific and required little supervision. We had role descriptions written up for each "job" and a set of rules and regulations for the volunteer to agree to. We had a timescale drawn up for the implementation of the scheme. Just before we went to publicly promote the scheme and advertise for volunteers, we were notified by the union that we couldn't go ahead as it contravened agreements between union and council. After some discussion which I wasn't involved in it was decided that the only roles we could seek volunteers for were for language and computer skills teaching. It severely restricted the programme but we went ahead anyway and advertised it seeking only those skills. We got lots of applications and offered training to those interested and with the required skills. We ran a couple of training courses and offered volunteer teachers out to our network of branches. A couple of branches took up the offer but to be honest the whole programme was doomed to fail from the outset. There are various reasons for this

which will take me a long time to outline in this email! We no longer use volunteers but it wasn't a deliberate policy on behalf of the council to cancel the scheme. It just petered out with little or no support from staff.

If you want to ask me more questions please feel free to do so. I'm not sure I have the original policy but it was very standard. There are plenty out there which would be the same or similar.

Hope this is a help.

Kind regards,

[redacted]

From: Ray Gainford 10510942@mydbs.ie
Sent: Thursday 23 April 2020 11:11
To: [redacted]
Subject: Re: Volunteering in public libraries

CAUTION: [EXTERNAL EMAIL] Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi [redacted],

thanks very much for getting back to me.

At the moment I am focusing on volunteers in special libraries, as from my research I have found that Irish public libraries do not seem to have hired volunteered very often. Special libraries such as [redacted] have done so in the past. The information from 2009 regarding [redacted] was an exception from what I could find! It would be great to get some information to compare/contrast the findings regarding special libraries.

I was just wondering if you would be able to answer some of the following questions:

- What duties were expected of volunteers?
- Was a volunteer policy created for this? If so, would it be possible get a copy to reference?
- Is there a particular reason this initiative was created?
- If it is no longer running, is there a reason for this?
- Were there any obvious benefits or challenges from hiring volunteers?

Any information at all would be helpful, I would really appreciate it!

Thanks & Kind Regards
Ray

From: [redacted]
Sent: Thursday 23 April 2020 10:17
To: Ray Gainford 10510942@mydbs.ie
Subject: Volunteering in public libraries

Hi Ray,

Your email regarding volunteering in public libraries was passed on to me as I was involved in a project to introduce volunteerism into [redacted] some years ago. I would be happy to help. I was also involved in similar projects in voluntary sector libraries too which might be helpful.

Let me know what you would like to know.

All the best,

[redacted]

Appendix D – Emails Regarding Volunteering in a Special Library in Dublin

From: [redacted]
Sent: Monday 27 April 2020 09:57
To: Ray Gainford 10510942@mydbs.ie
Subject: Re: Library Volunteer Information

Hi Ray,

I'm afraid we don't have anything on our website, but I'm happy to generally advise on what we ask of our volunteers. We have a code of conduct that all volunteers must sign. It essentially asks that volunteers represent the library to the best of their ability.

They must be welcoming and polite to visitors, and supervise them as they walk through the galleries, ensuring that they do not damage the collection. They must also ensure that visitors are not taking photographs, as this is a security issue in our library. They must ensure no foods or liquids are brought into the building.

They must not be on mobile phones in the galleries. We allow books for when the library has no visitors (this can occasionally happen during the winter season), but they must be put away when visitors enter the library.

We generally require volunteers to work one four-hour shift per week (although we are flexible on this, depending on the volunteers' schedule and commitments). As part of that, they receive a 15 minute break during their shift. A volunteer may work an extra day a week if we have a festival during the weekend (such as Culture Night, Open House, the Bram Stoker Festival), but this is not mandatory.

We have a smart casual dress code. We don't allow ripped clothing, slogans, or open toed shoes (for health and safety reasons). We also don't allow blue jeans or shorts. We provide volunteers, interns and staff with a [redacted] fleece, as it can get cold in the galleries. For the summer months, we provide volunteer lanyards so that staff can be identified easily.

I hope this helps. If you have any questions, please let me know.

Best Wishes,
[redacted]

On Thu, Apr 23, 2020 at 1:36 PM Ray Gainford 10510942@mydbs.ie wrote:
Hi [redacted],

many thanks for sending that information on - it's really helpful to know what is expected of volunteers and what duties they have. I really appreciate it!

Does [redacted] have a volunteer policy or guidelines that is publicly available?

Thanks again, it's a really big help to my research
Ray

From: [redacted]
Sent: Thursday 23 April 2020 10:19
To: Ray Gainford 10510942@mydbs.ie
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: Re: Library Volunteer Information

Hello Ray,

I hope your studies are going well during these unusual times.

I can tell you that we started our volunteer programme in 2014, to help us assist the growing number of visitors that were coming to the library. Our volunteers receive information on the history of building so they can answer any questions that visitors may have. They can also give guided tours if they are happy to do so.

Volunteers work front of house, greeting visitors, giving them tickets and selling merchandise in our gift shop. They also cover our phone line and help us with booking appointments and tours for both the museum and the reading room.

We have various school events throughout the year, mainly the Maths, Science and Engineering weeks, where we provide challenges for local primary school groups. Volunteers supervise and guide the children through these activities.

There is also the behind the scenes. We need to set up for festival events, films shoots, book launches, and various other events.

We interview all our volunteers and require them to provide references and be garda vetted before they begin their position.

Is there any other information you require for your dissertation?

Best Wishes,
[redacted]

On Wed, Apr 22, 2020 at 3:21 PM Ray Gainford 10510942@mydbs.ie wrote:
Dear [redacted],

Thanks very much for the information, it's a very helpful insight on how volunteer services are implemented in your library. It is very interesting to see how duties differ between special libraries!

I look forward to further information from your colleagues - many thanks again for this.

I hope you and all the staff at [redacted] are keeping safe and well.

Kind Regards
Ray

From: [redacted]
Sent: Wednesday 22 April 2020 15:07
To: Ray Gainford 10510942@mydbs.ie
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: Re: Library Volunteer Information

Dear Ray

I hope you are keeping well and feeling productive in these strange times!

I'm passing this on to my colleagues [redacted] and [redacted], who will be able to fill you in further about the use of volunteers particularly on the cultural tourism side of the library's operations.

We have also offered library internships, mostly under the Erasmus scheme, in which interns have been trained in rare books cataloguing, and also have been offered the opportunity to engage in other ways with the library's digital and education outreach.

best wishes
[redacted]

On Wed, 22 Apr 2020 at 15:02, Ray Gainford 10510942@mydbs.ie wrote:
Good afternoon,

I am a student at Dublin Business School, where I am undertaking my MSc in Information & Library Management. I am currently preparing materials for my dissertation, which will focus on volunteer services in special libraries in the Republic of Ireland.

I noticed on your website that the library has made use of volunteer services in the past. I was just wondering if you could offer any more information on this (duties etc), or if there is a volunteer policy which I could reference in my dissertation?

Any help would be greatly appreciated.

Thanks & Kind Regards
Ray