

Do Working Public Librarians In Ireland Perceive And Run Their Libraries As Community Centres?

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Declaration

'I declare that this dissertation that I have submitted to Dublin Business School for the award of [name your programme here] 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.'

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Abstract

This study explores the role of the public library in the community from the perspective of Irish librarians. There is a global conversation taking place on the role of the public library in the community, and whether the concept of the public library as a community centre has always existed or is a new phenomenon. While there is a growing body of literature internationally on this topic, the researcher explored the topic in an Irish context.

The researcher used qualitative methods. She interviewed four experienced librarians working in the public library system.

The study would seem to suggest that public librarians in Ireland do perceive their libraries as community centres. It further suggests that the librarians consider that Irish libraries have always had a community service element to their role and that as the needs of society have changed Irish libraries have evolved to meet those needs.

Contents

Declaration.....	1
Acknowledgements.....	2
Abstract.....	3
1. Introduction and Literature Review.....	8
1.1 Introduction	8
1.2 Research Aims.....	8
1.3 Rationale	9
1.4 Research Question	9
2.1 Literature Introduction	9
2.2 Defining a Public Library	10
2.2.1 Community.....	12
2.2.1.1 Library Non-Users	15
2.3 Collaboration.....	17
2.4 Marketing.....	19
2.5 Literature Conclusion	21
2. Method	23
2.1 Introduction	23
2.2 Participants	23
2.2.1 Population	23
2.2.2 Sample.....	23
2.2.3 Participants	24
2.3 Design.....	24
2.3.1 Research Philosophy	24
2.2.2 Research Approach	25
2.2.3 Research Strategy	26

2.2.4 Method	26
2.4 Materials and Apparatus.....	27
2.2.1 Materials	27
2.2.1.1 Introductory Email (Appendix 6.1).....	27
2.2.1.2 Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 6.2)	28
2.2.1.3 Consent Form (Appendix 6.3)	28
2.2.1.4 Interview Questions (Appendix 6.4)	28
2.2.1.5 Ethics Information Form (Appendix 6.5).....	29
2.2.2 Apparatus.....	29
2.2.2.1 Outlook	29
2.2.2.2 Zoom	29
2.2.2.3 DeScript.....	29
2.2.2.4 OneDrive	29
2.5 Procedure.....	30
2.6 Ethics	32
2.6 Data Analysis.....	33
3. Results.....	36
3.1 Introduction	36
3.2 Coding the Data	36
3.2.1 Phase One: familiarizing yourself with your data	36
3.2.2 Phase Two: generating initial codes	37
3.3 Transitioning from Codes to Themes.....	38
3.3.2 Phase Three: searching for themes	38
3.3.3 Phase Four: reviewing themes.....	39
3.3.4 Phase Five: defining and naming themes	39
3.3.5 Phase Six Producing the report.....	39
3.4 Themes.....	39
3.4.1 Theme One: Perceptions of a Community Centred Role.....	39
3.4.2 Theme Two: Chronology of Community Centred Public Libraries.....	42
3.4.2 Theme 3 Community Engagement	45
3.4.2.1 Perspectives on Public Library	45
3.4.2.2 Attitudes to Community Collaboration.....	46
3.4.2.3 Theme: Four Visibility	49
3.4.2.3.1 Marketing.....	49
3.5 Possible Models of the Data	52
4. Discussion.....	53

4. Discussion.....	53
4.1 Introduction	53
4.2 The aims of the research.....	53
4.3 Summary of Findings.....	53
4.4 Discussion of Findings	54
4.4.1 Theme One: Perceptions of a Community Centred Role.....	54
4.4.1.1Community Centre Description	54
4.4.1.2 Community Centred Public Libraries	55
4.4.1.3 Public Librarian Role	55
4.4.2 Theme Two: Chronology of Community Centred Public Libraries.....	56
4.4.2.1 History of Community Centred Public Library	56
4.4.2.3 Community Library Today	57
4.4.2.4 Future of the Community Library	57
4.4.3 Theme 3 Community Engagement	58
4.4.3.1 Community Perspectives on Public Library.....	58
4.4.3.2 Attitudes to Community Collaboration.....	58
4.4.3.3 Influences on Community Engagement.....	59
4.4.3.3.1 Local and Government Authorities.....	59
4.4.3.3.2 Practical Factors	59
4.4.3.3.1 Community Needs.....	59
4.4.4 Theme Four: Visibility	59
4.4.4.1 Marketing.....	59
4.4.4.2 Impact	60
4.5 Weaknesses of the Research	61
4.6 Strengths of the Research.....	61
4.7 Future Research	61
4.9 Implications of the Results and Applications of the Research.....	62
4.10 Conclusion.....	62
5. References	63
6. Appendix	66
6.1 Introductory Email	66
6.2 Participant Information Sheet	67
6.3 Consent Form.....	70
6.4 Interview Questions.....	72
6.5 Ethics Information Form	73

List of Tables

Table 1 Examples of Coding for Data Extracts	p. 37
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List of Figures

Figure 1 Finalised Thematic Map	p. 52
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1. Introduction and Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

Our Public Libraries 2022 – the Irish public libraries strategic plan aims to “expand the role of the library as an essential community service” (Department of Rural and Community Development, 2018, p. 3) and “reinforce the local library as a trusted place at the centre of the community” (Department of Rural and Community Development, 2018, p. 17).

Throughout this document there is an emphasis placed on the role of the library in the community and on the library being at the centre of the community. The library emerging as central to the community, or as a community-centre, is very much part of the branding of this strategic plan. However, this is not a topic being considered in Ireland alone. There is a global conversation taking place, about how public libraries are defined. In much of literature, they are being referred to as a community centre to varying degrees (see Literature Review).

The researcher was interested to explore where the concept of the public library as a community-centred library comes from. According to Field and Tran (2018, p. 113), this is a recent development born out of public libraries re-examining their purpose to ensure they are still providing relevant services to their users and are not just book repositories. However, the question arises is this concept of a community centred library is new or whether it has always existed and just been pulled into focus now? Sandlian-Smith (2016, p. 313) suggests that community has always been at the centre of the library, but that a community needs changes over time and the public library has always been changing with it.

1.2 Research Aims

This research project aims to explore the role of public libraries as ‘community centres’. The researcher was particularly interested in exploring this topic from the perspective of librarians working in public libraries. The study also aims to investigate if this idea of a community-centred library is a new phenomenon or if it has always been a part of the role of the public library. The research also aims to explore what factors impact on community engagement by the library and to what extent library users and non-users effect the decision making of a community-centred public library.

1.3 Rationale

This research is relevant as from an academic perspective it is filling a gap in the literature. There is an underrepresentation of Irish context among the literature. As will be shown in the Literature Review, it is a global conversation and this research could add an Irish perspective to it.

The research may be of interest to those working in the Irish public librarian sector as would allow them to explore this topic in the Irish context.

1.4 Research Question

Research Question: What is the role of the public library in the community?

Sub Questions: (a) How is the role of the public library in the community perceived by working librarians?

(b) How has the role of the public library evolved?

2.1 Literature Introduction

In order to explore the topic of public libraries as community centres, a literature review was undertaken. The literature review was conducted in order to “contextualise [the research] in relation to previous research” and to identify any gaps existing in the current literature that could be addressed by the research undertaken during this dissertation (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). The literature that was reviewed was secondary sources comprising of a mixture of peer-reviewed journal articles and books. The review of the literature explores the main themes of ‘Defining a Public Library’, ‘Collaboration’ and ‘Marketing’ along with sub themes of ‘Community’ and ‘Library Non-Users’.

The theme of ‘Defining a Public Library’ was chosen because in order to identify if public libraries are community centres, it is first important to determine how libraries are being defined in the literature currently. The sub theme of ‘Community’ was chosen as it is important to see how communities interact with their local libraries as the community would naturally play a significant role in a ‘community centred’ public library. From this sub-theme, the sub-theme of ‘Library Non-Users’ developed because they would make up part of the local community surrounding a public library and would be an important demographic public librarians would need to take into account.

The theme of 'Collaboration' was identified as through analysis of the literature, it was clear that collaboration is a significant component of community-centred public libraries. The theme of 'Marketing' was identified as it is useful to look at how public libraries are marketing themselves and if they are marketing themselves as community centres. Through the exploration of the literature within these themes, the area of public libraries as community centres can begin to be explored.

2.2 Defining a Public Library

In order to explore how public librarians in Ireland define their libraries, it is important to review how public libraries are defined in the library world in general so there is a groundwork for comparison.

The most frequent way a public library is defined in the literature is that it is a community space. This definition is worded in a variety of ways and interpretations. Williams and Willet (2018 p. 810) state that traditionally the library's role has been that of "a free space" for the public to come in and educate themselves. Sandlian-Smith (2016,p. 315) is more liberal in their interpretation, describing it as a space the community can adapt for their own needs not just for their own education. Yoshida's (2016, p. 2) work offers a Japanese perspective – most people in Japan regard their libraries as "core cultural institutions in communities". Field and Tran (2018, p. 120) similarly describe the public library as a "vital community hub". Baba and Abrizah (2018, p. 97) refers to "community libraries" when discussing static public libraries, stating they provide "people oriented" services. Santa María Muxica (2018, p. 258) refers to the public library as a "meeting place for the community." The concept of community, as well as the concept of informal learning, tend to be emphasised in 21st century library definitions (Santa María Muxica, 2018, p. 259), as seen above. This emphasis on community can be seen in *Our Public Libraries 2022* - the current strategic plan for Irish libraries. The strategy focuses on developing the library service "as a modern 21st century public service" (Department of Rural and Community Development, 2018, p. 21). The definition of a public library offered is "a modern and well-resourced public library contributes to the social, economic and cultural wellbeing of communities"(Department of Rural and Community Development, 2018, p. 7). The strategy aims to "reinforce the local library as a trusted place at the centre of the community" (Department of Rural and Community Development, 2018, p. 17). None of the above research is Irish based, only the

Irish strategic plan. This research topic would offer some definitions of public libraries in relation to community centres given by the working public librarians in Ireland.

This idea of community can also be seen in how the role of public libraries today is described. Some state that it is to assist in the needs of the community: whether that be providing a needed workspace, providing the tools and lessons needed to learn a skill, or providing a place for socialising – almost acting as a ‘catch-all’ building (Sandlian-Smith, 2016, p. 312; Hapel, 2012, p. 53). Similarly, Crawford-Barniskis (2016, pp. 140–141) analysed the mission statements of public libraries through which the conclusion was reached that the public library is situated as “a community wide benefactor” whose role was knowledge and creation. It is important to note that within this literature, Crawford-Barniskis (2016, p. 142) stated that boards of trustees and administrators were largely responsible for writing the mission statements as opposed to working librarians. She (2016, p. 149) articulates that librarians should be responsible for developing these mission statements, with influence from the community. This is reflected in Halpin *et al.* (2015, p. 37) who states that when discussions around a library’s value to society occur, the “voice of the professional” is not always heard (Halpin *et al.*, 2015, p. 37). This shows how useful the viewpoint of a working public librarian could be when discussing the public library and the role they play in their community.

Now that community has been identified as a significant component of public libraries, it begs the question of when the community-focussed practice in public libraries came about. Is this practice newly developed or has it always been a focal point? It would appear there is no definitive conclusion to this question. Dorner, Campbell-Meier and Seto (2017), through their discussion of various ‘Future of Libraries’ projects, propose that this focus was triggered by threats to the library including technology and a lack of government support. Organisations like IFLA and The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) undertook these projects that led to over 500 articles appearing in professional and scholarly literature from 2011 to 2016 discussing the future of libraries and/or librarianship’ (Dorner, Campbell-Meier and Seto, 2017, p. 321). The argument is that this caused libraries to reflect on what they mean to the community (Dorner, Campbell-Meier and Seto, 2017, p. 328). However, it is unclear if this is indicating that this concept of ‘community centre’ was then created as a result of those projects and articles or if it just means that the idea of

what a 'community centre' consists of shifted into something that would be more valuable to current library users. Scaffi and Rowley (2015, p. 104) seem to argue it is the former, that in response to changes in access to technology and information to the wider public, public libraries have made a deliberate effort to become a "core community service". Field and Tran (2018, p. 113) also suggest it is new, that it recently came out of many public libraries re-evaluating their purpose to ensure the services they provide are relevant to and driven by the community, and that they are not just repositories for books.

Some researchers suggest the latter, community has always been a focus of public libraries, but in the 21st Century what the community needs has altered and so library practices have had to be modified as well. (Sandlian-Smith, 2016, p. 313; Williams and Willet, 2019, p.803).

