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Branding of UK Public Libraries. Case study approach examining branding strategies of UK Public Libraries.

Author: Subnum Hariff

Supervisor/s: Jennifer Rowley,

Manchester Metropolitan University

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Branding of UK Public Libraries

Case study approach examining branding strategies of UK Public Libraries.

Subnum Hariff

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Research Supervisor: Jennifer Rowley, Manchester Metropolitan University

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Abstract

Purpose: Evidence from the literature review suggests that misconceptions and negative stereotypes of the image of public libraries still prevail today despite libraries diversifying and offering a range of services to their local community and contributing to key local and national priorities. This paper sets out to explore how public libraries in the UK are using branding as a marketing tool to reposition themselves with their stakeholders.

Methodology: Literature Review was carried out. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to interview key staff from three authorities, to explore their perception of branding and how they felt their branding approach was helping them reposition themselves with stakeholders. The three case studies chosen reflect the 2 different localised approaches through Devon County Council Library Service and Tower Hamlets Ideas Store and also a national approach via the Welsh marketing campaign of 'Happy Days'.

Key Findings:

Findings from the Welsh campaign would suggest that Public libraries would benefit from a nationally strategic branded marketing campaign to help support local efforts that can articulate clearly the vision for a future public library service.

Clear communication with all staff is required to ensure that staff understand their role as deliverers of the brand and to understand that branding is not just about logos and colour schemes.

Consensus from both Tower Hamlets and Devon Libraries that a brand that is distinct from that of the local authorities would present a stronger brand image and message to the users.

Managing stakeholder conflict and ensuring that political buy-in has been secured is essential for effective branding to be successfully implemented and sustained.

Background

Branding

Branding can typically be defined as

“ a name, term, sign, symbol, design or a combination of these, which is used to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from the competitors” (Kotler, 1999).

In modern practice and especially in service industries it is important to dispel the misconception that branding is just about name, logos, strap-lines and colour schemes. Definitions that explain the nature of branding more fully focus on the following attributes:

..’a promise to deliver a specific set of features, benefits and services consistently to the buyer’ (Kotler, 2003)

‘expression of a relationship between the consumer and the product’ (Rowley, 2006)

‘consumers perception of the offering – how it performs, how it looks, how it makes one feel, what message it sends’. (Rayport and Jaworski, 2001 cited in Walton 2008)

Traditionally branding was associated with the commercial sector but the application of branding techniques and the internalisation of brands and their management, particularly within the service businesses where the employee is pivotal in delivering customer satisfaction has grown. Organisations of all types are recognizing the value and importance of using their brands to improve their performance and build deep relationships with their customers. In an age where the proliferation of competitors and products and services are easily duplicated or replaceable, brands become an important means of simplifying the decision making process for consumers. Brands create difference, relevance and affinity. (Singh, 2004)

A strong brand will increase the trust a person has in purchasing a service and will allow the customer to visualise the nature of a service before it is purchased. A strong service brand becomes a promise of future satisfaction in a service and will demonstrate the value of a service to the prospective user. (Walton, 2008)

The recent surge of interest in branding in the Library and Information sector has been driven due to falling usage, the success of aggressively branded rivals such as bookstores and to a lesser extent government policy initiatives intent on promoting a more user-focused service. (Hood and Henderson, 2005).

There are 3,469 public Libraries in the UK today, attracting over 328.5 million visits in 2007/08, more than cinema and football match attendances, with around 52% of the population holding library membership. (Cooke, 2009)

A surge of investment in new library builds (supported by the governments Private Finance Initiative and the BIG Lottery Communities Libraries Fund), has seen old buildings undergo transformational renovations. Many libraries now have galleries, performance spaces, cafes, free WiFi technology, longer opening hours including Sunday opening, 24/7 access to online resources, wide programme of events, reading groups and a host of learning packages and classes from IT to knitting.

In addition many libraries are building partnerships with other council departments or external partners such as schools, colleges, NHS PCT to deliver shared services in an attempt to not only make cost efficiency savings but to attract new users and widen access.

So we all know then – don't we? – that public libraries of the 21st century no longer have the old 'library brand' image of dark gloomy places with poor book stock and stern unhelpful staff but are modern vibrant spaces, delivering a wide range of services, both in their physical buildings as well as through their online virtual world, that are loved, used and valued by the public!

Current Perceptions of the Library Brand

The first step to effective branding is to establish the existing image and perception of the library and a need to align the corporate image (public perception) with the corporate identity (internal view).

