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ABERDEEN

**IMPACT EVALUATION OF MUSEUMS,
ARCHIVES AND LIBRARIES:
AVAILABLE EVIDENCE PROJECT**

by

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2002

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Abstract

This report provides a critical overview of impact evaluation in the museums, archives and libraries sector. The study, funded by Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries, consisted largely of a review of the literature published during a five year retrospective period, with a particular emphasis on impact evaluations conducted within the UK. An advisory group, representing all three domains, was also established.

The methodologies used in, and the evidence obtained from, these evaluation studies are discussed critically within the broad context of social, learning and economic impact. While there is an abundance of anecdotal evidence and descriptions of best practice in the sector, extensive hard evidence of impact, gathered systematically, is often lacking. The most compelling evidence from the review indicates that the sector has an impact on personal development. There is also a current emphasis on the impact evaluation of special projects and initiatives; a shift in emphasis towards the evaluation of core services will require a corresponding shift in professional thinking.

Issues relating to physical, emotional and intellectual access to the sector by individuals or groups deemed to be in danger of exclusion are also discussed. While the profession is beginning to recognise access as a priority, there is a need to increase access throughout the sector in order to enable impact.

The report concludes with a series of detailed recommendations for follow-on work, including: further consultation on impact evaluation, both within and outwith the sector; further research into economic impact, long-term impact, the impact of the archives domain, and the establishment of causal relationships between sector use and social, learning and economic impact; further development of, and access to, appropriate evaluation techniques and tools; increased support for evidence-based practice; and the development and adoption of a strategic plan for the sector.

This report is also available on the Resource website at:

<http://www.resource.gov.uk/documents/id16rep.doc> (Word format)

<http://www.resource.gov.uk/documents/id16rep.pdf> (PDF format)

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Impact Evaluation of Museums, Archives and Libraries:

Available Evidence Project

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Since Resource was established in April 2000, as the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries, it has sought to ensure access, raise standards of collection provision, and assess impact, including long-term impact, in museums, archives and libraries.

The need to measure impact originates from the general climate of financial constraint when public organisations, in particular, need to be accountable to all their stakeholders (users, staff and funding bodies).

The government has identified areas for priority action and requires the sector¹ to demonstrate its impact on society, learning and economic growth. Impact evaluation is however a complex issue not helped by the fact that definitions are still being determined and understood by the museum, archive and library professions.

The aim of this report is to provide a review of the available evidence of impact evaluation in the museum, archive and library sector. This will support Resource in developing strategies for assessing the long-term impact of the three domains. The report builds on a considerable body of work that has already established the need to consider more closely the outcomes of services and activities, as opposed to traditionally measured outputs.

The objectives of the review are to:

- Identify what evidence already exists on impact evaluation for museums, archives and libraries.
- Synthesise the available evidence at a general level in order to provide a coherent picture of the impact that museums, archives and libraries have had.
- Identify and describe critically the different evaluation methodologies that have been used to date in the sector.
- Identify gaps and provide recommendations for next steps.

The methodology used for this study was a desk based critical review of literature of impact evaluation in all types of museum, gallery, archive and library over a retrospective period of five years and concentrating on evidence from the UK. An advisory group was set up to ensure all domains and policy areas were represented.

Key points

- The most compelling evidence from this review indicates the sector has an impact on personal development.

¹ Throughout the report the term 'sector' has been used to denote the collective museums, archives and libraries and the term 'domain' has been used to denote museums, or archives, or libraries as individual types of organisation. Generally the term 'museum' also includes galleries.

- A shift in emphasis towards the evaluation of core services, as opposed to special initiatives, requires a corresponding shift in professional thinking, including wider and more effective use of evidence-based practice.
- The profession is beginning to recognise access as a priority but there is a need to increase physical, emotional and intellectual access throughout the sector in order to enable impact.

Evidence of social impact

Museums and galleries

A number of potential areas of social impact were explored in the following major studies: *The GLLAM Report* (Research Centre for Museums and Galleries, 2000); *MORI* polls (1999, 2001); *Including Museums* (Dodd & Sandell, 2001); social impact of the *Open Museum* in Glasgow (Dodd *et al.*, 2002). The most compelling evidence of impact was found to be in the areas of personal development, such as:

- Acquisition of skills;
- Trying new experiences;
- Increased confidence and self-esteem;
- Changed or challenged attitudes;
- Developing creativity, cultural awareness, communication and memory;
- Providing support for educational courses.

These outcomes are comparable to the evidence for impact on learning.

Although actual evidence was not substantiated by this review, museum users and non-users, staff and project workers in varying degrees perceived there to be an impact in wider social areas with specific examples given in:

- Community empowerment, cohesion and capacity building;
- Influencing disadvantaged and socially excluded groups;
- Promoting healthier communities;
- Tackling unemployment;
- Tackling crime.

Archives

The archive domain used similar themes of potential impact in two large-scale surveys of visitors to UK archives (Public Services Quality Group for Archives and Local Studies, 1999 & 2001) and again the actual evidence for positive impact is expressed in terms of personal development:

- Useful and enjoyable learning experience;
- Important source of leisure enjoyment and personal satisfaction;
- Stimulating or broadening understanding of history and culture;
- Increasing abilities, skills and confidence; and, to a limited extent,
- Helping job seeking or workplace skills.

In addition, respondents expressed the view that archives had a positive impact on wider social issues:

- Preservation of culture;
- Strengthening family and community identity;
- Learning opportunities;
- Supporting administrative and business activity.

The archive domain has used an audit of social inclusion work in designated Places of Deposit for Public Records in England and Wales (National Council on Archives, 2001) to establish that there is potential for wider impact in the following areas:

- Personal identity and development;
- Community identity and development;
- Representing communities;
- Democracy and citizenship;
- Tackling crime;
- Promoting healthier communities;
- Promoting lifelong learning, educational attainment, employability.

Libraries

More studies examining social impact have been conducted in the public library domain than in museums and archives, including major national reviews and studies taking a more qualitative approach. Although some of these studies are outwith the timescale of this review, they have been included because their exploratory nature provides evidence of potential impact. In the case of the Proctor, Usherwood and Sobczyk (1996) study, it has been included because it provides evidence of the impact of the temporary closure of the library service in Sheffield.

Evidence from *Building Better Library Services* (Audit Commission, 2002); Matarasso (1998b); Linley and Usherwood (1998); Bryson, Usherwood and Streatfield (2002); Black and Crann (2000) and the two closure studies (Proctor, Usherwood and Sobczyk, 1996 and Proctor, Lee and Reilly, 1998) indicates positive impact in supporting:

- Personal development - including formal education, lifelong learning and training; after-school activities; literacy, leisure, social, and cultural objectives through book borrowing; skills development, availability of public information;
- Social cohesion - by providing a meeting place and centre of community development; raising the profile and confidence of marginalised groups;
- Community empowerment - by supporting community groups and developing a sense of equity and access;
- Local culture and identity - by providing community identity and information;
- Health and well-being - by contributing to the quality of life and how well people feel, as well as providing health information services;
- Local economy - by providing business information and supporting skills development.

Not all the studies provided evidence in all these categories and different studies provide a variety of similar and interrelated categories. Again the most compelling evidence was in the area of personal development if only because the immediate outcomes are more easily identified and less problematic in terms of establishing causality.

Studies concentrating on specific aspects of service provision, such as ICT (Eve and Brophy, 2001 and Roberts, Everitt and Tomos, 2000) indicate that these services also contribute to personal development.

