

Sunday Opening

An investigation into accessible opening hours
and Sunday opening in UK public libraries

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About the author

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In 2008 Chris returned to Wiltshire as Head of Reading and Learning Services, where he is enjoying putting books and reading at the forefront of libraries' activities, and building cross-council support for reading services through the National Year of Reading.

Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Setting the context.....	1
1.2	Aims.....	2
1.3	Objectives	2
1.4	Methodology	3
1.5	Literature review	4
2	Policy and societal background	6
2.1	Public libraries and local authorities	6
2.2	Retail and leisure	8
2.3	Belief and “Keep Sunday Special”	8
3	Survey responses	10
3.1	Headline figures.....	10
3.2	England.....	11
3.3	Wales.....	14
3.4	Scotland.....	15
3.5	Northern Ireland.....	16
3.6	Lunchtimes and evenings.....	16
4	Libraries that do not open on a Sunday	17
4.1	Key results from the statistical survey	17
4.2	Case study of Surrey County Council	19
4.3	Case study of York City Council	21
4.4	Case study of Stirling Council.....	22
5	Libraries which no longer open on a Sunday	23
5.1	Key results from the statistical survey	23
6	Libraries that open on a Sunday	27
6.1	Key results from the statistical survey	27
6.2	Case study of Tower Hamlets Council	34
6.3	Case study of South Lanarkshire Council	36
6.4	Case study of City and County of Swansea	37
6.5	Case study of Suffolk County Council	38
7	Key messages, and critical success factors	41
7.1	Key messages about location.....	41
7.2	Key messages about an “offer”	42
7.3	Key messages about staffing issues	43
7.4	Key messages about consultation.....	44
7.5	Key messages about success criteria and motivation for opening	45
7.6	Critical success factors – summary	47
8	Conclusion	48
Appendix A	Survey questionnaires.....	50
Appendix B	Responding authorities	58
Appendix C	Library auditions – an innovative way of recruiting	59
References	63

1 Introduction

1.1 Setting the context

For more than 150 years, public libraries in the UK have offered all sections of the general public the opportunity to access books and magazines for leisure reading purposes, and for information.

By the late twentieth century, responsibility for providing a “comprehensive and efficient”¹ library service had fallen to local authorities, and the pattern and type of provision pretty much as it stands today became established. In terms of the location of branches, and, often, the pattern of opening hours, development does not appear always to have been made on a strategic basis.

People use their library for many different reasons, including to choose reading material and exchange recommendations and thoughts about books, to gather information both from hardcopy sources and electronically, to use broadband internet PCs, to learn, or simply to enjoy some spare moments. Increasingly libraries are seen as key centres of community engagement.

Things are changing fast, however. The 43% of people with no home internet connection², or the job seeker, or the avid reader, or the child with homework, or one of Britain’s millions with basic skills needs all have needs which must be met by the public library. Some live in rural areas, others have cultural or religious beliefs, others still might only be able to reach their library at certain times. This puts a lot of pressure on opening hours for public libraries, not just in terms of their number, but also their pattern. Alongside provision of a wide and varied stock of books and information, opening hours can hold the key to libraries’ relevance and usage.

This research examines the accessibility of opening hours in UK public libraries, with special reference to Sundays. We do not yet live in a society which can fund 24/7 opening for libraries, and so targeting accessible opening hours, those outside the regular 9am to 5pm on weekdays, must be a local and regularly reviewed decision. Getting value for money is of key importance to local authorities. Deciding when a particular pattern of opening hours equals value for money is no easy task, but is often done by considering standard business measures: visits, issues, and membership.

Whilst I start from the point of view that opening on Sunday would increase accessibility, I acknowledge that this is simply an assumption and the research may identify other times of the week that are more appropriate. Geography may also be an issue here. It is assumed that a pattern will emerge which will lead to “critical success factors”, but at the very least the research will clarify issues to consider before implementing any Sunday opening. That said, it is just as likely that patterns will emerge that suggest that in some cases, Sunday opening simply might not work.

I set this research against a ‘B’hag’ (Big Hairy Audacious Goal)³ of libraries being open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, or for all the hours every member of the local community requires. Surely this, along with as many books and information sources as possible/relevant, must surely be the desire of all who provide library services. At that time playing off one set of hours against another will no longer be necessary, though if this is ever achieved it is likely to be so by

technological means (such as self service) and so the issue will become which hours are staffed, providing the value added not-just-transactional service for the public. It is this quality of visit, rather than a focus on the transactional, which becomes a key theme of this research.

1.2 Aims

The aim of this research is to present an analysis of Sunday opening in a varied selection of public library authorities in the UK, in the expectation that a set of critical success factors and helpful practice can be established for those who also may wish to open, supporting them to make the most effective decision on accessible hours on a local basis.

The research will also provide a baseline snapshot of which authorities are currently (2007/08) opening on Sunday, which are not, and which have done so but no longer are. Whilst extending opening hours as far as possible is seen as a good thing, because local factors regarding accessible opening will be prominent in local decisions, not least availability of budget, it does not take the view that those authorities not opening on Sunday are in some way “behind the times”, understanding that for some authorities opening at other times may make more sense. This view is, where the research allows it, examined.

The research sets accessible and Sunday opening against a context of current societal, economic, and policy developments. It will therefore examine whether Sunday opening furthers the appeal and use of libraries within the context of the need to increase usage, book issues, and visits. It will also aim to establish whether Sunday opening strengthens libraries’ place as centres for community engagement.

1.3 Objectives

The key objectives of the project were to understand the critical success factors underpinning Sunday opening of public libraries in the UK by:

- Understanding the current pattern of Sunday opening and examining usage and any “Sunday Offer”
- Understanding who the current audiences are and what services they engage with on a Sunday
- Understanding how the success, or otherwise, of Sunday opening relates to the social and economic forces outside library service control
- Understanding the impact of Sunday services on local communities
- Understanding other approaches to extending opening hours, for example early mornings or late evenings, in an expectation that a comparison can be made to back up critical success factors

1.4 Methodology

It is important to view this research within the context of current library policy, and changes and developments in society. This includes the development of the retail and leisure offers.

A survey sent to all 208 library authorities in the UK during the summer of 2007 invited them to provide basic information about their accessible opening hours, and further information on their approach to Sundays. There were three questionnaires with some overlap of questions, with each authority asked to respond to one only of:

- Library authorities that have never operated on a Sunday
- Library authorities that do operate at least one branch on a Sunday
- Library authorities which no longer operate any branches on a Sunday.

Copies of the three surveys are given in Appendix A (*page 50*).

This approach enabled development, as far as response rates permitted, of a picture of the extent of Sunday opening in the UK, as well as how this has been approached, and how different issues such as location, offer, and staffing, have been part of the planning.

Similarly, where Sunday opening does not occur, authorities were able to explain why not, or why this is not a current service priority, thus hopefully unlocking a wider variety of issues regarding achieving best value in opening hours, as well as perceptions about need, relevance, and what would be success.

These surveys also sought to identify basic information on impact and outcomes, especially whether particular audiences are served by Sunday opening, and whether particular “offers” are made which add value to the library experience on that day.

By carrying out more qualitative research with a smaller number of authorities in the form of telephone and face to face interviews and visits, it was possible to explore more detailed information on impact and outcomes. It was also possible to understand more deeply the work that went into planning Sunday opening. Interviews were not, however, restricted to those who operate successful Sunday services. Visits were also made to authorities who do not open on a Sunday to explore further the issues as they see them.

All interviews were planned to ensure that a spread of rural and urban authorities were consulted and, where possible, a mix of home countries. It was also important to try and ensure that the research covered the impact of local communities having particular religious or cultural beliefs affecting their activities, including using libraries, on particular days. An authority which runs libraries in seaside locations was also visited, in an attempt to see whether there is a specific case for seasonal opening on a Sunday. The case studies presented as a result of these interviews, whilst quite descriptive, will provide useful background for library service policymakers.

1.5 Literature review

Initial desk research was carried out during May 2007 with the intention of providing a background for the consideration of Sunday opening through examining previously published research or articles in the professional press about the background to Sunday opening in the UK.

Interestingly, a search through online abstracts such as LISA (Library and Information Studies Abstracts) showed very few articles on Sunday opening in the UK.⁴ Indeed, only three articles considered an aspect of Sunday opening in public libraries during the preceding five years, and two of these referred to public libraries in Europe: Denmark and the Netherlands. The remaining article was a speech to a group of UK librarians, as published in *Christian Librarian* in 2002, looking at Sunday opening historically⁵, with a focus on the ethical questions this can pose. None of these pieces represents detailed research, two are two pages long, and one is six pages.

Graham Hedges' 2002 paper "Should libraries open on Sunday"⁶ for *Christian Librarian* firstly points to similar questions being asked over 100 years ago when libraries often relied on the patronage of wealthy local men. Interestingly, then, as now, the decision was taken locally. The article questions whether Sunday opening is "window dressing" in an attempt to appear "consumer orientated".

Hedges then goes on to question whether opening on a Sunday at a time when opening hours overall are dwindling is the best use of resources when opening hours during the week might be extended as an alternative.

The main thrust of the paper, however, questions whether it is right to ask people to work on a Sunday, and whether even seeking volunteers is the thin end of the wedge. Whilst Hedges does not accept the suggestion that viewing the debate from this point of view is about considering the convenience of providers rather than the needs of customers, in fact the paper does focus on the emotional and spiritual needs, if not religious needs, of library staff, and whether opening on Sunday is, from society's point of view, improving society.

The article 'Danes want to go to the library also on the day of rest'⁷ begins from a similar position to this research paper. Making the point that Danish authorities, as a whole, do not necessarily have a full understanding of the level of demand for Sunday opening, it says that most large towns are now open on Sundays during the winter. Interestingly, given the findings of this research, it is able to detail large libraries doing well, as well as one which isn't, which that library manager explains as being due to its location in the town. Success is viewed by visitor numbers. The view is also advanced that Sunday opening need not be more expensive if hours are taken from other days of the week.

The 2001 article from *BibliotheekBlad*⁸, sets the debate within the context of understanding what users want. It proceeds to give the example of 13 library users, all of whom would like something different from the opening hours: either Sunday opening, later evenings, more evenings, earlier mornings, clearer patterns. These are all current users, and they conclude by saying they are in the main, however, satisfied. There is no sense of which of these views might be more pertinent to the whole community.

A search of the archives of lis-pub-libs⁹, one of the main e-mail discussion lists used by UK public librarians, also revealed very few questions posed about Sunday opening. Since 1998, fewer than 20 entries are found concerning Sunday opening, many of which are individual authorities asking for information about Sunday operation. The main questions to arise related to staff contracts and pay levels, as well as some on the levels of success. This probably reflects the reality of individual local authorities making their own decision, rather than there being a 'national debate'. This research will cover the areas that were raised.

Sunday opening has more recently been referred to in *Who's In Charge*¹⁰, a report by Tim Coates, where the view is advanced that libraries should be open for as long as possible. That report's focus takes a broad view of services, however, rather than specific research in this area which could support the work in this report.

It is interesting to note the small number of studies of this nature, especially at a time when the issue of book stocks and opening hours as being core to the true services of libraries is being constantly examined¹¹.

2 Policy and societal background

Transformational change in the way we live our lives, conduct our personal and professional business, and even how we relate socially means that all institutions are having to find ways to remain relevant and survive. This goes for hospitals, churches, institutions delivering news and entertainment, and retail outlets as well as libraries.

The 24/7 generation is here and is being quickly embedded, at least as one part of the demographic, and they are making use of the internet to shop, communicate, and live at a time to suit them. Changing work patterns have followed. There is a changing cultural demographic, with easier migration to and from European countries. Access to technology also can be seen to heighten choice and, therefore expectation. The 24/7 generation is, in many cases, a ‘demand’ generation.

The proliferation of methods of delivering entertainment – whether through technological means or deregulation of broadcasting – means that television channels are experiencing fewer viewers, and in many cases printed newspapers are struggling to survive; for example in 2007 the Bath Chronicle printed its final daily edition after 130 years¹². The creative struggle in the leadership of these organisations is how to adapt and survive. For many companies the border between whether they are ultimately providing a service, not least in the view of the public (for example, local newspapers or a television station) or whether they are existing to make a profit, has been called into close scrutiny.

Socially, family make up and the way families spend time together has also changed. For example, Social Trends remarks

*There has been a decrease in the proportion of households containing the traditional family unit – couple families with dependent children – and an increase in the proportion of lone-parent families. The proportion of households in Great Britain comprising a couple with dependent children fell from around a third in 1971 to a just over fifth in spring 2003. Over the same period, the proportion of lone-parent households with dependent children almost doubled, and accounted for 5 per cent of households in spring 2003.*¹³

This is the world in which public libraries must operate.

2.1 Public libraries and local authorities

2.1.1 England

Public Library policy is developed against the backdrop of the contribution public library services can make to a wide range of local government targets, and especially in community engagement.

The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) lists these five areas as being what public libraries ‘do’¹⁴:

- Provide safe, neutral, shared environments for people from all walks of life
- Support formal education and learning at all times of life
- Act as centres of creativity

- Serve as focal points for their neighbourhood
- Are at the forefront of universal access to the internet and e-government

It is the role of librarians running library services to ensure that the bedrock of providing books, reading experiences, and information remains at the heart of libraries' existence.

Other bodies, such as the Society of Chief Librarians (SCL), and the Chartered Institute for Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) also formulate, debate, challenge, and shape policy, though often within the frameworks set above.

Funding is provided through the local authority settlement from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), however it is the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) which oversees MLA, a non-departmental public body. Standards are measured as part of local government performance assessments with Audit Commission inspections, Best Value performance indicators, and, until recently, the results of a set of Public Library Service Standards (PLSS).

The PLSS¹⁵ covered areas such as householder distance from static branches, aggregate scheduled opening hours, provision of electronic information, number of electronic workstations, length of time taken to satisfy book requests, number of visits, how well the service is rated by users, number of items added through purchase, and the length of time taken to replenish stock.

Those delivering the service at local level in authorities, 149 in England, have the complex task of delivering the best library service they can (as they understand "best"), whilst meeting local need and trying to support nationally set targets. At the same time, regional or national groupings may develop their own ideas about how particular elements of the service could be delivered. This makes bold, national leadership for the public library service difficult, even if it does, in theory, allow for local decisions to be paramount.

2.1.2 Scotland

The situation is similar in Scotland, with the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Library and Information Council agreeing policy, measured by the Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix (PLQM). The PLQM is slightly different to the PLSS in terms of coverage. The situation in terms of management of a service within a local authority, setting its own goals whilst acknowledging national policy, is the same as in England.

2.1.3 Wales

The Welsh Assembly government, through its Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport, sets the policy agenda for the development of public library services in Wales. It does this through CyMAL, a new policy body of the Welsh Assembly, with responsibility for museums, libraries and archives. As well as setting policy, it makes available grants, and sets and monitors the Welsh Public Library Standards. Whilst developed by the Welsh Assembly government as being appropriate for Wales, these standards are materially the same as their English counterparts.

2.1.4 Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland the five Education and Library Boards are in the process of being merged, which will lead to a new organisation from April 2008.

2.2 Retail and leisure

Retail activity on a Sunday, for outlets larger than 280 m² is regulated by the Sunday Trading Act of 1994 in England. Smaller outlets are not covered by this Act, hence the number of convenience stores open on a Sunday. The larger stores can open for up to 6 consecutive hours, between 10am and 6pm.¹⁶ According to a definition in schedule 1 of the Act, a “shop” is defined as “any premises where there is carried on a trade or business consisting wholly or mainly of the sale of goods”¹⁷ which means that libraries are exempt, regardless of size.

Whilst there is an active “Keep Sunday Special” campaign, there is also pressure from other sides to allow trading for longer hours on a Sunday. Both sides of this debate publish polls suggesting that the public agrees with their own viewpoint.

What is interesting is how far trading laws might affect library footfall for those libraries in retail areas, and how much any further change in retail laws might raise expectations about library availability. Whilst in theory availability of more retail and services on a Sunday might lead to a deeper change of habits on a Sunday which could ultimately benefit any Sunday opening close to retail establishments, it does also provide opportunities for families to do other things (shop) rather than engage in “quality time” activities such as accessing libraries.

2.3 Belief and “Keep Sunday Special”

The Keep Sunday Special campaign group seeks to promote Sunday as being a clear day that people can “have time for family, friends and community” in order that people have time to “rest and enjoy” themselves. They also go on to say, slightly less specifically, that they “believe in keeping just one day a week a bit special.”¹⁸

It is unclear how this relates to libraries, as venues which can allow families time to rest and enjoy themselves, individually or together, and to meet with and engage with their community. They are certainly opposed to the opening of garden centres for more than their permitted hours¹⁹ and also the leisure pursuit of game shooting²⁰. Only one respondent to my survey of authorities mentioned the issue of keeping Sunday special, though it was not suggested that the respondent was a member of the campaign group.

