# The provision of European information by public libraries in the UK: results of a BL Research and Innovation Centre funded research project

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***Abstract:*** *This paper describes a BL Research and Innovation Centre funded project to investigate the provision of European information in public libraries in the United Kingdom, via the establishment of the Public Information Relay, a European Commission initiative to provide information about the European Union to the general public. The background to the PIR and the literature to date are discussed. The project methodology is described and the major findings of the project are discussed. The project found that libraries were making very positive efforts to develop their European information services, but that there were concerns about the future development and resourcing of membership of the Relay. While the support of the European Commission was seen as valuable by respondents, the majority of libraries served a wider community of need than was envisaged by the remit of the PIR, in particular being heavily used for educational and business related purposes.*

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## 1 The development of the Public Information Relay

In the early 1990s, during the lengthy and heated debate over the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, the European Commission became increasingly aware of a communication gap between itself and the European public. To address this issue, the EC set up a working group, chaired by Willy De Clercq, to examine how the public could be better informed about the activities of the Commission. The group's final report[i], published in March 1993, acknowledged the conclusions of the earlier Sutherland Report (1992)[ii], which found that the major obstacle to achieving consensus between Brussels and the European public lay less in

the lack of information than in the lack of transparency with which existing information was disseminated to the individual (See also[iii]). The De Clercq Report recommended that information networks be set up to ensure that every European citizen could have direct access to information on the European Union.

The appearance of the De Clerq report coincided with a National Consultative Conference, organised by the EC's London Office at Stoke Rochford in January 1993. This conference, entitled *Britain in Europe - filling the information gap together*[iv], assembled a wide variety of information providers who recognised that if the communication gap between the EC and the British public was to be bridged, then a more decentralised approach to EU information provision was necessary. (Two subsequent conferences, Stoke Rochford II[v] and III[vi], have been held but did not address the PIR specifically.) The report also coincided with the publication, in January 1993, of a report on the effectiveness of the EC's UK Regional Information Campaign[vii], which had consisted of a nation-wide programme of talks and seminars, together with a Mobile Information Unit which had toured the UK in an effort to generate interest in Europe among the British public. The report - *Communicating Europe 1988-1992: a five year programme of local initiatives* - concluded that the campaign, which had often involved public libraries, had been very successful, with around 47,000 people visiting the Mobile Unit over the five years.

Later that year, the EC's London Office commissioned a Gallup poll which examined the European information needs of the British public. It revealed that 72% of those questioned felt that they would like to be better informed about the impact of European Union policies in their region; and that 70% believed that their local library should be making more effort to inform the general public about European matters[viii]. (Similar results were obtained from subsequent polls carried out in 1994[ix] and 1995[x]).

Prompted by these developments, the Local Government International Bureau (LGIB), who recognised the significance of public libraries in any national information network, brought together the library advisers to the UK local authority associations and the London Office of the EC at a meeting in October 1993. Consequently, the Federation of Local Authority Chief Librarians (FOLACL), which then represented the principal library officers in local authorities in England and Wales, convened a seminar, in December 1993, for almost 30 of the key library authorities in the UK. At this seminar it became clear that there was considerable support for the principle of improved public access to European information.

Indeed, many felt that this was an important part of the statutory responsibility of every library authority.

As a result of this positive response, the London Office of the EC, together with FOLACL, arranged a major conference in Manchester, in May 1994. At this conference - *Communicating Europe through Public Libraries*[xi] - representatives of 44 library authorities met to discuss the proposed creation of a coordinated relay which would bring European Union information closer to the man and woman in the street. Delegates acknowledged that public libraries were particularly well placed to provide such a service. As Peter Beauchamp[1], the Chief Library Adviser of the Department of National Heritage, pointed out:

> "*There is no-one better placed than the public library network to take on the role of disseminating information about the EU and its activities. This is the role that public libraries must take up as part of their comprehensive and efficient provision.*"

Since then, membership of the Public Information Relay has grown dramatically. Indeed, at the outset of this Project, in July 1995, 154 of the then 167 UK library authorities had joined. Participating public libraries are entitled to receive:

- free copies of basic texts on the European Union

- a 50% discount on items produced by the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities (EUR-OP)

- a 50% discount on access to certain EU databases

- a stock of hand-out material produced by the EC

- a list of suggested basic publications

- training in the use and maintenance of a European collection

In return, Relay members are required to accept certain obligations:

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[1] Peter Beauchamp, quoted by Giancarlo Pau at the Public Libraries Conference, York, 28 September 1994.

- to continue to bear the costs of staff, overheads and the necessary discounted publications

- to make official documents and publications of the European Union available to the general public

- to establish links and cooperate with local members of other sectorally established relays (i.e. European Documentation Centres, European Information Centres, Carrefours etc.)

- to report back on activities and feedback from information users on an annual basis

- to publicise the existence of the Relay by using a designated logo adopted by FOLACL, and through various local events.

In order to provide the EC with specialist advice on the practical aspects of implementing the PIR, FOLACL (and its successor, the Society of Chief Librarians in England and Wales) has established an Expert Group, comprising a number of public library representatives, and a Sub-Group on Training. In Scotland, the lack of a FOLACL presence has led the Scottish public library community to form its own PIR User Group consisting of representatives of public library authorities, the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC) and the EC Representation in Scotland. In Northern Ireland, Relay matters are dealt with within existing structures, generally at the regular meetings of the Chief Librarians and at the Northern Ireland Reference Forum.

Further support for PIR members is provided by the EC-sponsored National Coordinating Committee (NCC) of the UK Network of European Relays. Officially launched at the First Annual Conference of the UK Network of European Relays in Birmingham in January 1995[xii],the NCC includes representatives from each of the existing relays - the PIR, European Documentation Centres (EDCs), European Information Centres (EICs), the LGIB, the European Information Association (EIA), the CBI, the TUC, and the Law Society - as well as representatives from the education sector, the EC and the UK Government. The NCC is to organise training for all members of the relay network and will stimulate and coordinate cross-relay contacts, at a national, regional and local level. It also aims to ensure that the needs and interests of the various sectors of European information users are taken into consideration in future decisions.

## 2. The Research Project

The project, described in the present paper, funded by the British Library Research and Innovation Centre, and carried out by the School of Information and Media at the Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen, investigates the provision of European Union information by public libraries throughout the UK, and in particular the implementation of the Public Information Relay. It has taken place at a relatively early stage in the PIR's development, when feedback and critical comment received from practitioners will be valuable and have a positive influence on the future development of the Relay.

The main aims and objectives of the Project are as follows:

*Aims*

- to investigate the present provision of European Union information in public libraries in the UK

- to identify the most effective method of supplying European Union information in public libraries

- to investigate levels of user need for European Union information

*Objectives*

- to provide a review of the types of European information services in public libraries

- to identify the extent of actual and potential need for European information amongst users

- to identify best practice for the provision of European information in public libraries

- to develop a method of investigating users' perceptions of and response to European information

## 3. Project methodology

The project methodology consisted of four elements: a postal survey of all public library authorities in the UK; case study visits to eight library services; a user survey; and a seminar on the project and its results.

### (i) Survey methodology

A questionnaire-based survey of all public library authorities in the UK participating in the PIR was carried out, to elicit information on the levels of European information provision (both prior to and since joining the Relay), the manner in which the PIR service was being implemented, and any potential problems and solutions. The questionnaire was tested on five professionals expert on European information provision in other sectors. As the questionnaire was 14 pages long, most of the comments received during this pilot stage related to its length, however, it should be pointed out that the questions themselves were all deemed wholly pertinent, and no suggestions as to how the questionnaire might be shortened were received. However, while all comments were carefully considered, only one or two minor amendments were required and the questionnaire remained virtually unchanged (See Appendix I: the questionnaire.)

The questionnaires were distributed to all 154 PIR members. An excellent response rate of 76% (i.e. 117 out of 154) was obtained. The high level of response suggests that initial fears over the length of the questionnaire were unfounded, and that the UK public library community was eager to voice its opinions and concerns regarding the PIR.

The project team also designed a separate and considerably shorter questionnaire aimed at those 13 UK library authorities who had not so far joined the Relay. This survey focused on current levels of European information provision, and contained a brief section which questioned the likelihood of each authority eventually joining the Relay. Seven of the 13 authorities responded.

### (ii): Case study interviews and observation

In the second stage of the project, further information was drawn from eight case study visits to PIR members. The libraries visited were a representative sample of Relay members, with a

reasonable geographic spread and a mixture of large and small authorities, and of metropolitan and rural areas. Each visit consisted of three basic elements: two interviews took place, with the person responsible for the day to day operation of the Relay service and with a member of senior management responsible for decisions on policy and finance; each authority's European collection was compared with a bibliographic 'checklist'; and a simple 'user survey' was conducted, consisting of observation of the use of the European collection and brief interviews with those people who had used the materials or who had directed a European enquiry at library staff. All interviews with library staff were recorded.

Some authorities were perfectly happy to be named in the project report, whilst others were not. It was, therefore, decided to make all of the case studies anonymous.

**(iii): User survey**

A survey of the European information needs of the public was also carried out, by means of a questionnaire which aimed to elicit information from members of the public on their past use of public libraries and other sources for obtaining European information, on the types of European information that they might wish to obtain, and on the reasons why they might want to use such information. Three public library services - Aberdeen, Glasgow and Moray - distributed 150 questionnaires to library users. The libraries were asked if systematic sampling might be used: however, it is appreciated that library staff involved in this exercise will have had many other pressures on their time and such a systematic approach may not always have been possible. The libraries were also asked if they could request that the users complete and return the questionnaires at the time of their distribution. This method proved successful, and in all but one distribution point a return rate of over 80% was obtained. Overall, 372 of the 450 questionnaires were completed. The respondents were a good and representative sample of the population as a whole, with the 15 - 19 age group most poorly represented particularly for males. This is unsurprising as the questionnaires were not disseminated in specialised 'youth' libraries and teenagers are a notoriously poor library user group, particularly males. The results are interesting in that they display a very high incidence of users between 20 and 45 and a greater proportion of male users overall.

**(iv): Seminar**

The final major element of the Project was a seminar, held at the Representation of the European Commission in London in June 1996. The purpose of this event was to allow

feedback on the results of the Project to date, and to gather qualitative response from practitioners and other interested parties. Planning for this seminar began at an early stage in the project, and provisional invitations accompanied the survey questionnaires sent to the PIR members and non-members. In addition, invitations were extended to a number of other relevant bodies, such as FOLACL, SLIC and the EIA. The event was attended by 47 delegates.

The seminar speakers represented a range of different perspectives, from practitioners to members of representative bodies. Prior to the seminar, each of the speakers was sent a copy of the draft Project results, and therefore had an opportunity to comment on these in some detail. The afternoon of the seminar consisted of a series of nine focus groups which explored some of the more significant issues to emerge from the Project results, offering delegates the opportunity to express individual views. A rapporteur from each group subsequently gave a brief summary of deliberations.