Studies examining special libraries have shown the provision of information to have a positive impact on professional decision-making (Marshall, 1992; Urquhart and Hepworth, 1995; Ashcroft, 1998; Reid, Thomson and Wallace-Smith, 1998; and Grieves, 1998).

Exploratory research in public libraries has investigated the level of activity and initiatives relating to social inclusion in UK public libraries and the extent to which the inclusion work is being monitored (McKrell, Green and Harris, 1997; Muddiman *et al.*, 2000). These studies suggest the mechanisms for monitoring social impact in public libraries have yet to be established.

Issues related to social impact

The literature examining social impact includes a number of policy documents that present evidence of social impact in the form of project cameos, short anecdotal quotes and brief accounts of engagement with specific groups in the community. The evidence presented in the social impact studies varies in extent and the rigour with which it is reported. It is clear that there is evidence of actual impact for particular individuals at specific points in time. However, the exploratory nature of the evaluations does more to demonstrate potential for a wider range of social impacts than provide consistently convincing results. Research in public libraries has combined qualitative and quantitative methods to assess impact and this has provided validity from large samples.

Exploratory studies in each domain suggest similar areas of potential impact, areas in which people believed there to be impact but where actual evidence was not substantiated by this review. However, there are still substantial differences between studies in the way impact is described and presented which makes comparison and collation of evidence difficult. There is a need for further investigation to establish an agreed set of areas of potential social impact and indicators that can be used to identify impact. The work by Matarasso (1998b) has already influenced researchers and would appear to provide a starting point for establishing a coherent way forward.

In general, while most of the literature reviewed here conveys the opinion that the sector does have a positive social impact, extensive hard evidence of this impact, gathered systematically, is often lacking, particularly in the museums and archives domains. This confirms the conclusions of previous literature reviews. In addition, throughout all three domains, there is a general acknowledgement of the difficulties of establishing a causal link between the sector and social impact.

Evidence of learning impact

Museums and galleries

There is limited empirical research into learning in British museums (for example: Hooper-Greenhill *et al.*, 2001; Hooper-Greenhill and Moussouri, 2001) and this research has adopted the visitor agenda-based approach used more extensively in the US (Falk, Moussouri and Coulson, 1998; Leinhardt, Crowley and Knutson, 2002). This approach provides an understanding of how visitors engage with the learning environment created by museums.

The museum domain has also made extensive use of project evaluations (for example: Owen, undated; Hawthorne, 2002; McAlpine, 2002; Education Extra, 1999; London's Transport Museum, [2001]) which use anecdotal quotes to illustrate impact. There is little doubt from the quantity of these that well prepared and organised project interventions do have a positive impact on some participants and organisers.

Overall, in the museum domain there is evidence of:

- Engagement and enjoyment;
- Acquisition of new skills;
- Trying new experiences;
- Encouraging creativity;
- Increased self-confidence or changes in attitude;
- Higher order cognitive learning, particularly when individuals are already familiar with the subject on display or with museum environments;
- Younger people making connections with existing knowledge, particularly when there is appropriate mediation to facilitate the learning process.

The review found some evidence to indicate that it is the unique nature of seeing and handling primary source material that is significant in the learning process (Gilbert and Priest, 1997; McAlpine, 2002).

Effective use of museums in lifelong learning is influenced by appropriate mediation by, and positive involvement or partnerships with, museums professionals, teachers, parents and youth workers (Gilbert and Priest, 1997; Tunnicliffe, 2000; Xanthoudaki, 1998; Hawthorne, [2002]). How collections are presented in museums is an area of research in its own right and its importance is implied in the research studied for this review.

Archives

There is very little research into the relationship between use of archives and impact on learning.

Evidence from the large-scale surveys of visitors to UK archives (Public Services Quality Group for Archives and Local Studies, 1998 & 1999) indicates that respondents felt there is a positive impact on learning:

- Useful and enjoyable learning experience;
- Important source of leisure enjoyment and personal satisfaction;
- Stimulating or broadening understanding of history and culture;
- Increasing abilities, skills and confidence; and, to limited extent,
- Helping job seeking or workplace skills.

References to individual projects that used archival resources (Heywood, 2001) reinforce the potential for impact on learning.

Libraries

There have been a number of empirical studies examining the relationship between libraries and learning. Some of these studies reflect different types of library provision: reader development in public libraries (Toyne and Usherwood, 2001; Train, 2001; Proctor and Bartle, 2002); and school libraries (Lance *et al.*, 2000a,b,c; Smith, 2001; Williams & Wavell, 2001); while other studies examine support for learning

through reading development in young children (Martin and Morgan, 1994; National Centre for Research in Children's Literature, 2001); and after school activities (MacBeth *et al.*, 2001; McNicol *et al.*, 2002).

Evidence from research into learning and library use indicates a positive impact on:

- Enjoyment and choice of leisure reading material;
- Reading development in young children;
- Academic achievement, particularly in terms of language skills;
- Acquisition of skills, particularly ICT and information literacy;
- Broader aspects of learning, such as increased motivation for learning, self-confidence, independence.

Although positive impact was identified in these areas, all the studies examined reflected the complexity of the learning process, the difficulties of isolating the impact of the library from other significant influences and the challenges in establishing causal relationships.

The review identified greater potential for impact than was actually substantiated by the evidence, particularly in terms of knowledge and understanding. The studies examining library provision and academic achievement (Krashen, 1993; Lance *et al.*, 1993, 2000a,b,c; Smith, 2001; Williams & Wavell, 2001; Williams, Wavell and Coles, 2001; Williams, Coles and Wavell, 2002) identified factors which appear to enhance the impact on young people's learning. These include readily available, high quality resources, an appropriate environment and the presence of trained library staff. The research also highlights the need for effective partnerships between library professionals, teachers, health workers and parents in order to mediate and facilitate the learning process.

Academic libraries in the FE and HE sectors are also concerned with tackling the issue of impact assessment and, at present, are at the stage of attempting to find appropriate indicators and data collection techniques.

Issues related to learning impact

The evidence of learning impact tends to be concerned with immediate engagement with the sector. The review found little evidence of how immediate engagement with the learning environment creates change or impact in the individual, group or community. However there was evidence of impact of museums and libraries on cognitive learning when data collection techniques looked beyond the immediate environment (Gilbert and Priest, 1997; Williams and Wavell, 2001).

Projects targeting young groups for after-school, holiday, or youth activities or targeting less traditional users, such as male readers or at risk groups, demonstrate positive interaction by individuals. These projects are about providing access and opportunities for new experiences. There is some evidence that a positive experience raises awareness amongst individuals of the potential for use at a later date.

The evidence presented in evaluation reports varies in rigour and it is not possible to establish the overall impact on a clearly defined sample. The emphasis of reports is often from the perspective of the organisation rather than that of the visitor.

The relationship between learning and sector use has been the subject of more extensive research than social and economic relationships. Learning is closely related to social and economic impact in terms of underpinning lifelong learning, health and well-being and business information needs. However, there are still gaps in the understanding between use and long-term impact. In addition, evaluation has concentrated on looking at particular projects or new services. While this serves to increase staff awareness and understanding, there is a need for more examination of the ongoing impact of core services, whatever these might be for a specific organisation, and the unique value of these services in supporting social, learning and economic impact.