Wiegand (cited in Williams and Willet, 2019, p. 802) argues that this community focus in public libraries can be traced back to 1945 in Britain following WWII where libraries became youth spaces for education. However, this is only the history of one country, and may not be reflective of experiences in other locations. Audunson et al (2019, p. 1) agree that this idea of community focused libraries is nothing new but makes the point that the attention it has been given has increased. Perhaps this is why other authors feel it is new, because it is being given the attention now. Sung, Hepworth and Ragsdel (2013, p. 206) concur that the conversation around the role of the public libraries has grown in the UK over the past number of years. These discussions particularly involve the word 'community' being used by library-related government bodies (Sung, Hepworth and Ragsdel, 2013, p. 206). It is important to note that Sung Hepworth and Ragsdel are only referring to the UK context.

As has been touched on already, when considering how a public-library is defined it is worth noting the different perspectives of the writers. The articles are written from North-American, Danish, Japanese, UK and Australian contexts. The cultural and historical contexts may differ from place to place. This research could add to the Irish context provided by *Our Public Libraries 2020* and add another voice to this conversation.

2.2.1 Community

As there is an agreement that public libraries do have a community component to them, it is useful to look at literature that outlines how a community may engage with and regard their library, and how this may manifest practically within different countries and contexts.

Oliphant (2014, p. 350) carried out a survey with 1201 respondents – both library users and non-users – that looked at how communities in Alberta, Canada perceived their public libraries. Results from the survey showed communities were highly aware of their public libraries (Oliphant, 2014, p. 354) and most respondents were engaging with ‘traditional’ aspects of the library – borrowing, reading and studying (Oliphant, 2014, pp. 355–356). Less than half of respondents were engaged in attending library events or socialising in the space socialising (Oliphant, 2014, pp. 355–356). The locations where the most programme attendance were indicated by respondents were rural areas (Oliphant, 2014, p. 358). It is worth noting that the study does not make it clear whether these results are due either to the fact that the libraries which the respondents interact with simply do not offer these services, or for some alternative reason. The results of the survey performed showed that communities had high interaction with and awareness of their libraries but mainly in ‘traditional’ ways. Similarly, the main function of many public libraries in Manchester and Rome described by their communities is that of “books” (Sbaffi and Rowley, 2015, p. 108). In the same vein, Audunson et al’s (2019) research was based on data from a survey of representative samples of the adult population in six countries – Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Germany, Hungary and Switzerland. The most popular way in which those surveyed saw their libraries was in the traditional role of “providing access to information” (Audunson *et al.*, 2019, p. 12). They did also see them as places where cultural heritage could be promoted, literature and culture could be accessed and leisure time could be provided, but to a lesser extent (Audunson *et al.*, 2019, p. 12). Overall there was more focus on the libraries’ traditional role (Audunson *et al.*, 2019, p. 13).

Appleton et al, like Sbaffi and Rowley, based their research in a UK context, running focus groups at 8 UK locations. From these focus groups, it can be gleaned that, similar to the above findings, patrons enjoy the more traditional area of books and printed information within the library, citing a sense of credibility and trust (Appleton *et al.*, 2018, p. 279). However, they also showed an acknowledgement of public libraries “as important community spaces”, particularly in urban locations, where diverse user groups can interact and take part in a variety of groups e.g. coding clubs, reading groups, history groups (Appleton *et al.*, 2018, pp. 179–180). Within this study there was more of a sense of

community ownership over public libraries with many participants expressing frustration with UK library closures and cutbacks (Appleton *et al.*, 2018, p. 180)

Sen (2014) writes from a UK perspective again, but focusing on Cumbria Libraries, using data gathered from document analysis as well as input from 85 participants from various stakeholders. Within Cumbria, the social aspect of libraries is important and libraries must aim to maintain this aspect for the community (Sen, 2014, p. 4). For this reason Cumbria Libraries has explicit references to a community orientation where community is one of the primary focuses of the library (Sen, 2014, p. 5). The services offered within the libraries are considered with the customer and community in mind (Sen, 2014, p. 8). Similar to Appleton *et al.*'s research, there was a sense of community ownership of the libraries with patrons voluntarily helping to run the library in order to have longer opening hours, increased footfall and improved services from the library for schools – it in turn has increased how valued the library is to the community, probably because of the close relationship that exists between them (Sen, 2014, p. 9).

Similarly, patrons of a library in Japan had a self-established library learning group “Yokohama Library Friend”(YLF) (Yoshida, 2016, p. 5). They were formed to act as a bridge between libraries and users (Yoshida, 2016, p. 7), similar to the volunteers helping in some of the Cumbria Libraries. They organised tours of the library for potential users, to show the library facilities and services and to potentially recruit new members (Yoshida, 2016, p. 7). They also organised seminars where staff would provide guidance on how to use the facilities and how to search for library materials and to go into detail on the services they offer for various groups, e.g. children, disabled people, local studies groups etc (Yoshida, 2016, p. 7). It opened up the library to the community. Through an analysis of the group's newsletters, it was clear the YLF saw the library as a “indispensable public institution” over which, like in Cumbria, they felt an ownership (Yoshida, 2016, p. 11). YFL also held social meetings within the library for local citizens to get them in and engaging with the physical library space (Yoshida, 2016, p. 12).

Reid and Howard (2016, p. 196) undertook research investigating community engagement in rural Canada. This research was done by interviewing librarians and a consensus was found among the librarians that community engagement is vital for libraries (Reid and Howard, 2016, p. 201). It would seem to be clear that the levels of community awareness

and community engagement are high in the above countries. It may sometimes take the form of a more traditional use of the library, but there is engagement and awareness, nonetheless.

In comparison, a Brazilian based study found that only 45% of people within the country were aware of their libraries (Medeiros and Olinto, 2018, p. 262). The consensus among library researchers in Brazil was that there was a need to improve the relationship between public libraries and their communities (Medeiros and Olinto, 2018, p. 263).

In contrast to the situation in Brazil, Malaysia seems to have had some success in raising awareness. Baba and Abrizah describe libraries as “universalised local community institutions” where every citizen is eligible to join (Baba and Abrizah, 2018, p. 90). Within Malaysian libraries there is an effort to benefit society through community engagement (Baba and Abrizah, 2018, p. 91). Many public libraries in Malaysia offer an array of activities for adults, youth and children and aim to reach urban communities who do not have easy access to library services (Baba and Abrizah, 2018, pp. 97–102). Baba and Abrizah (Baba and Abrizah, 2018, p. 103) highlight how important it will be for the Malaysian public libraries to show their community their value, outside of the ‘traditional’ library services but as contributors to the community itself.

When compared to other countries, communities in Brazil would appear to have minimal engagement with their libraries. This underlines the importance of geographical context when studying this theme. Even within countries that seemed to have a high level of community engagement and awareness, there were differences in the ways communities engaged with their libraries. It shows how valuable an Irish context would be, given the stark difference between the Brazil and the other countries shown here.

2.2.1.1 Library Non-Users

The community around a public library will naturally be made up of users and non-users. It is important that libraries consider non-users as they could potentially become library patrons (Sbaffi and Rowley, 2015, p. 105). However, there is a recognition within the public library sector that more needs to be done in engaging non users (Halpin *et al.*, 2015, p. 37; Sbaffi and Rowley, 2015, p. 109). This theme will explore ways in which non-users are engaged with public libraries.

Part of Sbaffi and Rowley's (2015) research looks at how public libraries based in Manchester and public libraries based in Rome approach the issue of non-library users in their respective locations. Children were found to be active library users, as were mature adults (Sbaffi and Rowley, 2015, p. 107). The least active group for both libraries is teenagers (Sbaffi and Rowley, 2015, p. 107). It is interesting that this was the same for both countries. Again, an Irish perspective would be useful here for comparison purposes.

One library, in order to get more users of school-going age, had the librarians themselves go into the schools and promote their services resulting in three schools beginning to come to the library (Sbaffi and Rowley, 2015, p. 107). This would suggest that one strategy to attract non-users is for librarians to leave the library and go into the community to promote their library. For the most part strategies to attract non-users were either aimed at "reader development" for those who perhaps had low literacy, or took the form of cultural events and activities that did not have to be reading related e.g. knitting workshops, coffee mornings, Tai Chi, language classes, social welfare information (Sbaffi and Rowley, 2015, p. 109). The main objective was to have enough varied activity to appeal to multiple user groups as opposed to focusing on one (Sbaffi and Rowley, 2015, p. 109). Additionally, activities like training in software, digital literacy, information literacy, cooking have all been raised as examples of activities aimed at a variety of user groups (Potnis *et al.*, 2019, p. 7). These activities highlight that the libraries do not only engage in 'traditional' activities that perhaps were of no interest to non-users. They have made a concerted effort to offer as wide a variety of services as possible.

Another strategy is for libraries, space permitting, to hire out their meeting rooms to the public in order to get non-users into the building (Sbaffi and Rowley, 2015, p. 109). Libraries in the UK extended their opening hours in order to draw in a wider scope of people (Halpin *et al.*, 2015, p. 37). This has also been done in Ireland with the introduction of the My Open Library, which extends the opening hours of Irish public libraries (Department of Rural and Community Development, 2018, p. 36).

Potnis *et al* (2019, p. 6) discuss the idea of programme innovation whereby the needs of specific user groups needed to be addressed through the development of specific services.

Many of these services described were aimed at both new and already existing user groups like immigrants, the elderly, disabled users and children with autism (Potnis *et al.*, 2019, p. 6). They also highlighted that UK public libraries ceased the use of late-fines for children as they felt it was a barrier to the child's engagement with the library and the child's development, particularly if they were in a low-income household who would not want to risk incurring a monetary fine (Potnis *et al.*, 2019, p. 7). Similarly, in Ireland, late-fines were removed in January 2019 as part of the *Our Libraries 2022* national strategy (*Learn About Your Local Library*, 2018). This is important as in order to engage with groups of young people in the community, libraries should "favour free access from the public to each of its services" (Santa María Muxica, 2018, p. 266).

There are some strategies described in the literature that are already practiced in Ireland. However, it is arguable that an exploration of this area from an Irish perspective would be valuable. This would particularly be the case when looked at from the perspective of working public librarian rather than just what is written in the national library plan.

2.3 Collaboration

Collaboration is considered a vital part of public libraries today – both collaboration with the government body and with local community organisations – as through them libraries are able to provide more resources and services to their communities (Reid and Howard, 2016, p. 196; Thompson, 2015, p. 3). Baba and Abrizah (2018, p. 95) support the importance of collaboration stating that strategic partnerships between libraries and "private corporations and companies" is a "winning strategy" when it comes to community engagement in Malaysia.

The literature would seem to suggest that it is not necessary for the collaboration to be directly library related and that it may simply be an instance of the library providing a space for independent community events to occur in (Reid and Howard, 2016, p. 197). Reid and Howard suggest this would be to the benefit of the library as it would promote access to the library space (2016, p. 197). For example, Sung Hepworth and Ragsdel's (2013, p. 208) article looks at Leicester Central Library and its collaboration with Citizens' Eye- a community news agency. The library gave office space and resources like internet access to

Citizens' Eye. It was a mutually beneficial relationship. In return for resources, this collaboration allowed the library to work with different organisations that were already partnered with Citizens' Eye – this in turn strengthened existing relationships with “partnership organisations” for both CE and the library and allowed for the development of new collaborations (Sung, Hepworth and Ragsdell, 2013, p. 213). This shows that even actively collaborating with one organisation can open up multiple potential collaborations to a public library.

These external partnership innovations” consist of collaboration between “libraries and non-library stakeholders” like schools, NGO's, local enterprises and patrons (Potnis *et al.*, 2019, p. 9). It is beneficial for libraries to engage in this as it allows them to amass new patrons (Potnis *et al.*, 2019, p. 10) and potentially may allow them to expand on the services they offer.

Writing within a British context Ann Goulding (2006, p. 237-238), supports this type of collaboration and broadens it to include partnerships with local government agencies.

Potnis *et al* (2019, p. 9) describe this concept as an “internal partnership innovation” as an incorporation of people, information and other resources that are shared by sub-organizations within a single organization. They (2019) discuss this concept with the idea of a large multi-branch library in mind but this would be an interesting concept to explore within the Irish public library system and its relationship with their County Councils and the Government. If employing this collaboration strategy, it is important it is consistently monitored and is subject to “key performance indicators” (Potnis *et al.*, 2019, p. 10).

The rationale behind this focus on collaboration within public libraries may be that it allows them to further develop and expand on the services within the library space, thus building up a community centred library (Goulding, 2006, p. 238). They also offer an opportunity for libraries to move beyond “traditional core services” (Goulding, 2006, 240). However, this begs the question – is this community collaboration just resulting in the physical library building being used by local communities with the library service playing a minimal role or is the collaboration central to the library service itself?