- Many users and potential users of the library service still have negative perceptions of the library service. Research has revealed that these negative perceptions are formed not only by the users library experience but also by

internal and external factors ranging from family influence to the media. (Lily and Usherwood, 2000) A recent qualitative study into the perceptions of public libraries of people in the age group 14-35 suggested that for non-users' negative perceptions of libraries are deeply entrenched'.(McNabola, MLA research briefing no 4, p2)

- A recent study published by OCLC, 'Perceptions of Libraries and Information Resources' in 2005 interviewed 3,300 people from the UK, USA, Singapore, India and Australia to find out about their use of libraries and their perception of the 'library' brand. The study revealed that the 'book' is still the global library brand and that many respondents clearly don't know what their libraries currently offer. (Tennant, 2006)
- Current perceptions of public libraries and public librarians may not fit the reality we wish to communicate, for example in the USA a 'librarian doll' on the market depicts a woman wearing a cardigan, long skirt and sensible shoes with a push button action that moves finger to lips with a shushing noise and action! (Kendrick, 2006).
- Recent moves to rebrand the library service in the UK have included individual authorities renaming their libraries to 'Ideas Stores' in Tower Hamlets and 'Discovery Centres' in Hampshire. This was done to counter the negative perceptions potential users had of the service and to increase usage. The aim was to highlight that libraries are diverse and offer more than just books. (McMenemy, 2009)
- The public library is an institution with a long history and despite libraries that strive to adapt to society's changing demands and needs; deeply entrenched institutionalised images and perceptions are slow to shift and change (Evjen and Audunson, 2008). This is a challenge for public libraries but further strengthens the argument for the need to engage in rebranding and repositioning of public libraries.

Strategic Vision – Compelling Idea!

An effective branding strategy must start with a compelling idea or have a clear strategic vision that embodies and expresses top management's aspiration for what the company will achieve in the future. Evidence shows that public libraries in the UK lack a strategic vision:

- Framework for the Future, the government's 10 year vision for public libraries published in 2003, stated "there is no single vision for the future image and branding of public libraries..." (MLA, Mar 2008, pg 4)
- Libraries offer a range of complex, quite individual experiences; the sheer variety of possibilities makes this very difficult to summarise and could be one reason why libraries find it difficult to explain what they do.
- Developments in Information Technology have also resulted in some confused perceptions of the public library service. Libraries appear to be currently suffering from an Identity crisis. With increasing competition for people's leisure time, changes in consumer behaviour with more people choosing to buy rather than borrow their books and information needs being met by the internet, libraries are having to diversify and redefine what they offer that is of value to the public.
- Benton Report (Weiss 1996) indicated that whilst users showed great trust in the library they were unsure of how the public library would fit in an increasingly digitised society.

Living the Brand –Organisational Culture

Branding means caring about, measuring and understanding how others see you and adapting what you do to take account of it, without abandoning what you stand for. All great brands are built on trust and the organisation's promise of delivery. In service organisations the role of the staff is crucial in delivering the brand promise. How employees understand, engage with and enact the brand values is crucial in ensuring the brand delivers on its promise and is sustained.

- This must start at the top of the organisation with the chief librarian being the brand champion. Library managers and leaders have a pivotal role in developing the brand and fostering a culture that will allow staff to promote and nourish a strong brand.
- If all library staff do not 'buy-in' to the brand there is real danger its impact and value will be seriously threatened. When new services are being created, library staff will need to ensure the key brand messages are central in their service development.
- Hood and Henderson 2005 claim that branding is now at the heart of UK public library marketing plans but often marketing and branding are seen by staff as a function of only the marketing department. Their survey also found that librarians gave very low importance to the impact branding can have on retention and recruitment of staff. Organisational branding as a means of raising morale and encouraging ownership of the service at the staff level is one potential method of improving service quality and reducing staff turnover.
- Brand must also be consistent in its delivery at whatever point the consumer comes into contact with it. Buildings, staff behaviour, printed materials and library websites should also be aligned to the brand image.

Need for a national campaign?

Some UK Public Libraries have invested in re-branding strategies but is this enough? Is there a need for a national campaign that will help reposition and rebrand libraries nationally?