Evidence of economic impact

The majority of the research conducted in the UK within the timescale of this review has concentrated on the arts and cultural industries in general. While museums, archives and libraries are included in these studies, presentation under domain headings is not always appropriate. Although not fully explored or quantifiable at present, there is evidence from a number of studies that:

- The sector has a direct (and indirect) impact on employment (Bryan *et al.*, 2000; Selwood, 2001);
- Status as an employer and purchaser impacts on the local economy in terms of goods and services (Bryan *et al.*, 2000);
- Major national attractions attract tourists and visitors to an area, whose spending power has a direct and indirect impact on the local economy (Vaughan, Farr and Slee, 2000).

Museums and galleries

Studies examining the economic impact of the museum domain have identified evidence similar to that identified in the arts and cultural industries (Baker *et al.*, 1998; Plaza, 2000; South West Economy Centre, 2000):

- Major national museums and galleries attract tourism (Plaza, 2000);
- The domain has a direct impact on employment, salaries and expenditure through suppliers (South West Economy Centre, 2000).

Another study of economic impact explored approaches from the perspective of visitor willingness to pay for services (Baker *et al.*, 1998) and found that there was an overall social benefit (the authors' terminology) in monetary terms to the presence of a gallery.

Archives

The Public Services Quality Group user survey (2001) explores the economic role of archives in the local economy by examining the use visitors made of local services. The evidence indicates that archive visitors made use of local transport (78.2% of users) and local shops and services (36.2%).

Libraries

Research into economic impact in public libraries cites evidence of impact in terms of:

- Direct and indirect impact in terms of jobs (Sawyer, 1996);
- Respondents' willingness to pay for services (Missouri, Holt, Elliott and Moore, 1998; Morris, Hawkins and Sumsion, 2001);
- Respondents' perceptions of economic benefits to the local community (McClure *et al.*, 2000);
- Impact of visitor spending in town centres (Greenhalgh, Worpole and Landry, 1993; Proctor, Usherwood and Sobczyk, 1996);
- Impact of business information provision on business success (Ellis, 1994; Vaughan, 1997).

Issues related to economic impact

Much of the literature is international and research conducted in the UK has concentrated on the arts and cultural industries in general. The research is at the stage of investigating possible approaches to measuring impact and demonstrating potential rather than actual impact.

Many of the studies examining economic impact have used relatively complex analytical techniques and have been conducted by economists or special consultants. While some studies have been based on economic impact or cost benefit analyses and result in statistical or monetary evidence of impact, other studies have used qualitative and quantitative approaches where economic impacts are not necessarily defined in monetary terms.

Economic impact of the sector is dependent upon data sources that are often incomplete, inaccurate or unavailable.

Research has concentrated on the public sector and major public spending initiatives. Research into the economic impact and value of business information is limited. Research into the relationship between public libraries and town centre regeneration is limited.

Access and barriers

Access is not itself a direct measure of impact but is fundamental to creating impact on users. Literature examining access often highlights barriers to use and these have been defined as:

- Institutional - restrictive opening hours, inappropriate staff attitudes, charging policies;
- Personal and social - lack of basic skills, low self-esteem;
- Perceptions and awareness - the organisations have nothing to offer;
- Environmental - physical access, poor transport links.

Other studies provide additional perspectives to these barriers, such as fear of the unknown, a lack of appropriate mediation, location and aesthetics and organisational learning.

A key factor in overcoming barriers to access and use that has been identified during this review is one of professional understanding and commitment to the issues of outcomes and impact on the visitor/user. The evidence from this review would suggest that there is still much to be learned and acted upon in order to improve

emotional, physical and intellectual access and this is an area on which the sector is concentrating at present.

Methods used for impact evaluation

A great variety of approaches have been used for assessing impact. None are suitable for all situations and all have advantages and disadvantages.

There is widespread acceptance of the value of qualitative data to understand and assess impact. This does not preclude the use of such data within an overall quantitative or semi-quantitative approach. Qualitative data provides the grounding for quantitative approaches by identifying useful indicators. While a number of *naturally* occurring indicators have already been identified by the sector staff both for social and learning impact, economic indicators and methodologies are still being explored.

At present project evaluations are a frequently used source of evidence of social and learning impact. They provide a useful means for practitioners to raise awareness of what can be achieved and provide understanding of how it can be achieved. In this they provide a foundation for organisational management. However, the quality varies tremendously and they are more to do with immediate outcomes than really getting to grips with longer-term impact. Their use by policy makers may even be distorting the true picture of impact or deflecting attention away from more significant areas of impact.

As yet there have been few attempts to examine the pooling of local datasets from different services to provide a regional or national picture of the evidence, although issues of compatibility have been raised.

Although research into the impact of archives has been identified as a gap, in the authors' opinion, the latest national survey provides a methodology for obtaining public perception of value and impact worthy of careful consideration for potential application across the domains.

Gaps

A gap has been identified in the research into impact evaluation and, therefore, evidence of impact in the archive domain. There is evidence that the domain itself is beginning to rectify this and is building on the research experience of the museum and library domains.

There is little evidence in the public domain of impact evaluation from private or independent organisations, such as special libraries and private museums.

While there is some positive exploration of the impact of information services on the health and business communities, this is limited and has not been related to social or economic impact.

There is a lack of evidence of the impact of public and dedicated specialist information services to their users or in areas of public or government interest, such as solving crime.

There is evidence of impact on learning in specifically designed programmes. There is less research establishing the links between core services (whatever the organisation feels these to be) and informal and self-directed learning and the relationship between engagement and interaction and the longer-term impact on education, health and quality of life.

Although there is some evidence the use of primary source material in museums has a significant role to play in impact, there is less evidence of the added value of the sector, e.g. the unique quality of a particular domain experience, e.g. what differentiates the library from other sources of information, or the museum from the history book.

There is little evidence of longer-term impact or the causal relationship between sector use and impact. For example, little evidence has been found to establish:

- How immediate interaction and engagement with collections is related to cognitive learning and decision-making;
- The therapeutic benefits of interaction and engagement;
- How availability of services impacts on inward investment in a particular area.

The most appropriate methodologies and indicators have yet to be identified, particularly in relation to economic impact.

There is a need for the sector to address issues related to the localisation as well as the compatibility of data related to impact. Existing evaluations are highly localised, and therefore useful at the organisational level, but there is a lack of research into the ways in which locally relevant evidence can be collected and shared to the benefit of the entire sector.

Although Resource has funded research to investigate the current use of quantitative data collections, there needs to be further research to establish how data already collected could or should be used with the findings of this review to demonstrate impact within the sector or in a way that would enable funding bodies to monitor the effectiveness of the sector.

Recommendations

Further consultation

- There is evidence that the sector can support learning in young people but that this requires appropriate and informed mediation within the profession, through other professions (e.g. teachers) and parents. Further discussion needs to ensure that all relevant agencies and stakeholders are fully aware of the potential of the sector and that effective partnerships can be established. There is a need for training and understanding for appropriate and informed mediation, through initial training programmes for teachers and social workers, for example.
- There needs to be consultation with professionals, practitioners and researchers to establish the practical ability and capacity of the domains to commit to impact evaluation and how this should mesh with self-evaluation initiatives already in place. Consultation needs to establish whether there will be any additional pressures arising from implementing impact evaluation measures. There will

need to be confidence that providing evidence of impact will be beneficial in terms of support for the domains.