## 4. Literature review

This Project represents the first major survey of European information provision in UK public libraries since that carried out by Hopkins in 1986[xiii,xiv]. The 1986 survey found an overall low level of provision to satisfy what was a low, and in some cases non-existent, demand for EU information. It concluded that the public library community, the UK offices of the European Commission and the European Parliament could be doing more to provide access to EU publications and to stimulate interest in them.

Over the next seven years little was written on the potential role of public libraries in providing European information. Wood[xv] (1991) believed that there was scope for European Information Centres and public libraries to work together to enhance each others' services and increase each others' credibility with the local business community. Hunt[xvi] (1992) reported a growing demand for EU information in public libraries, particularly from younger users and from the business community. Articles by Gallimore and Connor[xvii and xviii] (both 1994) pointed out that while the European Information Centre network had been established to meet the needs of business people, and the academic community was served by European Documentation Centres, the general public had been overlooked in the process of providing information on and from Europe. They offered Manchester Central Library's European Information Unit (the first unit of its kind in a UK public library) as an example of how a

European information service can be provided to the general public. As part of a study of the agencies providing European information in Scotland, Marcella and Parker[xix] (1995) examined the provision of European information, prior to the PIR, in Scottish urban public libraries.

More recently, however, and particularly since the establishment of the Public Information Relay, the provision of EU information in public libraries has begun to receive more attention. An article by Barton[xx] (1994) and two by Dolan[xxi and xxii] (both 1994) described the origins and early development of the Relay. Marcella[xxiii] (1995) discussed some of the key issues (e.g. staffing, accommodation, promotion) that PIR members need to address. Boughey[xxiv] (1995), meanwhile, gave a practitioner's perspective of the Relay initiative so far. Marcella and Baxter[xxv] (1996) described the development of the PIR and outlined the aims and objectives of the present Project.

The proceedings of a seminar specifically on the subject of the PIR, held at Stamford, Lincolnshire in May 1995, contained a number of relevant papers. Messenger[xxvi] emphasised the key role that librarians have in providing accurate and impartial European information; Dolan[xxvii] discussed the main achievements and concerns arising during the first year of the PIR; while Pau[xxviii] described the enabling role of the European Commission Representation in London. The seminar also included two case studies: of Manchester's European Information Unit[xxix]; and the service model being adopted in Hampshire[xxx].

A study of the early stages of the PIR initiative was carried out by Kelly[xxxi] as part of an undergraduate project (1996). Brophy[xxxii] (1996) also examined the PIR as part of an *Opportunities for Libraries in Europe* (OPLES) report, and offered it as an excellent example of two publicly funded bodies (i.e. the European Commission and public libraries) coming together in a mutually beneficial partnership. Marcella, Parker and Baxter[xxxiii] (1996, forthcoming) examined electronic sources of European information, with particular attention being paid to their use in UK public libraries.

## 5. Project results: Survey of European information provision in public libraries in the United Kingdom

Due to the length and detail of the questionnaire it is impossible to cover all of its points in the present article: this paper will, therefore, cover some of the more significant survey

findings, together with additional information that was gathered during the eight case study visits. The full report is available from the British Library on request.

**5.1: Membership of the PIR and libraries' political neutrality**

During the early stages of the project, anecdotal evidence and correspondence suggested that there was a feeling amongst some librarians that by becoming actively involved in the Relay, public libraries were in danger of losing their traditional political neutrality and that they might be perceived as being European Union marketing tools. It was, therefore, felt to be important to gauge the library community's overall feelings on this subject, and it became clear that there was an overwhelming belief (82%) amongst respondents that political neutrality was important to the public library service ethos. However, when it came to the potential impact of Relay membership on this perceived neutrality, opinions were more mixed, and there appeared to be some uncertainty, with a substantial proportion remaining in the middle ground.

*Figure 1: It has been suggested by some commentators that, by joining the Public Information Relay, public libraries might be seen as European Union marketing tools. Do you agree with this view?*

| Strongly Agree | No. | % |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 4 | 3% |
| 2 | 14 | 12% |
| 3 | 33 | 28% |
| 4 | 23 | 20% |
| 5 | 28 | 24% |
| 6 | 15 | 13% |
| Strongly Disagree | No. | % |

23 libraries had actually encountered a degree of opposition to Relay membership. In 15 cases opposition came from staff who were concerned about an excessive workload, and also about a lack of public interest in European information, but in a significant minority of cases (11) the opposition was from library users, and generally from anti-European groups or individuals. It subsequently became clear from responses to other questions in the survey that many libraries were deliberately purchasing works, other than those produced by the European Commission, to ensure that the collection contained a balance of political views.

**5.2: Collection development**

In terms of collection development, almost all of the respondents (93%) indicated that they supplemented their collection with non-official, commercially produced materials. This was felt necessary for a variety of reasons: to provide a political balance: to cater for the specialist requirements of certain user groups such as schoolchildren or business people; to fill gaps in the collection's subject coverage; to provide more user friendly and accessible material; and to provide more current and up-to-date information.

39% of respondents held fewer than three of FOLACL's list of suggested basic European information sources, suggesting a significant proportion of comparatively poor collections at the time of the survey. However, for the majority of respondents (65%), the receipt of free documentation consequent on PIR membership had added to their collection by less than 50%, indicating that a minority of libraries had negligible collections prior to joining the Relay. This would suggest that frequently collections held prior to joining the Relay were not based around official publications and were more extensive than suggested by the figure above. The survey also revealed, however, that there were several subject categories of European information which a significant number of libraries felt were inadequately represented in their particular collections. These included legislation, business opportunities, and scientific and technical research.

| Subject Area | Comp. Adeq. (%) | Adeq. (%) | Inadeq (%) | Comp. Inadeq (%) | No Resp. (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| General information on the EU's activities | 31 | 61 | 3 | - | 5 |
| Customs tariffs and regulations | 8 | 51 | 25 | 5 | 11 |
| Employment and labour | 7 | 74 | 12 | - | 7 |
| Education | 9 | 69 | 14 | 1 | 7 |
| Legislation/Implementation | 14 | 55 | 20 | 3 | 8 |
| Social issues/policy | 8 | 71 | 14 | - | 7 |
| Citizens' rights | 8 | 77 | 8 | - | 7 |
| Transport | 5 | 67 | 20 | - | 8 |
| Energy | 5 | 66 | 20 | 2 | 7 |
| Environmental issues | 7 | 71 | 14 | 1 | 7 |
| Agriculture, forestry and fisheries | 4 | 71 | 15 | - | 10 |
| Economic and financial issues | 6 | 71 | 15 | - | 8 |
| Business opportunities | 7 | 48 | 34 | 1 | 10 |
| Market and company information | 7 | 47 | 34 | 3 | 9 |
| Grants and loans | 13 | 60 | 19 | - | 8 |
| Scientific and technical research | 4 | 44 | 34 | 7 | 11 |
| Patents and standards | 8 | 33 | 40 | 8 | 11 |
| Statistics | 10 | 65 | 15 | 1 | 9 |

*Figure 2: In your European collection, is the stock you hold on the following subject areas adequate for meeting your users' needs?*

(**NB** 6 authorities (5%) failed to answer any part of this question, indicating it was too difficult to gauge.)

It is also highly significant that 91% of respondents felt it would be beneficial to receive some guidance on what actually constituted a quality European collection in these and other subject areas. While the FOLACL lists of suggested sources have been well received, and the survey found that libraries are using a wide variety of bibliographic tools to obtain suitable European materials (see Figure 3), these findings would suggest a clear need for the PIR training programme to give greater emphasis to collection development.

**Figure 3**: *Which of the following do you use when selecting European information sources for collection development and ongoing selection of new titles?*

| Selection Tools | Number of Authorities | % of Respondents |
|---|---|---|
| EUR-OP catalogues | 97 | 83% |
| Other publishers' catalogues | 82 | 70% |
| FOLACL's list of suggested basic sources | 78 | 67% |
| Standard bibliographic tools (e.g. BNB) | 68 | 58% |
| Library suppliers' lists | 68 | 58% |
| Journal reviews | 67 | 57% |
| Informal recommendations by colleagues | 63 | 54% |
| European Information Service | 49 | 42% |
| European Access | 48 | 41% |
| Other media reviews | 31 | 26% |
| Other current awareness services | 12 | 10% |

## 5.3: Electronic European Information

With regard to electronic sources of European information, the current level of use is low, with just over a quarter (27%) of the respondents using online hosts for obtaining European information, and surprisingly few libraries (18%) having access to the Commission's free host *ECHO*, or to its *Eurobases* host (8%), which Relay members can receive at a 50% discount. This suggests that the Commission needs to consider an awareness raising programme directed towards these two dedicated hosts. The most popular online host was *DIALOG*, which is not a particularly rich source of European information, while *DATASTAR* was used less frequently although it provides useful databases such as *CELEX* and *Spearhead*. Again this suggests a lack of awareness of appropriate sources. The relevant and useful *Context* is ranked particularly highly by those familiar with its use.

Internet access to European information is also currently very low (19% of respondents), and generally focuses on the Commission's *EUROPA* and *I'M EUROPE* servers. However, several libraries did point out that they were just about to be connected to the Internet, or that their current Internet use was still of an experimental nature, so this is one area where the level of use is likely to increase considerably in the future, particularly as more useful sources, such as the UK Representation's server, become available via this medium.

Far more popular at present are CD-ROM sources, with 39% of respondents holding at least one title containing European information. Responses indicate the wide range of relevant titles available in this medium: there was evidence, however, of a need for critical guidance

on the purchase of costly CD-ROMs.  One interesting point which arose from the case study visits was that there was an almost unanimous wish to see the Relay members' 50% discount on publications extended to the Commission's CD-ROMs.

**5.4: Location And Arrangement Of The Collection**

It was hypothesised that many libraries would choose to review their location and arrangement of the European collection in the aftermath of joining the Relay.  56%  of the respondents had in fact relocated their European materials as a direct result of joining the Relay.  In the majority of cases this had involved a centralisation and consolidation of materials that had previously been scattered throughout various departments or libraries. While the most common location for this centralised collection is a central reference library (54 authorities), business libraries, central lending departments and large branch libraries are also being used, and a small number of libraries have now established their own dedicated European Information Unit.

Nine respondents hold European material in a dedicated European unit.  The advantages are that: materials are kept together in one place; ease of training and of developing expertise in staff is facilitated; published indexes can be applied more effectively; and a specialist classification scheme can be utilised.  Disadvantages include that: less expertise may exist amongst other staff who consider Europe a 'mystery'; the collection may be inaccessible to users; and the loss of the serendipity factor of browsing users happening upon interesting material.