The Keep Sunday Special campaign is supported by the United Reform Church and the Mothers Union organisation. It is not formally supported by any other religious body. The Church of England, however, is against extending trading laws.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, when I asked him about whether the activities of libraries on a Sunday would be more acceptable to the Church of England than extending retail hours responded: “I think if everybody went to their public library on a Sunday that would be a very good thing”. His only caveat was that terms and conditions for staff did not mean that people were forced to work, especially those with families.

2.3.1 Days of rest

Not all religious groups view Sunday as a day of rest. For authorities with high numbers of residents following a particular faith, this could be significant.

Neither Hinduism or Sikhism requires observance of a particular day of rest. Islam, whilst not having a specific day of rest, does require all men to attend noon prayers every Friday; those of the Jewish faith and Seventh Day Adventists observe Saturdays, in the main, as their holy day. Uposatha, the Buddhist day of rest, falls variously on Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday during 2007 and 2008.²¹

3 Survey responses

3.1 Headline figures

All 208 library authorities in the UK were invited to respond to one of three different surveys – those that operate on a Sunday, those that do not, and those that did but no longer do (*Appendix A, page 50*). The snapshot of results refer to the position during summer 2007.

Overall 74 authorities responded, which represents a response rate of 35.6%. Within this, nine (12.2%) were from Wales, 12 (16.2%) were from Scotland, and three (4.1%) were from Northern Ireland. This leaves 50 (67.6%) from England.

Further to this, three authorities, all from England, submitted partial information by e-mail.

The spread would appear to be representative, for example by type of authority, geography, and sparsity of population. It is difficult to extrapolate from this sort of survey, though with a reasonable spread of responses, any conclusions are strengthened.

Of the survey responses, the situation was as follows:

- 29 (39.2%) authorities had at least one library open on a Sunday
- 41 (55.4%) authorities had no libraries open on a Sunday
- 4 (5.4%) authorities had had at least one library open on a Sunday in the past, but no longer did

Details are given in Appendix B (*page 58*). All of those who responded open libraries on a Saturday.

Across the 77 authorities, 124 libraries are open on a Sunday, whilst 1,354 are open on a Saturday. The 77 respondents are responsible, collectively, for a total of 1,526 branches, excluding mobiles. This means that 8.1% of these libraries are open on Sunday, whilst 88.7% are open on a Saturday. It is not possible to tell from my research whether there are libraries open on a Sunday which are not open on a Saturday, but it seems unlikely.

I asked those who were open on a Sunday to provide figures for the percentage of use those libraries that were open on a Sunday got on that day for visits and issues out of a typical week in that library. I was seeking to discover whether Sunday, regardless of whether it provided an overall increase or decrease in issues or visits, contributed a large percentage of the week's business. I also asked for Saturday figures.

Many authorities were unable to provide these figures, perhaps understandably given the variety of systems in place, and the sort of reports which can be easily accessed. I am grateful to those who did provide this information, as in some cases it took a great deal of work. The results can be seen in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Proportion of business done at weekends

	No of authorities providing info for Saturdays	Average % of weekly business achieved on Saturdays	No of authorities providing info for Sundays	Average % of weekly business achieved on Sundays
Visits	20	18.0%	25	7.0%
Issues	21	18.9%	23	8.0%

It is clear from this that Sunday does not meet the same high figures as Saturday for either visits or issues. Without knowing whether the library branches involved open for the same number of hours per week, on the same number of days, it is impossible to see whether Saturday over performs against other days or, to understand what a reasonable target for Sunday might be.

In retrospect a study seeking the proportion of business done per hour on different days of the week might be more helpful for comparison, assuming the results can be seen as typical.

Individual authorities can draw their own conclusions about whether the figures shown above for Sundays represent a good performance for a relatively “new” service. This snapshot purely represents transactional business.

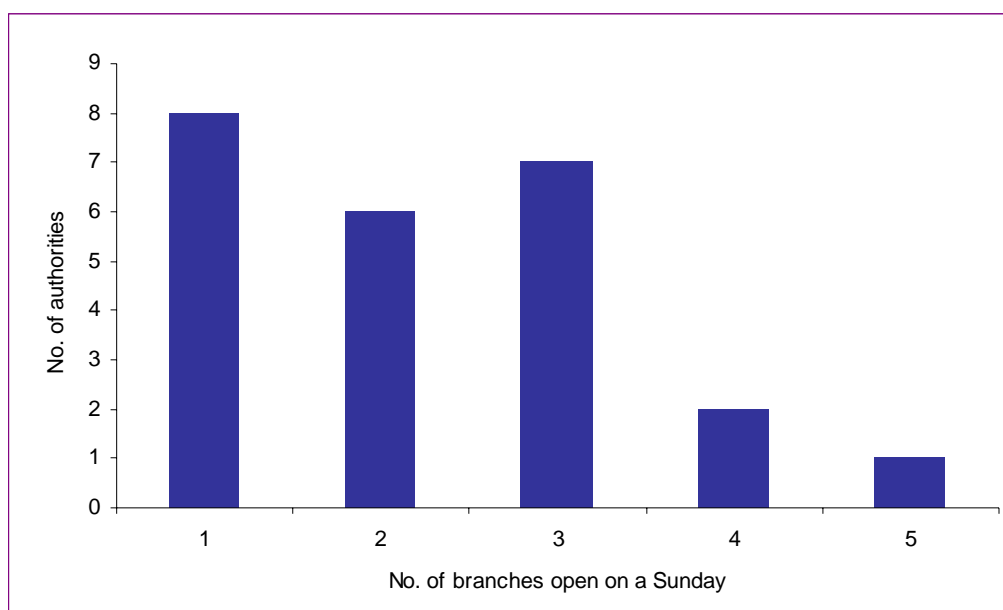
3.2 England

In England, the survey responses received covered 1,202 of the country’s 3,130 libraries, and 122 were open on Sunday. It is worth noting that responses were not received from some major urban centres such as Birmingham City, Sheffield City, Bradford, Manchester City, or Bristol City²², simply in order to understand that many areas with large populations are not covered.

In London, combining survey results with information on the authorities’ own websites, it is possible to identify that 24 of the 33 inner and outer London Boroughs open at least one branch on a Sunday (72%), 54 out of the capital’s 360 libraries are open (15%). Most of the 24 boroughs open the central library, where they have one.

Figure 3.1 (*overleaf*) shows the number of libraries open on a Sunday in London and how many authorities open that number. For example six library authorities open two branches on a Sunday, whilst only one opens five.

Figure 3.1 The number of London libraries open on a Sunday



Taking some key cities around England, Table 3.2 helps us understand the picture outside London. Some of these results are drawn from the authority’s own website rather than responses to this research, and are indicated by an asterisk (*).

Table 3.2 Sunday opening in key English cities

City name	Population ²³	Number of branches open on Sunday	Total branches	% open
Birmingham*	1,001,200	0	45	0
Leeds	723,100	9	54	17%
Sheffield*	520,700	1	29	3%
Bradford*	485,000	0	31	0
Liverpool	447,500	3	25	12%
Manchester*	441,200	6	23	26%
Bristol*	398,300	3	27	11%
	4,017,000	22	234	9.4%

What becomes apparent when considering the city-based authorities, and the opening hours of central libraries is that it is more difficult and costly to staff and manage a much larger building, possibly with several rooms. This means that even any trial opening would be expensive and require large numbers of staff. In a smaller branch, or a branch with one large floor space, this may be easier. Arguably authorities running large city-based libraries, or indeed any library based on several floors/rooms, may want more reassurance about the likely success of the venture before potentially treating Sunday like a ‘normal’ day, especially if this means closing at other times to accommodate Sunday opening. That said, figures are still lower than for the London area.

Using the authorities above, it is possible to compare Sunday opening with their Saturday offer, as Table 3.3 shows. Again, figures marked with an asterisk come from the authority's own website, rather than survey responses.

Table 3.3 Saturday opening in key English cities

City name	Population ²⁴	Number of branches open on Saturday	Total branches	% open
Birmingham*	1,001,200	42	45	93%
Leeds	723,100	52	54	96%
Sheffield*	520,700	28	29	97%
Bradford*	485,000	28	31	90%
Liverpool	447,500	24	25	96%
Manchester*	441,200	22	23	96%
Bristol*	398,300	27	27	100%
	4,017,000	223	234	95%

I thought it would be useful to contrast this with a group of more rural authorities. I used one of the CIPFA groupings, including large, sparse, rural areas such as Cornwall, Wiltshire and Dorset.

Table 3.4 Sunday opening in some rural English authorities

Authority name	Number of branches open on Sunday	Total branches	% open
Bedfordshire	0	17	0
Cornwall	0	32	0
Devon	1	50	2%
Dorset	0	34	0
East Sussex	0	28	0
Gloucestershire	1	39	3%
Lincolnshire	0	46	0
Shropshire	2	24	8%
Somerset	0	34	0
Warwickshire	4	33	12%
Wiltshire	0	31	0
	8	368	2.2%

Of course, in rural areas many of the above libraries will be very small and only open a small number of hours a week. That said, one of the questions this research should raise, even if it cannot answer, is whether it is of more value to the community to open on a weekend day, rather than a week day – if more people are free, then in theory there is a larger target audience.

Table 3.5 shows how these rural authorities compare for Saturday opening.

Table 3.5 Saturday opening in some rural English authorities

Authority name	Number of branches open on Saturday	Total branches	% open
Bedfordshire	17	17	100%
Cornwall	31	32	97%
Devon	47	50	94%
Dorset	31	34	91%
East Sussex	23	28	82%
Gloucestershire	36	39	92%
Lincolnshire	39	46	85%
Shropshire	23	24	96%
Somerset	34	34	100%
Warwickshire	27	33	82%
Wiltshire	21	31	68%
	329	368	89%

These figures are comparable with the cities, and show that the vast majority of libraries are open on a Saturday. If the issue of footfall from shoppers is seen as a prime reason for our getting custom, and we really believe that, then it is clearly more sensible to open on a Saturday. Another question to pose, however, especially in rural areas, is whether Saturday is a day when people are busy shopping, with relatively little time for library visits, or quality library visits.

3.3 Wales

In Wales, one of the 128 libraries featured in the survey responses was open on a Sunday. Wales has 300 libraries.

In terms of the largest three cities in Wales, none of which are included in the 128 libraries covered by responses to the survey for Wales, the picture for truly urban areas, according to the authorities' own websites, is shown in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6 Sunday opening in key Welsh cities

City name	Population ²⁵	Number of branches open on Sunday	Total branches	% open
Cardiff	319,700	0	20	0
Swansea	226,400	2	18	11%
Newport	139,600	0	10	0
		2	48	4%

For the above cities, the contrast with their Saturday offer can be seen in Table 3.7. This table is compiled from the authorities' own websites.

Table 3.7 Saturday opening in key Welsh cities

City name	Population ²⁶	Number of branches open on Saturday	Total branches	% open
Cardiff	319,700	19	20	95%
Swansea	226,400	17	18	94%
Newport	139,600	8	10	80%
		44	48	92%

3.4 Scotland

In Scotland one out of the 205 libraries featured in these statistics was open on a Sunday. Scotland, including the Isles, has 548 libraries. It is worth noting that no responses were received from urban centres such as Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee or Aberdeen, so again, the information in Table 3.8 is taken from each authority's website.

Table 3.8 Sunday opening in key Scottish cities

City name	Population ²⁷	Number of branches open on Sunday	Total branches	% open
Glasgow	578,800	6	35	17%
Edinburgh	457,800	6	26	23%
Aberdeen	202,400	0	18	0
Dundee	142,200	0	14	0
		12	93	13%

For the above cities, the contrast with their Saturday offer can be seen in Table 3.9. This data is compiled from the authorities' own websites.

Table 3.9 Saturday opening in key Scottish cities

City name	Population ²⁸	Number of branches open on Saturday	Total branches	% open
Glasgow	578,800	35	35	100%
Edinburgh	457,800	26	26	100%
Aberdeen	202,400	18	18	100%
Dundee	142,200	14	14	100%
		93	93	100%

3.5 Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, none of the 53 libraries featured in these statistics was open on a Sunday. There are 92 libraries in total in Northern Ireland.

According to the responses to the research, 62 branches were open on a Saturday. (Note: CIPFA statistics show 53 libraries being run by these authorities, yet their own responses suggest 62. It is likely they have included mobile libraries when responding to this survey.)

On a more general point, it was not possible to check the websites of all the authorities who did not respond, which is why general conclusions are based on these survey results, with extra research simply showing the position in London, one CIPFA comparator set, and major cities.

3.6 Lunchtimes and evenings

A further question sought to establish how many authorities had branches which closed at lunchtime or during a “tea” break in the evening. Sixty-six (86%) responded that they did. Whilst the survey was constructed from the point of view that this would be a bad thing, and that it would be more convenient for the public to have no break at all, no opportunity was given for authorities to state local reasons for this.

As such I acknowledge that, in framing the question, I have made an assumption which cannot be challenged by the answers received. It is useful information to consider, however, when looking at the issues apparent in some of the case studies below.

It should be noted that the case studies presented reflect the views of those interviewed, often in response to specific questions. Issues and conclusions are in a later chapter and are my own – discussion of an approach or method in the case study does not necessarily mean it is endorsed as best practice.

Appendix B ([page 58](#)) provides a full list of the authorities who responded to this survey, and who offer Sunday opening, as well as how many branches they open. The information was correct as at summer 2007.

4 Libraries that do not open on a Sunday

4.1 Key results from the statistical survey

Of those 41 authorities who do not open on a Sunday, 22 have restructured their opening hours within the last 12 months, 19 have not. Fourteen increased opening hours outside “core hours” (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm) during this exercise, but not to include Sunday.

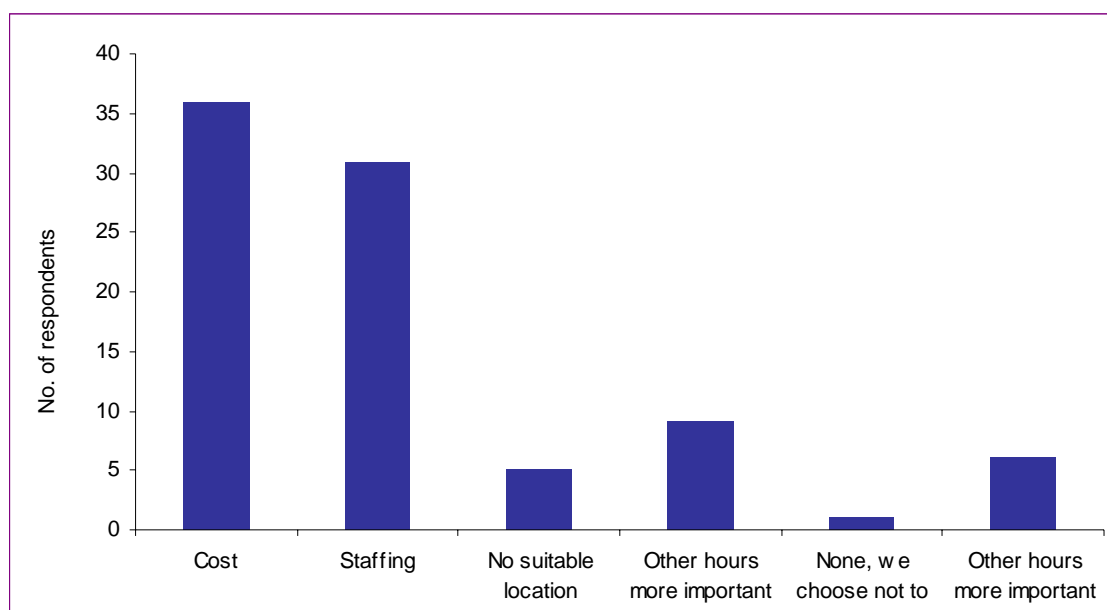
Fifteen said they would like to open at least one library branch on a Sunday, with a further 14 saying they would like to but other service priorities apply. Twelve said they would not wish to open a library on a Sunday. Two authorities expected to have a branch open by the middle of 2008.

Comments range from the expected concerns about budgets, funding cuts, and staffing levels to keep existing hours in place, as well as one or two comments which indicate that protecting and increasing weekday opening hours should be of prime importance, before consideration of Sunday. One notes that there is no demand for Sunday opening, but there is demand for increasing Saturday hours – but again budget issues apply. This was one respondent who was also taking into account support issues (availability of senior management and ICT support).

Of the 12 who said they did not wish to open a library, one responded that there is no Sunday culture in their very remote part of Scotland, and one that their religious beliefs, and feeling that Sunday should be a special day, would make it difficult for them to develop this. Others commented that there was little demand, or that non users had said they were not interested; whilst current users had expressed satisfaction with the status quo with regard to opening hours. Some were in the midst of structural changes or reorganisations, and felt the decision would need to be put off for this reason. Some again cited staff terms and conditions, and meeting the PLSS on core hours. There seemed to be no strong common theme.