Lankes suggests a type of community collaboration that would take place outside the library with the librarians going out into the community rather than just the community coming into the library building (Lankes, 2016, p. 146). Reid and Howard (2016, p. 196) agree – librarians should be recognised within and by the community they serve. While non-users are not mentioned, it is arguable that this strategy would provide a means of getting them in the library and engaging with them.

Lawton's (2016, pp. 123-124) research included case studies featuring a number of librarians -including an Irish public librarian in Dublin who also underlined how important collaboration inside and outside of the library is as it increases the visibility and impact of the library and brings in a social element to it. Rowley (2011, p. 165) echoes this and highlights that collaboration aids in the development of community cultural engagement through the conduit of the library. It would appear this type of collaboration would require direct involvement of the library service and indeed would need to be a central element of it.

Lawton (2016), is the only writer writing from an Irish perspective. However this writing also looks at libraries in the UK, USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia. No research looking at a solely Irish perspective has been found so far. Through this research topic an Irish public librarian's view on collaboration, how it is practiced, and what benefits it can have for the community and the library can be explored.

2.4 Marketing

Hariff and Rowley (2011, p. 346) highlight how vital marketing is to today's public libraries as there is an inconsistency between how public libraries have changed and developed and how they are perceived by the outside world. On a practical level, marketing is vital to a library's success, to raise attention about the resources and services they provide by highlighting the value they could bring to a community (Sbaffi and Rowley, 2015, p. 113). Supposing that libraries are community centres that go beyond 'traditional' services, how is their marketing mirroring this? The opinions of Irish public librarians on this subject would be interesting. When marketing their libraries, to what extent do they consider the societal role of the library?

According to Sbaffi and Rowley (2015, p. 110) one of the main marketing strategies used by libraries is digital communication. In the case study they did on public libraries in Manchester and Rome, the most popular promotion mode was the library website, then the website of the Local Authority and Facebook, as well as an online mailing list (Sbaffi and Rowley, 2015, p. 110). 'Traditional' marketing strategies were also mentioned – leaflets, word-of-mouth, posters and then sponsorship and collaboration with local businesses, cultural centres, schools and people from the community (Sbaffi and Rowley, 2015, p. 110). Collaboration appears to have multiple purposes in the public library world.

Hariff and Rowley (2011, p. 357) bring up national marketing campaigns. An Irish example of this is the recent 'Your Library-Take a Closer Look' campaign that sought to encourage people to make use of all modern resources and services of Irish public libraries (LGMA, no date). Oliphant (2014, p. 359) also discusses marketing to non-users (discussed also in 1.2.1.1 Library Users and Non-Users) of the library through campaigns as a method of informing them of all aspects of the public library. Again, within an Irish context, what perspectives do working public librarians have on the sector's out-reach to non-users through marketing?

Sanchez and Van Stralendorff (2018, p. 31) and Moran and Morner (2017, p. 125) both highlight the importance of a customer focused marketing approach. Within public libraries, the community are the customers and so marketing the library as a community centre, would bring about a positive effect on "program attendance, circulation, and presence in the community" (Sanchez and Van Stralendorff, 2018, p. 31) .

Social media was also mentioned – all libraries studied were on all popular social networks, particularly Facebook and Twitter (Sbaffi and Rowley, 2015, p. 112). Social media is an effective way for libraries to market themselves, their resources, services and collections - both to their own community and to the wider public - in an interactive and low cost way (Joo, Choi and Baek, 2018, p. 941; Shafawi and Hassan, 2018, p. 3). It has allowed libraries to reach both library users and potential users through a modern and popular format (Shafawi and Hassan, 2018, p. 3).

From interviews conducted by Shafawi and Hassan (2018, p. 4) some of the benefits found of using social media were increased library web and foot traffic, increased promotion of

library programs and more user engagement in library activities. It was found that if libraries did not promote their social media presence or did not have engaging posts then interaction with social media from users would be low (Shafawi and Hassan, 2018, p. 17). User engagement is important as it impacts on user awareness about what the library can offer, what events one can attend in the library and can influence users to visit the physical library (Shafawi and Hassan, 2018, p. 22). While Shafawi and Hassan are researching and writing from a Malaysian perspective, they are discussing globally popular social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter and so there is validity in interacting with their research. Furthermore, it allows for a comparison to what Irish librarians' may have experienced in relation their own libraries' social media platforms.

Joo, Choi and Baek (2018, p. 953) noted that posts about the community itself or posts that had an emotionally inspiring element to it drove a lot of user engagement. This shows that if engaging with public media as a library it is important to expand the scope of posts to include the actual community and bridge a connection between them and the library (Joo, Choi and Baek, 2018, p. 952). Joo, Choi and Baek (2018) only looked at Facebook for their research. They did not look at Instagram or Twitter – two very popular platforms. However, it still gives an insight in the importance of making the community feel included in the library and again offers a comparison to be made with Irish libraries.

As seen above, public libraries must identify successful methods of communicating their value within society (Halpin *et al.*, 2015, p. 30). It is worth noting Halpin *et al.* (2015, p. 31) are writing from a UK perspective where in recent years many public library branches have experienced closures. This would seem to suggest that libraries need to market their value not only to users but to all stakeholders connected to the library. However, there is no clear method to measure this, not like how foot traffic and book borrowing can be measured (Halpin *et al.*, 2015, p. 31). While this danger of closure is not present in the Irish context, there is still an emphasis on marketing and showing a library's value and what a modern public library in Ireland can do (Department of Rural and Community Development, 2018, p. 41).

2.5 Literature Conclusion

The Irish perspective would seem to be underrepresented within the literature, creating a gap. The literature would seem to illustrate that different understandings of the societal

role of the library and how they are perceived by their local communities exist in different countries. There appears to be a consensus that there should be community focus and interaction within public libraries, but there would appear to be no agreement on whether this practice is new or a concept that has always existed in the public library service. The literature will be a valuable foundation to inform the exploration of the role of the public library services within Irish society and from Irish librarians' perspectives. This perspective will be gained through interviews with working Ireland-based public librarians.

2. Method

2.1 Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of how the researcher conducted the research. It describes the participants, the research design, the materials and apparatus used to complete the research, the procedure during the collection of primary data, the ethical considerations made and the data analysis process. It also touches on the limitations of the methodology.

2.2 Participants

2.2.1 Population

In order to determine appropriate participants within this research project, the first step was to identify the population. The population of a research topic is “the full set of cases or elements from which a sample is taken” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 294). The population for this research topic, identified by the researcher, was working public librarians in Ireland. This population was identified as the research topic was specifically being looked at from the perspective of Irish public librarians. Time constraints placed practical limits on the research process and so the researcher employed sampling techniques.

2.2.2 Sample

By utilising sampling techniques, the researcher was able to minimise the “amount of data” needed by looking at a subgroup (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 325). The researcher ensured the sample chosen was related to the population (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2018, p. 295). The researcher utilised non-probability, purposive sampling which involved using “subjective judgment” when developing the sample (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 315). Purposive sampling was used to select a sample that would allow the researcher to best answer the research question and meet the objectives (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 321). The sample of public librarians were chosen based on their knowledge of the public library sector, specifically that they were fully qualified librarians in a senior position within their library. This was to ensure that they would be able to draw on their experiences when speaking on the topic. The main purpose was to “select ‘information-rich’ respondents” who would provide the information needed (Kumar, 2018, p. 290).

With non-probability sampling, the sample size is dependent on “the research question and objectives, what will be credible and what can be done within available resources” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 236). The sample consisted of four librarians chosen

randomly around County Dublin. The sample size is small because the researcher needed to adhere to the three-month time constraint. It was limited to County Dublin but it was not limited to one local authority within the County. At the time of this decision, geographical location was a factor as the researcher had anticipated doing the interviews face to face. However, due to COVID19 restrictions developing throughout the summer, the researcher ultimately conducted the interviews via Zoom and email. Ten libraries around Dublin were contacted and four libraries had librarians who were available to participate and who fit the criteria laid out in the Information Participation Sheet (Appendix 6.2) and introductory email (Appendix 6.1)

2.2.3 Participants

There were four participants in total. This was in part due to COVID19 restrictions. Ideally the researcher would have liked to interview five participants but accessibility to and availability of participants was disrupted by the ongoing COVID19 pandemic. Many libraries did not have full staff and many senior librarians, who were the majority of the participants, were working from home and so contact was impaired.

All participants were female, the age range was approximately forty to seventy years of age. This was not a purposeful sampling choice by the researcher, it just happened that they were the participants available who fit the criteria of experience and job role. One participant was an experienced public librarian, the other three were the senior librarians within their public libraries. All participants had been working in public libraries for at least ten years, and for two of the participants for over thirty years. One participant had specifically been involved in online communications for public libraries in her local authority.

All four participants answered the same questions in the interviews. Three were interviewed through online videocall on Zoom and one answered the questions via email. It was made clear to the participants that there was no incentive to participate – monetary or otherwise. Their participation was completely voluntary, and they gave their informed consent.

2.3 Design

2.3.1 Research Philosophy

The researcher employed an interpretivist philosophy. Interpretivism believes that a study of people has to be different to a study of a “physical phenomena” as humans “create

meanings” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 806). The purpose of research done with an interpretivist philosophy is to “create new, richer understandings and interpretations of [...] contexts” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 149). It has a focus on “narratives, stories, perceptions and interpretations” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 145). It emphasises “multiple interpretations and meaning-making”, allowing for the complexity that individuals can bring to a topic (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 149).

Interpretivism allows room for the subjective thoughts and experiences of each participant to be explored. This is important as the researcher is ultimately interested in the participants’ personal views and perceptions of the topic of community centred libraries.

Interpretivist research is usually done through qualitative methods (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 145). Qualitative methods were used in this research.

2.2.2 Research Approach

The research took an inductive approach. An inductive approach develops theory “as a result of the observation of empirical data” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 806). The inductive approach is typically used in research following an interpretivist philosophy (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 155). An inductive approach lends itself to a smaller sample size, as is being employed in this research (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 155). It supports research that is attempting to understand “why something is happening” rather than “describing what is happening” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 157). Within an inductive approach, data is analysed to discern if patterns emerge from the data that can then “construct generalizations, relationships and [...] theories (Gray, 2018, p. 19).

Gray notes that while the inductive approach does emphasise forming theories after data has been collected, inductivism still acknowledges pre-existing literature and theories on the research topic (Gray, 2018, p. 20). However, the inductive approach does not seek to “corroborate or falsify a theory” but instead, through data collection and analysis, seeks to “establish patterns, consistencies and meanings” (Gray, 2018, p. 20). It allows for an exploratory study of the topic to take place. This research project was not looking to prove or disprove a specific theory but instead to compare and contrast with previous literature and to add to the global conversation.

2.2.3 Research Strategy

The researcher used qualitative methods. Qualitative methods often correspond with an interpretive philosophy as the researcher is seeking to decipher “subjective and socially constructed meanings” being communicated about a topic (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 179). Qualitative research is often associated with an inductive approach as the researcher is looking to “develop a richer theoretical perspective than already exists in the literature” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 179). Qualitative research similarly can be used in situations where there is relatively little research or literature on the topic or “to gain new perspectives” on topics that already have a lot written on them (Strauss and Corbin cited in Gray, 2018, p. 178).

The researcher conducted an exploratory research study. An exploratory study is a valuable means to ask open questions to discover what is happening and gain insights about a topic of interest” (Gray, 2018, p. 186) The research was a “mono-method qualitative study”(Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 179). Primary data was collected by conducting semi-structured interviews followed by thematic analysis. Three of the four interviews were semi-structured to support the exploratory nature of the study. This method is a logical choice for exploratory studies as it makes room for “examining feelings, attitudes, perceptions” (Gray, 2018, p. 378). The fourth interview had to be done over e-mail, as will be discussed in 2.2.4 Method.

As this is qualitative research exploring “perceptions, beliefs or feelings”, there is not as much significance in identifying measurements and variables (Kumar, 2018, p. 107).

2.2.4 Method

As discussed above, the chosen method for primary data collection was semi-structured interviews. The researcher chose this method as it allowed for “open-ended questions” (Gray, 2018, p. 177). This made room for each participant’s views to be discussed. The researcher wanted to give the participants room to bring up any topics they felt were relevant that may not have been covered by the interview questions (Gray, 2018, p. 381). However, it was also important that the researcher provided a certain amount of structure through the interview questions in order to bring focus on the research topic.

The semi-structured interviews were performed over Zoom. Face to face, in person would have been preferable but due to COVID19 restrictions, this was not feasible. This was not a detriment to the overall study but there were some differences compared to a face to face interview. There were advantages and disadvantages. Performing an interview via an online video conferencing service like Zoom allowed both the participant and researcher to perform the interview from “their own familiar and safe locations” (Hanna cited in Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p.478). It also allowed for immediate clarification if there was any confusion over the meaning of a question (Gray, 2018, p, 379). However the disadvantage was relying on the internet connection to remain secure. Physical cues from the participant were also distorted due to the webcam.