54 respondents hold European material as part of their central reference collections with other official publications.  The advantages are that: most enquiries are received in the reference collection at present and most users expect to find information there; a larger body of staff can build up expertise; a separate section is still possible; materials are integrated with other related stock that is non-EU specific and users can therefore link with other materials, e.g. on commercial matters or law;  the material by being reference only is always available for consultation; other staff will have a known point of contact; and materials are more secure.  Disadvantages include that: material is less available to branches and to users without access to the central reference department; scatter across classification occurs thus failing to provide an overview of EU material and allowing material to 'get lost' within the reference collection; no distinct profile for the European information service exists and the

service is thus difficult to promote; the majority of total library staff remain unfamiliar with European material; and material is not available to borrow or is not collated with related subjects in the reference collection.

Only six respondents held European material as part of their business collection. Advantages are that: material is collated with much related material such as trade directories and statistical sources; links are established with single market materials previously gathered; and staff develop familiarity and expertise. Disadvantages include that: a very specific collection with one major user group results, with an associated failure to reach a wider public; and promotion of material is difficult.

Only three libraries held European materials within a central lending facility. The advantages here are that material is very easily accessible and visible to users. However disadvantages include that  material might be out on loan and no clearly identifiable section exists.

15 libraries held material scattered throughout the service. Advantages are that: there is wide availability and accessibility of materials to users; and that the collection continues to allow a non-European subject approach. Disadvantages include that: it is difficult to find stock on subjects; specialist staff knowledge does not develop; confusion for users may result; lack of focus and low resultant profile for the European service is found; users remain unaware of service; users require a greater degree of staff assistance in locating materials; duplication of resources may result; and the lack of central coordination renders collection maintenance and development problematic.

In terms of the cohesion of the collection and its impact upon dedicated European information seekers, a separate European collection is recommended. However, care must be taken to signpost the collection effectively to ensure that other users are alerted to its existence.

A number of libraries were concerned about the most appropriate subject arrangement for their European collection, and from the case study visits, a variety of methods are currently being used. Some libraries are using their existing classification scheme, with the European materials either gathered together in a separate, parallel sequence, or scattered throughout the standard classified sequence. Others are using the European Access classification, the scheme used in Manchester, which was disseminated to Relay members during the training programme. Some libraries are using, or have adapted, Manchester's subject headings for the

free booklet and pamphlet-type material, which were also handed out at training sessions. And some have created their own subject arrangements. It is felt by the authors that there would be considerable merit in developing a standard and consistent approach to subject arrangement.


**5.5: Staffing The European Collection and Training**


The survey also examined staffing and training issues, and found that in the vast majority of cases the Relay service was being implemented using existing staffing resources. In fact, only two libraries had employed additional staff specifically to deal with European information matters. With regard to the training, with the exception of respondents from Wales where training was deferred due to local government reorganisation, virtually all of the authorities (91%) had sent staff to at least part of the appropriate training programme, with the Scottish libraries following a different programme from those in England and Northern Ireland.

While the majority of libraries commented favourably on the effectiveness of the initial training programme, the Scottish libraries reacted less positively than the others. This was largely due to the fact that when the questionnaire was sent out, while libraries in England and Northern Ireland had been participating in Modules 1 and 2 of an initial training programme devised by the FOLACL (now SCL) Expert Group's Sub Group on Training, the Scottish libraries had only received a very basic awareness-raising session organised by the Scottish Public Information Relay User Group. However, the more detailed subsequent training in Scotland has received some very positive feedback in the period since the survey. 34% of the respondents had additionally sent staff on European information training courses hosted by organisations such as the European Information Association and Aslib.


**5.6: Contact With Other European Information Relays**


Prior to the establishment of the PIR, contact with other European information relays was very much on an occasional basis, and was generally with the European Commission Representations, European Documentation Centres (EDCs), in academic libraries, and European Information Centres (EICs), which primarily serve the business community.

Although 39% of respondents felt that contact with other agencies had increased since joining the Relay, this figure is lower than was expected.

**Figure 4:** *Which of the above agencies do you most often use (post-membership) for:*

| Agency | Referrals (No.) | Seeking Advice (No.) | Seeking Info. (No.) | Assistance with Obtaining Docs (No.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reps. of the EC in the UK | 14 | 35 | 31 | 31 |
| EDCs | 35 | 18 | 21 | 24 |
| EICs | 30 | 17 | 25 | 13 |
| Carrefours | - | - | - | - |
| ERCs | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| DEPs[2] | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Other Lib Auths | 12 | 7 | 7 | 6 |

The EDCs, the EICs and the Representations remain the most frequent points of contact, and there is still a relatively high level of use made of the Representations by libraries seeking information. This would suggest that the Representations' recent change of role from the direct provision of information to that of supporting and enabling is perhaps not being effectively communicated. Although the PIR has increased libraries' awareness of the existence of these agencies, many are still unaware of the precise nature of their stock and services (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5:** *To what extent are library staff aware of the resources held and the services provided by these agencies?*

| Agency | Completely Unaware (%) | Aware of Existence (%) | Aware of Stock and Services (%) | No Response (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reps. of the EC in the UK | 2 | 65 | 30 | 3 |
| EDCs | 6 | 57 | 33 | 4 |
| EICs | 4 | 55 | 36 | 5 |
| Carrefours | 59 | 30 | 2 | 9 |
| ERCs | 40 | 45 | 8 | 7 |
| DEPs | 35 | 45 | 12 | 8 |
| Other Lib Auths | 6 | 48 | 33 | 13 |

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[2] The single authority who uses a European Depository Library actually hosts such an agency.

Respondents felt awareness could be improved through the training programme, through familiarisation visits and through a directory. A directory of European information relays has subsequently been published and well received. There is, however, a need for a document which provides greater detail on the role, stock and services of each type of relay, in order that referral be accurate and appropriate. Other sources used by a small number of respondents in each case include the European Information Association, the European Parliamentary Office and Library, and local authority European units.

## 5.7: Usage Of The European Information Service

Very few libraries (12%) could offer statistical information on the frequency of European enquiries, generally because most libraries have no mechanism for recording these. Where statistics were available, and from the case studies, it was acknowledged that figures were often very approximate and that there were inconsistencies in the individual libraries' definitions of a European enquiry. If Relay members are required to gather statistics in the future (as seems likely), then some guidance on the definition of a European enquiry will be essential, as well as consistent and uniform mechanisms for the collection of numeric data.

27% of the respondents felt that there had been an increase in the number of European enquiries received since joining the Relay, while 73% recorded an increase over the last five years. It must, however, be emphasised that not all libraries had actually launched their service at the time of the survey. For those libraries where the Relay service had been operating for six months, the results were more encouraging, with around 48% noticing an increase in demand.

With regard to types of users, the survey found that prior to the Relay the most significant users of European information were seen to be students, followed by schoolchildren, business people, the general public and then local government officers.

**Figure 6: Respondents perceptions of frequency of approach amongst specific user groups**

| User Group | Percentage of respondents ranking group as significant | Number of authorities reporting more frequent users since joining PIR |
|---|---|---|
| 1. FE/HE Students | 66% | 25 |
| 2. Schoolchildren | 58% | 17 |
| 3. Business people | 47% | 8 |
| 4. General public | 41% | 9 |
| 5. Local government officers | 36% | 11 |
| 6. Job seekers | 28% | 2 |
| 7. Primary producers(i.e. farmers, fishermen etc.) | 4% | - |

32% of respondents had noticed that particular groups were becoming more frequent users of European information since the implementation of the Relay. Again, students were ranked first, followed by schoolchildren, local government officers, the general public, business people and job seekers. Therefore, three user groups not specifically targeted by the Relay initiative have become more frequent users of the service to a greater extent than have the actual targeted group, the general public. This is clearly a significant finding, and calls into question the whole ethos of targeting particular user groups by establishing separate Relays.

The survey also looked at the types of European information being most frequently requested. Prior to the Relay, there appears to have been an emphasis on statistical and business related information that would be used in a professional or a commercial capacity. The most frequently requested topics (i.e. asked for on at least a monthly basis in at least 50% of the responding authorities) were:

1. Statistics
2. General information on the EU's activities
3. Market and company information
4. Grants and loans
5. Legislation/implementation

However it is interesting to find that amongst those libraries where particular topics have become more popular since joining the Relay, although such subjects remain prominent, there has been increased interest in topics such as social policy or citizens' rights, which might be

of more interest to users as private citizens of Europe, rather than in any professional or commercial capacity.

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:4px;">

***Figure 7:*** *Topics becoming more popular since joining PIR.*

</div>

| Subject | No. of Authorities |
|---|---|
| General information on the EU's activities | 14 |
| Grants and loans | 12 |
| Legislation/Implementation | 10 |
| Social issues/policy | 10 |
| Statistics | 8 |
| Citizens' rights | 7 |
| Employment and labour | 7 |
| Business opportunities | 4 |
| Environmental issues | 4 |
| Agriculture, forestry & fisheries | 2 |
| Education | 2 |
| Market & company information | 2 |
| Transport | 2 |
| Customs tariffs and regulations | 1 |
| Economic and financial issues | 1 |
| Energy | 1 |
| Patents and standards | 1 |
| Scientific & technical research | 1 |

NB: 3 authorities felt that ***all*** of these topics had become more popular.

While much of this information is acknowledged to be impressionistic on the part of respondents as very few libraries had investigated the European information needs of their users prior to joining the Relay, it is significant to note that 41% of libraries now plan to undertake some investigation of user needs. The data thus gathered should be highly informative and the authors hope that it will be possible to gather the data together for analysis in the future.

**5.8: Promotion Of The European Information Service**

While very few libraries (15%) had promoted their European information provision prior to joining the Relay, 97% now either had promoted or had plans to promote their Relay service, with leaflets and posters (91%), guiding (69%), and exhibitions (63%) being the most popular methods. 54% of libraries are displaying European bunting and the flag. A minority are planning to or have promoted the service in newspaper media (33%) or on local radio

(16%). 23% of libraries have organised special events or seminars to help raise awareness of the service. However, it should be noted that 33% of respondents had concerns about conducting a promotional campaign. Concerns related to: the staff time and costs involved: the raising of issues about political neutrality: or that expectations of the service might be raised that could not subsequently be met.

### 5.9: Financial Implications Of Relay Membership

Only 32% of the respondents stated that additional funds had been allocated to their Relay service, mostly for purchasing stock, and that this money had generally come from the reallocation of existing budgets (20 of 37 cases). However, there appeared to be some confusion over this question, and from responses to other questions, where for example respondents indicate that they have supplemented their European collection since joining the Relay, and from the evidence of case studies, it would seem likely that a system whereby the Relay service is funded through the reallocation of existing resources, is in fact widespread throughout the country. From the survey it would appear that only three or four libraries have actually obtained new funding for their Relay service. The financial implications of membership of the Relay was an issue that emerged as significant from the Seminar discussions (see section 7).