Further research

- Resource should encourage impact evaluation not only of specific projects and initiatives but also of core services, as defined by the organisation but in consultation with stakeholders.
- Further research is needed to develop consistency of indicators, data collection, and analysis in order to facilitate comparative research.
- Research into the economic impact of the sector should be treated as a priority. As well as investigating the areas of economic impact already identified, further studies should investigate the sector's contribution towards attracting inward investment, the value of information, and the impact of location of services on the local economy.
- Research into the social, learning and economic impact of the archive domain should be treated as a priority. At this stage the use of case studies would be the most appropriate approach in order to increase understanding of impact.
- Resource should continue to support research into establishing causal relationships between use of the museums, archives and libraries sector and social, learning and economic impact, including the social and therapeutic benefits of leisure activities pursued through the sector.
- Long-term impact has not been established and there are significant challenges in demonstrating causality when investigating longer term impact. Resource, in collaboration with an appropriate Research Council, should seek to establish long-term impact, where the specific influence of the museums, archives and libraries sector is disaggregated from other factors.
- Funds should be made available to allow for further development in the impact evaluation of alternative approaches to core service provision, such as in the use of museum objects for reminiscence therapy.
- Resource to continue to support research investigating the impact of private sector information services or independent museums or organisations.

Techniques and tools

- There needs to be full commitment to a programme of staff development to encourage understanding and adoption of the principles of self-evaluation, the processes involved and the most appropriate approaches, data collection and dissemination techniques. There is a role for the regional agencies in facilitating staff development.
- There is a need for further development of toolkits and guidelines through consultation and research and for these to be widely and readily available to the profession and practitioners. This is a role for Resource in consultation with the profession, practitioners and researchers.

- There is a need to ensure that any large scale user/non user surveys are underpinned in the following ways:
 - There needs to be commitment to funding externally conducted surveys.
 - Discussion between the commissioning body and research agent is needed to ensure the survey design and analyses reflect the research questions of the sector.
 - Consideration needs to be given to the frequency of surveys and whether they should be conducted within the domains or across the sector.
- While project evaluations should not be considered a substitute for the evaluation of core services, where project initiatives require evaluation they can be made more useful if the following are in place:
 - Consultation and guidance needs to ensure that the purpose of such evaluation is clearly indicated, i.e. is it for internal project development, is it to be used to demonstrate impact, is it a quality assurance of value for money?
 - In the light of the above, decisions need to be made as to whether this is best conducted internally or externally.
 - Funding should reflect the need for staff time, training for internal evaluation or funding for external consultants, and time to enable evaluation to be embedded at all stages of the project, including evaluation some months after project completion.

Supporting evidence-based practice

- Resource should continue encouraging professionals to be more aware of, and committed to, evidence-based practice, the value of assessing outcomes and impact as well as outputs, and the value of recognising all stakeholder needs, as begun through the introduction of the Inspiring Learning framework.
- Resource to establish a national forum for discussing best practice in impact evaluation, perhaps in consultation with the Institute of Public Finance. This forum should involve all three domains, and should cover all aspects of social, learning and economic impact.
- Resource should consider approaches taken by other professions, such as in education and medicine, to set up research centres to review, collate and disseminate research.
- Resource to encourage the sector to disseminate impact evaluation methodologies and results via the professional literature, conferences, seminars, etc. Funding to be provided to enable the sector to access appropriate subscription-based publications and for sector staff to attend dissemination events.
- Resource to host or fund the establishment and ongoing maintenance of a public access portal encompassing, for example: research, toolkits, evaluations, and examples of best practice to inform practice and advice on consultancy. This should build upon current Resource initiatives, such as the evidence pages on the Resource website and the Resource database of learning and access projects.
- A data archive would need to be established to support comparative research.

- There needs to be a means of enabling organisations to pursue local priorities and objectives while contributing to regional and national data collections. There is a role for the regional agencies in collecting and collating local data.

Strategic considerations

Assessing social, learning and economic impact in the sector is a complex issue to which there is no single approach. A strategic plan is therefore recommended. As a first step, an advisory group should be established to determine Resource's strategy for impact evaluation.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Aim and objectives of the report

The aim of this report is to provide a review of the available evidence from evaluations of the impact in the museum, archive and library sector in order to support and inform Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries in assessing the long-term impact of these three domains. The report builds on a considerable body of work that has already established the need to consider more closely the outcomes of services and projects as opposed to the traditionally measured outputs.

The objectives of the review are to:

- Identify what evidence already exists on impact evaluation for museums, archives and libraries;
- Synthesise the available evidence at a general level in order to provide a coherent picture of the impact that museums, archives and libraries have had;
- Identify and describe critically the different evaluation methodologies that have been used to date in the sector;
- Identify gaps and provide recommendations for next steps.

1.2 Structure of the report

The report:

- Provides a critical review of the evaluations identified to indicate what has been done, why it has been done, who carried it out and the methods that have been used;
- Identifies evidence for the impact museums, libraries and archives have had, for example on access; learning; society, including social inclusion; and the economy;
- Provides recommendations for work that will fill the gaps that have been identified, and will satisfy the existing and emerging policy framework.

Section 1, *Introduction*, examines the aims and objectives of the research and outlines the structure of the report.

Section 2, *Research methodology*, examines the scope of the research and search strategy used during the study.

Section 3, *Rationale*, examines the context in which the review has been conducted, the growing interest in demonstrating impact and the accountability drive. The section also discusses the challenges of defining impact and setting impact within the context of current policy issues.

Section 4, *Making a difference*, examines the evidence of impact and discusses the findings within the broad context of social, learning and economic impact. Within these three broad sections evidence is examined in the three domains and further sub-sections were determined by the nature of the literature reviewed. There was no easy way to structure the sub-sections to ensure continuity and consistency given the

complex nature of the subject matter and the variety of types of studies and documents examined.

Two further sections are included in Section 4. The first explores research which studied how other agencies and organisations perceived the contribution of museums, archives and libraries to neighbourhood renewal and social inclusion projects. The second considers access and barriers which do not constitute evidence of impact but do have a direct bearing on impact.

Section 5, *Methods used for impact evaluation*, discusses the methods and indicators used for evaluation both by practitioners and by academics.

Section 6, *Conclusion*, discusses the actual evidence, the gaps and the recommendations for future action.

Throughout the report the term 'sector' has been used to denote all museums, archives and libraries and the term 'domain' has been used to denote museums, or archives, or libraries as individual groups. When used generally the term museum also includes galleries.

2 Research methodology

2.1 Scope of the review

The study concentrates on a five-year retrospective period for impact evaluations carried out in the UK. However, evaluation methodologies outside this timescale and geographical location have been included where appropriate.

The scope of the review encompasses:

- All types of museum (including local authority, independent, university, etc.); all types of archive open to the public (including national, local authority, business, health and any other special repositories); and all types of library (including public, academic [school, Further Education and Higher Education], workplace, etc.);
- Impact evaluations that have taken place on a local, regional and national basis;
- Impact evaluations that have looked at specific services, projects, programmes and initiatives in the three domains.

2.2 Search strategy

Two researchers searched all three domains using a predefined hierarchy of search areas and sites:

- National bodies: Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), Resource, Museum, Archive and Library Associations, and the research known to have been commissioned by them;
- Regional services, academic institutions with departments working in the domains of museums, archives and libraries, and consultants known to work in the sector;
- International and foreign national associations were consulted, including UNESCO, Museums Online (Australia) and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (USA);
- Electronic databases, such as Zetoc, Emerald, LISA and Information Science Abstracts, Science Direct and ABI/INFORM, and databases and bibliographies held by national bodies, including Resource;
- Relevant discussion lists were targeted with appeals for help, and individual members of the advisory group provided additional sources of reference.