- The National Year of Reading 2008 report concludes that "libraries still suffer from negative media perceptions..." and recommends that "a national brand for libraries be developed which can be used to counter negative perceptions and reporting about libraries in the media" and argues for "an annual library campaign to raise awareness.." and a national on-line presence" (Libraries and the National Year of Reading, 2009)

- A paper published in The Library Management Journal on strategic planning for marketing library services in 2005, concluded that a “major marketing campaign is necessary to increase awareness and educate the library users about available library resources’. (Adeyoyin, 2005)
- OCLC, America in its recent study 'From Awareness to Funding: A study of public library support in America' 2008 argues that ‘..a large scale library support campaign...with the right messages and programs, will increase support for the public library’. (OCLC, 2008, pg 73-75) The research shows that it is not people’s age, gender, education level or household income that determines their funding support for public libraries but their perceptions and attitudes about the library and the librarian.
- Hood and Henderson’s 2005 survey of UK Public Libraries found that over 50% of respondents agreed that a national branding approach would be more effective than a local one.

Research Methodology

For my research paper I decided to take a case study approach; interviewing key staff from 2 public library authorities that have recently focused on rebranding their library service. The third case study is with marketing staff based at Wrexham Library service that run a Welsh national marketing campaign funded by CYMAL representing public libraries, school and university libraries. Interviews carried out were semi structured and were framed around the following questions:

- 1. What does the term ‘branding’ mean for your library service and what were your core objectives?**
- 2. What was the process?**
- 3. What are the library services core identity, values, personality and positioning?**
- 4. How did you communicate your new branding message?**
- 5. How do you measure the success of your rebranding?**

Background

Case study 1: Devon Library Service

The rebranding programme in Devon libraries was driven mainly by the arrival of a new Head of Service, Ciara Eastell in 2008 and supported by the libraries 21st Century Modernisation Programme that had capital monies secured to rebuild and renovate six of the county's libraries. Branding the extensive network of 52 libraries across the county, based mainly in rural settings serving a largely elderly population, as a modern 21st century library service is an ambitious undertaking.

A modest budget of £15k was allocated to contract Bissett Adams to work with staff on their branding philosophy. Engagement and consultation took place with a broad range of stakeholders including frontline staff, library managers, director, directorate colleagues, and cabinet members. Series of road shows in supermarkets were conducted to test out the proposed brand with the public.

The main objectives for the new brand for Devon libraries were:

- To examine the service internally and what it provides, to make sure it reaches the widest possible audience and offers the best possible service tailored to the needs of Devon's people;
- To ensure the value of Devon's libraries is understood by staff, council decision-makers and by the public;
- To communicate what Devon libraries offer and how they can play a major role in the lives of local people.

Senior staff identified that that branding was about articulating to stakeholders the organisations set of core values.

Following consultation the core brand values identified for Devon libraries are

'looking to the future' as a large, ethical and modern organisation.

"Looking to the future' implies a continuum and allows the brand to be rooted also in the present as well as respecting the past. It was recognised that this was very much a service that was in transition and the message was that they are on a

journey to becoming a 21st century library service. This was an important distinction to make as there is often a danger that an overly ambitious branding vision over promises but then fails to deliver. For example the vision statement for Asker Public Library in Norway is “we aim to have a library such as the world has never seen”. (Feyling and Kvanum, 2007) Is that realistically achievable? Over promising could result in disappointment and mistrust if unable to deliver the promise.

The branding concept was developed during 2009 and due to the expansive network is being phased in over the county with the introduction being focused initially to the 6 refurbished/new build libraries.

Case Study 2: Tower Hamlets

The need to rebrand Tower Hamlet Library service came about in 1998 due to an underperforming and under used service. The Head of Service and Director for Culture recognised that there was an urgent need to invest in a radical approach to delivering the public library service to ensure that it remained relevant to people's lives.

An extensive piece of market research was commissioned with users and non users to find out what they would want from a future library service. Following this research Bissett Adams were appointed to work with Tower Hamlets Library service to help develop their branding philosophy. In 1999 a 10 year strategy, to replace libraries with 'Ideas Stores', was written that included the merger of the library service with the councils Lifelong Learning Service. An investment of £20million of capital monies was secured from central government with an additional £10 million from local government from savings that would be achieved by closing existing small libraries and learning centres.

The branding for the staff was very much about how the whole service is delivered via its core values; **engage, empower and enrich**. This meant not just a name change, but providing an extended quality rich service, through iconic buildings located in accessible settings, with excellent customer service. This was about a mind set change in the way the service was invested in and delivered at every stage

Case Study 3: Welsh national campaign 'Happy Days'.