### 5.10: Information Policy Issues

The survey also investigated some of the wider European Union information policy issues. For example, the questionnaire sought to determine whether respondents were aware of the existence of the National Coordinating Committee, and while there was a high level of awareness, there was still a significant minority of the respondents (29%) who were unaware of its existence, suggesting a need for more active promotion on the part of the NCC. When asked if they personally felt part of the PIR, 81% said yes. This is certainly very encouraging, as other Relays such as the EDCs and the EICs have voiced concerns about staff's feelings of isolation.

Respondents were also asked if they could foresee any problems in meeting the five obligations of Relay members, which were outlined in their individual agreements with the European Commission. Potential problems were mentioned by a minority of libraries in each of the five cases, many of which have already been discussed in this paper. The most notable finding, however, was that 37% of respondents felt that, due to internal funding pressures, it

might be difficult to meet the agreed obligation of bearing the costs of the staff, the overheads and the necessary discounted materials. A lower but still significant proportion (32%) felt that there would be problems in providing feedback from information users annually. Factors cited included: staff time required; that European enquiries are currently not recorded separately; and that there was no knowledge at present of the precise form that such feedback would take.

**5.11: Preferred Methods Of Reporting Back To Brussels**

One of the obligations of PIR members is to report back to the European Commission on an annual basis, and respondents were asked how this might be best achieved. A number of methods were suggested, with the most popular ones being a standardised questionnaire (34 respondents) or a written annual report containing details of usage, activities, meetings, etc. (33 respondents).

A number of libraries felt that there should be a standardised approach to ensure consistency throughout the Relay, and that the reporting back process should not place unreasonable demands on staff and resources. Equally, a number of respondents also felt that they should have a say in the design of the feedback mechanism, in order that realistic performance measures are established. It was also recommended by a small number of respondents that a summary or consolidated report be prepared for the PIR as a whole, to allow for *'comparison and inspiration',* in the words of one respondent.

**5.12: Future Developments**

The last section of the survey concentrated on future developments, and sought to determine which of a list of potential developments would be useful in furthering the evolution of the Relay. There was a very high level of response to this question, with all respondents keen to see some future development of the PIR in ways which would heighten awareness of activities, both amongst staff and users, but also amongst the wider professional community. The most popular options were a regular newsletter for Relay members and more frequent coverage of the Relay in the professional literature.

**Figure 8:** *Which of the following would be useful in furthering the development of the Public Information Relay?*

| Suggested Development | Number | % |
|---|---|---|
| A regular newsletter for PIR members | 95 | 81% |
| Regular coverage of the PIR's activities in the professional literature | 91 | 78% |
| A hotline/helpdesk for dealing with PIR matters | 86 | 74% |
| Opportunities to meet members of other UK relays | 84 | 72% |
| A directory of relays and relay members | 83 | 71% |
| An IT network (supporting E-mail, bulletin boards, etc) linking all public libraries in the PIR | 81 | 69% |
| An annual meeting/conference of PIR members | 76 | 65% |
| An annual report on the PIR's activities | 76 | 65% |
| Opportunities for cross-Europe meetings | 41 | 35% |

Finally the questionnaire simply asked what else could be done to help develop the Relay, and the most frequently mentioned option was a national publicity campaign using the press, TV, radio, the Internet and so on. A number of respondents actually specified that such promotion should be directed at the education sector, despite the fact that this is not the intended target of the Relay. Among other suggestions were: greater financial support for IT; the continuing availability of high quality promotional materials; the lifting of the current restrictions on the number of discounted publications that can be purchased; and the continuation of the current Relay training programme.

**5.13 Non-PIR Members Survey**

Only 13 UK library authorities had not joined the PIR at the time of the survey. Seven of these responded to the questionnaire. Four of these in fact planned to join the Relay; two committing themselves to joining within the next 12 months; one uncertain when the authority would join; and one uncertain due to financial constraints. Of the two authorities who did not plan to join the Relay, one did not have enough space or staff, while the second, though doubtful of the library service's capacity, requested further information from the Research Team and was clearly prepared to consider further. One respondent answered 'don't know', awaiting the results of reorganisation before reaching a decision.

## 6. User Survey

A user survey was carried out in three Scottish library authorities, in order to gauge the value and effectiveness of the PIR in serving the needs of the public library user in terms of European information. In total 372 questionnaires were completed. (The data collected is available broken down for each of the library authorities, but for the purpose of this paper only the collective findings will be discussed.)[3]

A minority (28%) of the respondents had previously tried to obtain European information. This figure was higher than the ones obtained in any of the three Gallup polls carried out so far (15%, 1993; 15%, 1994; and 18%, 1995) and might suggest that public library users are more active and informed users of information than non-library members.

The majority of those who had sought information (74 of 103) had gone to their public library to obtain this information, with educational libraries being the only other significant source (26 of 103). As the survey was carried out in public libraries, an element of bias must, however, be acknowledged. In fact it is interesting to find that in a recent small street survey of 56 members of the Aberdeen public, carried out by an undergraduate student supervised by one of the authors, less than half of those respondents who had previously looked for European information had used their public library. Clearly, if unsurprisingly, current public library users view their public library as a natural source of European information.

In terms of the types of information sought, although employment opportunities and business-related topics had been the most frequent, a high number of varied and highly individualistic responses were received, suggesting that it will be difficult for libraries to predict the nature of approaches for European information.

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[3] In common with all sample surveys, the results presented here are subject to margins of error. With this in mind, the Figure below provides the margins of error, for 95% confidence levels, based on the full sample size of 372. The Figure indicates the margin of error (plus or minus) associated with the sample size of 372 and with various percentage values. For example, a percentage value of 60% (or, of course, 40%) has a margin of error of + or - 5.0%. This indicates that the true value of the result (at the 95% confidence interval) lies within the range 55% and 65%.

| Sample Size | Percentage Value | Margin of Error |
|---|---|---|
| 372 | 50/50 | ± 5.1% |
| " | 60/40 | ± 5.0% |
| " | 70/30 | ± 4.6% |
| " | 80/20 | ± 4.1% |
| " | 90/10 | ± 3.0% |

**Figure 9:  If YES, what kind of information did you try to obtain?**
**(out of 74 respondents)**

| | |
|---|---|
| Employment/job opportunities | 12 |
| Market and company information | 8 |
| Business opportunities | 7 |
| Grants and loans | 6 |
| Economic and financial issues | 5 |
| Legislation | 5 |
| Citizens' rights | 4 |
| Travel information | 4 |
| Patent information | 3 |
| Political information | 3 |
| Statistics | 3 |
| Environmental issues | 2 |
| General information on EU's activities | 2 |
| Social policy | 2 |
| Census information | 1 |
| Current affairs in other Member States | 1 |
| Customs regulations | 1 |
| Energy | 1 |
| Information on individual Member States | 1 |
| Information on Maastricht Treaty | 1 |
| Languages | 1 |
| Scientific and technical research | 1 |
| Trade union information | 1 |
| Not specified | 5 |

Users were also asked to predict their future European information needs using a list of subjects identical to those appearing in the PIR survey, and altogether 92% of the users predicted a likely future need, indicating a much higher expectation of need than had been apparent from past usage.  The two sets of results must both be considered in any attempt to gauge the kind of collection required of a European information service.  Again a very wide spread of interest was displayed.

**Figure 10:  Which of the following subjects do you feel you might want to find out more about, either at the present or in the future?**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Employment/job opportunities in the EU | 161 | 43% |
| 2. Citizens' rights in the EU | 141 | 38% |
| 3. Education in the EU | 105 | 28% |
| 4. General information on the EU's activities | 105 | 28% |
| 5. EU grants and loans | 100 | 27% |
| 6. EU legislation | 95 | 26% |
| 7. Business opportunities in the EU | 92 | 25% |
| 8. EU environmental issues | 90 | 24% |
| 9. EU social policy/issues | 84 | 23% |
| 10. EU economic and financial issues | 83 | 22% |
| 11. Customs (duty free) regulations in the EU | 62 | 17% |
| 12. Scientific and technical research in the EU | 55 | 15% |
| 13. Transport in the EU | 55 | 15% |
| 14. EU statistics | 53 | 14% |
| 15. Farming, forestry and fishing in the EU | 51 | 14% |
| 16. EU market and company information | 48 | 13% |
| 17. European patents and standards | 35 | 9% |
| 18. Energy in the EU | 27 | 7% |

In certain respects, these responses contradict the PIR members' impressions of user needs. Librarians reported a high level of use of statistical and business-related information, but the users responses of employment, citizens rights and educational information suggest more of an emphasis on the individual and on the private citizen.

49% of users felt they would need this information for educational reasons, but there was also a significant number (41%) who felt a need would arise because of work-related reasons, or just because of a general interest (43%).  And a third of the users felt they might need European information when they were looking for employment.  One respondent cited activism and lobbying as a motivator.

The results of this user survey show a growing actual and predicted level of need for European information, and indicate, amongst public library users at least, an increasing awareness of the potential significance of European information.  It is particularly interesting to note the positive results of this survey in the light of the relatively low level of use of European information by the general public found in the majority of the case study libraries.

## 7. Seminar to discuss project findings

A seminar was held at the Representation of the European Commission in London in June 1996, in order to allow feedback on the results of the project and to gather qualitative response from practitioners and other interested parties. The seminar was attended by 47 delegates, including a group of speakers representing a range of different perspectives who had each had an opportunity to examine critically the full project results.

**Geoffrey Martin**, Head of the Representation of the EC in the UK, welcomed the appearance of the draft report and stated that a copy of the final results would be sent to each of the Commission Representations in the other Member States, where the PIR initiative was being watched with great interest. At a time when the European Union was the subject of a great deal of inaccurate press attention, the seminar was, he believed, particularly timely in that it emphasised the desirability of the general public looking to their public library as a guarantor of reliable information on the EU.

Seminar Chairman **Michael Messenger**, County Librarian and Arts Officer of Hereford and Worcester, and Vice President (England) of the Society of Chief Librarians, gave a brief presentation on the role of FOLACL in the development of the PIR and went on to indicate the continued involvement of FOLACL's successor, the Society of Chief Librarians (SCL).

The Project Team then outlined the rationale and the methodology for the project, summarised the most significant project results and discussed ideas for future European information research.

A number of speakers then presented papers indicating their response to the project results. **William Bell**, Depute Director of Glasgow City Libraries and Archives, and Chairman of the Scottish PIR User Group, discussed the development and activities of the User Group, particularly in coordinating training sessions, and producing the newsletter *Relay News*. One issue to which the User Group would be giving greater emphasis was that of IT development. Mr Bell also discussed the effects of the reorganisation of Scottish local government and expressed concern that these may have weakened the commitment to establishing the Relay amongst some authorities. He felt it was vital that each library authority should plan the development of their Relay service within the overall context of an information strategy for both the library service and its local authority. The forging of relationships with other relevant bodies was vital to the successful development of the PIR.