This search identified almost 600 documents which were recorded in a ProCite database to ensure ease of management of the analysis process.

Although the intention was to have a fully comprehensive review of the literature, it became apparent that the potential for relevant material was vast and restrictions were agreed with Resource to limit the search to evaluations specific to the three domains and post 1997. Evaluations covering other areas of interest, such as the arts, sport, heritage sites, tourism, etc., were considered when they were identified through sector searches and when they contained specific reference to the sector. The search strategy did not include a specific search of these areas. Therefore, given the short research timescale, this review cannot be considered fully comprehensive.

2.3 Advisory group

An advisory group was established to guide the research team and to ensure that the three domains and all the major priority and policy areas were equally represented. Although the timescale did not allow for group meetings, members were contacted on an individual basis as appropriate and their comments were appreciated and taken into consideration.

3 Rationale

3.1 Demonstrating impact

Since Resource was established on 1 April 2000 as the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries, it has sought to assess the long-term impact of museums, archives and libraries in order to support the vision statement:

'Museums, archives and libraries belong at the very heart of people's lives; contributing to their enjoyment and inspiration, cultural values, learning potential, economic prosperity and social equity.'

Until the establishment of Resource in April 2000, the three domains of museums, archives and libraries had been developing their own ways of assessing the efficiency, and to a more limited extent, the effectiveness of the service provided even though they are often managed within an overall corporate framework. Resource has built upon work already begun within the domains and has drawn up action plans for each domain recognising the past context but ensuring a coherent and relevant future for each (Resource, 2001a,b,c). Resource and the regional agencies have commissioned a number of research projects to take this new strategy forward. This critical review is one such project and aims to bring together current available evaluation evidence to ensure Resource is fully informed of developments already made and gaps in current research knowledge. Discussion of the methodologies used for measuring impact provides an understanding of the potential value and limitations of methods used.

The need to measure impact comes from a general climate of transparency and accountability to stakeholders in all public sector organisations and has increased awareness of service provision in relation to client needs and value for money, particularly as the increased use of technology has dramatically increased expenditure. For a number of years, libraries, museums and archives have collected data in a variety of forms in an attempt to establish the efficiency of service, client use and satisfaction. The introduction of standards, performance measurement and best practice in public libraries and more recently archives has followed government and industry lead in providing the basis for accountability. In museums there has been a system of accreditation in the Museum Registration Scheme, since 1988, in order to raise and maintain standards in all spheres of activity, including collection preservation, conservation and exhibition. These systems are more to do with the quantifiable measures of organisation outputs rather than less tangible or easily measured outcomes in terms of impact on users.

During the past decade there has been increasing interest in evaluating services in terms of outcomes rather than outputs. A number of academic studies have been carried out in the UK to investigate the value and impact of library and information services and there is a growing trend for an evaluation report to be written at the end of funded projects in all domains. Professionals are beginning to recognise the value of evaluating services as part of evidence informed practice in order to understand what works and why, and how this relates to organisational aims and objectives. Interest in impact evaluation is not restricted to the museum, archive and library sector and there is useful evidence and examples of evaluation studies and methodologies used in similar studies in other leisure industries, such as the arts, heritage and culture, and sport.

3.2 Government policy and initiatives

In this report current government policy priorities have been identified as covering four complex and inter-related areas:

- **Social impact** encompasses inclusion or overcoming exclusion of individuals or groups in terms of poverty, education, race, or disability and may also include issues of health, community safety, employment and education.
- **Learning impact** is interpreted in a broad sense to encompass an individual, organisation, or community's formal, informal and lifelong progression towards, and change in, knowledge base through a variety of real and virtual channels. Learning can be surface or deep, immediate or long term, the acquisition of skills or an interaction with established knowledge.
- **Economic impact** encompasses economic implications for individuals, small or large groups, or for communities in terms of urban or rural regeneration, renewal or sustainability.
- **Access** which in this report is considered to be the *provision of opportunity*, whether physical, emotional or intellectual, to accommodate learning, social or economic wellbeing.

The domains have been given or have adopted an assumed role of potentially supporting (i.e. ensuring physical and intellectual access), contributing to (i.e. providing appropriate opportunities), and impacting upon (i.e. making a difference to) a number of community or individual needs associated with education, social, physical, psychological and economic wellbeing. Clearly, while impact may be sought in relation to these priorities, it has to be recognised that they are interrelated and that evidence of impact in one area will always be difficult to disentangle from impact in other areas. Learning underpins many of the access issues and this is not restricted to, or controlled by, any one sector operating within the community. There are a number of conditioning or influencing factors (including previous learning) which either enhance or limit the potential impact by influencing access and accessibility. These factors need to be understood in order to maximise the actual impact. Some conditioning factors are, to an extent, within an institution's control given conflicting internal agendas, for instance staff training, allocation of resources, physical environment. Other factors are outwith an institution's direct control, for instance the personal agenda of visitors and users and the wider economic and social contexts within which the institution operates.

Physical, emotional and intellectual access to the resources and collections is a prerequisite for positive impact by the sector and is an issue that the sector as a whole has begun to recognise and address. Lifelong learning and social inclusion are priorities that the library domain in particular has attempted to address by developing new partnerships and programme initiatives while the museum domain has also attempted to ensure that funded education projects target less traditional users. The sector has begun to use information and communications technologies (ICTs) to tackle the issue of access for remote and specific target groups.

3.3 Impact evaluation

Impact evaluation is a management tool used to assess changes that can be attributed to a particular intervention, programme or policy. Usherwood, in correspondence with the research team, suggests a change in terminology 'to *move from measurement to evaluation to assessment*'. Definitions have proved problematic and different interpretations have been identified during the literature review, but in the context of this report the term 'impact' has been defined in the following conceptual framework:

- **Aims and objectives** are the defined and stated aims of a particular service and the means by which they will be implemented. Traditionally these have been defined by the organisation and increasingly the interests of other stakeholders, including users and government, have been taken into account.
- **Inputs** are the resources the service requires in order to function. (For example: buildings, raw materials, staff and information).
- **Process** is what is done with the inputs and may involve all sections of the services. (For example: cataloguing the collection, preparing an exhibition, educational programme or website, developing partnerships).
- **Outputs** are the direct *service product* of combining inputs and processes. Outputs provide a measure of efficiency and have traditionally been measured quantitatively. (For example: number of services provided and number of people provided for, numbers of books issued, numbers of visitors to an exhibition, number of reference enquiries answered, time taken to process raw materials).
- **Outcomes** are the positive or negative *engagement* with planned outputs by an intended or unintended user. Outcomes can be short or medium term. (For example: books read, visitor interaction with a website, user satisfaction with answer to enquiry, recollection of a memorable event).
- **Impact** is the overall effect of *outcomes and conditioning* factors resulting in a *change* in state, attitude or behaviour of an individual or group after engagement with the output and is expressed as 'Did it make a difference?' Impact can be:
 - short, medium or long term;
 - direct or indirect;
 - intentional or unintentional;
 - critical or trivial;
 - simple or complex.(For example: the reader returns to borrow another book by same author, user uses information gained in decision-making, visitor changes attitude towards an aspect of life.)
- **Value**, in this report, is defined in terms of the value stakeholders place on a service, not necessarily a monetary value (although this may be included).

There is a clear distinction between an immediate response to an output, and the impact 'continuum' which progresses beyond the immediate interaction through an intermediate and longer term response (e.g. a person reads, becomes employed, contributes to social cohesion). This continuum also reflects how the immediate individual response can then be transferred to a longer-term community impact. The

review aims to report on the impact the sector has on users and visitors, however the literature also considers the impact felt within an organisation itself and this has been discussed when evidence has been presented in this way (see Section 4.6.4).