The third case study focuses on the 'Happy Days' Welsh national marketing campaign delivered in 2008. The campaign forms part of the national strategic plan 2006-2011, for the marketing of library services in Wales as part of the @ Your Library Programme (a Welsh Assembly Government initiative to support bilingual library services to meet the needs of the 21st Century). The Welsh campaign is not a national rebranding of libraries in terms of one logo, or one set of core values for all Welsh Libraries. It is however included in this study because the Welsh marketing campaign is underpinned by the recognition that the **'library' brand** is shown to have great equity in terms of awareness and perceived value, but is dogged by negative associations. The aim of the strategy is to make recommendations that build upon the high perceived value and to re-position the brand to challenge the negative perceptions.

Further to this, all public libraries in Wales have signed up to a 'core entitlement offer' which also includes a national web presence (www.library.wales.org), something which has been mooted as part of the Public Libraries Modernisation Review Report published by the Labour government, March 2010.

The core objectives of the Welsh Happy Days campaign were:

- To demonstrate ways that libraries can make people happy
- To demonstrate to non-users/students/key influencers the added value of libraries
- To encourage people to take a fresh look at libraries
- To utilise emotive marketing to shift public/student perception
- To generate anecdotal evidence from library users and staff
- To increase library visitor/usage figures
- To get the media 'on-side' and generate interest in library stories
- To ensure entitlements are embedded in the campaign (public only)

- To drive traffic to www.library.wales.org

Stakeholders and conflict

To those of us that work in the sector, we would not deny that libraries are full of diversely skilled, dedicated and passionate people, full of innovative ideas. However, having to work within the bureaucratic processes of local government structures can often stifle and present unnecessary obstacles for the best of ideas. A whole range of stakeholders from users, non-users, politicians, to senior executive members were identified as key players in how the brand would be shaped and perceived. It is no great surprise then, that conflict tended to rise mainly from the local political decision makers.

Management at Devon libraries were aware that they didn't want to aggravate stakeholders, and were very conscious that the term 'BRANDING' was not used in the communication. Focus was kept on creating an 'identity' for Devon Libraries. Traditional connotations associated with the term branding are that it is wasteful, expensive and unnecessary, something which in difficult economic times is difficult to rationalise spend on.

Interestingly both Devon and Tower Hamlets library services argued strongly for their brand image to be distinct from that of the corporate council brand image. This is contrary to what many other UK authorities are doing, where library services are adhering to strict corporate branding guidelines.

Working closely with Devon County Council (DCC), Devon libraries complied and incorporated the DCC logo in to all of the branding, however a strong and distinct brand image was established. The previous Director for libraries was very supportive, however with current changes in administration, changes in political priorities, and changes in directorates, future challenges lie ahead. Recent concerns over library signage have been raised by a local councillor because it does not fit the corporate brand image.

In Tower Hamlets, the market research highlighted that a service associated strongly with the council was potentially seen as a second class service. With this in mind a very distinct brand image for Idea Stores was created that eliminated any sign of the Councils image or even logo and most controversially the removal of the word 'library'. After the opening and success of the first Idea Store in Bow, politicians

wanted acknowledgment that this was a service that is financed and run by Tower Hamlets Council and subsequently the strap-line 'created and managed by Tower Hamlets' was included.

As the Welsh campaign did not affect individual authorities branding there was no conflict in terms of using the national marketing branding alongside corporate branding. Shared key messages were developed through joint meetings as well as opportunities for more detailed discussions at single sector meetings.

Campaign

The biggest criticism of public libraries is that they simply don't sell themselves enough, 'All Gold, but no glitter!' We know we have a diverse range of quality services to help our communities, businesses, the disadvantaged etc. However we lack the budgets, the expertise and bravado to shout about it!

Once branding values have been conceptualised it is essential that a marketing campaign to communicate the message is implemented. Budgets, timescales and key service priorities were all factors in how the branding concept was marketed through the three case studies.

As part of the modernisation programme in Devon a series of outreach community engagement programmes were delivered in the areas where the 6 new libraries were being built/refurbished including targeted work with deprived communities via a full page advert in a local paper and use of social media. Curiously, the new brand has not yet been transferred to the website or social media sites.

In the initial phase, printed materials produced with the new branding focused on targeting the younger market; under 5's and 5-12's. Further work in segmenting the adult market is yet to be done.