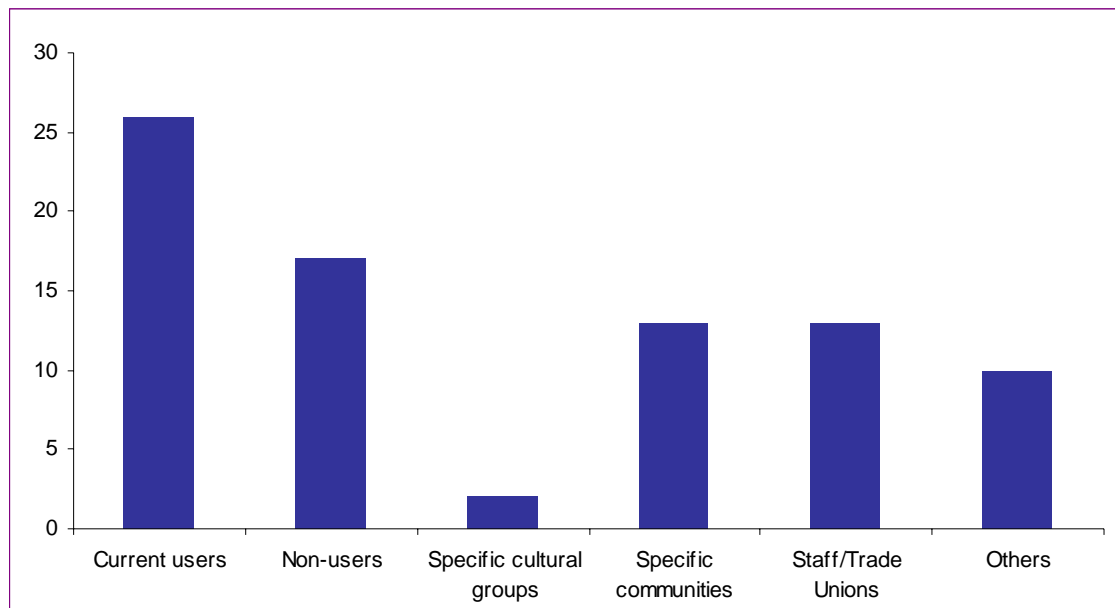
The most common blockages with regards opening on a Sunday are cost and staffing, as demonstrated in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 Issues getting in the way of Sunday opening



In terms of the opening hours decisions that have been made in recent months, 31 went out to consultation. Ten did not. Current users were the most common group consulted.

Figure 4.2 Who was consulted on opening hours



In terms of those who consulted “others”, the most common of these were community councils, elected members, and key local services e.g. schools.

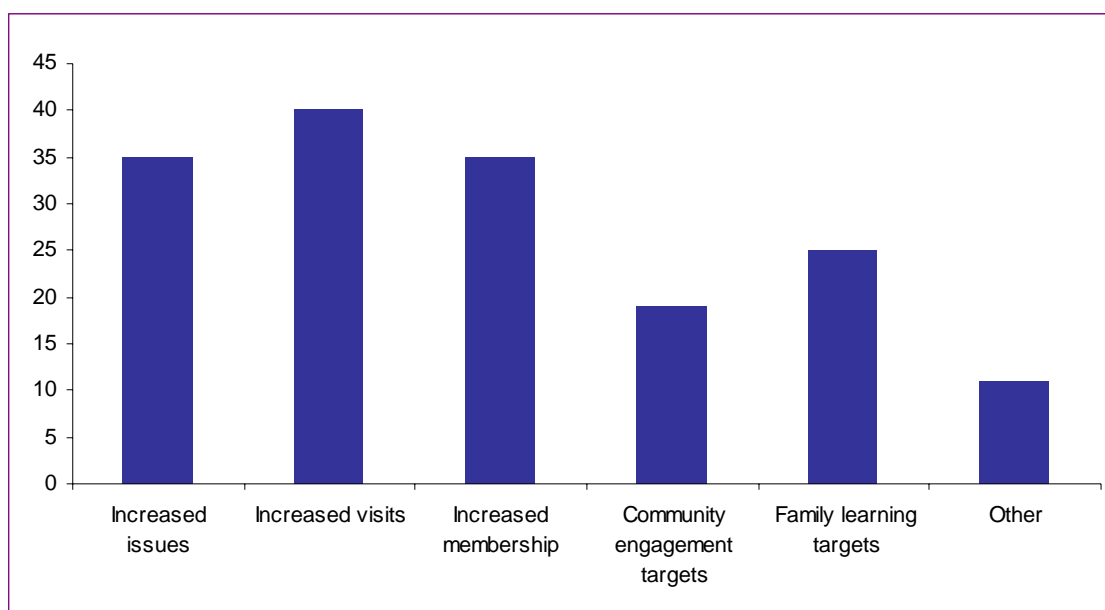
The survey did not ask whether there was interest in Sunday opening from existing users which was not acted upon for other local reasons. In retrospect this would have been a useful question to ask.

Despite the fact that only two authorities out of the 44 were planning to open on a Sunday in the six months after the survey, all were asked what their expectation of Sunday opening might be, what success criteria they might set, and where they might consider to be a good place to trial this.

Those who responded overwhelmingly felt that a town centre with enough footfall to sustain the opening would be required. Local shops and retail and leisure outlets were seen as important. A student population was also considered an important factor. One suggested a busy residential area might also be successful. Starting with largest branches or central libraries was also a strong theme. One commented that it would be down to local demand. Nobody commented that a small library might justify the investment. These perceptions run strongly through the research.

In terms of success criteria expected for Sunday opening, a more mixed response was received, as presented in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3 Success criteria expected from Sunday opening



Whilst increased issues, visits, and membership seemed to be the most popular, there was an acknowledgement that other targets were important, unsurprising given current policy agendas. Some respondents included increased usage of the People’s Network as being a success measure, whilst a small number of others suggested that the feel and nature of Sunday might be different and it could be about convenience, widening access, and family use. There is a strong hope that new and different users would be attracted during this time. Similarly some interesting answers came up about Sunday opening potentially increasing the profile of the library, increased stay per visit, addition of arts and culture programmes, working with parents/grandparents and children.

Throughout this study, the consideration of what might constitute appropriate success measures for Sunday opening has been a major theme.

4.2 Case study of Surrey County Council

Surrey County Council operates 52 libraries serving just over one million residents. The authority is to the south west of London and has a rural south and a populous north. None of the 52 libraries opens for more than 59 hours a week, and none for less than 15. Guildford is the “county town”, but does not have the largest library. Woking is the largest branch, doing around 600,000 issues a year, though it would be difficult to consider this a central library for the county. There is no one place in the county where bus routes converge.

Until the 1970s there had been a rationale to develop libraries in areas with resident populations over a certain figure. This is no longer the case and Surrey faces a challenge in meeting the Public Library Service Standard for opening hours. Budgets permitting, it might be possible to add hours onto the evenings of particular libraries, though there is recognition that this is not a strategic approach, might have little effect, and would be simply to meet a standard. The service is keen to make much more of an impact by holding a more detailed review.

Combined responses from the CIPFA PLUS surveys and from a lapsed user survey suggested that weekday hours needed to be reviewed, with the most common complaint being that opening hours were unpredictable and therefore the library was difficult to access. This has led to a review of opening hours which reported in early 2007. Proposals were before elected members during the period this case study was written.

Proposed new hours would be standardised across branches of a particular size, meeting users expectations of consistency, long days, and some synergy with retail and commercial opening hours²⁹. Planned to make what they saw as the most effective use of existing resources, it was acknowledged that shutting libraries at 7pm instead of 8pm, reflecting low usage patterns, could release resource to bring about a clearer set of easy to promote hours. Surrey County Council had also allocated an increase to the revenue budget of £250,000 enabling the review report to show how effective use of this money could mean an increase of 12% in hours, in combination with the opening of the new library at Walton on Thames. No libraries will be opened on a Sunday through this review of hours: the focus has been on sorting out the weekday.

Surrey also has a large number of self service terminals to support its opening hours and staffing. These are currently well used, getting up to 90% usage. They are not in all branches, but there are often four together, with customers being encouraged to use them by a 'sweeper'.

Surrey will shortly be opening a new library in a shopping centre. The developers think that this new library in Walton on Thames will increase footfall to the shopping centre, and feel that if the library is going to be part of the centre it should reflect, broadly, shopping centre opening hours. Sunday opening, then, is written into the lease. It is unclear, as yet, whether the lease will specify the hours, though this may well be 10am until 4pm. The library will be approximately 900m².

Details are yet to be worked out, but with heavy use of self service, Surrey has discovered it will be cheaper to run Sunday opening than they expected, approximately £18,000 a year at the new Walton on Thames branch. This, of course, will be met from the increased budget for the new library agreed by the Council, rather than from another part of the service budget. Staff terms and conditions mean an enhancement would still have to be paid to regular staff, though the idea of employing Sunday-only staff may be considered.

I asked whether "success" at Walton might mean a new approach for the rest of the county, even if this is staged. This is difficult to predict at the moment, and of course success in terms of issues, visits, and membership at Walton might also mean a dip at nearby branches. And if it is a success, it is unclear whether the criteria might be new branches as they come about, or going back to comparable libraries. It was felt, however, that this would need to be a case by case political / business case as new revenue would be required.

Surrey actually trialled Sunday opening in Woking in the mid 1990s, but it was felt that the increased expenditure to do this simply meant a 'spread' of current use. The pilot was not continued or rolled out, suggesting that a spread of use was not sufficient payback for the cost to the service. Surrey acknowledge, however, that with the growing diversity of communities, increased Sunday opening by retail outlets, and the People's Network, results may well be very different if it was tried now.

It is interesting to reflect whether simple issues, visits and membership success criteria would provide a true picture in the case outlined above. Indeed, I asked what, ideally, a success measure for Sunday opening should be for Surrey, and the main answer was retention of current users. Convenience, attracting new users, and active users were also listed as important. As Surrey is also considering its core offer through libraries, and this is inextricably linked with work on opening hours, a whole package of success measures is likely to be developed.

4.3 Case study of York City Council

At the time of preparing this case study, York City Council currently do not operate any of their branches on a Sunday, although they are actively exploring a pilot and contacted me about their information gathering as part of their response to my survey. Their approach is different to that of Surrey in that York are setting out to consider Sunday opening and whether it might be beneficial, prior to exploring public feeling on the matter. That said, this intuition is based upon comments received from the public in other ways, such as comments books and informal conversations, as well as the knowledge that other authorities are opening on Sunday, and that York city centre is busy on a Sunday.

York City Council runs 14 libraries, including its central library. It serves a population of almost 190,000, and most of its libraries are within the greater York urban area. Until Local Government Reorganisation in the late 1990s it was part of North Yorkshire County Council.

Opening hours in York have only been tweaked in recent years. A recent consultation, results as yet unavailable, to discuss whether people would use the library on a Sunday is the first on the subject of central library opening hours for some time. The focus is on providing a pilot location, with the central library being chosen because of its location, and the number of people in York on a Sunday: it was felt footfall might be high. No extra funding is available to open on Sunday, so any change in opening hours to effect Sunday opening would necessitate Sunday being seen as a “success”.

York Libraries have a key part in the Local Area Agreement for the authority in terms of delivery of adult learning. Sunday opening might provide the opportunity to broaden access to courses in libraries, another reason for considering it. (It is worth noting that adult learning was “unexpectedly” popular in East Kilbride who also ran courses seasonally on Sundays and who are a later case study in this report). This contribution to the LAA is every bit as important in York as the PLSS.

Although no detailed plans have been drawn up, it was felt that Sunday should present some sort of “offer”, rather than being a simple extension of hours. Offering further adult learning opportunities, and the possibility of taking fuller involvement in weekend-long festivals might form a core part of this. York have a strong partnership with the adult and community education department which they believe will put them in a strong position for making this work.

No decision has been made on staffing, although neighbouring North Yorkshire has been sharing experience. Conversations are also taking place with legal and human resources colleagues on this topic.

When we discussed what success measures York would choose for Sunday opening, acknowledging the fact that Sunday opening will contribute to the availability of adult learning, access to the People's Network, and the possibility of taking part for two days in regular weekend festivals, as well as providing diversity of hours, the idea that issues, visits, and membership increases might accurately be the barometer was brought into question. It was acknowledged that choosing the right success measure would be essential in any future review of the effectiveness of the service.

If the trial was successful, York would probably wish to consider rolling out Sunday opening further, though funding issues are unclear.

4.4 Case study of Stirling Council

Stirling is a predominantly rural council covering 82km² approximately 15 miles north east of Glasgow. The authority operates 15 branches and serves a population of nearly 90,000. Fourteen of the libraries are open for fewer than 44 hours a week. Eight of the 15 libraries are within five to eight miles of Stirling. Stirling has a university.

An opening hours consultation two to three years ago suggested that people wanted the libraries open later in the evening. This was trialled in two branches but was not successful. The trial was therefore stopped, with an eye on making best use of service resources. There was no customer demand identified for Sunday opening.

The locations of Stirling's libraries mean there are none which are obviously in busy urban/retail areas, it was noted anecdotally that on a Sunday people were more likely to visit the retail park a mile or two outside the city centre. This is two miles from the library.

Whilst self service is in operation in a small library, and it did release a member of staff to carry out reader development work, it was not suggested that Sunday opening could be tried in this small library. This reflects a general impression I gained more broadly from the results of my survey that the belief or professional intuition of many library managers is that Sunday opening would only be successful or provide real value for money in busier, larger locations. This is understandable.

Although not planned at the moment, opening the central library in Stirling on a Sunday was discussed recently, and though no level of detail was achieved, it was felt that employing Sunday staff might be the way forward. The motivation might move further than PLQM requirements, and should be about access to the library and IT, with any resultant success measure focussed on that. It was noted that wi-fi internet access is available in and around Stirling's libraries, and this is used on a Sunday.

5 Libraries which no longer open on a Sunday

5.1 Key results from the statistical survey

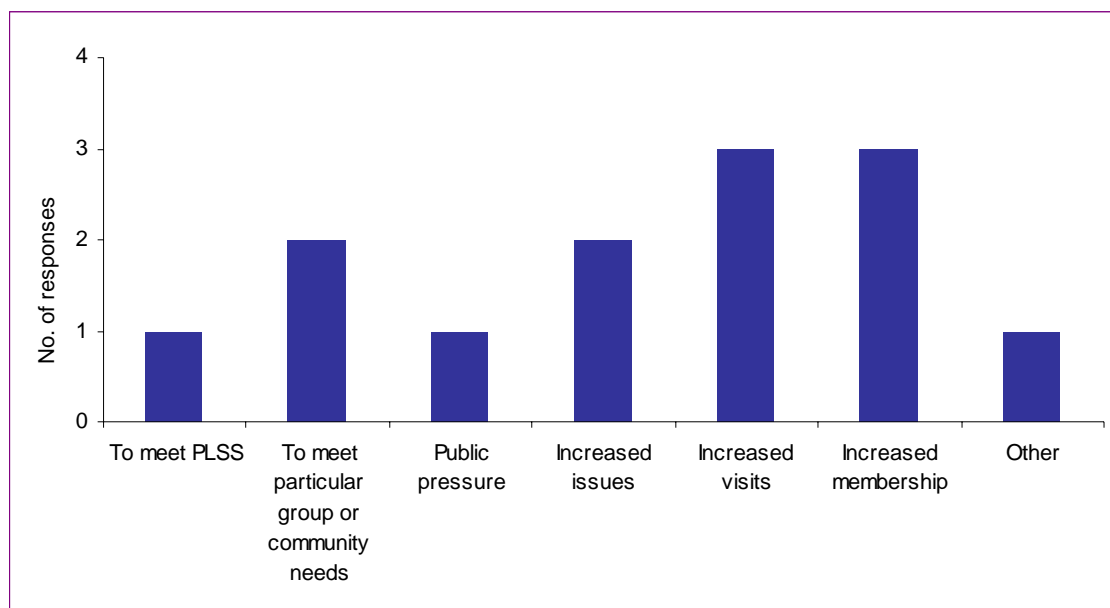
It is worth noting as a prequel to this section that inclusion in this part does not mean that Sunday opening was a failure, it simply means that for a variety of reasons it is no longer in place in those authorities who had tried it. Often it was the issue of funding that was the problem.

Of the four library authorities who responded, three only opened one library. East Riding of Yorkshire opened two and did both at the same time, rather than as a staged approach.

Only one carried out research or public consultation beforehand, and this was as part of a wider authority user/non user panel.