**Dorothy Connor**, European Information Officer at Manchester Central Library, and Vice-Chair of the Training Group of the National Coordinating Committee of the UK Network of European Relays, discussed three of the key issues highlighted by the project results - training, collection development and networking. With regard to training, Ms Connor emphasised the importance of cascading expertise from the formal training programme to other staff. The idea of having centrally or cooperatively produced training materials for all PIR members was also mooted. Ms Connor believed that, as it would be unreasonable to expect the EC to continue to provide free training ad infinitum, then an element of self-help and mutual support amongst PIR members will be essential.

Ms Connor highlighted the project finding that 91% of PIR members would welcome guidance on what constituted a quality European collection. More assistance could be given at a regional level, through contact with experienced information professionals from other relays, through visits to other collections and via regional publication discussion groups. The importance of networking was also stressed. The project had found that PIR members require more information about the stock and services of other relays and Ms Connor recommended visits to other relays or attendance at the new cross-relay training modules. She felt that the next most pressing task for the UK Network of European Relays was to stimulate active regional groupings which could act as local support networks and allow the exchange of expertise.

**Judith Barton**, Editor of the Local Government International Bureau's *European Information Service* bulletin, and a member of the National Coordinating Committee (NCC) of the UK Network of European Relays, described her role in the establishment of the PIR and, pointing to a project finding that 29% of PIR members were unaware of the existence of the NCC, described its origins and composition. Its main tasks are: to oversee the setting up of the UK Network of European Relays; to organise training for the relays; to commission publications; to lobby the EC on behalf of all relays; and to organise the annual conference of relays. The national conference in Newcastle (June 1996) had identified several issues to be pursued by the Committee (e.g. electronic information, developing the Education Relay, the need for resources, regional delivery), a number of which had been raised in the project report.

Discussing the project report, Ms Barton felt that its 76% survey response rate was a welcome sign to the NCC of the public library interest in the PIR. One possibly unwelcome

finding, though, was an increase in usage of public library European collections by the education sector. This, she felt, demonstrated the urgent need for the Education Relay to be up and running as soon as possible.

Ms Barton assured the delegates that the NCC was fully aware of PIR members' financial concerns, particularly those surrounding restrictions on the numbers of copies of discounted EUR-OP publications to which PIR members were entitled. Issues such as this and those raised in the project report need to brought to the attention of the NCC members. Ms Barton concluded by expressing a desire to see a follow-up report, which could judge whether there had been a trend in the level of European enquiries in public libraries, and whether the PIR had been a worthwhile exercise.

**Barbara Schleihagen**, Director of EBLIDA, reported on the development of European information relays in public libraries in other EU Member States. She described initiatives similar to the PIR in Spain, Denmark and in the Netherlands, and pointed out that three basic elements must already be in place if similar relays are to be established in other countries: a functioning network of public libraries; an acceptance of this network as the natural place for providing access to all kinds of information for the general public; and commitment and financial support from the national European Commission Office. In certain countries circumstances might preclude the creation of a PIR network. In Greece and Portugal, for example, public libraries are only now in the process of playing a more important role in public life; and in Germany, the public library is, on the whole, not anchored in the general public consciousness as being an information centre for everyone. With this in mind, while the UK PIR initiative might be regarded by other Member States as an ideal model, its adoption on a wider basis may prove rather difficult.

All delegates took part in a series of nine discussion groups which explored some of the more significant issues to emerge from the Project results. A rapporteur from each group subsequently gave a brief summary of the deliberations.

**Group 1: the opportunities of PIR membership** The focus group felt that the Relay has created an opportunity to increase the general public awareness of European matters, enabled the individual citizen to make more informed choices and improved his/her democratic involvement. The group also believed PIR membership offers public libraries the opportunity of greater contact with other information services both nationally and across Member States.

**Group 2**: **financial and support issues**  Discussion confirmed a project finding that, in the vast majority of cases, PIR services have been established through the redeployment of libraries' existing resources, and there were questions as to how far libraries can continue to do this without local or European support.  The importance of the discounts on EUR-OP publications was emphasised, and the production of centrally generated promotional materials was suggested.  Group 2 also considered the possibility of additional financial support for IT hardware and for developing electronic networks.  The group felt that PIR members should be seeking external sources of funding.

**Group 3: training and staff**  The success of the first three PIR training modules was acknowledged, particularly in conducting the training programme on a regional basis.  Discussing future training needs, the group agreed that the topics identified by FOLACL's Training Sub-Group - electronic sources, grants and loans, statistics, People's Europe, and Europe and local authorities - would be particularly valuable.  Group 3 also discussed the desirability of employing specialist staff specifically to deal with European information matters, concluding that this was unnecessary in their particular libraries, and also that the creation of such posts might lead to the ghettoisation of European information.

**Group 4: the users of the PIR**  The group concurred with a Project finding that the most frequent users of European information in public libraries were the educational community, closely followed by business people and then, to a lesser extent, the general public and local government officers.  The group suggested that the voluntary sector might be a worthy target of future promotional activity.

**Group 5: links with other relays**  There was general support for the concept of a regional structure for the overall UK Network of European Relays:  however, the question of which other relays would be in these regional groupings was raised, in particular that they should include organisations such as Training and Enterprise Councils and MEPs.  The issue of entering into reciprocal agreements was also considered, and it was felt that some well stocked relays, e.g. EDCs, might see cooperation as a rather one-sided arrangement.

**Group 6**: **evaluation and feedback**   As the precise nature and form of the performance measures to be used is still unknown, group members expressed concerns about the resourcing implications and the demands which evaluation might place upon staff.  A clear definition of a 'European enquiry' must be provided to PIR members, for many enquiries can be cross-disciplinary in nature.  It was also felt that the feedback process should reflect the

full use of the European collection and should also include information about each member's activities, allowing commentary from members on their perception of the Relay service.

**Group 7: further development of the PIR**   The concept of an E-mail network linking all PIR members was considered particularly useful.   Personal contact was also regarded as important, however, and there was support for an annual meeting of PIR members and for regular regional meetings of all types of relay.

**Group 8: collection management, development and arrangement**   The group agreed with the project finding that there was a need for guidelines on a quality European collection and for more critical appraisal of European information sources.   Visits to other collections and regional meetings were also considered valuable aids to material selection, and it was suggested that the EC provide more information on its publications in its Internet pages.   On the subject of classification, Group 8 felt that Dewey was unhelpful.   They suggested that the different schemes currently being used could be collated and practitioners asked why they find their particular choice useful.   This might then allow other PIR members to select a scheme which would suit their particular circumstances.

**Group 9**: **communications amongst PIR members**   The final group felt that communication amongst the whole relay network was more important than that within the PIR.   This, they felt, should be done at three levels: at a UK level, with a newsletter and an annual meeting of all of the relays; at a regional level, possibly achieved through discussion groups and through the training programme; and at a local level, achieved through personal contacts.

Following the summaries of the group discussions, a brief question and answer session took place, during which the prospects of obtaining additional financial support for the PIR were considered.  **Giancarlo Pau**, Head of the Information Network Unit at the EC Representation in London, explained that while the London Office could not commit itself to direct funding, it will honour its commitments as outlined in the PIR agreement and, if possible, will supplement these.  **Michael Messenger**, then concluded the day's events by thanking the EC for hosting the seminar, and by thanking the delegates for their attendance and contributions.

**8. Conclusions and recommendations**

The project reached a number of conclusion and made many recommendations under the heading of themes which had emerged from the study. These are summarised below.

**8.1: The Public Information Relay as an opportunity for public libraries**

That the PIR has been seen as a positive development by the majority of libraries is evident from the very low level of non-membership, by the participation of high numbers of library staff in the training programmes, by the involvement of representational groups such as the Society of Chief Librarians and SLIC, and by the very high response to the survey carried out as part of the present project together with the excellent attendance at the Project Seminar.

It was felt by the focus group that the PIR offers public libraries the opportunity for greater contact with other information services both nationally and across Member States, as well as creating opportunities to increase general awareness of European matters, enabling the individual member of public to make informed choices and improving democratic involvement. However, unless the material provided by a European information service is accessible, objective and comprehensible to the public, these objectives will not be achieved.

The ethos of public library service has traditionally been one of *Education, Information and Recreation* and the PIR initiative has reinforced what may in some instances have been a waning perception, on the part of funding bodies and politicians, of the role of the public library in providing information, with an incremental drift towards an image of the public library service as part of leisure and recreation. There have been unsuccessful bids on the part of public libraries to become EICs, serving the business communities, suggesting a lack of awareness of the long tradition of the provision of excellent business information services by a significant proportion of public libraries in the UK. Public libraries should see their membership of the PIR as an opportunity to advertise their potential as an objective resource for the public in political and social debate.

Public libraries have, in the majority of instances (89%), developed already existing collections of European information and enhanced existing staff expertise through their involvement in the PIR, so that the process has not been a one way flow of resources from the

European Commission but rather a cooperative interchange.  This situation may contrast with the Commission's experience in developing certain other relays.

However, a significant number of respondents foresaw problems in meeting their obligations as members of the PIR, in particular in terms of bearing the costs of staff, overheads and in purchasing the necessary discounted materials and in providing standardised and informative feedback to the Commission.  There were also fears about the demands that might be felt on limited resources as a result of increased awareness of the European service.

## 8.2: Membership of the Public Information Relay and libraries' political neutrality

Overwhelmingly (82%) of respondents felt that political neutrality was important to public library service ethos, but they were undecided about the potential impact of membership of the Public Information Relay upon perceived neutrality.  It is clear that many libraries (36) were deliberately purchasing works which would establish a balance of political views in the European collection.  Where opposition to their membership of the Relay had been encountered, in half of the cases the opposition was political and had come from library users, while for the remainder opposition had come from staff concerned about the additional burden on resources.

## 8.3:  Funding and supporting the PIR

The European Commission has supported the PIR by providing free copies of basic texts; by giving a 50% discount on a certain number of EUR-OP publications and on certain EU databases; by providing stocks of hand-out and promotional material; by giving advice on publications with which to develop the European collection; and by providing training in the use and maintenance of a collection.

However, there are concerns amongst members of the PIR about the future support which the Relay will receive.  The great majority of libraries have redeployed existing resources to staff, accommodate and supplement the basic European information collection, and there are doubts as to the extent to which they can continue to do so without local or European support. Individual libraries must include European information as part of their overall information strategy and argue the case on a local basis if they wish to seek improved resources: however,

libraries may learn from the successful experience and example of others. The European Commission must also recognise the disparities that occur across library services in terms of the willingness of local authorities to provide funding. Promotion of the service is particularly costly and it is recommended that a centrally generated set of promotional materials be produced.

At the time of writing this report the restriction on the number of discounted publications allowed to participating libraries was under review by the European Commission. The Commission must consider the varying needs of the different libraries, in particular their size and structure in terms of the impact that such factors will have on individual collection needs in reaching a decision about future strategy.