A higher profile and impressive marketing campaign to market the new branding philosophy was masterminded by Idea Stores. This included the production of a high quality glossy magazine that was published 4 times a year. Two years prior to the first Ideas Store opening 20,000 copies were distributed via key points including one-stop shops, schools, libraries and community venues. Advertisements on the

public transport system, the underground and buses were also invested in as well as adverts and articles in the local press. This level of investment was not required for future Ideas Stores, as press coverage and word of mouth spread after the hugely successful opening of the first Idea Store.

In Wales the campaign was structured as follows:

A user and student survey was carried out to find the top 10 things that make people happy from using their library service and to gather evidence and personal stories.

Five key messages targeting different segments of the audience were drawn up and genuine local people and their stories were used in the marketing materials to sell the message. The market messages were segmented to target older people, families, teenagers, primary aged children and students.

A national high profile launch event followed by 4 regional events using Welsh celebrities was co-ordinated to target different markets and engage national, regional and local press.

Staff Buy-in

Before the brand is marketed to its users it is critical that the conceptualisation and consumption of the brand is undertaken by one of the library services most important stakeholders; the staff. If staff do not understand, accept or live the brand, the brand will fail in its delivery. Significant staff training was invested in Tower Hamlets, which included shadowing the retail sector to focus on improving customer service skills and attending a training programme to understand how the brand values would help staff develop themselves and assist them in shaping the service.

In Wales, members of staff at all libraries were encouraged to develop and deliver events linked to the Happy Days campaign. A Marketing Innovation Award for staff, with a £250 prize, provided added incentive and buy-in to the campaign. It was recognised early on, that high profile regional events would need to be supported by a programme of local events to capitalise on publicity and deliver on the promise branded by the campaign.

Positioning.

In an increasingly technologically developed world where access to information is more readily available via the internet and the subsequent decline in book issue and library visitor figures, the debate about the future and the positioning of libraries rages on. All staff interviewed recognised that in terms of positioning, libraries are not in direct competition with bookshops, but need to position themselves within the wider cultural and learning offer that is accessible and integral to people's lives.

As Devon County Council is a non-unitary council, it has been difficult to position libraries within the wider cultural offer and currently libraries are very much fighting their own battle for survival. There are opportunities and possibilities of working more collaboratively with museums and art galleries and other cultural providers, however, political tensions often make that difficult. Currently libraries sit in one directorate and culture in another directorate, so the opportunities and synergies for working together are, at present, few. Looking to the future, opportunities to reposition libraries regionally may be explored as part of the MLA/LGA Future Libraries Programme that Devon libraries have been selected to participate in. (MLA/LGA Future Libraries Programme, MLA Website, accessed 20th September 2009)

The market research conducted in Tower Hamlets highlighted that libraries were not a destination that solicited a special visit. What people wanted was a library service that was accessible, could be combined with a visit to the shopping centre and where a wider range of services including books and information could be accessed. By addressing these issues and merging with the Lifelong Learning service and working to deliver cross government targets a successfully repositioned library service has emerged offering an extended service that is integral to people's daily lives.

Similarly the Welsh marketing campaign aimed to position libraries back into the heart of people's lives by highlighting through its 5 key messages the integral values and benefits libraries contribute to people's lives. The media was targeted, through the high profile celebrity events, as the main medium to relay positive messages about the library service.

Co-branding

Very little work or thinking has taken place around co-branding in public libraries. Opportunities to work in partnerships are driven mainly by government priorities and savings agendas rather than seeking positive brand associations that would enhance the brand of the library. The Idea Stores have cafes however the sub contract will largely be driven by budget rather than strategic branding association decisions though quality of service is seen as an important deciding factor.

What has come through strong from both Devon and Tower Hamlets was a resistance by senior management to allow other council services from using their brand. This was deemed as potentially damaging and diluting the library brand. With two new libraries planned that are shared buildings with other services in Devon, a piece of consultative work needs to be carried out to ensure that the library brand remains strong but is flexible enough to accommodate other brands.

Similarly in 2002, when Tower Hamlets were asked to incorporate a one-stop-shop with their Idea Store, the Idea Stores brand was not yet properly established and therefore there was reluctance to incorporate additional brand associations. 10 years on, now that the brand is strongly established, the Watney Market Library due to open in 2012 will include a one stop shop, but will be built and delivered very much on the Ideas Store branding philosophy. A strong successful brand allows the service to dictate partnership terms and can be flexible to accommodate co-brands without diluting or damaging the core brand image and values.

The Welsh campaign's strongest co-brand association was through the celebrities. Although celebrity brand image and their ability to attract different target audiences was important, other key dictating factors included budget and celebrity availability. Also as it was a Welsh campaign, celebrities that were Welsh and their ability to speak Welsh were a key criterion.