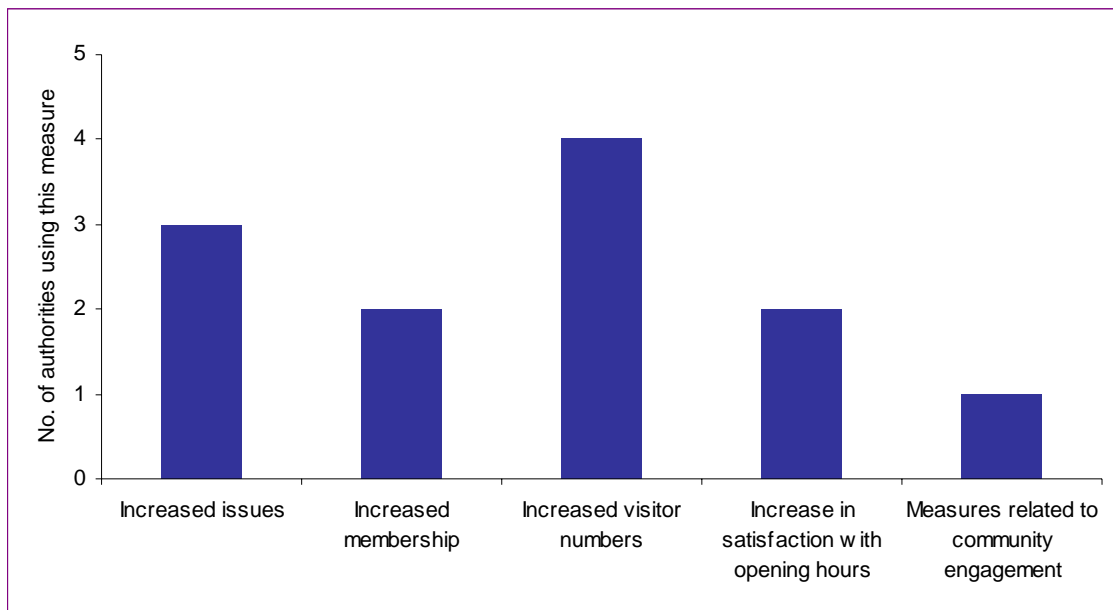
Responses to the question seeking motivation for opening, as presented in Figure 5.1, show that increased issues, visits and membership were the most common, though meeting the needs of a particular group or community was also noted. The authority who responded “other” was seeking to increase use by families and non-users, as well as attract a particular BME community.

Figure 5.1 What would be your motivation for opening on a Sunday



The motivation for opening is reflected in the success measures that were set, although one respondent notes that they also considered how many people who used the library on a Sunday did so during the week as well.

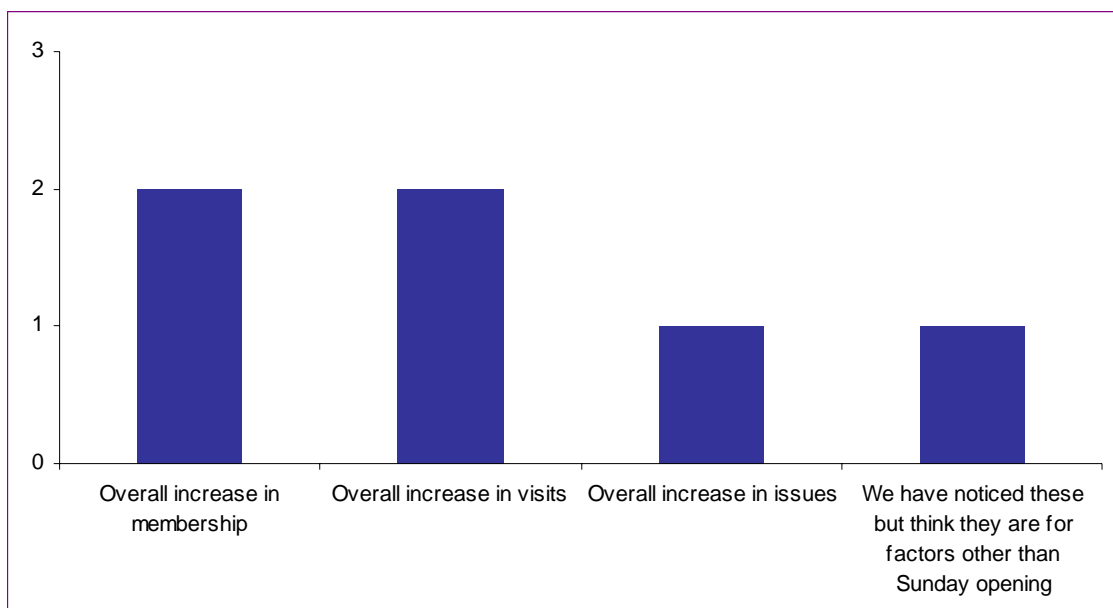
Figure 5.2 Success criteria expected from Sunday opening



Only one of the authorities said they met their success criteria (increased visits) though I do not have the information which would suggest by what degree. One said it failed to meet its criteria of increased visits and issues. The other two said they partially met two of their criteria, one noting a marginal increase in membership, and an increase in community engagement work in terms of family learning. This again bears out the point that, even though it was not mainstreamed, Sunday opening was not a failure.

In terms of issues, visits and membership, when asked whether they had noticed any improvements, the answers are presented in Figure 5.3:

Figure 5.3 Effect on issues, visits, membership



There were a variety of different ways Sunday opening was staffed. Volunteers were used, including existing staff, which may be the case with the responses here. The only comment with regards staffing as a critical success factor was that “positive, customer caring volunteers” were sought from existing staff. Figure 5.4 shows the range of methods used to staff Sunday opening.

Figure 5.4 How Sunday opening was staffed



Three of the four respondents funded Sunday opening within existing service budgets, the other received Public Service Agreement funding for the year they were open.

None of the services involved used self service to support Sunday opening.

Two of the four made an “offer” on a Sunday, of which family learning, ICT taster sessions, and reading sessions formed the key part. Two did not make a change from the regular weekday offer.

Only one of the three targeted particular groups – family groups and young professionals. Three of the four noticed particular groups using the service on a Sunday (all evidence is anecdotal): some who could not visit on other days, family groups, and regular library users from other days.

In all cases the library or libraries selected for the Sunday opening were in busy areas. The following comments were gathered:

“Central library was opened close to Town Centre Sunday retailing. Hours were determined after consultation with reps of Town centre traders.”

“Close to a major supermarket open on Sundays”

“Libraries selected for the pilot were the busiest in the Authority “

“We had hoped for a better take up of the service on a Sunday by people who couldn’t use the library during the week and by families – in this regard we were unsuccessful. We chose [the] Central Library because it is the busiest of our libraries and is quite near a large supermarket. However it isn’t in the main retail sector and didn’t pick up any of this trade. “

Two of the respondents felt that the hours they had chosen made a contribution to the success of the Sunday opening, whilst two were unable to comment. One pointed out that they opened 11am to 3pm and were unable to open for more than four hours due to staffing issues. They pointed out that nothing in the town is open before 11am.

In terms of the effectiveness of offers, where made, one respondent claimed the offer was a success, although it only attracted existing users. Another authority commented that they believe their inability to make an offer may have caused Sunday opening to be less successful there.

A summary comment from one of the respondents, who found they did not meet their success criteria, offers the following advice:

“To make Sunday opening a success - the location of the library is crucial - near either a retail or leisure park, where you would get passing trade. You need to offer something for the family and have a more laid back approach than may apply in the week. You also need to promote the service and be able to commit to funding the initiative.”

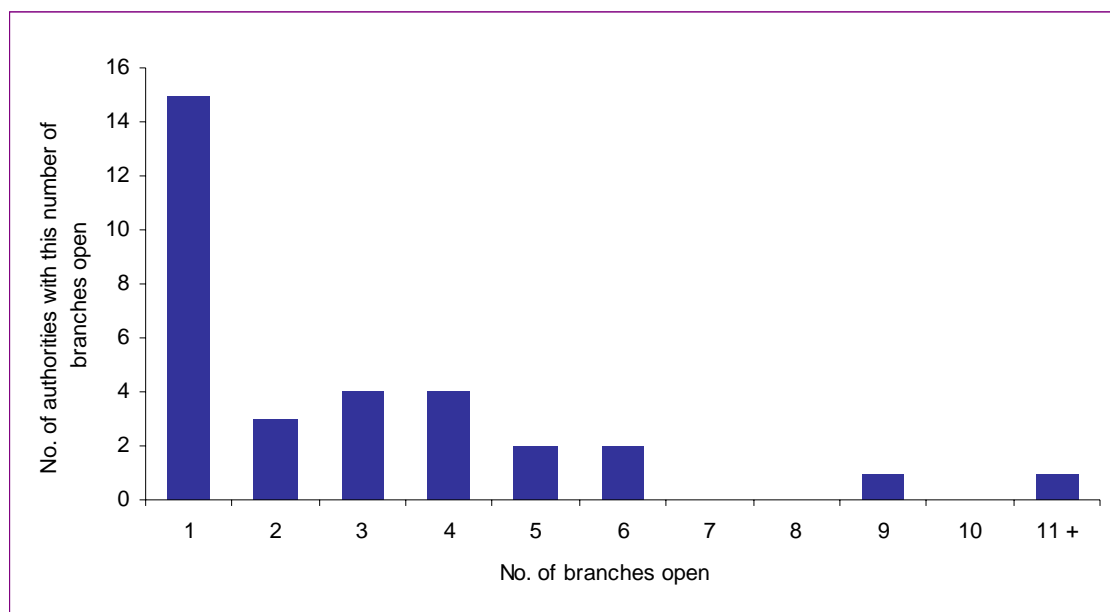
These results offer a variety of points for consideration, summed up by the final quotation. Interestingly, the issue for critical success factors might be about picking apart the issues – location, family offer, approach, and see if one is more important than the others. It is also important to understand what the “success” is that you are seeking, and whether issues/visits/membership adequately covers it. This is made easier by investigating the experience of those who do open on a Sunday.

6 Libraries that open on a Sunday

6.1 Key results from the statistical survey

Thirty-two authorities from across the UK responded to the survey saying they open on a Sunday.

Figure 6.1 Number of public libraries open on Sunday



Of the 124 branches this amounts to being open, 63 are open for more than five hours on a Sunday.

Sunday opening is quite well established in some parts of the country, particularly London. It is interesting to note that Wandsworth Reference Library has been opening on a Sunday since the 1930s.

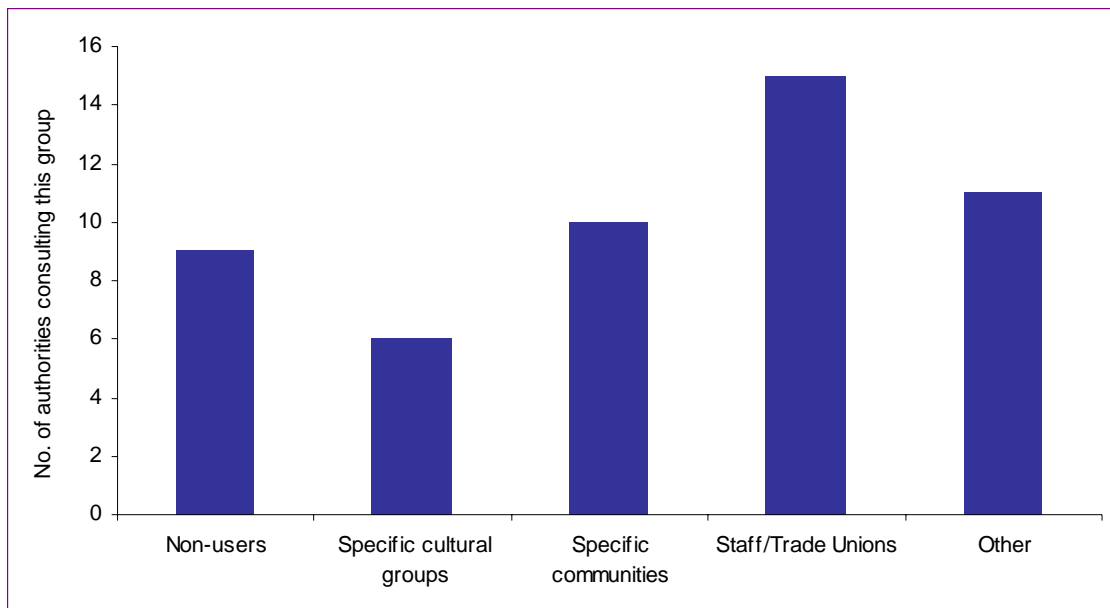
Table 6.1 Number of years public libraries in London have been open on a Sunday

Years open	No of branches
Less than 1	1
1 to 2	3
2 to 3	3
3 to 4	4
4 to 5	4
5 to 6	2
6 to 7	0
7 to 8	5
8 to 9	1
9 to 10	0
Over 10	6

Of the 17 authorities in the UK who open more than one branch, three opened all their branches at the same time (or within a very short period, but the intent and plans were in place). The remaining 14 operated a staged or trial approach. Whilst this might reflect the fact that libraries were developed on Sunday as new branches were opened, the results do suggest that most authorities prefer to do their own learning and try Sunday opening in one place first.

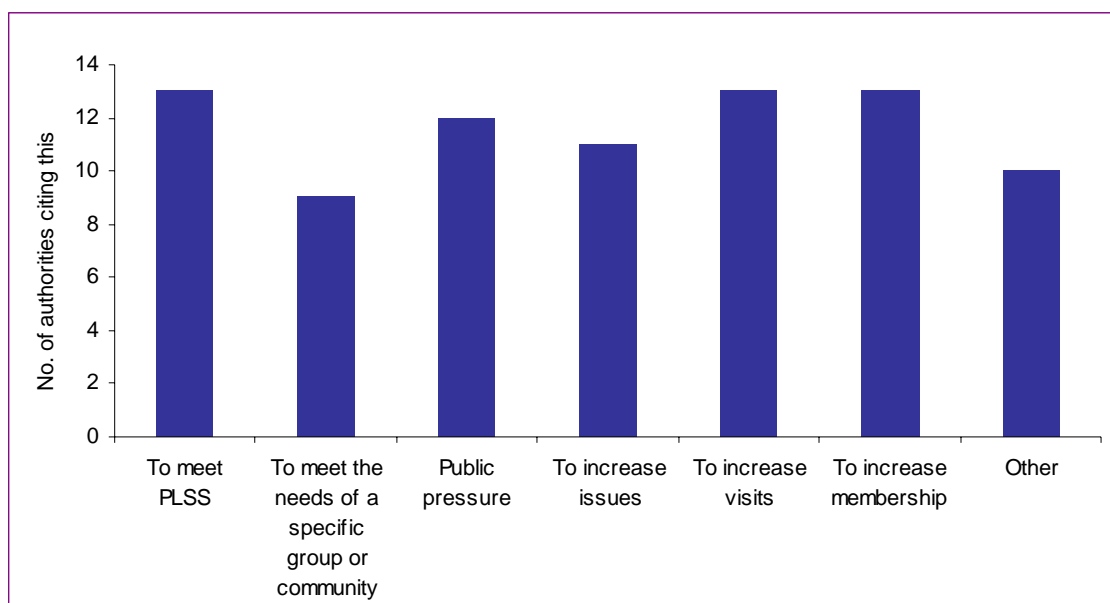
Twenty-one of the authorities undertook research before making the decision to open on a Sunday. Nine did not. In terms of the “Other” in Figure 6.2 below, users, library friends groups, and elected members were most often consulted.

Figure 6.2 Who did you consult about Sunday opening



In terms of the motivation to open on Sunday, aside from results from user consultation, a wide range of reasons were listed; as shown in Figure 6.3.

Figure 6.3 Motivation for Sunday opening



What would be interesting would be to see where the initial idea for Sunday opening came from: as a result of user consultation, or from library managers who then chose to put the matter to consultation. I suspect that in most cases for those who consulted on opening hours, it was the latter, though possibly reacting to customer comment received through other means – such as comments cards or verbally in library branches.