The review suggests that professionals understand inputs, outputs and processes and the need to gather evidence to maximise potential efficiency and effectiveness by bridging the gap between service pressures and client needs. However, the challenges begin with the terms 'outcomes' and 'impact' and highlight the need for clarity and consistency in seeking and presenting the evidence of impact.

This points to the need for changes in the way professionals think about services, and the need for tools and enhanced training to enable professionals to gather and analyse this type of data.

In this report we are not concerned with Performance Measures, Benchmarking or Best Value although they are closely related and in practice may influence the data collection techniques used to assess impact.

4 Making a difference

Section 3 discussed the problems associated with defining the terms 'outcomes' and 'impact' and the variety of literature examined in this section provides no clear consensus on what constitutes evidence of impact. The research community raise concerns over the quality of 'evidence' put forward by the profession in policy documents in the form of personal expressions of conviction or practitioner studies that lack the explicit rigour shown in quality academic research.

This section begins by describing the sources of evidence, the type of documents citing evidence and the quality of that evidence. The actual and potential evidence is then considered under the three broad areas of social, learning and economic impact. These headings have been further sub-divided into literature examining the impact in arts and culture generally and then the museum and gallery, archive and library domains. This order is not intended to convey any significance but reflects the order used by Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries. Within each of these sub-sections further divisions have been determined by the nature of the literature and evidence. Two additional headings complete this section: the first examines how external agencies perceive the contributions of the sector to social inclusion and neighbourhood renewal, and the final heading examines access and barriers to impact. Issues of access are fundamental to enabling positive impact and the fact that studies are examining access and barriers reflects the current position of the sector in tackling access before impact can be assessed. In this respect it is also worth noting that there is little to be gained from searching the earlier literature as it is clear that the research approach for assessing impact has not yet been effectively developed and/or widely applied.

4.1 Sources of evidence

The available evidence from the UK is scattered across a wide range of research and policy related documents. The nature and quality of evidence varies markedly and much of the *evidence* is in fact pointing to *potential* areas of impact rather than actual impact. A number of documents describe the *potential* for impact on social, learning and economic issues by users of museums, archives and libraries. This *potential* for impact is discussed in literature reviews, relating either to the arts and cultural services in general, or to libraries or museums in particular, that attempt to arrange the literature under themes which provide frameworks of potential areas of impact.

Policy documents are illustrated with evidence in the form of anecdotal quotes or best practice which provide further evidence of *potential* impact. The cameos presented in these policy documents have been taken from individual project evaluations.

Project evaluations are often targeted at particular groups either to increase access or to attempt to establish impact. Although individual project evaluation reports show that interventions do make an impact on individual participants, they tend to assess the whole project in very general terms without clearly defining indicators of impact, setting out the findings within the overall context of the sample and establishing the extent of impact. Although these reports do not provide evidence of actual impact in the strict sense, they do serve to identify the wide range of areas and indicators for potential impact of museums and libraries, if not archives.

In terms of quality and relevance, as already mentioned, the project evaluations and cameos of projects give very general accounts of the initiatives and target groups, and gather evidence from staff, project workers and less frequently project participants. There is little indication of how this data has been collected and therefore the quality and rigour with which it was gathered and analysed. One recognised challenge mentioned throughout the literature examined is the means by which the largely anecdotal evidence cited could be more rigorously gathered and presented.

A stronger source of evidence can be found in a number of national surveys of museums, archives or libraries that have taken place over the past five years and all have emphasised the nature and extent of social inclusion or community development work being carried out within the organisations. In more recent years, the archives and museums sectors have each conducted large-scale, national surveys of users and (in the case of museums) non-users. Some of these surveys have specifically examined inclusion, learning and economic issues and some major surveys of service provision have targeted particular disadvantaged groups. Much of this work relates to issues of access and illustrates how the services are responding to policy priorities, reflecting their belief in their potential to make an impact rather than attempting to examine actual impact which is dependent upon access. The recent national survey of archives has begun to address the issue of impact and does provide some evidence of impact on users.

Some research provides empirical evidence to support the potential for social and learning impact. However, the authors of these studies express the need for caution when considering the causal relationship between use of museums, archives and libraries and perceived impact on users, particularly when there has been little empirical evidence to support such claims. Bearing such cautions and limitations in mind, the following sections discuss evidence of both *potential* and *actual* social, learning and economic impacts. It should be noted however, that there is considerable overlap between some of the general 'social' impact studies in Section 4.2 and the evidence of 'learning impacts' in Section 4.3.

Existing overviews of the impact of museums, archives and libraries

During the time period being studied here, a number of literature reviews on impact have been written, relating either to the arts and cultural services in general, or to libraries or museums in particular. These documents contain few, if any, specific references to archives, reflecting the limited empirical research conducted in that domain during the last five years. While these documents are concerned largely with the social impact of the sector, learning and economic issues are also discussed.

Coalter (2001a,b,c,d), as part of an investigation of the ways in which cultural services can help to address the wider objectives of national and local government, has produced a series of seven desk studies evaluating existing evidence in the areas of sport, the arts, parks and open spaces, children's play, tourism, museums and libraries. Jermyn (2001) and Reeves (2002) have written complementary reviews, for the Arts Council of England, on the social and economic impact of the arts.

Kerslake and Kinnell (1997, 1998) drew together the international literature on public libraries' community development work from 1992-1997; while Matarasso (1998a) summarised the results of research into the social impact of libraries undertaken by

the PULSE group (these projects will be discussed individually throughout this present report). Newman and McLean (1998, 2000) traced the use of museums and heritage resources in social inclusion and community regeneration programmes.

There have also been literature reviews carried out as part of larger projects. For example, Roach and Morrison (1998) examined the literature as it related to public libraries and ethnicity, citizenship, community and local democracy; Muddiman *et al.* (2000) produced a comprehensive series of 16 working papers on various aspects of social inclusion and public libraries, each paper drawing heavily on the literature; Parker *et al.* (2002) reviewed the published output on neighbourhood renewal and social inclusion, particularly in relation to museums, archives and libraries; while Scott, as part of a wider exploration of the social roles and responsibilities of the museum (Sandell, 2002), examined the literature on measuring social value in museums and in the arts in general.

Some of these reviews have attempted to arrange the literature under various themes which suggest areas for potential impact. A summary of these themes is provided in Table 1. Matarasso, in an approach similar to that adopted in his *Use or ornament?* report (1997), of which more is discussed later, also identified 33 potential developmental impacts of public libraries; these are presented at Appendix B.