It is clear that there would be great benefits from the availability of a dedicated email network for all Relay members, in particular in terms of communications and referral. However, such a network requires financial support for it to be put in place across all Relay members. The EIA has already introduced a network for its members, *Eurotalk*, and the EDC librarians have access to *Eurodoc*. The European Commission must consider whether it is willing to support such an email network for PIR members. Similarly, while Internet development was viewed by members of the PIR in a positive light, it should be a matter of urgency for members to consider the form that such Internet provision should take: whether as a source of information about Europe, open to staff and public alike, or as a source of information about members of the PIR and the kinds of service they can provide.

## 8.4: Staff and training

Generally, the feeling amongst PIR members is that staffing the European information service has not been as great a burden as was initially anticipated. Much of the credit for this situation is due to the highly developed and regionally delivered training programme, which must continue if libraries are to refresh their staff's skills and train new members of staff, without the expense of costly travel. There is evidence from the case studies that staff are growing more confident in dealing with what had been perceived as a very difficult subject area. However, from the results of the survey, a high priority should be given to electronic sources in future training, in particular to the very poorly used official and free or discounted databases.

Most respondents had not appointed specialist staff and it was felt that too great a specialisation amongst staff was undesirable as it might lead to the ghettoisation of European information.  The authors believe that this is an attitude which reflects a traditional reluctance to develop staff specialities in the public library sector and not one that would be encountered in an academic library where subject specialists have long been the norm.  The advantages of a highly expert and specialist staff are likely to lie in greater economy of use of resources, better and more economic stock selection and higher quality response to enquiries.  The disadvantages relate primarily to administrative concerns, such as staff turnover.

## 8.5:  User needs

Only 14 authorities could offer information on the frequency with which requests were made for European information.  Definitions of European enquiries were not clear in (or consistent across) some respondents' statistics.  Based upon impressionistic data, the majority of respondents had noted an increase in demand for European information over the last five years.  Since joining the Relay, only 27% had observed an increase in demand.

A significant level of demand is displayed for materials that do not fall into the general information category, primary use of European information being for educational or business related purposes.  26% of respondents felt that there had been a growth in frequency of requests for particular topics, since joining the Relay, in particular for general information, grants/loans, legislation, social issues and statistics.  Although only 8% of respondents had investigated European information needs prior to joining the Relay, a much higher proportion (41%) either have investigated or intend to investigate needs since joining the Relay.

It is particularly interesting to note the positive results of the user survey (see Section 6) in the light of the relatively low level of use of European information by the general public in the majority of the case study libraries.  A very high level of predicted  future need was found, together with a wide range of subject interests.  These are all positive findings suggesting a growing awareness of the potential significance of European information by public library users.  However, there is a need for further investigation to explore the contradictory findings in terms of actual past and predicted future need.

Highly significantly the project demonstrates that the user of the European information service in the public library is most frequently an educational or business user.  This result

may be unsurprising to those that have been long familiar with public libraries in the United Kingdom, but it is highly significant in that it questions the whole premise of the Public Information Relay. It does not call into question the concept of the public library as an appropriate resource for European information for the general public: rather it calls into question any vision of the public library as a source to which the public will only go for general interest or *private citizen* information. It is clear that public library users will continue to approach the service for material that will help them in their studies or in running a business, whatever alternative sources are made available, via the Educational Relay for example. Libraries cannot, therefore, afford to ignore provision of business information and educational materials if they are to support all of their users.


## 8.6: Links within the PIR and with other European information Relays

A high proportion of Relay members felt that they were personally part of the PIR, indicating the success of the establishment of the network. However, ultimately, the Public Information Relay must be seen not in isolation, but as part of a network of Relays nationally and across European Union Member States. There is evidence from the survey that PIR members are not fully aware of the services offered by other Relay members such as the EDCs and EICs. Such knowledge is essential to the ethos of cooperation and mutual referral across Relays. While the training programme is going some way to address this problem and increased opportunities for visits by staff to other Relays will also help, it is recommended that a document is produced which clearly describes the role, objectives, primary user groups, services, fees (where applicable) and stock of each of the Relays.

It was felt that reciprocity and cooperation might be adversely affected by unfair demands being placed on the particularly well developed Relays, such as EDCs with their extensive stock and expert staff. This situation should be monitored closely and if there is indeed heightened pressure on EDCs as a result of referral some allowance should be made for this fact in resourcing the Relays.

The idea of a regional structure for Relays was becoming more popular as the Project progressed. Such a regional structure should bring together on a regular basis local representatives of all Relays, and any other European information providers, and would ensure better understanding of local resources strategically. There would be benefits in better attendance by all: however, it is recommended that expertise be brought in from outwith the

region on a regular basis. Other forms of communication are also important. A newsletter was seen as desirable by a very high proportion of respondents, perhaps based on one of the existing titles, allowing discussion of issues, problems and solutions on a regular basis. It is also important that European information is dealt with in the broader professional literature. The desirability of a dedicated email network has already been mentioned. In terms of assisting communications in today's environment of electronic interchange, it cannot be overemphasised. Finally an annual meeting of PIR members is recommended, along with the establishment of local discussion groups. Discussion of European information issues at both dedicated and more general conferences should also be encouraged.

The seminar focus group felt that communications amongst PIR members was less significant than communications throughout the entire UK Network of European Relays. However, communications amongst the PIR was seen as significant by survey respondents who clearly felt that they could learn from the experiences of other public librarians in providing European information. It is recommended, therefore, that there should be an open and formal meeting of PIR members on an annual basis, perhaps via the establishment of a PIR Sub-Committee of the National Coordinating Committee. It is important for the success of the PIR that its development is guided by the profession and it is only via such a forum that the necessary debate will take place. If the opportunity of the PIR is to be seized it is essential for public librarians to review their contribution in increasing European awareness and their role in ensuring access to information, in a unique manner.

**8.8: Collection management, development and promotion**

A significant minority (39%) of respondents held fewer than three of the sample of core texts from FOLACL's list of recommended basic information sources, suggesting a significant number of poor collections in member libraries. However, this finding must be tempered by a realisation that libraries are likely to have, in addition, a stock of non-official publications supporting these core texts. Libraries with very basic collections should critically review that collection and consider whether it should be supplemented or if electronic sources via the Internet might be an attractive, visible and more cost-effective alternative. Given the need for libraries to supplement their collections from commercial publishing houses it is recommended that the NCC should seek to establish discounts with appropriate publishers.

There were several subject categories of European information for which a significant proportion of respondents recorded an inadequate collection: customs; transport; legislation; energy; business opportunities; market and company information; scientific and technical research; and patents and standards.  Although much of this material does not equate with the PIR's objective of providing *private citizen* or *general interest* information, there is evidence of a demand for its provision in public libraries.  Supplemental purchases to enhance EUR-OP publications are required to: make available variant levels of treatment; ensure that different political perspectives were represented;  provide more user friendly and approachable materials;  fill gaps in subject coverage;  create better subject access to assist information retrieval;  improve the attractiveness of the European collection;  and provide current information.  Respondents were using a wide range of bibliographic aids to collection development and the selection of new titles.  However, 91% of respondents felt that they would benefit from guidance as to what constitutes a quality collection of European information across all subject categories, and such guidelines are urgently required: they could be developed by pooling the knowledge of PIR members via a survey, resulting in the publication of a document containing details of the recommended collection, at several levels, to correspond with the needs of large, medium and small libraries.  Critical appraisal of new official and costly commercial publications is also urgently required:  such evaluation could be provided via the proposed Newsletter, in existing publications such as *European Access* or on an email network.  Regional meetings, visits to well-developed collections could also provide a forum for sharing knowledge of sources.

A very high proportion of respondents had either very limited or no access to online database hosts and the official European hosts, *ECHO* and *Eurobases*, were particularly poorly exploited.  Only 39% of respondents held relevant CD-ROM titles.  A number of PIR members requested that the 50% discount offered on EUR-OP publications be extended to CD-ROM sources.  Despite the growing availability of relevant Internet sites, such as *Europa*, *I'M Europe, CORDIS, ISPO, CEUS*, and Representation servers, only 19% of respondents were using this medium to access European information.  However, from additional comments, it is likely that this proportion will increase very rapidly.  Training, promotion and critical review of electronic sources of European information are urgently required.

**8.9: Location and arrangement of the European collection**

56% of respondents had relocated their European materials as a result of joining the PIR. For the majority of cases, the relocation had involved a centralisation and consolidation of previously scattered materials. Several patterns of location were recorded and the advantages/disadvantages of each discussed. While this variation will inevitably continue it is recommended that staff should take opportunities to visit more highly developed services in order to examine critically alternative arrangements.

There are concerns at present about the subject arrangement of European collections. Five methods are at present being applied: use of the library's classification scheme; use of *European Access* subject index headings: use of Manchester Public Library's subject headings; adaptation of Manchester's subject headings; and the creation of in-house subject headings. In addition one respondent recommended a sixth solution: use of an agreed standard scheme, possibly UDC, where classmarks would be centrally assigned by EUR-OP. It is felt that a standard and consistent approach to subject arrangement would have much merit in ease of subject classification and the facilitation of enquiries throughout the Relay. EUR-OP should be approached to determine whether there are any plans to develop a classification scheme for European information. If no such plans exist, it is recommended that existing subject arrangements be examined critically in terms of both their value for shelf arrangement and for subject retrieval, and that a recommendation should be made for a standard to be adopted from these.

Many libraries felt that a major problem in housing the European collection was that of limited space. Such libraries should adopt alternative measures, such as a bulletin board or electronic databases to highlight their European information materials, which may be stored in closed access.

**8.10: Feedback to the Commission from PIR members and evaluation of the Relay**

A variety of methods were identified by survey respondents as means of providing feedback to the Commission, with the most popular being standardised questionnaires (34) and an annual report (33). Interestingly the method that would provide the most evaluative feedback, standard user surveys, is least popular with respondents.

At present, the form of service evaluation which will be required is unknown. The precise nature and form of performance measurement to be utilised must be established without delay, for without a clear understanding of performance measures no service can begin to consider the quality of provision. It is also recommended that the system of evaluation which is developed is responsive to the concerns of librarians and fully tested to ensure that it operates uniformly and consistently. A clear definition of a European enquiry, including the treatment of complex and cross-disciplinary approaches, must be provided to participating libraries.

It is recommended that evaluation consist of several elements:

1. statistics on usage calculated from periodic week-long statistics gathering exercises
2. user satisfaction surveys
3. analysis of data gathered from comments books or logs
4. comments from library management and operational staff on administration, activities and success factors
5. an identification of issues, problems and solutions (where appropriate)
6. independent and objective spot checks of services

## 8.12: Future IT developments

An email network for all European information Relay members is seen as a high priority for development. Attention should be given by DGX to the perceived low quality and lack of user friendliness of the official databases, available via ECHO and Eurobases. While it is understood that a windows interface is under development for these hosts, there remain some doubts about the value of particular databases as information retrieval tools. Databases should receive attention under the training programme, covering not just the official databases but also commercially produced examples.