In terms of the answers for “Other” in Figure 6.3, the following were offered:

“To offer a more accessible service”

“As a response to Members view that less affluent/more isolated parts of the authority had a need for study space at weekends”

“To be open when the public wanted to use us”

“Central Library opened to meet local need. Town centre shopping area already open”

“Instruction by Council Members following the 1995 review of the public library service by the Department of National Heritage”

“To meet clearly expressed demand in public consultation”

“To meet needs of families”

“[Library also operates as a]... Visitor Information Centre, so had to be open on Sunday”

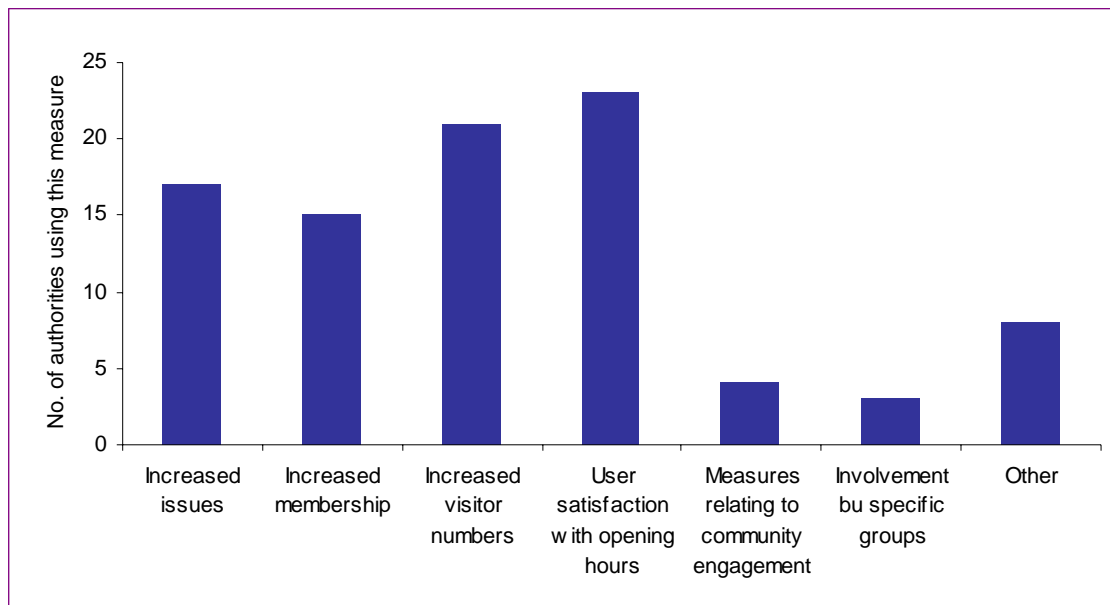
“Opportunity arose when new library was co-located with sports centre. Decision was made to open library same hours as sports centre”

“As a way to increase opening hours”

“Offer a less formal, more relaxed service, designed to appeal to people who may find the traditional ‘look and feel’ of libraries off-putting”

A variety of success measures were set by authorities for Sunday opening, as Figure 6.4 demonstrates.

Figure 6.4 Success measures set for Sunday opening



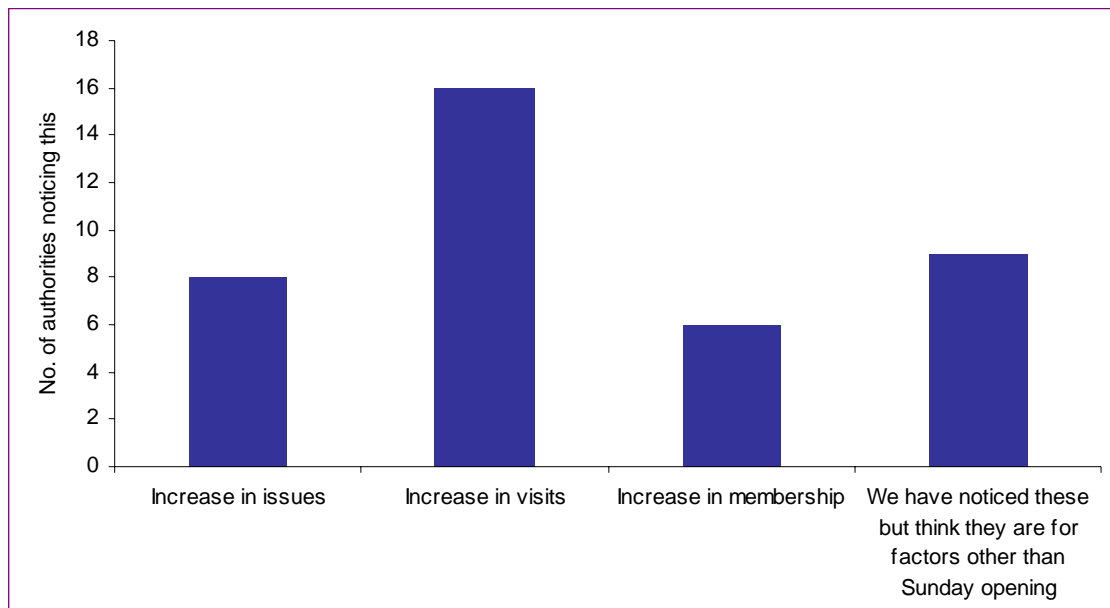
The most popular success measure set was increased satisfaction with opening hours. Most authorities also anticipated an increase in issues, membership and visits as a result of opening at a different time. In many cases this might reflect the view of what is cost-effective. Recognising that opening hours alone may not necessarily increase issues, it might have proved interesting to ask a question about whether an increase in opening hours happened at a time when extra stock was made available, perhaps specially aimed at target groups.

Sixteen authorities felt they met their success criteria, 14 felt they partially did. One authority noted that it had not set any success criteria. Many of those offering comment on meeting targets suggest that increases in issues/visits/membership did take place, though often it was not possible to specifically relate these to Sunday opening. Several note that whilst increases did not take place, the rate of decline was slower than in branches not open on a Sunday.

It was not possible to anticipate the range of success measures that would be offered in answer to the above question, and therefore difficult to identify whether the 16 authorities who said that user satisfaction with opening hours was a key measure held this as more important than increases in issues/visits/membership when it came to reviewing the service, or indeed, whether this was measured.

Specifically on the issue of whether Sunday opening has led to a general increase in issues, visits and/or membership, the following results are shown:

Figure 6.5 Impact on issues, visits, membership

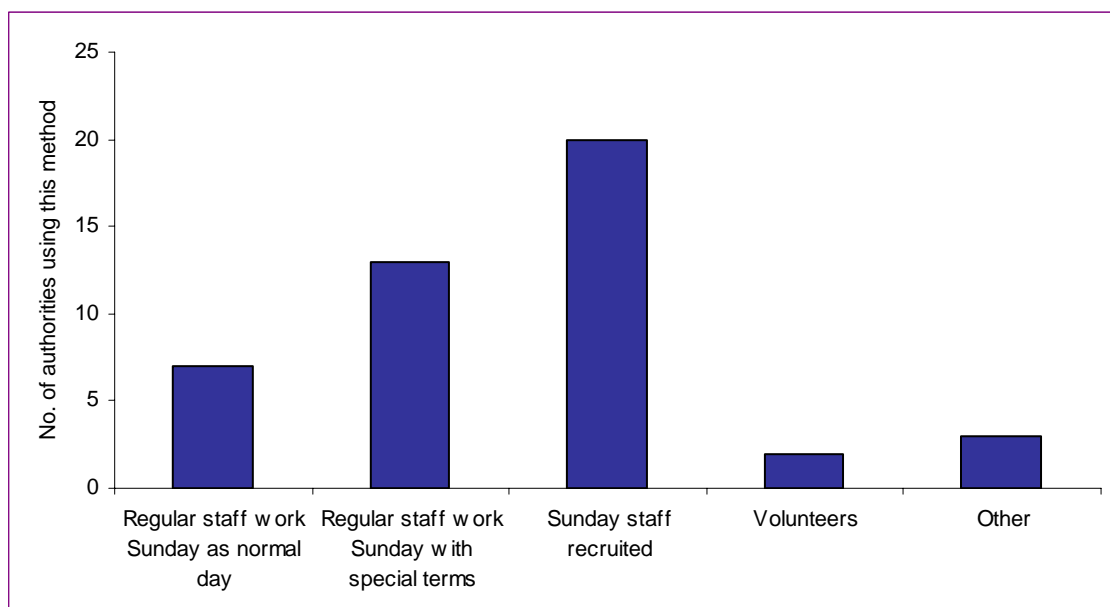


It is important to note that an option for “none of the above was noticed” was not included in the survey. That said, only two authorities made a comment that they would have chosen such an option.

Figure 6.5 could suggest that more visits are made by existing users, though, of course, membership does not necessarily include people who have come in for an hour to read a newspaper, read with their children, or often use computers or take part in family learning activity. Quality of use, and length of stay would be useful indicators here.

Practically speaking, Figure 6.6 shows the following methods of staffing Sundays in libraries was used:

Figure 6.6 Staffing Sunday opening



Most authorities who opened employed some form of special Sunday staff, though this seems to be underpinned by existing staff with a range of terms and conditions, most likely relating to enhanced payments, in place.

As this is likely to be a key area of interest, especially given the results of the survey of those not open, and the barriers they identify, the further information provided (for example “other methods”) is provided in full:

“Also Saturday assistants work Sundays”

“Staff are paid flat rates – one level for those ‘in charge’ of a library and lower for all the others”

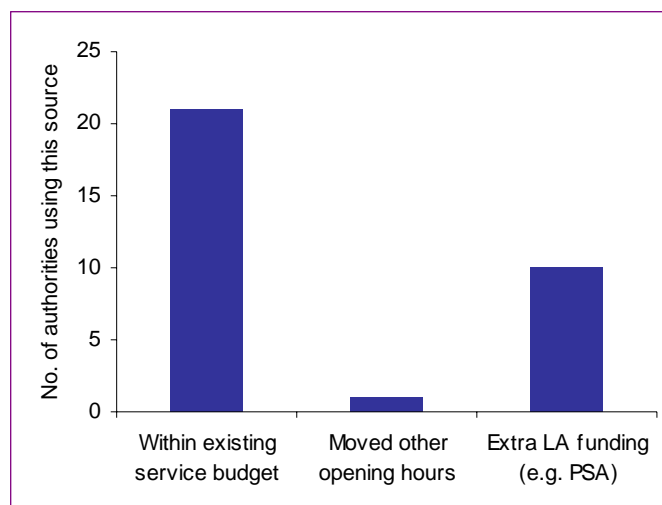
“Firstly current staff were asked if they would like to work on Sun[day] and be paid at 1.78 times normal rates. Thereafter all gaps were filled by recruiting new staff who usually worked on Sun[days] only to start with but the intention is to integrate them into the weekly shift pattern as time goes on”

“Sports service staff, already contracted to work Sundays, were trained in library counter assistant work. Note since 2000 all newly appointed library service staff have contracts that include the requirement to work Sundays, Bank Holidays and late evenings (to 22.00) if service needs dictate. Approx 30 of all library service staff are now employed on these terms. This was done to make future Sunday opening at other libraries easier but so far funding has not allowed us to open more libraries on Sundays.”

“Existing regular staff offered opportunity to work on Sundays. New regular staff contracted to work Sunday on normal terms if required – no premium payments.”

Sunday opening was financed primarily within existing budgets, though in a few cases increased local authority funding was available. In a small number of cases this was through the PSA.

Figure 6.7 How Sunday opening was funded



Hardly any of the authorities took the decision that it was worth moving hours from another part of the week to broaden opening to include Sunday as well.

In terms of using self service to support Sunday opening, 17 authorities do not, while eight do in some of their Sunday locations. Two use RFID and two use traditional self service, where this information was provided.

Twenty-two authorities do not have a particular Sunday “offer”, eight do. Of those that do, some of the things on offer on Sunday include: family activities, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, writing groups, cultural diversity events, Sunday storytimes, monthly family fun days, family learning, baby bounce and rhyme sessions, adult reading groups, movie clubs. It is noted that these are often when time permits.

Further details about Suffolk County Council's distinctive offer is shown in a case study later in this section. Three respondents commented that the offer contributed to a more relaxed look and feel, and seemed to be well received. Another who had not made an offer said that a future pilot would try this to test how it was received.

Some of those that did not make an offer often commented that the point was to have Sunday as a “regular” day and offer the same service, sometimes viewing this as an issue of quality.

The issue of having time to maintain and upgrade systems was raised – one respondent commenting that if systems are down, Sunday visits can reduce to 20. Whilst it is unclear in that particular case what caused visitor numbers to reduce (even if issuing systems were not working), it is true that any planned maintenance of council systems which might regularly affect computer facilities, or staff ability to carry out basic circulation and catalogue functions, could impact on the quality of visit. One day in the week when the service is not open does leave a window for maintenance and upgrades.

One respondent commented that Sunday staff often did not work during the week and this proved a problem in terms of their skills and knowledge or overview of other staff, they also noted a problem recruiting qualified librarians for a Sunday.

Ten libraries have targeted particular groups or communities, 21 have not. Where information was provided, groups targeted include families, young people, people employed all week, new and emerging communities, particular Jewish communities, Dads, members of the Chinese community who have difficulty accessing the service at other times, church goers where libraries are based in church halls, and young people studying for exams.

Anecdotal evidence from the 18 authorities who felt they had noticed particular audiences making use of the library on a Sunday suggests the following groups have been seen across the branches open: Dads while Mums go shopping, single parents who have access at the weekend, visitors to the city, ethnic minority groups using PCs, Bangladeshi population, students, people coming in as a family especially from ethnic communities, migrant workers. Many felt that the average age was younger as fewer older people seemed to come in. Others, however, noted that older and single people were noticeable in their presence. Also it was noticed that people seemed to stay longer and use the library in different ways: several commented that People's Network use was high.

In terms of factors to do with location, the overwhelming majority of respondents felt that libraries to be opened on a Sunday should be in busy areas with retail, housing, or attractions nearby. One noted a pilot had taken place in a geographically isolated community and that had been less successful, whereas the second pilot was to take place in the central library where a much higher uptake was expected, even if it was not new users.

Suffolk is able to offer a perspective based upon both rural and urban libraries being open: “Libraries in areas with footfall for other reasons do benefit and those with a good, sustained programme of activities tend to be more successful. Some rural libraries are less well-used; this may be related to other footfall and/or quality of offer [issues] in particular branches.”

Authorities who open on a Sunday were asked whether they had identified particular factors with regards opening hours which might affect successful Sunday opening. The most common single issue to come up was that they should mirror local retail hours and that this seems to have been successful. In addition to this, one authority noted that two of its branches had different busy periods and thus different opening hours, suggesting there is not one ‘catch all’ successful time on a Sunday. That said, four authorities reported that afternoons were busier, or selected to allow people to lie in, attend church, or even so that IT had one block of hours which it had to support.

One authority noted that its pilot of opening in the morning was successful, whilst another noted that usage seemed to build during the afternoon.

6.2 Case study of Tower Hamlets Council

Tower Hamlets operate their four Idea Stores on a Sunday. Sunday opening was something they started to do with the opening of the first Idea Store in Bow, in May 2002. Integral to the branding of Idea Stores, Sunday opening is something they felt they would not consider designing a service without. They felt that one of the most important aspects of their approach was that it was “bold and confident”.

Tower Hamlets Council operate eight libraries in East London, four of which are flagship Idea Stores, and four which are more traditional libraries. The latter venues are not open on Sunday.

The Idea Store in Whitechapel is, according to Tower Hamlets’ own information, “drawing in visitors from all over the borough and from other parts of London (17.5% of users are non-resident). In the short time since its opening it has become the fourth most visited library in London”³⁰.

Idea Stores grew out of a desire to mark a step change in the delivery of library services. In 1999 a huge survey of residents showed that whilst libraries were valued, there was great dissatisfaction with the quality, nature, and location of the service that was being offered. The Idea Store concept merges library and adult learning services in flagship buildings, including meeting rooms, and an area for relaxation/coffee where magazines and books can be read. The project involved multi-million pound investment.

So the ideological base for Idea Stores very much encompassed Sunday opening. Tower Hamlets describe their Sunday opening as “not tokenistic”, and say they open for as long as they can legally open, in Whitechapel this is the same as the nearby supermarket (11am to

5pm). They do feel that retail has led the way, and that we should reflect that – questioning whether the notion of the regular library routine is pretty much gone, how many of our users really do come every Thursday morning? How many of our users who come in on a Thursday morning *could only* come in on a Thursday morning?

Building and location are part of the branding. Research went into where people go and when, reflecting the location of the Idea Stores. It was very important to develop this offer where people were – usually urban and retail areas. It was suggested that due to the location of the library, it was unlikely that many people would visit the “tiny” Isle of Dogs library on a Sunday, for example.

Research has shown that 50% of people visit Idea Stores for reasons other than book lending. The offer is wide, with adult learning courses, the People’s Network, books in many languages, reference and information. On a Sunday the offer is similar, the availability of these services, but with the public at heart. For example, if local groups and clubs are looking to book an evening meeting in one of the Idea Store rooms, but nothing is available, a prompt may be issued by the Manager that they could try a Sunday.

Opening hours are uniform across Idea Stores. Sundays are most popular in Whitechapel and Canary Wharf. I queried whether they felt that the faith of many of their users (there is a high number of Bengali residents) meant that Sunday was a ‘normal day’ and thus popular was felt to be relevant. I did not get the impression this was considered a key factor in the success of Sunday opening. Indeed, at the Watney Market library, if they were to close on a Friday (a more important day in the Muslim faith), they would probably choose to open on a Wednesday rather than Sunday.

Staff terms and conditions entitle them to enhancements for Sunday working, but Tower Hamlets do not tend to have Sunday only staff. The service is very well supported politically, even the social services budget at one time was cut to support libraries.

Because Sunday opening is so wrapped up in the Idea Store brand, specific targets for it were not set, it is seen as so integral. It was recognised, however, that a target of increasing issues, visits, and membership, whilst desirable, would not reflect the true picture of usage. There was no evidence to suggest that different clientele used Idea Stores on a Sunday, though it was felt this might be partly the case. Whitechapel Idea Store does attract a queue at 11am on a Sunday.