Table 1: Summary of themes in social impact/social exclusion literature reviews				
Kerslake & Kinnell (1997)	Matarasso (1998)	Coalter (2001)	Jermyn (2001)	Scott (2002)
1) The impact on the community in which the library operates. 2) Impact on skills i. Literacy and numeracy. ii. Computer literacy. iii. Lifelong and open learning. 3) Economic impact i. Information provision to the business community. ii. Alleviating poverty. iii. Stimulating town centre activity. iv. Library expenditure.	Personal development Education and learning. Employment. Families and young people. Poverty. Health. Community development Community. Social inclusion. Democracy. Local culture.	Personal capital Social contact. Development of confidence and self-esteem. Education and life-long learning. Health and well-being. Social capital Economic and employment effects. Social cohesion and community empowerment. Community safety. Environmental improvements.	Impacts on the individual. The arts in education. Arts and offenders. Health and well-being. Creating social capital. Community development and urban regeneration.	Collective and personal development Discussion and debate. Personal identity. Tolerance and understanding. Reverential and commemorative experiences. Collective identity. Economic value Educational value

While the reviews point to a broad range of potential social impact, many of the authors of these reviews are in agreement that some of the evidence presented in the literature might be questionable. For example:

'There is also widespread consensus among commentators that there is a lack of robust evaluation and systematic evidence of the impact of arts projects, or cultural services, more broadly, despite a wealth of anecdotal evidence.' (Reeves, 2002, pp.31-32)

'While there are clear 'best practice' examples of libraries which address a variety of social issues roles, much of the debate is conducted with limited data - mostly output rather than outcome based.' (Coadter, 2001c, Executive Summary)

'The evidence, such as it is and it is limited, seems to indicate that museums have had really very little impact on their communities. No research results are available that prove that museums have an impact upon the problems of social exclusion' (Newman and McLean, 2001, p.7)

4.2 Social impact of museums, archives and libraries

Much of the 'anecdotal' and 'best practice' evidence referred to in the existing literature reviews can be found throughout various policy and strategy documents produced in recent years, each one designed to illustrate potential and actual social impact. These have dealt specifically with the contribution of libraries (DCMS, 1999a; Cookman, 2001a), museums and/or archives (DCMS, 2000; Scottish Museums Council, 2000), or the arts and cultural services in general (DCMS, 1999b; English Regional Arts Boards, 2000; Local Government Association, 2001). The evidence they present tends to consist of a combination of pen portraits of particular projects or initiatives, brief accounts of the types and levels of engagement with specific groups in the community, and illustrative quotes from staff, project workers and (less frequently) project participants. There is little indication of how this data has been collected, nor of any systematic evaluation techniques being used within the individual projects discussed. The Local Government Association's 'toolkit' for tackling poverty and social inclusion does provide examples of local performance indicators used by authorities (these are output rather than outcome based) and current developmental impact measurement work, such as that funded by Resource.

While the English Regional Arts Boards (2000) clearly believe that their report provides hard evidence of impact, other authors are more cautious, acknowledging that measuring social impact presents some challenges. The DCMS (2000), for example, in its policy guidance document for museums, galleries and archives, *Centres for Social Change*, indicates that *'demonstrating the impact of activities to combat social exclusion is not easy, and it may be some time before the benefits are fully evident'*.

The journal literature in the public libraries field also includes a number of reviews of good practice. These have examined: public library social inclusion projects in general (Raven, 2001); initiatives aimed at disadvantaged groups, such as elderly or visually impaired people (Hicken, 2002); or the candidates for, and winners of, inclusion and best practice award schemes (Wark, 1999; Anon, 2001; Swaffield, 2002). Again, however, these tend to consist of: brief descriptions of the projects; accounts of engagement with participants; library staff and project workers' perceptions of the initiatives' value and impact; and occasional quotes from project participants. Project evaluation procedures are very rarely discussed, and in no detail.

4.2.1 Arts and culture in general

The first ever large-scale study of the social impact of participatory arts initiatives was conducted between September 1995 and March 1997 (Matarasso, 1997). This research used a case study approach to examine projects in the UK, New York and Helsinki, with 60 projects being examined closely and more than 30 others being involved more peripherally. The variety of data collection techniques used included: participant observation; interviews and discussion groups involving 600 individuals; a questionnaire survey of over 500 project participants; and the completion of other

types of questionnaire by over 500 people involved in the case studies. The extent to which these case study projects involved the museums, archives and libraries sector is not clear, although Nottingham Museums was a major research partner. However, as will be seen throughout this section, this report has clearly influenced more recent, sector-focused research.

The Matarasso research divided the social impacts of participation in the arts into six different themes:

Personal development. Where the change is at an individual level, such as in confidence, education, skills and social networks.

Social cohesion. Where arts projects bring people together, promote intercultural and intergenerational understanding, reduce fear of crime, etc.

Community empowerment and self-determination. Where projects can help to build organisational skills and capacity, encourage consultation and democratic participation, strengthen support for community-led initiatives, etc.

Local image and identity. Where projects can help to develop a sense of place and belonging, or transform the image of local groups and bodies.

Imagination and vision. Where participation in the arts can help to develop people's creativity and confidence about the arts, or encourage people to take positive risks, both personally and organisationally.

Health and well-being. Where participation can help people feel better, healthier and happier.

Whilst economic impacts were not specifically addressed, some issues arose as a result of the research, such as the contribution to local economies by invisible voluntary labour, consumer spending on arts materials. (See Section 4.4 of this report for a fuller discussion of studies looking specifically at the economic impact of museums, archives and libraries.)

The study drew on two kinds of evidence: people's views of what had happened to themselves or to others, and more concrete outcomes. The evidence itself is presented under the six main themes (although the author acknowledges that there is some overlap between these categories) and consists of respondents' comments together with findings drawn from the various research questionnaires. For example, in terms of respondents' views, the key findings of the survey of participants, arranged under the six themes, were as follows:

Personal development

- 84% felt more confident about what they can do;
- 80% had learnt new skills by being involved;
- 37% had decided to take up training or a course;

Social cohesion

- 91% had made new friends;
- 84% had become interested in something new;
- 54% had learnt about other people's cultures;

Community empowerment and self-determination

- 86% wanted to be involved in further projects;
- 21% had a new sense of their rights;

Local image and identity

- 63% had become keen to help in local projects;
- 40% felt more positive about where they live;

Imagination and vision

- 86% had tried things they hadn't done before;
- 81% said being creative was important to them;
- 49% thought taking part had changed their ideas;

Health and well-being

- 73% had been happier since being involved;
- 52% felt better or healthier.

Wherever possible, the more concrete outcomes attributable to the specific projects studied are also identified, and these are presented and discussed throughout what is an extensive report. For instance, the progress made by 88 junior and infant pupils in nine Portsmouth schools following participation in a programme of arts activities had been judged by their teachers, who believed that participation had had a positive impact on the children's creativity and imagination (in 83% of children), physical co-ordination (62%), language skills (60%), social skills (56%) and observation skills (53%). However, full details of such evaluation results, and the techniques used, are not always provided.

The author presents examples of social outcomes related to the six broad themes and these are brought together at the beginning of the report to form a list of 50 social impacts (the terms impact and outcome appear to be interchangeable here). This list, subdivided by general theme, can be found at Appendix A of this present report. Whilst Matarasso issues a mild caveat concerning the evidence, he is ultimately convinced of its validity:

'The biggest problem, in relation to this evidence, is showing that a particular outcome is the result of an arts activity - i.e. establishing a causal link. Those involved may say that something happened as a result of an arts project; we, as outsiders, may believe them: but is it so? This, in miniature, reflects one of the central issues not just of this study, but of social research itself, and each reader must reach her or his own conclusion. However, it cannot be denied that there is a cumulative power in the hundreds of voices we have heard over the past 18 months, in vastly different circumstances, explaining again and again how important they feel participation in arts projects has been for them. How many swallows does it take to make a summer?'

Whilst, overall, the study concluded that participation in the arts brings benefits to individuals and communities, Matarasso also identified some costs and drawbacks to such participation, particularly when projects are badly planned or executed. Some individuals, for example, had found that involvement had put stress on personal relationships. From the questionnaire survey of participants, 7% of children and 21% of adults said that taking part had negative effects on them.