## 8.13: Developing a model of best practice in European information service provision

While it is important to acknowledge that there are very significant variations in size and structure of public library services in the United Kingdom, as well as in the level of

resourcing available to services, there are certain lessons that can be drawn from the project and applied.

◊   Libraries can build a case for European information service development. There are cogent arguments and exemplars for making such information available to the general public and to other user groups.

◊   For the European information service to be used, it must be visible and demonstrably of utility. There are ways in which the service's visibility can be enhanced even where space is limited: electronic provision of European information may be particularly valuable where physical space is at a premium. From the first principles of reference service, a reference service consists of a member of staff capable of both dealing with enquiries from users in an expert and professional manner and of interrogating the appropriate sources of information.

◊   In order to ensure access to European information, material should be collocated into a section devoted to Europe, regardless of the classification scheme at present in use.

◊   Subject specialism should not be regarded as a disadvantage. Public library services have staff who are expert with and experienced in handling business information or local studies or official publications. Given the challenges of dealing with European documentation, such staff will be essential to the provision of high quality European information services. Staff must be supported in attending formal training and in taking additional measures to support expertise. This training should be cascaded to other members of staff.

◊   Developing close contacts with and a secure understanding of a wide range of other European information services, both locally and nationally, is essential to the process of effective and accurate referral.

◊   Location within a business section is not desirable as this will limit visibility for the general user.

◊   A basic referral service, with pamphlet material and staff having attended cascaded training sessions should be available at all service points.

## 9. The Future

This project has examined a new development in library service under the impetus of an initiative of European Information and Communication Policy. It has raised a number of more specific research questions, such as the creation of an effective classification scheme for European information, the use of staff subject specialists in the public library sector and the evaluation of European sources of information. The project has also highlighted a much broader question, one of first principle for public library service: that is the extent to which the public library service has a role to play in ensuring that their users have access to *general citizen* information and the extent of need for that information amongst the public. It is recommended that further research into user needs, not only for European information but also for provision of information relating to national government, is necessary.

The Public Information Relay has developed considerably over the short period of its existence to date and its evolution is a welcome sign of the recognition of the public library network as a "guarantor of reliable information" (see Seminar welcome by Geoffrey Martin in Section 7). It is hoped that the early enthusiasm and commitment, evidenced in this report, will continue both in terms of the involvement of Relay members and of the European Commission's continuing support of the PIR. However ultimately, while public libraries must acknowledge the valuable support and impetus of the European Commission, the sector has a long tradition of information service and serves a wider community of information need than is envisaged by the remit of the Public Information Relay, in particular being heavily used for educational and business related purposes. Library services must, of course, continue to serve all of these needs, placing their membership of the PIR within the context of their overall information strategy.

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# APPENDIX I:  QUESTIONNAIRE - SURVEY OF PIR MEMBERS

<div style="border:1px solid #000; background:#ccc; text-align:center">

**QUESTIONNAIRE**
**EUROPEAN UNION INFORMATION IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES**

</div>

This questionnaire is the focus of two research projects; one is funded by the British Library and is an investigation into the implementation of the Public Information Relay, while the other project is in relation to a PhD thesis, investigating European Union Information Policy. Although the questionnaire is quite lengthy, it should be possible to complete it relatively quickly.

## A: THE PUBLIC INFORMATION RELAY

**[1]** When did your library authority join the Public Information Relay?

**[2]** When was the Public Information Relay service formally launched in your locality? (***Note:*** If the service has not yet been launched please provide the proposed launch date).

**[3]** Were there ever any doubts in your library authority about the advisability of joining the Public Information Relay*?*

<div style="text-align:center">

YES ❑     NO ❑     DON'T KNOW ❑

</div>

**If YES**, please specify the nature of these doubts:

**[4]** Are library staff aware of the rationale behind the establishment of the Public Information Relay?

<div style="text-align:center">

YES ❑     NO ❑

</div>

**If YES,** how was this awareness achieved?

**[5]** It has been suggested by some commentators that, by joining the Public Information Relay, public libraries might be seen as European Union marketing tools. Do you agree with this view? *[Please tick the appropriate box].*

<div style="text-align:center">

**1  2  3  4  5  6**
Strongly agree  ❑❑❑❑❑❑  Strongly disagree

</div>

**[6]** In your opinion, how important is it that public libraries maintain a politically neutral stance? *[Please tick the appropriate box].*

<div style="text-align:center">

**1  2  3  4  5  6**
Extremely important  ❑❑❑❑❑❑  Extremely unimportant

</div>

**[7]** Have you encountered any resistance to the Public Information Relay from:
*[Tick all applicable].*

|  | YES | NO |
|---|---|---|
| library users | ❑ | ❑ |
| library staff | ❑ | ❑ |
| library committee members | ❑ | ❑ |
| representatives of your funding authority | ❑ | ❑ |

**If YES** to any of these options, please specify the nature of the resistance in each case:

## B: THE PROVISION OF EUROPEAN INFORMATION

### a) Sources

**[1]** Please indicate if the library holds any of the following key hardcopy sources of European information, as published by the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities (EUR-OP). [*Tick all applicable].*

| | |
|---|---|
| Treaties | ❑ |
| Official Journal of the EC 'L' series | ❑ |
| Official Journal of the EC 'C' series | ❑ |
| Official Journal of the EC 'S' series | ❑ |
| Annex to the Official Journal | ❑ |
| Bulletin of the European Union | ❑ |
| General Report on the Activities of the European Communities | ❑ |
| Com Documents | ❑ |
| Directory of European Legislation in Force | ❑ |

**[2]** In your European collection, is the stock you hold on the following subject areas adequate for meeting your users' needs? Please indicate. (***Note:*** It is appreciated that, when answering this question, a degree of subjectivity may arise). *[Tick all applicable].*

| | Completely Adequate | Adequate | Inadequate | Completely Inadequate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| General information on the EU's activities | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Customs tariffs and regulations | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Employment and labour | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Education | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Legislation/Implementation | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Social issues/policy | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Citizens' rights | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Transport | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Energy | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Environmental issues | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Agriculture, forestry and fisheries | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Economic and financial issues | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Business opportunities | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Market and company information | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Grants and loans | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Scientific and technical research | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Patents and standards | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Statistics | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Other(s), please specify | | | | |
| _____ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| _____ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| _____ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |

**[3]** Do you feel it would be beneficial to receive some guidance on what constitutes a quality collection in these subject areas?

YES ❏     NO ❏

**[4]** From the following, please indicate if the library has access to any of the following online hosts. *[Tick all applicable].*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Butterworths Telepublishing | ❏ | Eurokom | ❏ |
| Consultancy Europe Associates Ltd | ❏ | FT Profile | ❏ |
| Context Ltd | ❏ | Mead Data Central | ❏ |
| CPC Technologies (formerly BRS) | ❏ | NOMOS Legal Information Service | ❏ |
| DataStar | ❏ | WEFA | ❏ |
| DIALOG | ❏ | Other(s), Please specify | ❏ |
| ECHO | ❏ | | |
| Eurobases | ❏ | | |

**[5]** Please rank the top three online hosts you use most frequently to access European information:

**1**. _____     **2.** _____

**3.** _____

**[6]** From the following, please indicate which CD-ROM titles containing European information the library has in stock: *[Tick all applicable].*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| COMEXT on CD-ROM | ❏ | Justis Official Press Releases | ❏ |
| CORDIS | ❏ | Justis Parliament | ❏ |
| EC Infodisk | ❏ | Justis Single Market | ❏ |
| EUROCAT | ❏ | OJ CD | ❏ |
| Eurolaw | ❏ | SCAD+ CD | ❏ |
| Eurostat-CD | ❏ | Other(s), please specify | ❏ |
| Justis CELEX | ❏ | | |
| Justis European References | ❏ | | |
| Justis Official Journal C Series | ❏ | | |

**[7]** Does the library access European information on the Internet?

YES ❏     NO ❏

If **YES**, which World Wide Web home pages do you find particularly useful? Please specify by providing either the URL or title of the page:

**[8]** Do you have any plans to add your own European information home pages to the World Wide Web?

YES ❏     NO ❏

**[9]** From the following, please indicate approximately what proportion of your total European collection is official material published by EUR-OP:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| None | ❑ | 71-80% | ❑ |
| 1-30% | ❑ | 81-90% | ❑ |
| 31-50% | ❑ | 91-99% | ❑ |
| 51-70% | ❑ | 100% | ❑ |

**[10]** If you supplement official sources with non-official, commercially-produced sources, please briefly indicate the main reasons why you feel this is necessary:

**[11]** To what extent has your European collection grown since joining the Public Information Relay? (including free Relay start-up packs sent by the European Commission)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Not at all | ❑ | 71-80% | ❑ |
| 1-30% | ❑ | 81-90% | ❑ |
| 31-50% | ❑ | 91-100% | ❑ |
| 51-70% | ❑ | >100% | ❑ |

**[12]** Please provide details of the quantity of stock obtained from the European Commission *since joining* the Public Information Relay:

| | **Quantity** |
|---|---|
| Start-up packs of free publications | |
| Additional free publications | |
| Discounted materials | |

**[13]** Is the form and level of the material published by EUR-OP suitable to the needs of the general public?

YES ❑     NO ❑

**If NO**, please briefly indicate why they are unsuitable:

**[14]** Which of the following do you use when selecting European information sources for collection development and ongoing selection of new titles?  *[Tick all applicable]*.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Standard bibliographic tools (e.g. BNB) | ❑ | Other media reviews | ❑ |
| FOLACL's list of suggested basic sources | ❑ | European Access | ❑ |
| Informal recommendations by colleagues | ❑ | European Information Service | ❑ |
| EUR-OP catalogues | ❑ | Other current awareness services | ❑ |
| Other publishers' catalogues | ❑ | Other(s), please specify | ❑ |
| Library suppliers' lists | ❑ | | |
| Journal reviews | ❑ | | |

**[15]** Please indicate if you have any difficulties in finding out what has been published by EUR-OP:

        YES ❑     NO ❑

       **If YES**, please briefly describe the difficulties you encounter:

**[16]** Once you are aware of what has been published by EUR-OP, do you have any difficulties in obtaining the sources you require?

        YES ❑     NO ❑

       **If YES,** please briefly describe the difficulties you encounter:

**[17]** Once added to your stock, does European documentation present any additional problems?

        YES ❑     NO ❑

       **If YES**, please provide brief details of the problems encountered:

**b) Accommodation**

**[18]** *Prior to* joining the Public Information Relay, where was most of your European information located?

| | |
|---|---|
| in a dedicated European information unit | ❑ |
| in a central reference library | ❑ |
| in a commercial/business/technical library | ❑ |
| in a central lending library | ❑ |
| scattered throughout various departments/libraries | ❑ |
| other, please specify | ❑ |

**[19]** What particular advantages and/or disadvantages did these arrangements offer? Please specify:

**Advantages:**

**Disadvantages:**

**[20]** Have these arrangements changed, or are they about to change, as a result of joining the Public Information Relay?