The other interview was done through email by sending the list of questions in a Word document. Again, there were advantages and disadvantages. This meant the interview was much more structured and there was not as much of an informal and open conversation. Clarifications could not be made immediately and there were no physical or vocal cues for the researcher to look at. However, the majority of the questions were written in an open-ended manner, so the participant still had room for exploration and interpretation within the question scope. Doing interviews via email also allowed “time for reflection” for the participant when forming her answer, leading to very considered responses (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p.477). It also meant that the data was recorded as it was typed and there was no need for transcription on the part of the researcher which saved time (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p.477).

2.4 Materials and Apparatus

2.2.1 Materials

2.2.1.1 Introductory Email (Appendix 6.1)

The introductory email was sent out to all potential participants/libraries. The email gave an introduction of the researcher, the context of the research, a brief explanation of the project, information on the type of participant sought and the proposed completion date of the interviewing process. Attached to the email were also the Participant Information Sheet and the Consent Form (as discussed below).

2.2.1.2 Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 6.2)

The participant information sheet was developed using a template provided by Dublin Business School (DBS). It included an overview of what the topic was about, the researcher, what the participant was being asked to do, how they would be anonymised, how their data would be used and the proposed duration of the interview.

2.2.1.3 Consent Form (Appendix 6.3)

The consent form was developed using a template provided by DBS. It contained a project summary and the participants rights. It was sent with the introductory email and sent again when the participant confirmed their interest.

2.2.1.4 Interview Questions (Appendix 6.4)

The interview questions were emailed to all participants prior to the interview. There were fifteen questions in total. The researcher developed based on the research topic and objectives and on the literature review. The opening questions were:

1. What does the phrase 'community centre' mean to you?
2. Would you describe your library as a 'community centre'?

These questions were at the centre of the research question. They allowed the participant to express in their own words what they felt a community centre was and whether it applied to their library. It also set up the overarching topic of community and public libraries which fed through all the interview questions.

The closing question was:

15. What do you see as the future for the library as a community centre?

This felt like a natural closing question. This question was designed to prompt the participants to think of the role of the library in the future.

A sample of other relevant questions were:

4. How does your library engage with the local community – both library users and non-users?

6. Do you feel there has always been a community-based aspect to your job?
8. To what extent do you view community collaboration as an important component of public libraries?
13. How do libraries promote their role as a community centre?

These questions acknowledge the objectives of exploring how libraries practice community engagement and how much thought they give to the concept of community engagement in the day to day practices of running the library. They also prompt a discussion on whether public libraries have always been community focussed.

2.2.1.5 Ethics Information Form (Appendix 6.5)

An Ethics Information Form was filled out in the proposal stage of the dissertation. This ensured the researcher considered all potential ethical issues when developing their topic. This form was submitted to DBS for ethical approval in order to move forward with the research topic.

2.2.2 Apparatus

2.2.2.1 Outlook

Outlook's email and calendar features were both used. The researcher conducted all email correspondence through their DBS email address. The Outlook calendar feature was used to schedule the Zoom interviews with the participants and to send the meeting invitations to them.

2.2.2.2 Zoom

Zoom (2020) is a web videoconferencing software that was used to conduct the interviews. The researcher and the participants being interviewed were able to see and hear each other throughout. The researcher used the inbuilt recording feature to record the interviews. The recordings were then saved in the researcher's secure OneDrive file.

2.2.2.3 DeScript

DeScript (2020) is a transcription software the researcher used to transcribe the audio recordings of the interviews. It allows the researcher to listen back on the audio while reviewing the transcription and making any necessary corrections.

2.2.2.4 OneDrive

OneDrive is a secure file hosting service on which the researcher kept all research and data.

2.5 Procedure

The four participants were assigned identification codes. They were named Librarian A, Librarian B, Librarian C and Librarian D. Librarians A, B and D are senior librarians within their libraries. Librarian C is an experienced librarian .

Participants were all contacted between the 7th of July and the 22nd of July. Each participant was contacted through the researcher sending an introductory email (Appendix 6.1) to their library's general email address with the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 6.2) and Consent Form (Appendix 6.3) attached. This was done because the direct email address of the individual participants were not publicly available on the websites of the libraries. Ten libraries were sent the email in total with four participants ultimately taking part. Each participant was sent the interview questions once they agreed to participate. They were told their interview would be recorded and during each interview, the researcher told the participant when they would start recording.

Librarian A was recruited with a follow up phone call to the library on the 15th of July 2020. The researcher left a message with a member of staff and was contacted by Librarian A the same day to discuss the project further. The participant called and agreed to take part two days later and the participant and researcher finalised a date for a Zoom interview for the 21st July 2020. They discussed the consent form and navigating the signing of it around COVID restrictions prior to the interview. Librarian A decided they would print the form, sign it, scan it and email it back to the researcher. The researcher agreed.

Librarian B was recruited by the researcher following up the email to the library and a member of the library staff offering to email it on to the head librarian. After a second follow up phone call on the 16th of July, the researcher was given the email address of the head librarian to follow up with them directly. The researcher then sent a follow up email to Librarian B who replied back agreeing to take part in the interview via Zoom. The interview was then scheduled for the 28th of July 2020. They discussed the consent form and navigating the signing of it around COVID restrictions prior to the interview and Librarian B consented to the researcher typing their name in on behalf of the participant.

An introductory email to the library of Librarian C was sent out on July the 22nd. Librarian C expressed her interest by sending an email to the researcher's supervisor on July 23rd. The supervisor forwarded the email to the researcher who reached out to Librarian C and arranged a date for the Zoom interview to take place. It was to be held on the 30th July, but later needed to be rescheduled for the 4th of August. They discussed the consent form and navigating the signing of it around COVID restrictions and Librarian C consented to the researcher typing their name in on behalf of the participant.

Librarian D was recruited via a follow up phone call on the 22nd of July – following up on an introductory email sent on the 13th of July. This participant requested to do the interview via email with the offer of a follow up phone interview if any aspects of their answers needed clarification. The researcher agreed and sent the interview questions out on the 22nd of July. They also discussed the consent form via a phone call to clarify certain aspects of it that the participant had questions about. The participant, once all questions had been answered and they had a full understanding of all aspects of the form, agreed that the researcher could type their name on their behalf on the consent form. The researcher and participant kept in contact via email, and the researcher checked in with the participant once a week via email to determine how the participant was getting on. This interview process took longer, as it was via email rather than face to face and the participant was navigating a busy work schedule. The participant returned the interview answers on the 13th of August. No follow up phone interview was performed as the researcher was satisfied with the answers of the participant.

The interviews with librarians A, B and C were conducted over Zoom. Prior to the meeting, when a time and date for the interview was decided, the researcher scheduled the meeting in Zoom and sent a calendar invitation to the relevant participant. The researcher then resent the URL for the Zoom meeting to each participant an hour before the interview was scheduled to begin. The researcher also provided their mobile number to each participant so they could contact her straight away in the case of technical difficulties.

Each Zoom interview took different lengths of time.

Librarian A's interview was approximately fifty minutes in length.

Librarian B's interview was approximately thirty-five minutes in length

Librarian C's interview was approximately twenty minutes in length.

Despite the variation in the length of the interviews, in the researcher's view there was no difference in the relevance or quality of the answers. As soon as the first interview was complete, the transcription process began. Interviews were transcribed using the transcription tool Descript. The researcher then listened back to the audio while reviewing the transcription, amending any errors and anonymising the transcription. To anonymise each interview, the researcher replaced the library name and the name of the librarian with assigned identification codes. The identification code for both the library and the librarian corresponded with each other. For example, Librarian A's library was referred to as Library A.

2.6 Ethics

Ethics was a primary consideration for the researcher. In order to ensure all ethical issues were addressed, the researcher filled out an Ethics form (Appendix 6.5) and received approval to proceed with the research. The researcher also developed a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 6.2) and Consent Form (Appendix 6.3), both of which were attached to the introductory emails sent out to all participants. The Participant Information Sheet contained information about the researcher as well as the reasoning for the thesis, the research aims, what is expected of the participant and what will happen during the interview.

By providing this form, the researcher was able to ensure informed consent was given. Informed consent means that the participants have been made aware of what information the researcher wants from them, why the researcher wants this information, what the information will be used for, what is expected of them as a participant and what their rights as a participant in the research are (Kumar, 2018, p. 358). In addition, the information sheet also described how the information would be collected and stored (Gray, 2018, p. 86). By signing the Consent Form, the participants confirmed they understood the contents of the Information Participant Form and that they were taking part in the research without any sort of external pressure or coercion (Kumar, 2018, p. 358).

Within the Participant Information Form and the introductory email, the researcher stated that all participants would be anonymised as would their library. The form and introductory

email also informed the participants that the interview audio would be recorded and that the transcripts would be anonymised. Both the transcripts and audio would be stored in a secure online server. They were informed about their rights as participants – the right to withdraw at any time, the right to have their data destroyed, the right to refuse or omit an answer within the interview and the right to have any questions or concerns about the research addressed.

One of the main ethical considerations that needed to be addressed by the researcher was to ensure the participants' confidentiality was protected (Kumar, 2018, p. 360). The researcher decided to anonymise both the library and the librarian because as most respondents were senior librarians within their library, information regarding their position in their library was readily available online. If the library was named in the research, along with the participant's position, they would have been easily identifiable. The researcher chose to anonymise the local authorities within which the libraries were situated to further ensure anonymity. The researcher could do this because the study is looking at the perceptions of working librarians. The exact library and exact local authority they work in does not have to be named to achieve this. The research is not concerned with the specifics of the library, more with the thoughts and experiences of the librarian.

Due to COVID19 restrictions all interviews were done via Zoom or email. For this reason, one participant was able to print, sign, scan and email back the consent form. Other participants were unable to do this so instead the researcher got their approval to type their name on to the consent form. The researcher also was sent emails confirming their interest and willingness in participating in the research. The researcher ensured the participants knew they could contact the researcher with any questions or concerns through phone or email.

Ethics also had to be considered by the researcher when engaging with secondary sources that would be used within the research project. To avoid plagiarism, the researcher ensured all secondary sources were "properly acknowledged and cited" (Kumar, 2018, p. 362).

2.6 Data Analysis

As a qualitative study was performed, data analysis was done via thematic analysis utilising the 6 phase guide as laid out by Braun and Clarke (2006). Boyatzis (cited in Braun and

Clarke, 2006, p. 79) describes thematic analysis as a way of “identifying, analysing and reporting patterns”. It is flexible and can be used in a variety of “theoretical frameworks” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 81). Certain decisions had to be made before commencing thematic analysis. The decisions made by the researcher are described below.

Firstly the researcher needed to identify what constitutes a theme (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 83) A theme encapsulates important aspects of the data relating to the research question (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 82). A theme would generally appear across the data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 82). However, the researcher also had to keep in mind that even if a theme was prevalent across the data set, it did not mean it was relevant to the research topic and so the researcher also had to ensure relevance to the “overall research question” was there (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 82).

Secondly, the researcher needed to decide if their analysis was going to provide “a rich description of the data set” or a thorough report of a specific facet (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 83). The researcher chose to focus on doing a detailed account of a specific “group of themes” that related to the specific research question and objectives (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 83). This decision was made based on the researcher’s aim to discuss the themes that best related to the overall research topic and so only specific areas of the data set were relevant. If the researcher decided to produce a detailed description of the dataset, the needed nuance and complexity would have been lost (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 83).

The researcher then needed to decide whether the analysis would be inductive or theoretical (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 83). The researcher primarily took a theoretical approach that was guided by the researcher’s “theoretical or analytic interest in the area” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 84). This approach offered a more detailed study of certain areas within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 84). This approach is most suitable when the researcher is coding for a particular research question (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 84). The researcher then used elements of an inductive approach in which the themes that were identified were connected to the data (Patton cited in Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 83). This meant the identified themes did not relate to the specific interview questions but rather to the participant’s answers (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 83). This was because certain themes were ultimately comprised of data that was part of answers to multiple questions as

opposed to just one. The researcher did not do a fully inductive approach because they needed to base their coding frame around the research topic.

The researcher then needed to determine at what level the themes would be identified – would they be semantic or latent (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 84). The researcher decided to use a semantic approach where the focus was on the surface meanings of the data which were then used to identify the themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 84). The researcher did not look beyond what the participants said or wrote (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 84).

Through the semantic approach the data was organised into themes by the patterns shown in the semantic data and summarised, followed by an interpretation of the patterns to theorise potential “meanings and implications” and how it relates to previous literature and the research question (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 84).