There are plans for more Idea Stores, all in urban and retail areas.

The nature of the “offer” from Tower Hamlets differs in ways from the one from Suffolk discussed in a later case study – it is not so distinctive from weekday provision. This is neither a plaudit or a criticism: it does show, however, a different approach to an “offer”. The books, of course, are available at all times.

6.3 Case study of South Lanarkshire Council

South Lanarkshire have been operating their largest library, East Kilbride, on a Sunday since 2004.

South Lanarkshire Council operate 25 libraries in a largely rural area to the south of Glasgow. There are a number of urban centres which gives South Lanarkshire a mix of provision: 17 of its branches are open for 45 hours a week or more. The population served is just over 300,000.

Following a Best Value Review in 2002, changes to opening hours was one of the things acted upon. The motivation was user response which told the council that there needed to be more flexible opening hours. That said, there was no clear definition in the comments made – whether this meant opening earlier, opening later, or opening at weekends. During 2004, and following the opening of the newly refurbished Hamilton library in 2003, a pilot was carried out in four of the largest libraries: East Kilbride, Hamilton, Rutherglen and Lanark. The pilot was primarily concerned with opening later into the evening (until 9pm, twice a week) in these libraries, with Sunday opening on a Sunday afternoon (12.30pm until 4pm) to be trialled at East Kilbride.

Although not the reasoning behind Sunday opening, it was felt that the opening hours perhaps made it difficult for employed people to use the service, and it was noted that these were the people paying income tax! The motivation was to widen access.

East Kilbride was chosen because the library is in a shopping centre (one of the busiest in Scotland) which is still expanding. Location was seen as crucial, with Hamilton not seen as a likely candidate due to it being slightly away from the town centre in a civic building, and Lanark is in an office street. Implicit in this is the view that only devoted library users would make the special journey. In November 2004 the review report showed a significant increase in issues and visits, with the library on a Sunday often doing 200 issues in its 3.5 hours of opening. The pilot was mainstreamed, though not extended to other branches.

In terms of staffing, volunteers from the existing staff were requested during the pilot, with Saturday staff and others being given the opportunity to take on extra or new Sunday roles. Three volunteers were found for the length of the pilot. Interestingly there was more staff resistance to working later in the evening than working on a Sunday. Once the pilot was sustained, a Sunday Supervisor was recruited, and methods such as e-mail, the branch diary/notebook, and telephone calls were employed to ensure some level of integration with regular staff, with a view to equity of service and customer service. The person taking the role, was, in fact, someone with experience in the libraries, which helped.

South Lanarkshire is clear that library use is changing and that, whilst access to books is of core importance, there will be people who come to use the library on a Sunday, perhaps for the computers, or as a place to sit and read a newspaper whilst the family are shopping. In terms of widening access, this is seen as important.

There is no particular “offer” on a Sunday, though during the spring and autumn there are often adult learning sessions, usually run by the local adult and community learning service, and these have proven “surprisingly” popular. Such usage would not show in issue statistics, or even membership statistics in some cases, which impacts on how success is measured in South Lanarkshire. In their view, even if Sunday users are simply users who would have come

at another time in the week, this is valid – Sunday may now be more convenient. This is seen as being customer driven. It is hoped, of course, that widening access also means increasing users.

East Kilbride library gets between 12,000 and 15,000 issues a year from Sunday opening, significant when you consider this is equivalent to half the yearly issues from a smaller branch in the authority. If issues are the measure of success, however, something South Lanarkshire question, then what level of issues shows success? Similarly visitor numbers do not show how long people stay, and what services they make use of during their time in the library: a senior manager visited one of the branches after receiving visitor figures which he felt were lower than he would have expected, and noted that the library seemed to be very busy.

Choosing the right success measure was recognised as being a challenge by South Lanarkshire, especially where shrinking budgets and the need to achieve value for tax payers' money means any penny spent on a new set of opening hours needs to be justified. In their case, issues and visits were considered, but the need to be customer focussed, and recognise when the service was being well used in all ways had to form a strong part. I asked the difficult question – do you think you would shut a branch during a weekday in order to roll out Sunday opening elsewhere, but there was a reluctance to remove an existing day, due to similar issues of choice, though if it was felt strongly that the library location was right, it was acknowledged it might be possible to close at Wednesday lunchtime to enable a Sunday. It should be noted, however, that this question was posed by me, and is not planned by or the policy of South Lanarkshire at this time.

6.4 Case study of City and County of Swansea

The City of Swansea's experience of opening on a Sunday demonstrates that smaller libraries can prove a success when it comes to delivering a busy and vibrant service on a Sunday. This case study was provided by Peter Gaw.

“Killay new library opened in May 2006 on the site of the previous library, which had burned down, due to an arson attack, four years previously. The council spent several years operating a skeleton service from a local church hall with very reduced opening hours.

“An alternative site was also sought for the new library as the existing site was some way out of the retail footprint and was tucked behind a very large power substation. This was not possible, however, and so in May 2006 a new 230m² library was opened on the existing site (with the power station removed, providing a street level view of the building) opposite a doctors surgery and pharmacy.

“The new library had a 48 hours opening hours pattern funded, and the libraries management team had wanted to pilot Sunday opening for a couple of years. Killay was not an automatic decision as the consultation had not really raised the issue, there were other libraries that could project greater Sunday footfall, and there was no track record for Sunday opening hours in Swansea or any other Welsh library service. However despite very little evidence it was decided to pilot Sunday afternoon opening.

“The key aspect of piloting was around staffing and handling a significant change in working patterns. As the new library was to recruit the majority of its staff from fresh, thus making the new deal easier to bring about, there was an ideal opportunity to build a case in advance of a new Central library due to be opened in March 2008. This, of course, would depend on success. Recruitment of a new manager and team was then undertaken on the basis of Sunday opening.

“Staff were mainly recruited from retail and/or the book trade, and thus not only accepted the working patterns but positively promoted a new style of service on a Sunday afternoon. The public responded very well and the average Sunday would see more than 350 visitors, many staying for an hour taking part in activities and using the range of services available.

“The key to the success was clear to the management team: the new building, good marketing, excellent product but most of all a staff who really promoted Sundays as a place to go and relax.”

6.5 Case study of Suffolk County Council

Suffolk County Council have been opening all of their 44 branch libraries on a Sunday since 2003. This was a core part of their “challenging step change” to ensure that libraries were relevant in five or ten years, not just in 2002.

Suffolk County Council serves a population of almost 800,000. Fifteen of its libraries are open for between ten and 29 hours a week, with a further 15 open for between 30 and 44 hours. It is a county council located in the east of England, approximately 60 miles north east of London.

Suffolk did receive an increase in its revenue budget, almost £400,000, which made Sunday opening in each branch possible. That said, they emphasise that it was up to them how this was used, but it was ring fenced for increasing their opening hours. They wanted to do something “big and bold” with the money, something which would take the whole service forward. It was felt that only adding opening hours here and there would not be sufficiently bold enough, so they opted for a package which included Sunday opening everywhere, and extra evening and weekday sessions.

Having considered the results of their own surveys which saw the public commending them for what they do, but recognising that many people were not interested, and after studying recent reports such as *Building Better Libraries*³¹, Suffolk decided that they needed to target specific audiences, including the 24 to 39 age group. Targeting them now might also deliver pay back as many of them become parents.

Opening on a Sunday was identified as providing a good opportunity to make a different offer, something visibly different. To do it in every library, all in one go (opening was staggered across three months) made the offer very easy to promote. The project to move to this service was complex, and included fifteen strands, such as consultation, staffing, opening hours patterns, complete costings, and so on. Marketing and branding was given prominence. The money available meant all libraries could open for five hours on a Sunday, and most also increased their opening hours during the week.

In terms of offer, Suffolk themselves say: “we will be offering all visitors the ‘Sunday Experience’. Unlike the rest of the week there is music and refreshments - you can wander round, listen to the music, eating and drinking while you go! Story times for children and families feature as Sunday activities in most libraries. Most libraries are also offering drop-in homework support clubs. Sundays offer performances from local schools, music groups, dance clubs and much, much more, making Sundays, fun days! Some libraries also arrange for local clubs, organisations and individuals to pop in and give talks, demos and taster sessions. If you would like your club to have a regular Sunday meeting at your library, please let us know.”³²

They also go on to remind users that regular services are available. On Sunday self service is available in all libraries, and this is part of the deal: Sunday is self service day, with staff free to run or manage events. CD players were brought for each branch, along with performance licenses. Coffee machines were purchased. Staff t-shirts and sweatshirts were produced, and professional banners, new library cards, and publicity were produced. Sunday “should not resemble a weekday service”. This is not to say that the quality of service received is variable, but the feel of the library on that day should be different.

In terms of the offer in each branch on an ongoing basis, staff build a programme within guidelines, and this is sustained by them. This includes Bookstart events and activities using Stories From The Web, but has also included a local demand for salsa classes! IT taster sessions, family learning, People’s War events, even availability of Playstation games, live music, and Warhammer clubs form part of the mix. Suffolk believe that this community-up approach enhances its ability to promote community engagement. Similarly, of course, whilst people are in the library they can be exposed to the relaxed, friendly atmosphere, and interesting and often restful place, and most importantly the range of books, information, and reading resources.

Consultation took place with a wide range of people. Because Suffolk were specifically targeting 24 to 39 years olds, however, they did not want to survey the views of a disproportionate number of older people, who they felt might already find weekday and Saturday opening hours convenient. Included in the consultation were parish councils, non users, and the local Church of England Diocese.

A programme of staff auditions took place in order to recruit the number of staff required, over 100, in such a short time. So many extra staff were required in order to keep all 44 libraries open on an additional day each week. A senior member of staff in larger branches, plus a library assistant were drawn from regular staff, with Sunday staff providing extra staffing. As mentioned before, an attractive rate was offered to attract the right people to promote the Sunday offer. Suffolk have produced a case study of their ‘X Factor’ style recruitment process, held at Ipswich Football Club, and this is attached at Appendix C ([page 59](#)).

The background to this saw staffing terms and conditions worked out in 2002, before Sunday opening was planned. This dispensed with premium payments for weekend working, including Sundays, for all new staff, and it included payments for Saturdays. New staff would go straight onto these new terms and conditions. In terms of Sundays, a “reasonable” rate was offered to ensure that the necessary calibre of people were attracted to these jobs. Senior staff are also available on weekends, whilst Suffolk’s ICT partner offers some support at weekends.

The roll out took place over ten weeks, with at least one large library celebrating its opening each week. Great care was taken with the roll out plan, given the emphasis Suffolk placed on developing a brand, using marketing consultants, and selling the message. Rather than necessarily going down the route of opening libraries linked for administrative purposes, the catchment for local newspapers was studied and openings were banded so that maximum publicity could be gained. Where Sunday opening had previously been in place, in Lowestoft, this was stopped some weeks before to create a buffer. This was so that the new Sunday offer could be emphasised.

A year on and Sunday opening was reviewed. 60% of those asked liked the new hours. Four of the smaller libraries (out of the 44) were not performing quite as well as hoped, but in order to maintain a countywide offer, it was demonstrated that even despite slightly lower usage rates, the cost per visit was still cheaper to the council than a subsidised bus seat. A report to the County Council Scrutiny Committee was produced as a DVD, this powerful film is well worth watching and is available from Suffolk County Council. It was then endorsed by the next administration, which shows that is “very well” embedded within Suffolk culture.

Suffolk think that if they started again there is not a lot they would do differently. They acknowledge that a key thing for them was the vision to open all branches, and the importance of the offer – hence the approach to recruitment and publicity. When asked if they thought trying a pilot site would have led them to opening all their branches, they replied they suspected it would not.

7 Key messages, and critical success factors

In order to develop critical success factors, it is necessary to consider some of the broad themes, assumptions, and messages which have come through the research findings. Many of the findings clearly do not show a consensus: for example there was no consensus on whether to open on a Sunday morning or a Sunday afternoon. This is probably unsurprising.

This section sets out to analyse the results of some of the main factors identified as being critical for success, and draws out the themes and assumptions, and sometimes contradictions, running through the responses. A final part of this section also looks at what people thought the critical success factors were, with some analysis of whether they appear correct against the research findings.

7.1 Key messages about location

There was general consensus from all three groups of respondents that Sunday opening would be more suitable in “busy retail areas”, though it should be noted that those who do not yet open were asked “what sort of location would you try *first*”. Where retail areas were not mentioned, a more general definition of “the busiest” or existing popularity in any authority was suggested.

Interestingly one respondent did broaden this by noting that “if we were to be sited near other facilities with Sunday opening then it would be a logical step, but in a town centre location where no other outlets are open would probably not be a success”. This brings across the strong feeling from all three groups that we need to capitalise on footfall generated by others, mostly identified as retail, but occasionally leisure or simply where there is existing footfall. There was also the point made about capitalising on a shared location.

Although the prevailing and most widely held view, it was not the only view put forward. Surrey reported that the new library at Walton on Thames is in a shopping centre development, and that the developers consider that the library will bring footfall to the centre. This is an interesting perspective, and probably one which might benefit from further research and examination. Comparing footfall, demographic, and patterns of visit to libraries in a way that retail companies try to do (for example with their loyalty schemes) could enable us to compare with the retail or leisure sectors, perhaps to understand more deeply what drives footfall. Are we confident enough about our own ability to draw in users, or is this truly not a reality?

Hendon noted that they consider their library to be busy simply because it is the only facility that is open in the area on a Sunday, whilst Swansea admit to being surprised by the level of business in a library based in a residential area.

We should, perhaps, also reflect on whether benefiting from others’ footfall might generate brief transactional visits, admittedly those which register against issues/visits/membership success criteria, rather than capitalising on quality of visit. That is not to imply that one type of visit has more value than another, rather it reflects a question about whether we could, if we wanted to, expect more from a Sunday as it is, arguably, unlike any other day of the week. Understanding how people have deployed “offers” will support this.

As Suffolk said: “Libraries in areas with footfall for other reasons do benefit and those with a good, sustained programme of activities tend to be more successful. Some rural libraries are

less well-used; this may be related to other footfall and/or quality of offer [issues] in particular branches”.

Although the research set out to identify specifically where success followed a particular approach, it should be noted that only a very small number have tried it in a rural or quieter location which makes the prevailing view harder to challenge. Whilst Suffolk have some success, another authority reported the failure of a pilot in a rural library for low usage.

7.1.1 Critical success factor

Try Sunday opening first, or primarily, in your busier libraries, or ones which will benefit from footfall from other sectors such as retail or leisure.

7.2 Key messages about an “offer”

When talking to the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) prior to conducting this research, it was evident that they were keen to understand how opening on Sundays might impact on a library’s role in the community.

In exploring whether authorities make a specific or different offer on a Sunday, and trying to understand the type of service that is available, what became clear was that most community engagement was through offering facilities for adult or family learning, IT access, or story times for families and parents who might only have access or time to spend with children at the weekend. Tower Hamlets’ example of making available (and promoting) community rooms on a Sunday probably comes closer to what I understood MLA to be thinking about, within the context of the 2006 local government white paper, as does some of what Suffolk would call their customer led activity, such as provision of salsa classes.

That said, this research was also interested in how an offer can grow core library activity (books, reading, learning) – most important in its own right – as well as the role of the library in the community.

Absent from the original questionnaires was a definition of what was meant by “offer”. Tower Hamlets would say they make an offer, and detail the range of what is available, however this is largely the offer they would make on a weekday, though the fact it is clearly communicated seems to have brought benefits across all their opening days. Suffolk, however, have clearly gone for a different ‘look and feel’. I do not propose to try and make a definition now, as the majority of respondents did not make an offer which significantly differed from the regular transactional business and what is more interesting is the impact making an offer has had.

Unfortunately, the data collected for this survey, whilst having a value in offering a snapshot of the type of offers being made, and therefore potentially provoking thinking and discussion, does not allow me to demonstrate whether making an offer had a more significant impact on success criteria than not making an offer. Indeed, respondents commented on whether they met their own defined success criteria, another reason why results are not comparable.

It is not, therefore, possible to judge whether the positive messages from authorities such as Suffolk, have led to more usage (by any definition) than services which, for example through co-location, can offer 77 hours of opening across the full week, as noted by Bridgend. What might represent a huge success to one authority may represent a damp squib to another. This

is certainly an area which would benefit from further, more detailed research, perhaps understanding the expectations, targets, and performance of a set group of authorities.

On a personal level, my analysis is that the pictures painted about the potential offers that could be made, such as involvement in local festivals, or offering classes, story times and reading based activity, do feel like capitalising on a day when fewer people might be working and families might be able to share the experience of reading, books and learning. I would even suggest there is more potential for this than on a Saturday, despite the higher levels of business as evidenced much earlier in Table 3.1 (*page 11*). Do we think we can use Sundays to 'grow the business'? How long do we give Sunday opening to get established?