YES ❑     NO ❑

**If YES**, in which of the above locations will most of your European information be held from now on? Please specify:

**[21]** Does the display and storage of European documentation present any problems?

YES ❑     NO ❑

**If YES**, please provide brief details of these problems:

| c) Staff/Training |

**[22]** Please provide the job title of the person coordinating your Public Information Relay activities:

**[23]** *Prior to* joining the Public Information Relay, did your library have any staff with specialist expertise in dealing with European enquiries?

YES ❑     NO ❑

**If YES,**  [i]  How many specialist staff were there?  _____

[ii]  How was this expertise attained? *[Tick all applicable].*

Experience          ❑
Training              ❑
Qualifications      ❑

**[24]** As a result of joining the Public Information Relay, do you plan to employ any additional staff, or re-assign staff from other duties?

YES ❑     NO ❑

**If YES,** please provide brief details of the proposed arrangements:

**[25]** Have any library staff undertaken all or part of the European Commission's initial Public Information Relay Training Programme?

YES ❑     NO ❑

**If YES,** please go to question 26.

(Question 25 continued)

**If NO,** are there any particular reasons why staff have not attended the European Commission's training sessions? Please specify:

**[26]** In your opinion, how effective was the European Commission's initial training programme?

**1  2  3  4  5  6**

Extremely effective  ❏❏❏❏❏❏  Extremely ineffective

Do you have any further comments on the effectiveness of the training programme?

**[27]** Have any library staff ever undertaken European information training courses, other than those organised by the European Commission? (e.g. those run by the EIA, Aslib, etc.)

YES ❏      NO ❏

**If YES**, please provide details:

**[28]** Please briefly indicate if there are any particular aspects of European information provision which you would like future European Commission training sessions to cover?

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**d) Links with other relays**

**[29]** *Prior to* joining the Public Information Relay, how frequently was contact made with the following external European information providers? *[Tick all applicable].*

| | Daily | Weekly | Monthly | Occasionally | Never | Not Known |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Offices of the European Commission | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ |
| European Documentation Centres | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ |
| European Information Centres | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ |
| Carrefours/Rural Information Centres | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ |
| European Reference Centres | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ |
| European Depository Libraries | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ |
| Other Library Authorities | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ |
| Other(s), please specify | | | | | | |
| _____ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | | |
| _____ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | | |
| _____ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | | |
| _____ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | ❏ | | |

**[30]** *Since joining* the Public Information Relay, has there been a significant change in the level of contact with any of the above agencies?

YES ❑     NO ❑     DON'T KNOW ❑

**If YES**, please indicate the manner in which this contact has changed:


**[31]** Which of the above agencies do you most often use for:

Referrals _____
Seeking advice _____
Seeking information _____
Seeking assistance with obtaining documents _____


**[32]** To what extent are library staff aware of the resources held and the services provided by these agencies? *[Tick all applicable]*.

| | Completely Unaware | Aware of Existence | Aware of Stock and Services |
|---|---|---|---|
| Offices of the European Commission | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| European Documentation Centres | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| European Information Centres | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Carrefours/Rural Information Centres | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| European Reference Centres | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| European Depository Libraries | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Other Library Authorities | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Other(s), please specify | | | |
| _____ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| _____ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| _____ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| _____ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |


**[33]** In your opinion, what could be done to improve the general level of awareness in relation to these agencies?


**e) Promotion and Publicity**

**[34]** *Prior to* joining the Public Information Relay, was your European collection actively promoted?

YES ❑     NO ❑

**If YES,** by what means was it promoted? *[Tick all applicable]*.

Leaflets/posters ❑          Guiding ❑
Exhibitions/displays ❑          Local radio ❑
Seminars/meetings ❑          Other(s), please specify ❑
Subject bibliographies and booklists ❑
Newspaper advertisements and articles ❑          _____

**[35]** *Since joining* the Public Information Relay, which of these methods have been used, or will be used, to promote your European information service? *[Tick all applicable].*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Leaflets/posters | ❏ | Local radio | ❏ |
| Exhibitions/displays | ❏ | EU bunting | ❏ |
| Seminars/meetings | ❏ | EU flag | ❏ |
| Subject bibliographies and booklists | ❏ | Other(s), please specify | |
| Newspaper advertisements and articles | ❏ | _____ | |
| Guiding | ❏ | _____ | |

**[36]** Do you have any concerns about conducting a Public Information Relay promotional campaign?

YES ❏     NO ❏

**If YES**, please specify the nature of these concerns:

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## C: FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

It should be emphasised that library authorities answering the questions in this section are assured of complete anonymity. It should also be pointed out that precise financial details are not required.

**[1]** Have additional funds been committed to your European information service?

YES ❏     NO ❏

**If YES**, to which of the following areas have these funds been allocated: *[Tick all applicable].*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Stock | ❏ | Accommodation | ❏ |
| Staffing | ❏ | Overheads | ❏ |
| Training | ❏ | Other(s), please specify | ❏ |
| Publicity | ❏ | _____ | |
| Equipment | ❏ | _____ | |

**[2]** If additional funds **have** been committed to your European information service, have other budgets within your library service fallen as a result?

YES ❏     NO ❏     DON'T KNOW ❏

**If YES**, please indicate the broad service areas (i.e. adult fiction, journal subscriptions, IT equipment, etc) where budgets have fallen:

**If NO**, from where have these additional funds come? Please specify:

## D: USAGE OF THE SERVICE

**[1]** Do you have any information on the frequency with which requests are made for European information?

YES ❑     NO ❑

**If YES**, could you please provide details of the frequency of usage *(Note: If you wish, please attach any statistical information that you may have).*

**[2]** Has the service noted an increase in the number of European enquiries received over the last five years?

YES ❑     NO ❑     DON'T KNOW ❑

**[3]** Has the service noted an increase in the number of European enquiries received since joining the Public Information Relay?

YES ❑     NO ❑     DON'T KNOW ❑

**[4]** *Prior to* joining the Public Information Relay, did the following user groups make significant use of your European collection?

|  | Very Significant | Significant | Insignificant | Don't Know |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| businessmen/businesswomen | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| primary producers (i.e. farmers, fishermen, etc.) | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| further/higher education students | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| the general public | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| local government officers | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| job seekers | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| schoolchildren | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| special interest groups (please specify) |  |  |  |  |
| _____ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |  |
| _____ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |  |
| _____ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |  |
| other(s), please specify |  |  |  |  |
| _____ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |  |
| _____ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |  |

**[5]** Have any of these groups become more frequent users *since your library authority joined* the Public Information Relay?

YES ❑     NO ❑

**If YES**, please indicate which:

**[6]** Please indicate the frequency with which information on the following topics was requested ***prior to*** your library service joining the Public Information Relay: *[Tick all applicable].*

| | Daily | Weekly | Monthly | Occasionally | Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| General information on the EU's activities | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Customs tariffs and regulations | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Employment and labour | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Education | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Legislation/Implementation | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Social issues/policy | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Citizens' rights | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Transport | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Energy | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Environmental issues | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Agriculture, forestry and fisheries | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Economic and financial issues | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Business opportunities | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Market and company information | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Grants and loans | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Scientific and technical research | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Patents and standards | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Statistics | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Other (Please specify) | | | | | |
| _____ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| _____ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| _____ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |

**[7]** Have any of these topics become more popular ***since your library service joined*** the Public Information Relay?

YES ❑    NO ❑

**If YES**, please indicate which:

**[8]** ***Prior to*** joining the Public Information Relay, were the European information needs within your locality investigated at any time?

YES ❑    NO ❑

**If YES**, what methods were used? *[Tick all applicable].*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Survey by questionnaire | ❑ | Observation | ❑ |
| Interviews | ❑ | Other(s), please specify | |
| Analysis of stock used | ❑ | _____ | |
| Analysis of enquiries received | ❑ | _____ | |

**[9]** *Since joining* the Public Information Relay, have you investigated, or do you intend to investigate, the European information needs within your locality?

YES ❑     NO ❑

If **YES**, which of the following methods have been or will be used? *[Tick all applicable]*.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Survey by questionnaire | ❑ | Observation | ❑ |
| Interviews | ❑ | Other(s), please specify | |
| Analysis of stock used | ❑ | _____ | |
| Analysis of enquiries received | ❑ | _____ | |

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## E: EU INFORMATION POLICY ISSUES

**[1]** Please indicate if you are aware of the existence of the National Coordinating Committee of the UK Network of European Relays?

YES ❑     NO ❑

If **YES**, in what ways do you think that the National Coordinating Committee can support what you are doing, as part of the Public Information Relay?

**[2]** Please indicate if you are aware of the existence of the European Commission Directorate-General X's Users' Advisory Council?

YES ❑     NO ❑

**[3]** Do you personally feel part of the Public Information Relay?

YES ❑     NO ❑

**[4]** Do you foresee any problems in meeting the following obligations of Public Information Relay members, as set by the European Commission:

i) To bear the costs of staff, overheads and the necessary discounted materials

YES ❑     NO ❑

If **YES**, please specify the nature of these potential problems:
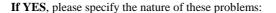
(Question 4 continued)

     ii) To make official documents and publications of the European Union available to the general public.

          YES  ❑      NO  ❑

          **If YES**, please specify the nature of these potential problems:

     iii) To establish links and cooperate with local members of other sectorally established relays (eg European Documentation Centres, European Information Centres, Business Links etc)

          YES  ❑      NO  ❑

          **If YES**, please specify the nature of these problems:

     iv) To report back on activities and feedback from information users on an annual basis

          YES  ❑      NO  ❑

          **If YES**, please specify the nature of these problems:

     v) To publicise the existence of the Public Information Relay by using the designated logo adopted by FOLACL and through various local events.

          YES  ❑      NO  ❑

          **If YES**, please specify the nature of these problems:

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## F: THE FUTURE

**[1]** As you can see from above, one of the obligations of Public Information Relay members is "to report back on activities and feedback from information users on an annual basis." In your opinion, how could this be best achieved?

**[2]** Which of the following would be useful in furthering the development of the Public Information Relay?

- regular coverage of the PIR's activities in the professional literature ❑
- an annual meeting/conference of PIR members ❑
- a regular newsletter for PIR members ❑
- an annual report on the PIR's activities ❑
- opportunities to meet members of other UK relays ❑
- opportunities for cross-Europe meetings ❑
- a hotline/helpdesk for dealing with PIR matters ❑
- a directory of relays and relay members ❑
- an IT network (supporting E-mail, bulletin boards, etc) linking ❑
  all public libraries in the PIR

**[3]** In your opinion, what else could be done to aid the further development, or promote awareness, of the Public Information Relay? Please specify:

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Please return in the pre-paid envelope.

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