The researcher then decided on a realist approach that allowed the researcher to theorise “motivations, experience and meaning in a straightforward way” where language is seen to reflect and enable one to articulate meaning and experience (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 85). This allowed the researcher to explore solely the participants’ answers, as opposed to attempting to theorise the possible “sociocultural contexts” that the participants were answering from, as would be done with a constructionist approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 85) This is because the researchers aim was to explore the perceptions of the participants in their own words, not explore what potential context lies behind them.

Lastly, the researcher needed to decide what questions would guide the development of themes. It had already been decided the researcher would consider the research questions and objectives when developing themes. However, the researcher decided not to use the questions asked in the interviews as a guide during coding and analysing because, as Braun and Clarke (2006, pp. 85–86) state, this would not have been the most effective form of analysis. The researcher coded and analysed the data independent of these questions so as not to restrict the process unnecessarily.

3. Results

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on the findings of the thematic analysis of the primary data collected in this research project. The researcher analysed the data using thematic analysis following the guidelines of Braun and Clarke (2006). The guidelines consist of six phases which are as follows:

Phase One: Familiarizing yourself with your data

Phase Two: Generating initial codes

Phase Three: Searching for themes

Phase Four: Reviewing themes

Phase Five: Defining and naming

Phase Six: Producing the report

(Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 87)

The process with these six phases is described in the sections 3.2 and 3.3.

3.2 Coding the Data

3.2.1 Phase One: familiarizing yourself with your data

The researcher commenced the thematic analysis process by first familiarising herself with the data. The data was collected during interviews by the researcher and so she had prior knowledge of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 87). Due to using the transcription software DeScript (2020), the researcher had already read the transcriptions of the data while checking it against the audio and so was already beginning to familiarise herself with the data. One of the interviews was completed over email and so the researcher read this document through after she had reviewed the transcriptions to ensure she was familiar with all of the data. During this time, the researcher began to note some points of interest within the data but had not yet started coding.

When all transcriptions were completed and verified, the researcher began the process of “repeated reading” in order to “immerse” herself in the data (87 Braun and Clarke, 2006). The researcher ensured she was reading in “an active way” and began to search for patterns. She printed out the data and began to make notes of potential codes and points of

interest in pencil beside the relevant data, with the research question and aims in mind. This led the researcher into Phase Two.

3.2.2 Phase Two: generating initial codes

The researcher began to develop initial codes from the data. Codes pinpoint a facet of the data that is of interest to the analyst (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 88). The coding was performed with the research questions and objectives in mind, as well as the points of interest raised in the literature review and so was “theory driven” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 89). The researcher made sure to give “equal attention to each data item” and to work systematically during the coding process.

Initially the coding was done manually. The codes were initially written in pencil and relevant data extracts were highlighted. The researcher then continued the process on a Word document as she could input a comment on each data extract with the code and easily collate the codes together.

Following the advice of Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 89) the researcher kept an open mind and coded “for as many potential [...] patterns as possible” within the timeframe, to keep some of the surrounding context of the data and to code as many times as the researcher felt was relevant (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 89). Samples of coded data extracts can be seen in **Table 1**.

Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 89) also emphasized that data sets will have contradictions and there can be “tensions and inconsistencies within and across data items” and these should not be ignored. They are an important stage in reaching the overall thematic map.

Table 1 Examples of Coding for Data Extracts

Data Extract	Coded For
People use libraries for a variety of reasons. Borrow books, find information, join a book club, chill and relax reading the paper, study, or research, and even simply print a boarding pass or some important document in a hurry.	User’s Perspective Library Activities Community Centred Library Non User Perspectives Branding

Irregular users still have a vision of the library as a traditional service that only offers a book lending services and a quiet study space.	Perception
Data Extract	Coded For
Yes .Its A way of promoting the library. Um, you know, it's like getting a seat at the table .Like if, you know, It's very hard to communicate the message of what a modern library is to non-users unless you actually go out and get involved in the community, and then you can, you know, I don't know what the word is, but like you can develop library champions in schools and library champions in like [redacted] resource centre that will then say they will be able to, like, when they're talking to someone in the community, they can say, "Oh yeah, the library can help you out there".	Visibility Non-Users Community Engagement Community Centred Practice Marketing

3.3 Transitioning from Codes to Themes

3.3.2 Phase Three: searching for themes

Once the researcher had finished coding and collating those codes, then she began sorting the codes into broad themes and bringing together the relevant extracts under the themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 89)..

Through this process some codes became themes, some became sub themes, some codes were combined and some were discarded and some new codes were developed (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 90). When the researcher was satisfied with the collection of candidate themes and sub-themes, and the coded data, she proceeded to Phase Four (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 90).

3.3.3 Phase Four: reviewing themes

In this phase the researcher began to refine the themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 91). The researcher reviewed the themes at two-levels (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 91). On the first level she “reviewed the coded data extracts” to determine if they were coherent together and formed a pattern (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 91). The researcher then moved onto the second level of review where she reviewed “the validity of individual themes in relation to the data set” and that the candidate themes accurately reflected “the meanings evident in the data set as a whole” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 91). It also gave the researcher the opportunity to review the data set again for any potential extracts that had not been coded yet (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 91). Once the researcher was satisfied with her themes and had refined her thematic map (**Figure 1**), she moved on to Phase Five.

3.3.4 Phase Five: defining and naming themes

Within Phase 5, the researcher began to “define and refine” themes and analyse the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 92). The researcher collated the data for each theme again to determine the “narrative” and to ensure each theme was not “too diverse” in what it was representing (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 92). The researcher then reviewed the themes in terms of how they fit into the “broader overall ‘story’ that the researcher is attempting to tell (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 92). The researcher then ensured each theme was clearly defined in terms of what they were and were not (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 92). The researcher named each theme in a way that would give “a sense of what the theme is about” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 93). The researcher then proceeded to Phase Six.

3.3.5 Phase Six Producing the report

Phase six was the “final analysis and write-up of the report” of the “fully worked-out themes” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 94). The report was written for the purpose of providing a clear and compelling account of the story the data is telling using data extracts that “capture the essence of the point” and embedding them within an “analytic narrative” that interacts with the researcher’s research question (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 94),

3.4 Themes

3.4.1 Theme One: Perceptions of a Community Centred Role

This theme looks at how librarians define community centred roles., if they feel this definition applies to their libraries and what they feel their role as a librarian entails in

relation to the community. The theme was broken down into three categories - Community Centre Description, Community Centred Public Libraries and Public Librarian Role.

Community Centre Description

On a practical level Librarian D described a community centre as a place to avail of information on access to community services. Similarly, Librarians B and C were of the opinion that it offers a supportive role, with Librarian B stating it is a place that plays a supportive role the “the wellbeing of people” and “supporting people through life stages”, ultimately that people would “feel ownership over it”. Librarian D described community centres as “valuable outlets to keep people connected and informed”.

Librarians A, B and C stated it was a place that was free and inclusive to all members of the community. Librarians A, B, C and D described it as a place for the community to socialise. Librarian A stated it is “just somewhere where people can come and go and come first, regardless of anything - who they are, background anything”. Librarian B felt the community should feel sense of ownership over a community centre. Librarian A surmised a community centre as “being a part of the local and wider community, and welcoming people into a safe space”.

Community Centred Public Libraries

All librarians agreed their libraries had a community aspect to them. Librarians A, C and D said they would consider their libraries community centres. Librarian C touched on the fact that her library is in the centre of the village in which it is located so geographically “it's very much in the community here and if you're in the village you would see it”. Librarian A stated, “we very much see ourselves as a kind of community space here [...] both in the services we provide and in the physical space itself” and that the library sees itself as “a community facility, first and foremost,”. Librarian A highlighted that within the local authority, the public libraries come under “the Community and Cultural Development Department” and that “from central government down to each individual library, the word community features, [...] it's a part of what we do every day”.

“I really couldn't be probably more positive about seeing this as a community centre. There's kind of no doubt in my mind” (Librarian A).

Librarian B was of the view that her library did have “similar functions and objectives” to a community centre – both provided support in a multitude of ways for a wide range of people of all ages. However, she did feel it was important that the library did not move away from the “core business” of “access to information and knowledge and free access”. She felt the library is partially a community centre but with the “core identity” of being a “a repository of knowledge”. Despite not considering her library a community centre, she did agree the library is “an inclusive, welcoming space, like a community centre” but with the “added layer” of the library’s core “business”.

Public Librarian Role

This category looks at how the public librarians see their roles within community centred libraries. Librarian A stated that her role was to “provide a safe [...]welcoming and inclusive space”. She felt that a public librarian needs to reach as many members and groups of the local community as possible and to “nurture and maintain” those connections. In her view, the librarian is there to “make it easy [...] for people to come in and [...] learn something, inform themselves or just have fun”. The role of the public librarian is really all about “public service and community”. Librarian B stated that she believes the role of the public librarian is to “be supportive and an advocate, both for the library and for the community”. Librarian A expressed the view that a community focus is part of the public librarian’s everyday practice from “interacting with the local, who they know from coming in regularly” right up to bringing people in to attend an event.

Librarian stated that the librarian’s role is to remove barriers and hold “a positive attitude”. Similarly, Librarian B believed the librarian should be a “helpful, friendly face” as representative of the library to the community and strive to remove any barriers “for just even stepping foot inside the door”. Librarian D felt the role of the librarian was to “provide [...] accurate, current , relevant information to the local community and to connect them with available community services like “job centres, health and welfare organizations, educational bodies”.

Librarian C felt that the librarian should “help people as much as you can” so they can enable themselves in the long term. Librarian D stressed the importance of the librarian’s

role to “communicate effectively the value of libraries” through marketing, service outreach and actively taking part in community on panels and committees like school committees.

3.4.2 Theme Two: Chronology of Community Centred Public Libraries

This theme looks at the past, present and potential future role of the community centred library, as perceived by the librarians.

History of Community Centred Public Library

Librarian A felt that there has always been a community focus in public libraries and felt “all library staff” would have a similar view. Having worked in the public library sector for 32 years, she felt there was a community focused ethos “right from day one”, whereby as a public librarian “you're serving the local community and giving the best service you possibly can to them”. It was her view that “regardless of what it is, the day to day borrowing and returning of books or an event or a book launch or an exhibition” is still reaching out to the community.

Librarian B similarly felt there had always been a community component in her job, for as long as she had “been going to libraries” and been working in libraries. Librarian B believed that part of this may be due to the fact that they are a “uniquely placed” institution in that they have “such distribution around the country” and are a “non-commercial space”.

Librarian C, similarly felt that her job as a public librarian has always had a community focus as it is a free service – the users do not have to pay and so the public library is “giving back to” the community and there is “a feel good factor” in working in a job that is not about “money, targets and commission”. However, Librarian B did then go on to say she definitely feels that “since [libraries] started running events [...] and providing more than books” that they “made the move from just a book house to more [...] than that”. Librarian D, who has also worked in the public library service for over 30 years echoed this sentiment. She stated:

“Although the library was always a community resource, I would say that from my earlier experience, the library was usually perceived as a book lending service with limited space capacity for community events” (Librarian D).

Instead, she felt there was greater emphasis on the librarian’s administrative roles, for example “cataloguing and classification of library materials” and assisting library users in sourcing information “through hard copy reference materials and books alone”. At that time

technology “was not at the forefront” of services and buildings were smaller and did not have the “community room spaces” that exist in many libraries today (Librarian D). In her view, the public would have had a different perception of public libraries at that time. She believed that the development of “larger community libraries” and the “growth of the technology sector”, particularly the introduction of the internet in late 80s, have provided a wider scope for the libraries to interact with and inform the community, as well as widened what the library can offer e.g. DVDs, audiobooks (Librarian D).

Community Library Today

Librarian A was of the opinion that a community centred library today should make links and partnerships with many different groups – “[..] it really is what we are and what we do”. Librarian D encouraged today’s community centred libraries to perform outreach visits to schools and businesses within the community. Librarians C and D both felt today’s community centred libraries should strive to leave no-one behind – they should be “socially inclusive” and “provide equal access to libraries” (Librarian D). A community centred library should also regularly be engaging with their community and letting them know what they are doing (Librarian C). Librarian B stated that in her view community centred libraries today should aim to provide “serious” services like “assistance with job hunting and career development” but also provide an element of fun and socialising with cultural events and clubs.

Librarian B was of the opinion that community centred libraries should be a “welcoming base” for the community and “celebrate the area” through some community specific events. She highlighted the importance of online sources in the library, particularly at the time of the interview which was during the COVID19 pandemic. She felt it was a way to “keep providing a service” with the e-audio books becoming a “great comfort” to the library users, and the BorrowBox e-book service aiding parents who were home-schooling their children. It allowed them, as a community centred library, to continue to meet the needs of the community in the best way they could under the circumstances and keep “looking out for people”.