7.2.1 Critical success factors

- Coming strongly through the case studies of those who do open on a Sunday is a perception that an offer, or a distinctive approach on a Sunday, could help develop usage, even if this is not always about a change of 'look and feel'. Interestingly, many of those who do not open on a Sunday, when questioned about what they would hope for from Sunday opening, did talk about attracting new users and, in some cases, a different look and feel.
- Offers are not widespread, however, and more common is the approach of making the 'regular' library offer on a Sunday.
- It is not for this research to dictate or recommend whether an offer should be made, or what it should be, but locally the question should be considered based on what the authority wishes to achieve.

7.3 Key messages about staffing issues

The key here seems to be variety. Indeed, this will no doubt be helpful and reassuring for many respondents to know, given that staffing issues were perceived as being one of the biggest blockages to opening by those who currently do not.

Whilst again it was not possible to come to a consensus about how to approach staffing Sunday opening, the variety of approaches, and often unexpected experiences (for example staff in South Lanarkshire seemingly being more open to Sunday opening than working later in the evening) shows that it might be possible to find a way forward in most situations.

The research does not unlock enough data around funding special Sunday posts, and whether this is more costly than getting regular staff to change their hours, even if you disregard the likely costs and upheaval of any attempt to change core contracts. The evidence has shown, however, a variety of ways round the issue. Indeed whilst numbers are not high, more authorities were beginning to view Sunday working as 'normal' or something which would need to be dealt with formally, than perhaps I had expected (*see Figure 6.6, page 31*).

The research did not show up widespread use of volunteer members of the public, and it is evident that many authorities interpreted the question as being about getting volunteers from existing members of staff.

It would be difficult to summarise this into a success factor for all. One of the more interesting themes coming through is how many authorities had been able to find willing volunteers from

within their own staffing to work Sunday, yet this would presumably be easier in a smaller urban authority where staff from a variety of branches might converge on the branch selected for Sunday opening. In a sparse rural authority this would be much more difficult. Also, if all, or a large proportion of, branches are to open, a different approach would be required.

Successful staff deployment, however, has been demonstrated by authorities using, or having used, a variety of methods. Some of the issues arising, and worth considering, surround quality of service, and ensuring that, whoever your staff are, they understand what happens during the week, processes, services available, and where possible have some means of being integrated with weekday teams. Where special Sunday staff are used, this might be through phone calls, ensuring regular staff are also on duty, or use of a 'day book'.

Authorities looking at this area might also be interested to reflect on how some authorities who use a mix of regular staff and Sunday staff have decided that the senior staff on duty should be regular, with assistants recruited especially, whilst others have opted to employ special senior staff for Sundays with assistants being from the regular staff.

The remarks of the respondent from Peterborough might be most appropriate here, when asked about critical success factors relating to staff deployment: “[I] Don’t think there are any apart from recruiting people visibly demonstrating a lively and enthusiastic personality.” Perhaps unsurprisingly the key message is be realistic and recognise how you might get the staff you need to deliver the service you aim for. If you want to ensure quality/equality of provision, then a way of using existing staff might be the best option, for example.

7.3.1 Critical success factors

- The key issue is to ensure that staff deployed understand if there is a different look and feel, and understand how the work may differ from the rest of the week.
- Also, be realistic about whether you really will have to go for a terms and conditions change, or whether seeking volunteers, or slowly changing terms and conditions might, allow you to open one branch.

7.4 Key messages about consultation

The research findings show that consultation was not carried out by all authorities, though many did consult. A wide range of groups were consulted with, the most common being current users. From a management point of view, staff and trade unions were also a key group, understandably more so with those who have gone on to open on Sundays.

Although it is correct to view consultation with the public, ultimately the funders of the service, as being paramount, one case study, that of Swansea, showed how successful Sunday opening, driven by the belief of library management, was possible in an area where little interest had been shown in the consultation.

Suffolk make an important point about the targeting of consultation. This again highlighted the importance of knowing what you want to achieve, or your offer: why consult with all users or all potential users if you actually wish to attract a particular group? If you really wish to broaden access and attract people who might find Sunday more accessible, it might be sensible not to

consult on convenience of opening hours with groups who, as users, might find the current opening pattern convenient for their lifestyle, or those who might have more flexibility. In Suffolk's case this meant not targeting consultation at pensioners. Whilst it is important not to ignore key voices and core users, it could be argued that this approach gathers more useful information.

So if, as one authority suggests, *“experience shows that any reduction in weekday opening is poorly received by users”*, something which I suspect, anecdotally, is not an uncommon situation, is this actually worth the risk if we feel sure that for those users it is a matter of *convenience* rather than whether they can use the service or not, whereas for others it might be more about the only time services can be accessed?

As with many of the other key measures identified in this research, the key factor seems to be motivation for opening on Sundays, and how we choose to measure success.

7.4.1 Critical success factors

- Be clear what you want to do and who you want to reach, and use a variety of methods to inform your decision, such as desk research.
- Be clear about whether your consultation method will bring you back the most valuable data – for example the views of all might cloud the views of a key group.
- As has been shown, Swansea felt even after no strong feelings were gathered at consultation it was important to trial this offer. After all, it can be difficult for people to conceive something they have not experienced, as we find when visioning new buildings and service provision.

7.5 Key messages about success criteria and motivation for opening

The majority of authorities questioned, when asked what was, or would be, their motivation for opening on a Sunday offered as at least part of the response the answer that either some or all of an increase in issues, visits and membership would be important. It is true that other motivations were identified, and often by those same authorities, such as increasing user satisfaction with opening hours, and further community engagement, but the quantifiable “levels of usage” measures were paramount.

This is understandable, and certainly our core reading services can be judged on issues perhaps more effectively than the service as a whole, and ultimately if your visitor count is low, then Sunday opening, whatever the offer, may not be seen as effective.

That said, South Lanarkshire made the important point that *“a senior manager visited one of the branches after receiving visitor figures which he felt were lower than he would have expected, and noted that the library seemed to be very busy.”* This, it was felt, reflected the fact that those who were coming in to the library were staying longer, and making more use of the range of facilities. Length of visit, and quality of experience, whether studying, researching, reading quietly, using the PCs, or conversing about books or interests with other library users, can be masked by visitor and other usage figures.

Of course, if your aim is for an increase in such figures, which often need to be reported, then those measures are appropriate, and the evidence of this research is that, broadly, you may see some small increases in visits and issues, and maybe membership. That said, the research also suggests, though not under a great deal of examination, that extending hours on a Saturday may be a more effective method of increasing business, if the proportions shown in Table 3.1 (page 11) are typical.

Here, though, it is worth considering whether the money that might have to be spent on Sunday opening, either through publicity or staffing, might be better spent on new stock for that branch if an increase in figures is the motivation. Although this research does not cover this, the relationship between opening hours and an increase in key statistics, as opposed to increasing stock levels and an increase in key statistics would be very useful to understand. A piece of research identifying where the real “bangs for your buck” are could prove valuable, if this is to be an either/or choice within tight budgets.

During an interview for the case study of York City Council, an interesting discussion took place about the importance of choosing the right success measures. Whilst this might sound obvious, it might be easy to go for issues / visits / membership, but if your motivation is involvement with adult learning, and involvement in festivals and the city street scene, other measures which could balance perhaps poorer than expected issues / visits / membership results would be helpful in order to understand the full picture. At least one authority reported that their motivation was to attract families, non users, and a specific BME community, but they list their success criteria as being by visits and issues only. Of course, part of the motivation of attracting those users would be to increase core statistics, but the picture may somewhat have been masked if those were truly the only measures used in evaluation.

Respondents were invited to provide examples of more specific success measures that they had used, though only a small number were received. They covered number of events offered and increasing use by families. I am therefore unable to suggest other measures which have proved effective.

Although the issue was not raised by most respondents, nor was it discussed in the surveys as sent out, some mixed views on the spread of usage to Sundays, rather than the attracting of new users, were identified. Wandsworth reported that their *“pilot found that use did not increase overall but that use was spread over more days which reduced the pressure on Saturdays and increased the customer experience”*. South Lanarkshire felt that if this was what customers wanted, and it could reflect greater convenience, then this was valid. Surrey, however, reflected that when they trialled Sunday opening in Woking during the 1990s, simply spreading use was not deemed to get the best value from resources.

Implicit in many responses is the idea that Sunday opening is an extra, or add on which should be considered once weekday opening (and Saturdays) are more fully covered. Table 3.1 (page 11) would bear this out as a sensible approach. I wonder, however, whether the evidence that has been collected more broadly in this paper is strong enough to suggest that Sundays could be viewed in a different way and as having different potential.

The questions remain: can we afford to change the service we give current users who contribute to our statistics now, and how long can we direct resources to something which might not work in a given area before recognising it has not worked, and how long should you leave it before you make a judgement about success?

Of course, we could argue that we cannot afford not to do what we can to increase hours and attract new users. In some places this might mean giving serious consideration to swapping hours from weekdays, despite the unrest this might cause, if it contributes to keeping extra costs down or neutral. Possibly the only real success measure is to work out what might be appropriate, if anything, and try it.

Whilst one view was that “there is no Sunday culture in this part of Scotland”, Suffolk, who would not choose to close any of their branches, also felt that they might never have opened all of their branches if they had been more cautious. Only locally will it be clear whether, after open minded consideration, Sunday opening is really appropriate.

This research, as it stands, shows gains can be made, but does suggest that some gains might be more easily made in other ways.

7.5.1 Critical success factors

- If you are going to open on a Sunday as a trial, ensure your success measures truly reflect your motivation.
- Be clear about how long you might need if you are trying to ‘grow’ usage or new membership.

7.6 Critical success factors – summary

The critical success factors which I have identified through this research do not exist in the sense I initially expected. Rather than a broad consensus from the research on issues such as location, staffing, “offer”, and when extra hours might be best employed, I find I am concluding more about motivation, consultation and purpose, and therefore how success is measured as being key.

What do people want, should we want the same, and are we ambitious enough? Perhaps a research paper cannot answer these questions, but it hopefully can stimulate those with passion and experience (and power) to again examine this issue. A national survey of non-users may be revelatory.

My only other analysis of the situation, however, rests upon the scenarios and experience upon which the critical success factors are based. Whether or not the success factors are right or wrong, I do believe it is possible to say they have largely been based on a similar type of provision, and in larger libraries. If this is the provision we seek, and this is our motivation for opening, then these success factors carry more weight. If, in fact, we are using these success factors and the analysis to understand whether there is a greater potential for Sunday opening, I think they are less useful.

A further study which was able to fully able to examine the nature of and experience in rural libraries open on Sunday, city centre libraries, libraries offering different types of provision (for example reference libraries, lending libraries, children’s libraries, AV libraries), and even mobile libraries might prove more helpful. This would provide more evidence than this report does from different types of library, though I acknowledge the research would need to be qualitative in nature, given the conclusions this report has drawn about the lack of agreement on measuring success.

8 Conclusion

Having identified some critical success factors, and analysed the research findings, I now reflect back on the objectives for this research.

Overall the research shows that Sunday opening is not unusual in a variety of local authority types, and that many deem it to be successful. It also shows that while more respondents to the survey did not open on a Sunday than did, if some of the constraints to opening were removed, many more authorities would choose to open.

Primarily, opening public libraries on Sundays is seen as being a way to extend the current offer, which may be directed towards new or underrepresented audiences, and one which needs to relate quite closely to quantifiable targets such as issues, membership and visits. The case studies show some authorities who wish to, or do, extend the offer, often in partnership with adult and community learning colleagues. More unusual is the (added value) reading-based or community-activity based approach.

This means that by providing Sunday services in a certain way - largely the familiar transactional, normal, day-to-day business element of our services, and all the benefits that we understand this can bring – it is difficult to conclude objectively about who uses the library on a Sunday and what they use it for, or who might be encouraged to visit and on what scale. The majority of data currently collected is still more focussed on the question “do they use the library?”, rather than how and what for. The case study for Suffolk shows the picture can be different.

Indeed one respondent felt that in posing questions for this research, I was assuming that “*Sunday opening is always a good thing*” and makes the point that “*library services must be cost effective - which is achieved by having busier Saturdays and being closed on Sundays, which is disproportionately more costly and less effective for the reasons above.*” Actually, I do think that libraries should be open for as long as possible and on as many days as possible, and personally I also think that larger libraries at least should be open all day on Saturdays and Sundays, even if this impacts on weekday hours. I do note, however, that this view is not supported by this research report, and I am realistic enough to understand that difficult choices have to be made, which I hope has come through in some of the analysis of this report. What I did hope this report would unlock, however, was an examination of what *is* proving successful, and a discussion about whether this can be replicated elsewhere, what elements of the service might compete for funds and staff time, and whether we can be more ambitious. I do accept this might feel very theoretical to those seeking to simply maintain current opening hours, however.

It is also difficult to conclude about the impact of Sunday opening on local communities. Apart from one library in an area with a large Chinese population, which was successful, no deeper information on impact within target communities was available. This study, therefore, could not gather any evidence to support conclusions in this area.

Sunday opening is not widespread across the country, though it is interesting to note how the populations of many of our large cities have access to services on a Sunday if they are prepared to travel a little way.

Many more libraries are open on a Saturday than on a Sunday, though it is not clear whether, as lifestyles change, Sunday may become a more convenient day, and how this will affect the, admittedly unclear, evidence about evening opening I present in this research. I also think we need to consider how and whether we can grow Sunday services, and generate our own footfall.

In terms of critical success factors for Sunday opening, it was necessary to step back and identify the real reason we provide services, rather than view this as an extension or 'extra'. Is this to provide a way of getting in new library users who cannot access us at other times? Is it about giving even more access for regular library users? Different approaches, of course, may be required to reflect different answers to these questions.

In discussing some of the key themes and messages, further areas for research have been suggested. Inevitably in presenting and trying to analyse the results of what was a wide survey gathering a lot of information, it was not possible to drill down as fully as I would have liked. If this paper provides useful information on the current position of Sunday services, some examples, and provokes discussion, however, I will be satisfied. I would also like to note that I have tried not to make this issue appear too simplistic, or to imply that all it takes is a little willingness, or even, as one respondent noted, to work from the standpoint that Sunday opening is always appropriate. If, in places, I have failed, I ask for your forbearance!

I wish to thank, once again, those authorities who gave up some considerable time to help with this research.

Appendix A Survey questionnaires

The questions asked on the three different surveys used can be found here. The original survey was web based.

Those who currently open on Sunday

Q No	Question	Multi-choice options
Section 1: About your authority		
1	Name of authority	
2	Position of person filling in survey	
Section 2: Sunday opening		
3	How many of your branches operate on a Sunday	
4	Of that number, how many operate for 5 or more hours on a Sunday	
5	What are your total opening hours, for the whole service, on a Sunday	
6	What proportion of your weekly figures for issues fall on a Sunday, for those branches open	
7	What proportion of your weekly figures for visits fall on a Sunday, for those branches open	
Section 3: Saturday opening		
8	How many of your branches operate on a Saturday	
9	Of that number, how many operate for 5 or more hours on a Saturday	
10	What are your total opening hours, for the whole service, on a Saturday	
11	What proportion of your weekly figures for issues fall on a Saturday, for those branches open	
12	What proportion of your weekly figures for visits fall on a Saturday, for those branches open	
Section 4: Other accessible hours		
13	How many of your library branches open for at least one late evening, 7pm or later	
14	How many of your library branches close for a period at lunchtime or teatime	
Section 5: About your Sunday opening		
15	How long is it since you began operating your first branch on a Sunday (Years and months)	
16	Did you operate a staged or 'trial' approach with one branch, or open all the branches at the same time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staged / trial approach • All at same time
17	Did you carry out research and/or public consultation before deciding to operate on a Sunday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (go to Q18) • No (go to Q19)

18	Which groups were consulted with?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non users • Specific cultural groups (e.g. religious or social) • Specific communities • Staff/trade unions • Others (please specify)
19	Was there any other motivation for operating on Sunday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To meet public library standards • To meet the needs of a particular group or community • Responding to public pressure • As a way to increase issues • As a way to increase visits • As a way to increase membership • Other (please specify)
Section 6: Success measures		
20	What success measures/targets did you set for your Sunday opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased issues • Increased membership • Increased visits • Increased user satisfaction with opening hours • Measures relating to community engagement such as family learning, skills development etc. • Targets for involvement by specific groups • Other (please specify)
21	Have you met the success criteria you set yourself? Please give any further information below.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • Partially
22	Have you noticed any of the following, having opened on Sunday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall increase in issues • Overall increase in visits • Overall increase in membership • We have noticed the above but think it is due to factors other than opening on Sunday
Section 7: Strategic decisions around Sunday opening		
23	How do you operate on a Sunday with regards staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular staff are now contracted to work Sunday as a normal day • Regular staff work Sunday with special terms • Special Sunday staff recruited • Volunteers • Other (please specify)
24	How have you funded Sunday opening?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within existing service budget • Moved other hours to achieve • Project funding or partnership • Extra local authority funding (e.g. PSA) • Other (please specify)
25	Do you use self service technology to support Sunday operation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, RFID • Yes, EM technology • Yes, a mix per branch

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, in some branches • No
26	Do you have a specific Sunday “offer” (e.g. family activities, learning)? What is it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (please specify) • No
27	Have you targeted particular groups with Sunday opening? If so, whom.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (please specify) • No
28	Have you noticed any particular audiences who seem to make use of the library on Sunday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (please specify) • No
Section 8: Critical success factors with regards to Sunday opening		
29	Please specify any factors with regards the location of the library branch(es) operating on Sunday which you consider to be critical to the success of Sunday operation. (This might include proximity to leisure and retail outlets which are open, or whether you have noticed a difference between rural and urban locations, for example)	
30	Please specify any factors with regards the hours chosen to operate on a Sunday which you consider to be critical to the success of Sunday operation	
31	Please specify any factors with regards the “offer” you make to users on a Sunday (if this differs from other days) which you consider critical to the success of Sunday operation	
32	Please specify any factors with regard to staff selection / deployment / training which you consider to be critical to the success of Sunday operation. (This might include particular work you have done with staff teams to encourage support for the Sunday offer, or techniques used to garner union support, for example)	
33	If you have any further comments you wish to make, or information you wish to make me aware of, please use this box to do so.	
Section 9: Following up this survey		
34	If you would be prepared to take part in a follow up interview about accessible and Sunday opening, please include your name and telephone number in the box below. Thank you.	