Partnership working with the BBC, as a brand that is trustworthy, was further strengthened when a regular slot on BBC radio was awarded for staff to promote what's happening in Welsh libraries.

Measure of success

For all three case studies, performance statistics; membership, visitor, issue figures, computer usage etc will be used as indicators of success. In Tower Hamlets, usage at Bow Idea Store went from 550,000 in 1998 to 2.1 million in 2009. In 08/09 Welsh libraries reported an increase of 3.7% in visitor figures and book borrowing up by 6.8% compared to the previous year.

Staff retention and recruitment were also seen as important indicators of brand success. Devon will be conducting electronic snap surveys with staff to capture how they feel about working for the service and how they relate to the brand once it has been established. Idea Stores have invested heavily in staff training and are providing opportunities for staff to exploit their potential and diversity of interest and skills through the core values of engage, empower and enrich.

The Head of Service for Devon libraries identified that within the current economic and political climate, the true test of brand success would ultimately lie in brand continuity. Management need to ensure that they can evidence that the branding work is essential to the future delivery of the service. The Ideas Store brand has been established over the last 8 years and is, as identified in the 2009 strategy review, still proving popular for the residents of Tower Hamlets.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

Vision

A recent debate on lis-pub-libs forum highlights the challenges we face around branding the future of public libraries:

“where librarians went wrong is simple. We have failed to agree a simple message that encapsulates the complexity and value of the universal library offering to society. Lacking that simplicity of concept, we have failed to promote what we do.”
Elspeth Hyams

Public libraries are already absolutely brilliant at providing customised support to individuals. In fact they are so good at it that it impedes the ability to relay a simple national message. Yet a simple message is what’s needed to convey the role and value of the service to everyone else. Liz Dubber

Chris Batt, at an address at the JISC Libraries of the Future symposium, 2009 argued that the danger with public libraries is their inability to demonstrate public value and a lack of national coherence. (Batt C, 2009)

If public libraries cannot clearly articulate the value of public libraries the danger is that politicians will continue to use simple base line visitor figures such as those published by the Taking Part survey (DCMS, 2010) that shows decline in usage as ammunition for library closures.

Of course this problem is not just prevalent in UK libraries but emblematic across the sector globally. Eva A Jonson writes that in Sweden “the public image of libraries does not reflect realities” and that “many users have never even heard of the new services”. The reason for this is we “do not have a clear cut vision for the new library”. (Jonson, 2007) As comments from staff in the Hood and Henderson’s 2005 survey summarises “you can’t brand a service that doesn’t know what it wants to be.”

As we move in to challenging economic times with public spending under scrutiny we need now, even more than ever, people in the library sector that can understand, define and articulate the core values of a future library service.

National Branding

Which leads us on to the question of where does this responsibility lie? It is clear that locally authorities need to invest in communicating with and aligning their branding philosophy to meet the needs of its local communities. However as the research has highlighted, a multi layered approach that includes national support, investing in advocacy and national marketing campaigns, is imperative to tackle the issue of shifting deeply entrenched negative stereotypes and influencing decision makers.

In September 2009 the All Party Parliamentary Group for Libraries' published its report on The 'Inquiry into the Governance and Leadership of the Public Library Service in England'. The report argues for a national library development agency to be established, suggesting that the MLA due to its cross sector focus has been ineffective in championing the cause of public libraries. The new coalition government have not taken that consideration forward and with the announcement of the winding up of MLA by 2012, where libraries national advocacy will sit is yet unclear.

A support programme for ten pilot authorities/regions has instead been announced by DCMS lead by MLA and LGA, looking at new governance models and shared services models. Whether a shared authority/regional model will look to address shared branding as a marketing tool to reposition public libraries remains to be seen. Key challenges around this model if pursued will involve agreeing shared core values and securing political buy in.

Staff buy-in.

Further to all of this a brand will fail if those that deliver it, do not engage with it, understand it or live it. What has emerged from this study is that senior management of public libraries need to engage with their staff to ascertain the core values of their service looking to the future. I spoke informally with front-line staff in Devon where the brand is still relatively new. There were signs that staff were beginning to understand the benefits of the new branding as a tool that will help them market their message to users more effectively and cohesively. However there is the

danger that staff will over time lose sight of the core values and associate the branding with publicity and colour schemes. The challenge for management is to ensure that staff training is invested in and that the core brand values are incumbent to all future service developments and delivery.

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