Librarian D stated that access to the community centred library should be free, becoming accessible to “marginalised groups” who may need support, and that community centre

libraries would be best placed close to “shopping centres” and “community amenities” like schools, job and social welfare centres, medical centres, care facilities. She felt that today’s community centred libraries should offer a variety of services and events based around health, art, creativity, space for support groups, courses and classes and that the public should have access to the library services remotely and outside of business hours. She felt that libraries should “build community partnerships to ensure there is a wide variety of services suitable for diverse communities”. She also suggested that libraries have extended opening hours to make the building even more accessible to the community.

Librarians A and B run a lot of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) events in their libraries for teenagers. Librarian B also mentioned creative programmes ran in the library “to build self-esteem and self-worth”. Librarian A, B, C and D all hold book clubs within their libraries. Other commonly mentioned services and events were arts and crafts, exhibitions, workshops, children’s activities, educational and health events and services, language groups and local events

Future of the Community Library

Librarians A, B, C and D all expressed the view that the future of the community centred library lies in adapting to the community as their needs change and develop. Librarian A stated that it is important to stay up to date and be aware of “different strands in the community, diversity in the community, catering to all, not missing out any group” and that the library does “not get left behind”. Librarian B also stated that public libraries needed to be “responsive and flexible” – “you can’t just sit back and keep doing what you’re doing”. In order to be sustainable as a community centred library, they need to remain a relevant service (Librarian B). Both Librarians A and D agreed that the future of community libraries involves continuing to increase awareness of the library. Librarian D felt it was important to do “more outreach to reach the non-users”. This outreach could be through outreach, social media, or marketing (Librarian D).

Librarian A also highlighted that technology will continue to play a huge role in community centred libraries, particularly with the future post-COVID19 being uncertain – “in the time of COVID It really showed the importance of [...] what we can do online”.

Librarian D felt libraries should engage with patrons to be able to identify gaps in services and offer regular chances for the community to give feedback through materials like surveys to ensure the library is remaining relevant to the communities changing needs. Librarian A acknowledged the need for libraries to accommodate the changing needs of society when she stated: "I'm here 32 years. The libraries are unrecognizable now from when I started and that's the way it should be"

3.4.2 Theme 3 Community Engagement

This theme covers the area of community engagement – how the community engage with the library, how public librarians view community engagement and the decisions that influence community engagement in a public library.

The sub themes are Perspectives on Public Library and Attitudes to Community Collaboration. The category Influences on Community Engagement was developed under Attitudes to Community Collaboration. It was then divided into subcategories Influences on Community Engagement with the subcategories of Local Authorities, Practical Factors and Community Needs.

3.4.2.1 Perspectives on Public Library

All Librarians felt there were differences in how members of the community might perceive their library in relation to a community centre – particularly in how library users and non-users would view the library.

Librarian A expressed the view that public libraries "still have plenty of work to do" to reach non-users, as many of them would not think of a public library if asked to name a community centre and many are not aware of the array of services libraries today provide. Similarly, Librarian B felt that to many people, in particular non users, "libraries equal books". Librarian C felt that perceptions from the community about the library definitely need to be changed with some assuming that all librarians do is "sit at the library and read at the desk". Librarian D felt many may not realise "how quickly library services have developed in recent years" and that they are not just "keepers of books".

However, all librarians felt that regular users of the libraries recognised the library as a community centre. Librarian A believed that if a regular user of the library was asked if they saw the library as a community centre that "they would say yes, they would, absolutely".

Librarian B felt that users “definitely see [the library] as a part of the community. Librarian C was of the opinion that the community saw them. Librarian C gave, as an example of their place in the community, the Tidy Towns group tended to the library’s garden.

The librarians also all recognised that within the population of library users, there would be differences in how each user group interacted with and perceived the library. Librarian D agreed that people used libraries for a number of reasons – whether it be to borrow books, join a book club, research or print something. Librarian A felt this was due to the fact that everyone is in their own bubble and base their perceptions “on their own particular needs” and what they want to “get out of the library” and what services they want to engage with. Librarian C noted that for a person living on their own, the library is a place they could go as a social outlet whereas a university student may prefer to go to their own college library and then use the public library as a back-up option.

This view was reinforced by their observations of the impact of the COVID19 lockdown on the users of the lockdown. Librarian B was of the view that during the COVID19 lockdown users who came to the library every day “lost that connection to people” and were unable to socialise in the library as they were accustomed. She also noticed that students were also impacted significantly by the lockdown because they were missing the study spaces within the library. A more day to day example she gave was those without a computer at home coming into the library to use the computers and the Wi-Fi.

3.4.2.2 Attitudes to Community Collaboration

All librarians expressed positive opinions about community collaboration. Librarian A stated it was “very important” and a “huge part of what we do everyday of the week”.

Collaboration offers the opportunity to connect with schools, retirement homes, disability groups, mental health groups and so on. Librarian A described it as “collaboration with local people in the community” done to try and “provide the best possible service”. To Librarian A collaboration in the community “justifies why you’re here” and is “what’s it all about”. It allows the library to “get people in to provide a service they mightn’t get elsewhere, to provide it for free, um, and to encourage people to come into the library” (Librarian A). Librarian A viewed it as beneficial for both the library – who get the opportunity to provide a “richer better service” – and for the community who can avail of the service and get the

benefits from it (Librarian A). In her view it creates a more inclusive service as they work with “various different groups” and create “diverse facilities and services for diverse people”

Librarian B found this to be true when she was able to collaborate with the local family resource centre in order to get children from the area who would not be library users to come to the library for a Summer program of events. It allowed Librarian B to get to the library’s “real target audience”. Librarian B holds community collaboration as a vital way of getting to know your area, otherwise “you’re going to fail as a service”. By reaching out to the community leaders, the library can enquire about service gaps and adjust their resources and supports accordingly (Librarian B). For Librarian B, the library “won’t survive if [they] don’t listen to people” – community collaboration facilitates these discussions.

Librarian C described it as “80%” of their work. It’s a constant practice within the library and through this engagement and collaboration with the community a sense of ownership from the community over the library develops (Librarian C)

Librarian D viewed the community as “the heart of the library” and “interdependent” with the library. Community collaborations “actively demonstrate” the value of the library as an “integral community network” while also aiding the library by fostering their relationship with reluctant users of the library. Librarian D also felt there was a “promotional benefit” of community collaborations with community services to patrons.

C: Influences on Community Engagement

SC: Local and Government Authorities

Librarians A, B and C mentioned that the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) in relation to decisions around community events and initiatives. Librarian A stated that when deciding on events they would try to tie in the “national initiatives” from the LGMA (LGMA) – she describes this as “the national filters down to the local”. The initiatives are, as named by Librarian A, Right to Read, Healthy Ireland, Creative Ireland and Work Matters. They would organize events like music based events for Creative Ireland, or a digital literacy program for Work Matters (Librarian A). Similarly Librarian B stated that in her library they run events for Right to Read and Healthy Ireland and would have LGMA programs like Summer Stars Reading Program. The libraries of Librarians A and D also engaged in this as

part of the Right to Read initiative. Librarian B also mentioned that the city librarian would have a certain influence over who the library would ‘cater for’, and so that may be a consideration when deciding on collaborations. Librarian D referred to the Development and Marketing Department who work with the county council and library branch managers to “deliver local community events throughout the year”.

SC: Practical Factors

There were practical factors mentioned that the librarians felt had to be considered when deciding what services and events their libraries would facilitate. All Librarians named budget as a potential constraint. Librarian A acknowledged in their library, they are not as effected by this but that it can still be a consideration. Librarians B, C and D did feel this was a constraint for them.

All Librarians named space as a constraint. Again Library A acknowledged this was not as much of a problem for them. Librarian B felt that “trying to find space to provide [...] room for these events and programmes can be difficult”. Similarly, Librarian C said they would need to schedule their events based on the space available. Librarian D stated that the likes of workshops may have to be repeated due to space constraints to ensure everyone has a chance to attend.

Both Librarian A and Librarian C mentioned that they sometimes have to refuse to facilitate events. For Librarian A this may be because they don’t have the facility. For Librarian C it may be because she has to balance the needs and requests of multiple groups and individuals within the community and cannot pander to one. Similarly Librarian B found time can be a constraint as partnerships and collaborations can take a lot of time and she has to be careful to not give too much time to the extent that she would fall behind on other duties like administration.

Both Librarian B and Librarian C identified staffing issues as a potential constraint. Librarian B says they are often “left with vacancies for a considerable amount of time”. This would affect their ability to facilitate an event or programme. Similarly, Librarian C stated that sometimes they may have to decide not to do an event due to staffing issues or space issues and so they may have to push an event into the next quarter.

SC: Community Needs

Community needs would be a significant consideration to the four librarians. Librarian A states “you don’t want to be leaving gaps or leaving anybody out”- they want to cater for all. Librarian A’s library would try to determine “what can we do that maybe people wouldn't be able to access otherwise”, what will be inclusive. Librarian B, through her collaborations with the family resource centre, tries to fill in the gaps of what they’re doing so that the community can be well served. She gave the example that the local resource centre were running computer courses but lost their teacher and did not get funding for a new one. Librarian A contacted the resource centre and offered to do the courses through the library.

Librarian B also stated a significant portion of her decisions on events are based on the demographics of the community – are they an aging population, are they “new Irish”. Similarly Librarian D states that their decisions on services are made based on “Customer/user profiles”. In her library the customer profile is largely children and schools and so they would have programmed partnered through the Local Authority Arts Office like the creative arts hub.

3.4.2.3 Theme: Four Visability

3.4.2.3.1 Marketing

Librarian A expressed the hope that the LGMA’s advertising campaign ‘Your Library - Take a Closer Look’ to show “what libraries provided” to both users and non-users in Ireland. Librarian A hopes this would have “increased public awareness” of what a modern public library can offer.

Librarian A, C and D’s libraries engage in social media to promote their libraries. Librarian D noted that her library uses Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook – “all libraries have their own Facebook page to highlight their own community services”. Librarian B does not really use social media in her library.

Both Librarians A and C mentioned an events guide – a “quarterly guide” that shows the “range of activities that's happening in the library” (Librarian A) The events guide – the physical copy – is especially important for marketing library events to people who do not have “easy access to the internet” or might not use social media regularly (Librarian A). Librarians B and D circulate a monthly newsletter. Librarian A utilizes a quarterly mailing

list. Librarian B noted that most enquiries and booking of events are prompted by the her newsletter.

Librarian D stated that one of the ways she promotes the library is word of mouth. In the same vein, Librarian A mentioned that she also uses simple conversation to market the library and raise visibility. When people join the library, they give them a run through of the library and events. She described how while the person may have just come in to borrow a book, they are surprised to hear about an event or club or the music streaming service. Librarian A promotes her library “right from the basics of dealing with an individual standing in front of you at the public desk” whereby she is “welcoming and “friendly” to show the library is also safe. Librarian A highlighted the importance of advertising the services because “many people don't realize all the various services that are available. Librarian B also utilizes conversation. While her library is being encouraged to direct users towards the self-service kiosks to free up staff time to help other users, Librarian B “would never discourage people from coming to the desk and have that [...] lifeline of a bit of human contact”.

Librarian D promotes her library through outreach services like mobile libraries “where staff bring the service to the community and highlight what is on offer at their local library”. Similarly Librarian B has a program of class visits and library tours with the schools in the area. Librarian C used to go out into the community during the work days and go to the post office or bank – just be part the community and talk to the community outside of the library.

Librarian B also discussed going out into the community – “It's very hard to communicate the message of what a modern library is to non-users unless you actually go out and get involved in the community” .Through this method Librarian B develops “library champions” in schools and resource centres who essentially act as spokespeople for the library to the wider community. Librarian B was of the view that with the champions “you don't have to do as much marketing yourself”. Librarian B also markets by chatting to schools and bringing them to the library.

Librarian A's library has connections with schools and so would often organise class visits. She highlighted that these children might be from families who are not library users. She

believes that in bringing in these non-users and showing them the library, she can engage the child's interest. These children then come back with their family to collect library cards.

Librarian B also uses more traditional routes of the library's website and blog post. She also occasionally goes on local radio to chat about upcoming events. Librarians A and B highlighted the support of broadcaster Ryan Tubridy "praising libraries and spreading the word". Librarian C also mentioned broadcaster Sean O'Rourke who also praised the libraries as well. Librarian C also touches on another aspect of visibility – the county librarian would ensure that in meetings with the Housing and Planning Departments that libraries were not forgotten about or "left behind".