Those who have now stopped opening on Sunday

Q No	Question	Multi-choice options
Section 1: About your authority		
1	Name of authority	
2	Position of person filling in survey	
Section 2: Sunday opening		
3	How many of your branches operated on a	

	Sunday	
4	Of that number, how many operated for 5 or more hours on a Sunday	
5	What were your total opening hours, for the whole service, on a Sunday	
6	What proportion of your weekly figures for issues fell on a Sunday, for those branches open	
7	What proportion of your weekly figures for visits fell on a Sunday, for those branches open	
Section 3: Saturday opening		
8	How many of your branches operate on a Saturday	
9	Of that number, how many operate for 5 or more hours on a Saturday	
10	What are your total opening hours, for the whole service, on a Saturday	
11	What proportion of your weekly figures for issues fall on a Saturday, for those branches open	
12	What proportion of your weekly figures for visits fall on a Saturday, for those branches open	
Section 4: Other accessible hours		
13	How many of your library branches open for at least one late evening, 7pm or later	
14	How many of your library branches close for a period at lunchtime or teatime	
Section 5: About your Sunday opening		
15	For how long did you operate on a Sunday (years and months) and when was this.	
16	Did you operate a staged or 'trial' approach with one branch, or open all the branches at the same time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staged / trial approach • All at same time
17	Did you carry out research and/or public consultation before deciding to operate on a Sunday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (go to Q18) • No (go to Q19)
18	Which groups were consulted with?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non users • Specific cultural groups (e.g. religious or social) • Specific communities • Staff/trade unions • Others (please specify)
19	Was there any other motivation for operating on Sunday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To meet public library standards • To meet the needs of a particular group or community • Responding to public pressure • As a way to increase issues • As a way to increase visits • As a way to increase membership • Other (please specify)

Section 6: Success measures		
20	What success measures/targets did you set for your Sunday opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased issues • Increased membership • Increased visits • Increased user satisfaction with opening hours • Measures relating to community engagement such as family learning, skills development etc. • Targets for involvement by specific groups • Other (please specify)
21	Did you met the success criteria you set yourself? Please give any further information below.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • Partially
22	Did you noticed any of the following, having operated on Sunday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall increase in issues • Overall increase in visits • Overall increase in membership • We have noticed the above but think it is due to factors other than opening on Sunday
Section 7: Strategic decisions around Sunday opening		
23	How did you operate on a Sunday with regards staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular staff are now contracted to work Sunday as a normal day • Regular staff work Sunday with special terms • Special Sunday staff recruited • Volunteers • Other (please specify)
24	How did you fund Sunday opening?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within existing service budget • Moved other hours to achieve • Project funding or partnership • Extra local authority funding (e.g. PSA) • Other (please specify)
25	Did you use self service technology to support Sunday operation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, RFID • Yes, EM technology • Yes, a mix per branch • Yes, in some branches • No
26	Did you have a specific Sunday “offer” (e.g. family activities, learning)? What was it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (please specify) • No
27	Did you target particular groups with Sunday opening? If so, whom.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (please specify) • No
28	Did you notice any particular audiences who seemed to make use of the library on Sunday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (please specify) • No
Section 8: Critical success factors with regards to Sunday opening		
29	Please specify any factors with regards the location of the library branch(es) operating on Sunday which you consider to affected the success of Sunday operaton. (This might include	

	proximity to leisure and retail outlets which are open, or whether you have noticed a difference between rural and urban locations, for example)	
30	Please specify whether you think the hours chosen to operate on a Sunday affected the success of Sunday operation	
31	Please specify any factors with regards the “offer” you made to users on a Sunday (if this differs from other days) which you consider affected the success of Sunday operation	
32	Please specify any factors with regard to staff selection / deployment / training which you consider to have affected the success of Sunday operation. (This might include particular work you have done with staff teams to encourage support for the Sunday offer, or techniques used to garner union support, for example)	
33	If you have any further comments you wish to make, or information you wish to make me aware of, please use this box to do so.	
Section 9: Following up this survey		
34	If you would be prepared to take part in a follow up interview about accessible and Sunday opening, please include your name and telephone number in the box below. Thank you.	

Those who do not open on Sunday

Q No	Question	Multi-choice options
Section 1: About your authority		
1	Name of authority	
2	Position of person filling in survey	
Section 2: Saturday opening		
3	How many of your library branches operate on a Saturday	
4	Of that number, how many operate for 5 or more hours on a Saturday	
5	What are your total opening hours, for the whole service, on a Saturday	
6	What proportion of your weekly figures for issues fall on a Saturday, for those branches open	
7	What proportion of your weekly figures for visits fall on a Saturday, for those branches open	
Section 3: Other accessible hours		
8	How many of your library branches open for at least one late evening, 7pm or later	
9	How many of your library branches close for a period at lunchtime or teatime	

Section 5: About Sunday opening		
10	Have you (within the last 12 months) restructured your opening hours to increase access, either through increasing opening hours, or moving them?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (please go to Q11) • No (please go to Q12)
11	As part of this exercise have you increased the number of hours open outside core office hours (i.e. outside Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, or anytime on a Saturday or Sunday)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No
12	Did you carry out research and/or public consultation before making your decision on opening hours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (go to Q13) • No (go to Q14)
13	Which groups were consulted with?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non users • Specific cultural groups (e.g. religious or social) • Specific communities • Staff/trade unions • Current users • Others (please specify)
14	Would you like to open at least one library branch regularly on a Sunday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • Yes, but there are other service priorities (please specify)
15	Do you expect to operate regularly on a Sunday within the next 6 months in at least one branch?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (go to Q17) • No (go to Q16)
16	What issues are getting in the way of your opening on a Sunday?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing • Cost • Increasing opening hours in other areas is a priority (e.g. late evenings) • Suitable location • None – we choose not to do it • Other (please specify)
17	If you said that you choose not to open on Sunday at Q14, it would be helpful to understand the reasoning behind this.	
18	If you were to plan Sunday opening, what factors do you think you might consider in deciding the location of the branch to try first? (e.g. would you expect rural or urban libraries to be more successful)	
Section 6: Success measures		
19	What success criteria would you expect from Sunday opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased issues • Increased membership • Increased visits • Family learning • Community engagement targets(e.g. volunteer run taster sessions) • Other (please specify)

20	If you have any further comments you wish to make, or information you wish to make me aware of, please use this box to do so.	
Section 9: Following up this survey		
21	If you would be prepared to take part in a follow up interview about accessible and Sunday opening, please include your name and telephone number in the box below. Thank you.	

Appendix B Responding authorities

As of summer 2007, the following library authorities offered Sunday opening in the number of libraries shown, according to returns made to the research questionnaires.

Angus	0	London Borough of Redbridge	0
Bath and North East Somerset	1	London Borough of Southwark	3
Bedfordshire	0	London Borough of Tower Hamlets	4
Belfast Education and Library Board	0	London Borough of Wandsworth	5
Blackburn with Darwen	1	Merthyr Tydfil	0
Blaenau Gwent	0	Moray	0
Bridgend	1	North Eastern Education and Library Board	0
Bury	4	North Lanarkshire	0
Cambridgeshire	3	North Tyneside	0
Ceredigion	0	North Yorkshire	4
Cheshire	0	Northumberland	0
Conwy	0	Nottingham City	0
Derby City	0	Nottinghamshire	0
Dundee	0	Pembrokeshire	0
Durham	1	Peterborough	1
East Ayrshire	0	Poole	0
East Dunbartonshire	0	Portsmouth	1
East Lothian	0	Powys	0
East Riding of Yorkshire	0	Redcar and Cleveland	0
Falkirk	0	Royal Borough of Kingston	1
Gloucestershire	1	Rutland	0
Gwynedd	0	Scottish Borders	0
Halton	0	Sefton	0
Hampshire	2	Shetland	0
Herefordshire	0	Solihull	0
Hertfordshire	6	South East Education and Library Board	0
Leeds	9	South Gloucestershire	3
Leicestershire	1	South Lanarkshire	1
Lincolnshire	0	South Tyneside	0
Liverpool	6	Stirling	0
London Borough of Barnet	3	Suffolk	44
London Borough of Bexley	1	Tameside	0
London Borough of Bromley	1	Westminster	5
London Borough of Harrow	0	Wiltshire	0
London Borough of Islington	1	Wirral	0
London Borough of Lewisham	2	Wrexham	0
London Borough of Newham	4	York	0

Appendix C Library auditions – an innovative way of recruiting

The following case study on recruiting staff was provided by Suffolk County Council.

1. The context

Suffolk libraries were planning to open all libraries on Sundays and needed to recruit a new workforce specifically for the Sundays.

Why a new workforce?

Existing staff had been promised that they wouldn't have to work Sundays, unless they were on a new contract – a new local agreement had been signed in October 2002, which had recognised that libraries in Suffolk are now a seven day service, and that it would no longer be appropriate to make special payments for weekend working. All new staff recruited since October 2002 or on new contracts are subject to these new local conditions.

As important, it had also been recognised that the staff to be recruited needed to be a different profile to the traditional library worker. These staff would need to be relaxed and confident in delivering the Sunday experience, which is targeted at families, ethnic minorities and young people, with:

- Coffee
- Music
- Internet
- Family sessions
- Teenage drop in sessions
- Self service

The Sunday experience is a key part of the transformation of the Suffolk public library service into a C21 service which is targeted at a wider audience and moving from a **No you can't** to a **Yes you can** culture.

More information on this approach is on www.sundaylibraries.co.uk

The new Sunday staff would be paid no less than £6.74 an hour; part of the local agreement was this rate of pay and a commitment to a substantive training programme for all new staff.

2. The challenge

To recruit over 100 people to work at 44 locations between June and July 2003 ready (and trained) to begin working in libraries on Sundays from August 2003. If we had done this conventionally, this would have been over 500 interviews.

We acknowledged early on that this approach was not practical or desirable – firstly our capacity to do over 500 interviews didn't exist, and secondly we didn't want to take the risk that people would be attracted to the good pay, good at interviews, and apparently highly qualified **but** lacking what we wanted which was:

- highly developed interpersonal skills;
- ability to cope under pressure;
- understanding of our new approach; and,
- people with initiative and good judgment.

We hoped that many young people would be attracted by the pay, but we needed to be sure that they were mature and responsible as well as all the qualities listed above.

3. The approach

With Suffolk Employment Agency (SEA) we discussed and agreed that we would try out a different approach – using an auditions style of day with group-work and role play, which we would develop to ensure that we could measure in a structured way, that successful candidates displayed our key requirements.

This would allow us to see lots of people at a time, but also allow us to rapidly screen out the best, using a scoring system, which was fair and transparent. Once we had weeded people out we could then use more conventional interviews in the afternoon.

So, we employed a consultant to help us design and carry out this process, which included:

- training for staff taking part in the recruitment
- paperwork which reflected our key selection criteria
- help and coaching as we went
- a facilitator for the days of auditions, of which there were five- two at ITFC, two in Bury and one in Lowestoft.

We also completely redesigned the application form – focussing on star qualities rather than traditional and academic information – and we advertised using colourful flyers, full colour newspapers advert in the same style, and radio advertising inviting people to auditions.

For our recruiting team, we recognised we needed about twelve helpers for each event so we asked for volunteers and then trained a vertical slice of senior, middle and frontline managers to take part. This was a really impressive development activity, with specially designed training, which also allowed us to develop the key selection criteria and the qualities we wished to see measured. We also test ran the games and the role-plays which we were going to use with our auditionees.

Once people had responded to an advert or a flyer, they were sent a pack and then once returned, invited to an audition day. On the form in the pack they were given a choice of location and preferred place to work.

They were asked to come for the day, promised some fun, and plenty of refreshment and lunch.

4. On the day

When they arrived, and checked in, we gave them drinks and a chance to chat informally; they were then asked them to take part in a warm up exercise, in which we all took part. After this they had a short explanation of what was going to happen, and a presentation from a senior library service manager on what the Sunday are all about.

Candidates were then divided up into pre-arranged groups of about six and seven and asked to play a problem solving game called *Vikings Attack*. This game relies on a whole group working together to crack a puzzle; they need to communicate, agree a strategy and all participate. We used it to measure leadership, team working, organisational skills and creativity with behaviours scored for each out of five. A score of 20 points meant that the candidate was perfect in each! Our assessors only observed and scored two people each.

After this, there was more coffee, and then they were paired off, in different combinations, and asked to participate in some role-play designed to see if they could cope with challenging situations. We were looking for empathy, listening skills, questioning skills and good negotiation skills. Two people took part in each and each had two chances to play a member of staff. Assessors then talked through with each of the candidates how they had behaved.

They were then given a buffet lunch while the assessors disappeared to a private place to make their judgements.

If they scored more than half at each activity, they would be asked to stay for the afternoon and some more conventional interviews. If not, then there was a collective decision about what to do, and mostly our assessors agreed together whether to give them an interview, or to ask them to go home. If they went home, they were given honest but confidence boosting feedback.

If they were asked to stay for the afternoon, they were interviewed by pairs, again different assessors, who would then meet with the facilitator on their verdict.

People were then told immediately if they had got a job.

5. The risks

We were aware that this approach was risky and that:

- we might not be able to recruit enough people,
- that people would be put off by the concept of *auditioning* for a library job,
- that we might end up with too few people for the all the places with Sunday jobs.

6. The outcome

The five auditions days had about 25 or so people coming to each, with over 75 people recruited to work the Sundays across the county. This was 75% of the people we have eventually employed.

We were not able to recruit all our Sunday workers this way and had to resort to different and more traditional methods for some of the very rural places.

While this was disappointing the practicalities of the far-flung gaps did not lend itself to another auditions day.

All of our Sunday staff are excellent, but some of the people recruited in auditions have shone as outstanding and exactly what we wanted for our Sunday teams. Many of them have been given extra work in libraries in the week as well. We know that the process for recruiting them

was as fair as it could be, and gave us a much clearer idea of how they would perform in certain situations.

The process was observed by the SCC Diversity manager to quality check its fairness, and transparency.

7. The learning

You need to ensure that the back office processes have been properly thought through; we would allow more time for this in future, and checking that people sending out packs give the right information and messages.

Ensure that as many front-facing staff are included as possible – then they will buy in to the process as well, and the outcomes. All that did were very committed and engaged with the process and the choices of people.

This was very ambitious and probably never will need to be done on this scale again; the volume of work to communicate with successful candidates, to do contractual work, and to train everyone has been a logistical challenge. But worth it.

We will be using this process again soon with two front line jobs in a larger library – with less candidates but a similar process.

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LISU Mission Statement

LISU is a national research and consultancy centre which promotes good management practice in information, cultural and academic services, through providing independent advice and support for advocacy and for performance evaluation and enhancement.

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1. To provide library and information services managers and policy makers with the range of tools they need to develop services to their full potential, including authoritative data on the operation of services
2. To raise awareness of the value of performance evidence in managing and to increase understanding and the application of such evidence
3. To conduct advanced research that contributes both to the evolution of investigative methods and to the understanding of information, cultural and academic services and the wider knowledge economy
4. To maintain and enhance LISU's reputation for quality in data collection and analysis; reliability and authority in data dissemination; and independence and integrity in reporting results
5. To continue the development of LISU's field of operations, particularly in cultural services, including museums, galleries and archives, and academic support services

LISU Values

1. LISU rigorously protects and promotes its reputation for integrity and unbiased reporting of the results of any investigation which it undertakes
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3. LISU actively contributes to sharing knowledge and extending professional discussion through participation in conferences, scholarly publishing and similar avenues of dissemination

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