ST Impact

Librarians A, B and C described how they used statistics to measure their success as a community centred library, measuring attendance, footfall, and internet usage. These statistics are sent to the LGMA who publish them in their report (Librarian A). There are also benchmarks that success would be measured on – "targets we need to meet [...]set down by the LGMA" (Librarian A). Librarian D's Library has goals and objectives they aim to achieve e.g. "tracking number of visitors and footfall of library patrons". Librarian D described "performance measures" like "goal attainment levels" which provide effective feedback. She touches on measuring user satisfaction and staff performance and that it is "difficult to capture in terms of service effectiveness".

Librarian B raised the need for qualitative feedback. She stated that she would love to be able to "have more nice little quotes and snippets" rather than just quantitative numbers of attendance. Her library also employs feedback forms but the majority of feedback and success measurements are quantitative. She expressed the view that statistics give an incomplete measure of "how [they] function and how well [they] do as a community centre" (Librarian B). She stated that the most qualitative feedback they get is a "nice email" thanking them for their help (Librarian B). She also does event reports that can capture more of the qualitative aspects of an event – "I can just see this picture in my head of excited, giddy children with no inhibitions chatting away to an adult in a really confident way" following an author's visit to the library. But she does feel "it's a hard one to capture".

Librarian C discussed an event where there were loads of requests to attend but they could not accommodate everyone – “it's a pity, I don't know if you can fully really include those statistics of all the people that were interested who wanted to come”.

3.5 Possible Models of the Data

Theme	Perception of a Community Centred Role
Category	Community Centre Description
Category	Community Centered Public Libraries
Category	Community Centered Public Libraries
Category	Public Librarian Role

Theme	Chronology of Community Centred Public Libraries
Category	History of Community Centred Public Library
Category	Co Community Library Today
Category	Future of the Community Library

Theme	Community Engagement
Category	Influences on Community Engagement
Subcategory	Local and Government Authorities
Subcategory	Practical Factors
Subcategory	Community Needs

Theme	Visibility
Subtheme	Marketing
Subtheme	Impact

Figure 1 Finalised Themes Map

4. Discussion

4. Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is a discussion of the researcher's findings. In this section the findings are summarised and then discussed in conjunction with previous literature on the topic. This section will also explore the strengths and weaknesses of the research and explore potential future research that could be explored.

4.2 The aims of the research

The aim of this research topic was to determine if Irish public librarians perceived their libraries as community centres. The research aimed to discern how a community focus could manifest itself in the running of a public library and if this is a new phenomenon or a long time practice of public librarians. This topic is being explored from the perspective of working librarians in the public library sector.

4.3 Summary of Findings

The findings would suggest that Irish public librarians do perceive their libraries as 'community centres' to varying extents. Their definitions of a community centre, while not identical, were similar to each other. The librarians were very community-focused in their answers about their role in the library and used similar language to when they described a community centre.

An exploration of the chronology of the development of community focused libraries shows that there is a consensus among public librarians that they have always had a community aspect to their role. The librarians describe this aspect of the role of the libraries as evolving to meet the needs of society. In the past, public libraries were not necessarily seen as community centres by the public. The chronology shows that currently public libraries are embracing community collaborations, community outreach, adjusting opening hours and very much adapting to the community. This idea of adaptability is also what the librarians see as driving community centred libraries into the future – keeping on top of changing community needs and to continue to adapt to these needs. .

With regard to community engagement, the findings indicate that users of the library are generally more aware of what the library offers than non-users or irregular users. The public

librarians have a positive attitude to community collaboration and acknowledge it is a significant part of their job. The participants agreed that community needs do influence how the libraries engage in collaboration, but they are also subject to influence from the LGMA initiatives and the constraints within their own libraries.

In terms of the visibility of the community centred library, there are many methods employed to promote their library from national campaigns to simply speaking to someone face to face. They are all aimed at the community and inviting the community into the library space.

The effectiveness of the community centred library is measured by quantitative methods. There was a wish expressed for more qualitative methods as it was felt that it is difficult to capture the effects of community engagement or the success of events quantitatively.

The findings of this research project both compare and contrast with the previous literature, as will be discussed in 4.4 Findings. As this research was exploratory there is no agreement or disagreement with the research questions. The findings did allow the researcher to meet their research questions and contribute to the global conversation about the topic this research question was born out of.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

4.4.1 Theme One: Perceptions of a Community Centred Role

4.4.1.1 Community Centre Description

This theme set up the context of what a community centre is. This was integral to the study as the participants were being asked if they considered their profession to be in a community centre. The definitions offered by the participants touches on similar elements to some of the definitions of libraries offered by the literature. Santa María Muxica (2018, p. 258) describes a public library as a place where the community can meet. All participants described a community centre as somewhere for people to socialise. Willian and Willet (2018, p. 810) referred to the library as a place where people can self-educate, similar to Librarian D's definition that it was a place to be informed. Both view their respective locations as places of knowledge. It may be that Willian and Willet (2018) are referring to a more academic type of education, whereas Librarian D is referring to more education on civic services, they are still both describing their places as places where knowledge is gained.

On a practical level Librarian D sees a community centre as a place to avail of information on access to community services. Sandlian-Smith (2016, P. 315) defines a public library as an adaptable place that is for the community's own needs. Librarian B expressed the view that a community should feel ownership over their community space. A space that is adaptable to the community would naturally lead the community to feel ownership. It is no surprise there are similarities in definitions given the emphasis on concepts of community existing in 21st century library definitions (Santa María Muxica, 2018). It also supports the participants answers under the 'Community Centred Public Libraries' category below. While the literature does not align with Librarian B's statement about the community centre looking after "the wellbeing of people", or indeed Librarian A's feeling that it is a safe space, there are still many similarities. As the literature is discussing public libraries as community centres, and the data is focused on definitions of community centres it is not surprising there are inconsistencies.

4.4.1.2 Community Centred Public Libraries

Field and Tran (2018, p. 120) refers to libraries as community hubs and so it falls in line with the Librarians' consensus that their libraries each have a community element to them. Librarian B felt her library was not quite a community centre – it had a "core identity" as a "repository of knowledge". She may fall more in line with Yoshida (2016, p. 2) who refers to libraries as "core cultural institutions in communities" which acknowledges the community role the library plays but without the branding. Or perhaps more in line with Baba and Abrizah (2018, p. 97) who see them as "community libraries" that provide "people oriented" services. The role of the library as community centre is also encouraged in the *Our Public Libraries 2022* definition of library as somewhere that aids in the social, economic and cultural wellbeing of communities" (Department of Rural and Community Development, 2018, p. 7). This would support Librarian A's assertion that they are community centre first.

4.4.1.3 Public Librarian Role

Sandlian Smith (2016, p. 312) and Hapel (2012, p. 53) when referring to the role the library plays in the community states that it is a catch-all space that can assist in the needs of the community whatever that entails. Librarian C's statement falls in line with this as she feels that the librarian themselves should help the community in any way they can. Sandlian Smith

(2016, p.312) and Hapel (2012, p. 53), despite describing the library building, essentially seem to encapsulate how the librarian's feel about their role. They feel it is their job to make the community's lives easier, to advocate for and interact with their community. Librarian D's emphasis on the responsibility of marketing as a librarian falls in line with Hariff and Rowley's (2011, p. 436) emphasis on marketing as there are misconceptions about what people think libraries do today. Crawford-Barniskis' (2016, pp. 140-141) research concludes that public libraries are creative and knowledgeable benefactors for the whole community. Librarian D's assertion supports this. She believes part of her role as a librarian to be providing patrons with current and relevant information and to enable them to access community services.

4.4.2 Theme Two: Chronology of Community Centred Public Libraries

4.4.2.1 History of Community Centred Public Library

All the participant's concurred that they had always felt that public libraries had a community focus. Sbaffi and Rowley (2015, p. 104) have theorised that libraries decided to become "core community" services following the increase in access to technology. While Librarian D would support this argument in that she felt the growth of technology certainly widened the scope with which they could interact with the community, she does maintain that she felt the library was always a community resource. This would indicate that for librarian D it wasn't so much a decision to become a "core community service" but more so a decision to continuing being one while expanding resources. Similarly Librarian A, who has been working for approximately the same amount of time as Librarian D in the public library sector would also maintain that there was always a community focus regardless of what resources were available. To her something as simple as lending a book out was an interaction with the community and providing a community service.

Librarian B's answer is more in line with Sbaffi and Rowley in that she feels perhaps the library really started feeling community focused once they started running events. While this is not for the technological reason Sbaffi and Rowley are arguing for, she is indicating that maybe it was not always so clearly community focused. It also falls in line with Field and Tran (2018, p. 113) who argue that this community focus is from public libraries no longer being just repositories for books, but making a move towards community focused services Field and Tran (2018, p. 113). However, she never argued it was a new focus the way Field

and Tran did, just that when it occurred they were “providing more than books”. She did still agree community has always been a part of public libraries for as long as she’s been in them, so regardless it’s not a brand new focus as Field and Tran argue. The findings of this theme are much more in line with Sandlian-Smith (2016,p. 313) and Williams and Willet, 2019, p.803) who argue community has always been the focus of public libraries, but the needs of the community have changed, and the world has changed and so libraries have adapted to that.

4.4.2.3 Community Library Today

All of the participants considered collaboration and the creation of partnerships within the community to be an essential element to the role of the community-based library. This focus on collaboration and establishing links are in line with Reid and Howard (2016, p. 196) as they argue it is a vital part of public libraries today and allows the library to expand its services. This would be a significant help in making the libraries as accessible as possible – an important component of libraries noted by the participants. It was also deemed important to engage in outreach and have the library be equal access. The participants were of the view that it would be beneficial for the libraries to be located near amenities within the community. Remote access to services and extending the opening times were suggested as a means to promote accessibility. There was particular note by two librarians that they were focused on encouraging teenagers into the library. This is because teenagers are difficult to get into the library. This falls in line with Sbaffi and Rowley’s (2015, p. 107) observations in Manchester and Rome .They also provide events like the traditional book club, their role as a book repository and then providing workshops, language groups among others. Collaboration was described as central to what librarians do.

4.4.2.4 Future of the Community Library

The overall practices of the library are not expected to change in the future. All four librarian highlighted the importance of keeping on top of changes in the community and continuing to address and adapt to community needs. It is important the library stays relevant. Again this directly supports the argument from Sandlian-Smith (2016, p. 313) and William and Willet, 2019, p. 803) that the community has always been the focus of public libraries, and according to these findings always will.

This community focus was further illustrated in the discussion from some of the librarian about COVID19 and how it effected their everyday users. It highlighted how important technology will be to public libraries, but again for the reason of community focus and adapting to help your community.

4.4.3 Theme 3 Community Engagement

4.4.3.1 Community Perspectives on Public Library

Sbaffi and Rowley (2015, p. 105) recognises the importance of libraries addressing non-users as they are members of the community, and by extension potential patrons. Sbaffi and Rowley (2015, p. 105) state that in the public library sector libraries need to engage with non-users more. This echoes the sentiment made by one of the participants. The findings showed a clear dichotomy between how librarians' felt users and non-users perceived the library with non-users assuming libraries were the stereotypical 'book repositories' and that there was nothing for them there.

However, in contrast the librarians felt secure that their regular users perceived the library as a community centre and would be happy to engage with it. They would use the library for a number of reasons depending on their needs. Unlike the results of Medeiros and Olinto's (2018, p. 262) Brazilian based study, there seems to be a lot of community awareness of the library. It falls much more in line with Oliphant (2014) and Reid and Howard, (2016).

However, the issue of non-users was still present and was described as a challenge by all the participants.

The main objective was to have enough varied activity to appeal to multiple user groups as opposed to focusing on one (Sbaffi and Rowley, 2015, p. 109). When researching how libraries attracted non-users into the library Sbaffi and Rowley (2015, p. 109) stated variety was important so that you were not only engaging one group of users. The findings suggest that even the people who do regularly go to the library, do so for a variety of reasons. This shows how differing perception can be and why it's so important for libraries to engage with all members of their community.

4.4.3.2 Attitudes to Community Collaboration

Community Collaboration is seen as vital according to the findings and this attitude reflects the literature that describes it as vital (Reid and Howard 2016, p. 196; Thompson, 2015, p.) and a "winning strategy" (Baba and Abrizah 2018, p. 95). It provides opportunities to

community centred libraries to connect and expand. The findings show that libraries view collaboration as an opportunity to connect with their community and grow and provide the best service possible. Goulding (2006, p. 238) echoes this stating it allows the library to expand services, Lawton (2006,p.123-124) also underlines the importance of the social aspect collaboration can bring to the library. From the findings, it's a way to ensure you're meeting all community needs and have a diverse range of services and events. All of the librarian spoke about the necessity for community collaboration. A specific example were described by Librarian B regarding her collaboration with a resource centre to run computer classes.

4.4.3.3 Influences on Community Engagement

4.4.3.3.1 Local and Government Authorities

When it comes to community collaboration, the findings show the LGMA has a certain amount of influence over the events the library will host. The LGMA will develop community-based initiatives and the libraries are expected to incorporate them into their programme. The initiatives are all community based, for the benefit of the community and so it is well within the purview of a community centred library.

Other influences include the county librarian who may have specific targets set that the library needs to meet.

4.4.3.3.2 Practical Factors

Space, budget and staffing are all issues that can affect the type of engagement a community centred public library can have. It effects the number of events they can have, the amount of peoples Additionally, they have to balance multiple requests at a time which can be a further constrain to putting on events.

4.4.3.3.1 Community Needs

Community needs were found to be a significant factor among librarians for considering the vents and services they'll offer. They consider what will be inclusive, what is missing, what can we get that most don't have access too. Who is in the community? Who are the demographics?

4.4.4 Theme Four: Visibility

4.4.4.1 Marketing

Hariff and Rowley (2011, p. 346) highlight how vital marketing is to today's public libraries to accurately represent how they have changed and developed and what they are today. The findings showed that social media was highly used by three of the participants. One of the participants chose not to engage with it. They also participate in Facebook and Instagram.

Oliphant (2014, p. 349) mentions national marketing campaigns as a method of reaching non-users. This was true for the LGMA 'Take a Closer Look' campaign. As the findings showed, it was to highlight to the communities in Ireland what their libraries can provide now. Some of the librarians also went on radio to market the libraries.

Shaffi and Rowley (2015, p. 110) state that one of the primary marketing methods used by librarians is digital i.e. the library website, Facebook, mailing lists. This is certainly used by the librarians, especially mailing lists. But they also use traditional methods of printed out events guides. This was done to account for users who do not have internet or who do not go on it a lot. This could be seen as a form of customer focused marketing. Customer focused marketing is a very important marketing tool (Sanchez and Van Stralendorff, 2018, p. 31; Moran and Morner, 2017, p. 125). In this instance all customers were taken into account when developing marketing strategies

The librarians also engage in other forms of marketing. For example, a simple word of mouth, a face to face conversation about the library and all its services, in addition to books. Face to face conversation is a very important tool of the librarians as shown by the findings.

They also do outreach as a form of marketing whether that be by utilising mobile libraries or doing class visits. One librarian would often go out to the village whiles she was working and market people by chatting to them. Librarian B found this to be a particularly effective way of interacting with non-users. She also develops library champions who again perform face to face marketing through chat. The findings indicate the librarians interviewed place a lot of value on outreach as a form of marketing.”.

4.4.4.2 Impact

The findings show that community centred libraries measure their effectiveness using statistics primarily – measuring foot traffic, attendance and so on. They primarily use

quantitative methods. They also have benchmarks and targets to meet. However, it is not necessarily the best way to measure a public library's success. There was a suggestion that qualitative feedback would be perhaps more representative of the difference a community centred library can make as qualitative analysis is interested in thoughts and feelings and the unquantifiable.

4.5 Weaknesses of the Research

The research study only had four participants and utilised a mono-qualitative method. This meant the data set being drawn from was small. The sample was limited to Dublin-based libraries. All participants were working in urban County Dublin libraries. If the research project had included librarians from rural libraries there may have been differences in how they perceive their library, the constraints they experience when running community events and how the community engages with the library. The researcher was not an experienced interviewer. As the researcher only collected data through interviews, this may have affected the quality of the data – the researcher could have asked more probing questions as it was a semi-structured interview, instead of sticking primarily to the pre-set interview questions.

4.6 Strengths of the Research

The researcher did not bring bias into the research. The researcher, at the time this research project took place, was not employed in the library sector and so had no personal experience that could lead to subjective views being injected in the research process by the researcher.

The researcher successfully gathered data utilising qualitative methods. The researcher designed the most appropriate research strategy for the research question to be answered. The choice in an exploratory qualitative study allowed for the study of perceptions, feelings, and experiences of the librarians to be gathered and analysed.

4.7 Future Research

The research could be expanded to involve more participants from both rural and urban backgrounds, going beyond County Dublin to the rest of the country. The research could be expanded to include data from users of the libraries to get their perspectives on the topic of community-centred libraries. The perspectives discussed in this research were how the librarians interpreted the library users and non-users' views of the library.

4.9 Implications of the Results and Applications of the Research

This topic has been discussed within the Library Sector in recent years, as seen with the *Our Public Libraries 2022* document. The research allows the Irish sector to look at this topic in the same context they are working in, whereas most research encountered throughout this study was based outside of Ireland, bar one piece of research. It adds an Irish voice to a topic that has not yet reached a definitive conclusion, allowing this research to be added to the global conversation.

4.10 Conclusion

The researcher found this research project to be very interesting and informative. It involved exploring the role of public community libraries from the perspective of working librarians and how they perceive their own role in relation to this.

The primary findings of this research topic were that public librarians do see their libraries as community centres, and they would see their role in a similar light. They indicated that libraries have always been community centred but that the needs of the community have changed over time and will continue to change, and the libraries have adapted and must continue to adapt in the future. It was interesting for the researcher to see the role of branding and marketing of the library in addressing misconceptions about what a library does, particularly among non-users. The researcher also noted the impact of user needs on the decision-making process in libraries in relation to community engagement.

The researcher's interest in this topic arose from her studies on Library Management and her interest in the public library sector. It is hoped that this dissertation will be of interest to librarians working in this sector and that it will contribute more generally to the discussion on the role of public libraries in the community.

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6. Appendix

6.1 Introductory Email

Dissertation Interview Request

Niamh Kearns <[REDACTED]@mydbs.ie>

Wed 15/07/2020 12:01

To: [REDACTED]

📎 1 attachments (18 KB)

Info sheet and consent form N.K DBS.docx;

To whom it may concern,

I hope this email finds you well.

My name is Niamh Kearns. I am a student in the Master's Degree course in Information and Library Management at Dublin Business School. As part of this masters, I am undertaking a research dissertation.

The topic of my research is **Do public librarians perceive their libraries as 'community centres'?** This research will be exploring what public librarians' opinions and experiences are in relation to community engagement within their library. Further information on this research can be found in the attached information sheet.

I am contacting you to enquire if a librarian in a senior position within your library would be available to participate in an interview on this topic? The participant would need to be a fully qualified librarian in a senior position with enough experience to have opinions on the topic outlined. The participant will be anonymised in the dissertation, with only their job title identified. The library will not be named, it will only be identified as being a library in Dublin.

The interview would likely only take between 40 minutes and an hour and would be conducted over video conferencing or via phone. Again, further information can be found in the attached document. Ideally, this interview would be conducted before the end of July. However, this can be extended into the first week of August if needed.

If you would be willing to take part in this research, and any queries have been adequately answered, please sign and email back the consent form found at the end of the attachment. I am happy to send a copy of the interview questions before the interview.

I sincerely hope that you can help me with my research. Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you require further information. You can contact me by email or by phone on [REDACTED]

I would like to thank you for taking the time to consider my request and I look forward to your reply.

Kind Regards,

Niamh Kearns

6.2 Participant Information Sheet

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

PROJECT TITLE:

Do public librarians perceive their libraries as ‘community centres’?

You are being asked to take part in a research study on public librarians’ perspectives on what their library’s role is in terms of community engagement. This research proposes to explore the librarian’s perception of the library’s role in community engagement in an Irish context and how the librarian incorporates the idea of community within their library, particularly in the areas of marketing and collaboration. It will question whether this concept of a community focused library is a new phenomenon or if it has always played a part in public librarianship.

My name is Niamh Kearns. My supervisor is Trevor Haugh. I am completing a Masters in Information and Library Management in Dublin Business School. I am undertaking a thesis for the final stage of this course.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN

In this study, you will be asked to take part in an interview in which you will be asked several questions related to the topic of public libraries and community interaction and engagement. You will be asked to speak on your opinions and experiences around the subject matter proposed.

Due to social-distancing measures in place as a result of COVID-19, this interview will be carried out online via a video conferencing programme such as Zoom or Skype – the programme chosen will be dependent on what you, the interviewee, is most comfortable using. It will be recorded using the inbuilt recording features of the service in question. You will need to ensure you have a working microphone on your device for the audio. However, it is not a requirement that you have a camera.

Alternatively, if you are unable to carry out the interview via an online video conferencing service, the interview can be carried out over the phone as a second option. In this case, the phone call will be put on speakerphone and recorded using an audio recording device.

The data collected from the interview will be stored in a password protected folder on OneDrive, a secure cloud storage facility. The data will be stored until the day after any grade appeals for the dissertation have been finalized and closed.

TIME COMMITMENT

The study typically takes between forty minutes to a maximum of one hour. It only requires one interview session. There may be follow up emails if the need for clarification arises.

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 except your professional role within the library sector and the general location of your library (e.g. Dublin). The data will be anonymised manually following the interview. Your name and other identifying details, except professional role and general location, will be anonymised and you will be assigned an ID number instead. This ID will be used throughout the written research project when referring to you.

The data will be used for the dissertation. The dissertation will be deposited on the DBS eSource repository which can be viewed publicly.

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 [REDACTED]

6.3 Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PROJECT TITLE:

Do public librarians perceive their libraries as 'community centres'?

PROJECT SUMMARY:

This project will be looking at if working public librarians perceive their libraries as community centres. It will explore their opinions of and experiences with the library's role in community engagement in an Irish context. It will question whether this concept of a community focused library is a new phenomenon or if it has always played a part in public librarianship. Furthermore, this study will look at how public librarians incorporate the idea of community within their library, particularly in the areas of marketing and collaboration with government departments and community groups in the context of initiatives, services and events.

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

6.4 Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. What does the phrase 'community centre' mean to you?
2. Would you describe your library as a 'community centre'?
3. Do you think the public sees the library as a 'community centre'? (Please explain your answer)
4. How does your library engage with the local community – both library users and non-users?
5. What do you feel is the role of the public librarian when interacting with the local community?
6. Do you feel there has always been a community-based aspect to your job?
7. How do you determine what community services/events you will facilitate in your library? Are there constraints that effect this decision?
8. To what extent do you view community collaboration as an important component of public libraries?
9. Are there, in your experience, benefits to engaging in community collaboration?
10. Are there, in your experience, challenges to engaging in community collaboration?
11. What factors do you think go into turning a library into a community centre?
12. Do you think different user groups have different perceptions of what a 'community centre' library is?
13. How do libraries promote their role as a community centre?
14. Do you measure / record your effectiveness as a community centre in any way?
15. What do see you as the future for the library as a community centre?

6.5 Ethics Information Form

Ethics Information – MSc Postgraduate Studies

Student Details	
Student Identifier:	10178154 Niamh Kearns
Submission Date:	27/04/2020
Proposal Research Title:	Do public librarians perceive their libraries as community centres?
Brief Description of the research:	This research will look at how public librarians perceive their libraries in relation to the communities they serve. It will look at librarians' opinions around community engagement, the branding of libraries as community centres and how their opinions line up with what has been said in previous research on this area and in official documents of the Irish Public Library Sector. The data for this project will be gathered through recorded interviews.

Sampling	
Population of interest: (brief description)	I am interested in sampling librarians who are currently working in public libraries in Ireland.
Sample of interest: (brief description of size and how it is chosen)	The sample size is two librarians, both from different libraries within the same constituency. The librarians will be chosen based on their experience and knowledge of the public library sector.

Primary Research - Data Management	
Is the data anonymised – how is this done?	The data is anonymised. This will be done manually following the two interviews. The names and other identifying details of each participant will be anonymised and they will be assigned an ID number instead – this ID will be used throughout the written research project to indicate the interviewee.
How is data confidentiality maintained:	Data confidentiality is maintained by myself, as the researcher. I will not share any raw data with anyone outside of the research project nor with other participants of the project.
Where will the data be stored:	The data will be stored in a password protected folder on OneDrive, a secure cloud storage facility.

When will the data be destroyed:	The day after the time period for appeal-of-grade period has expired. Or, the day after any grade appeals have been finalized and closed.
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Specific Ethical Considerations	
Detail any aspects specific to your proposal that will require further ethical approval e.g. interaction with under-18 year-olds, experiments requiring deception, anything that might cause respondents any distress, etc.	<p>There is no aspect that I foresee requiring further ethical approval.</p> <p>All participants will be over the age of 18.</p> <p>All participants will be sent a participant information sheet detailing what the study is about, what is being asked of them and detailing in full their rights as participants including the right to withdraw from the study at any time and for their data to be destroyed. Participants will be required to read and then sign this form, indicating they have understood it and are giving informed consent.</p>

Student Signature: Niamh Keane Date Signed: 26/04/2020