In 2001, Annabel Jackson Associates conducted a study of the social impact of the Millennium Commission's Millennium Awards programme. The results were based on almost 700 interviews with award recipients from 50 award partners, covering 403 group projects and 290 individual projects. Whilst the majority of the projects were concerned with community and social issues, or with education, just over 20% of the projects surveyed were environmental, arts or health related. Full details of the projects studied are not provided, although an appendix is provided containing details of 30 projects and is designed to give an impression of the range of activities funded.

Only one of the 30 case study projects (involving education work in the four Tate galleries in the UK) relates to museums, archives or libraries, so the extent to which this study is relevant to the sector is unclear. The report identifies two broad areas of impact:

Personal impact. In terms of developing confidence, motivation, teamwork, leadership, communication, negotiation, literacy/numeracy, etc.

Community impact. In terms of improving the quality of life, strengthening links within the community, reducing isolation, etc.

Overall, 90% of respondents said that their project had been a success in terms of its effect on them personally, while 86% believed it had been a success in terms of its effect on their community. A slight majority (54%) believed that the personal effects would not have happened without the project. In terms of personal impact, 87% of respondents reported increased confidence, 69% were now more likely to take part in training or education, while 30% said that participation had helped them to get a job. Whilst no specific breakdown of impact by the subject area of the project is provided, the report does state that *'the arts excel at developing confidence and communication'*.

Also of interest here is research undertaken by the Local Government Association (Whitworth, 2002) which aimed to obtain a comprehensive picture of local authorities' cultural services work within the context of possible restructuring and the modernisation agenda, and to examine the contribution of cultural services to other areas of local authorities' work. A questionnaire survey of 235 local authorities in England and Wales revealed evidence to suggest that cultural services were contributing to the LGA's 'six commitments initiative' (six key areas in community development), namely:

- Supporting children and their families;
- Developing schools in the community;
- Helping the 'hardest to reach' into work;
- Helping older people to live independent lives;
- Delivering high quality, more reliable bus services;
- Transforming the local environment wherever people live.

As with the other reports discussed above, the evidence is presented as selected project case studies. These are largely descriptive, and while the existence of formal evaluation procedures in some case studies is mentioned, details are not provided.

Two current social impact evaluation programmes in the arts, culture and leisure sectors have also been identified, although as these are longer-term programmes the results are not yet available. Both were established in response to the DCMS Policy Action Team 10 (PAT 10) report on social exclusion (DCMS, 1999b) which identified a need for a programme of research into the impact of culture and leisure on individuals and communities, with a view to developing monitoring and evaluation methodologies as standard elements for social inclusion work. A two-year programme involving 14 projects is currently being conducted by Leeds Metropolitan University's Centre for Leisure & Sport Research, and is due to end in 2002 (DCMS, 2001). The participating projects represent a cross-section of projects involving arts, museums, galleries, libraries, archives and sport. In line with the recommendations of PAT 10, the evaluation and monitoring criteria will be derived from the expressed needs of participants. Meanwhile, the Arts Council of England (Arts Council of

England, 2000; Bridgwood, 2002) is running its own complementary two-year programme, due to end early in 2003, involving 18 projects selected by the Regional Arts Boards.

4.2.2 Museums and galleries

In 2000, the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) at the University of Leicester published the results of research conducted on behalf of the Group for Large Local Authority Museums (GLLAM), *The GLLAM Report*. The key aims of this research included the mapping of social inclusion work across the GLLAM membership and the identification of the social impact of museums and galleries in relation to disadvantage, inequality and discrimination. Part of the research involved a telephone survey of GLLAM staff and project workers. The report highlights seven key areas of impact, the first three based on impact at personal, community and societal levels:

Personal growth and development. The impact that involvement with museums has on the lives of individuals in danger of exclusion.

Community empowerment. The impact of museum initiatives on regenerating and empowering disadvantaged communities.

The representation of inclusive communities. The impact of museums in challenging negative attitudes towards minority or marginalised communities and in providing a sense of place and enhanced community identity for those groups at risk of exclusion.

The remaining four areas of impact are based on the role that museums can play in tackling the UK Governments' four key indicators of exclusion, as reflected in documents such as the PAT10 report (DCMS, 1999b), namely:

- Promoting healthier communities;
- Enhancing educational achievement and promoting lifelong learning;
- Tackling unemployment;
- Tackling crime.

Each of these themes is illustrated with project descriptions and 'cameos'. Outcomes are mentioned throughout, and while some would appear to be drawn simply from the impressions of project workers, a smaller number are clearly the result of some form of formal evaluation. For example, one brief project description reports that, following a museum music initiative, 80% of participants had learned new skills/developed a new interest, 47% felt more confident and encouraged to try something else, and 40% would investigate further training opportunities. Clearly, these are the types of key facts that would help to demonstrate the impact of museum initiatives. Yet important details, such as the number of participants surveyed and the methodology used, are not provided, therefore the validity of the results presented is not clear. Indeed, although *The GLLAM Report* does not give specific details of individual projects' evaluation methods, the survey did establish that a variety of methods are used by GLLAM members. These methods, in order of frequency of use (although precise numbers are not given), are: questionnaires, informal discussions, face-to-face interviews, photographic evidence, self-evaluation, videos, external assessment, performance indicators, note diaries, focus groups, telephone interviews and response postcards. The authors note, however, that the

data gathered is rarely analysed and findings are not always summarised and presented in a report. They conclude that:

'The lack of focused and thorough evaluation plays its part in rendering the good work being done by museums and galleries invisible to all but the immediate participants.'

There have also been two major MORI polls, in 1999 and 2001, of users and non-users of museums and galleries. The first of these polls, conducted on behalf of the Museums and Galleries Commission (MGC), consisted of interviews with almost 2,500 adults. The accompanying press release leaves the reader in no doubt as to the MGC's views on the results of the survey, as they relate to the inclusiveness of museums and galleries:

'Museums are socially inclusive. Only one in a hundred say that they feel intimidated by museums and galleries. Among those interviewed the proportion of ethnic minorities who have visited a museum in the past year is the same as that of the whole population.'

A more in-depth, follow-up investigation of 20 individuals, conducted by telephone interview, revealed that all respondents, whether or not they actually visit museums, agreed that they have important social and educational roles. The interviewees perceived museums and galleries as having a collective role, in representing a society's or community's culture, keeping the collective memory alive, and archiving and preserving objects of the past; and they also perceived the domain as having a role in educating the next generation.

The 'anecdotal' and 'best practice' approach has been used by Dodd and Sandell (2001), albeit with more extensive illustrative examples than those appearing in many of the policy and strategy documents described above. In exploring the responsibility and potential of museums in addressing the social inclusion agenda, they indicate that museums can deliver outcomes at three main levels:

Individual - e.g. increased self-esteem, acquisition of new skills, increased personal confidence.

Community - i.e. delivering benefits to communities in specific neighbourhoods and locations, for example in community capacity building, or in community empowerment and cohesion.

Society - i.e. relating to influences on not only those identified as disadvantaged, discriminated against or at risk of exclusion, but also wider 'mainstream' publics.

The authors acknowledge that evidence of such outcomes has tended to be anecdotal and undocumented. They present a series of articles which, they believe, suggest ways in which these outcomes might be achieved. The contributions include: individuals' accounts of the impact on their lives of participation in museum projects; summaries of community development initiatives; and articles by project workers and participants in projects dealing with topics such as disability and black history. As with the policy documents discussed above, though, details of any systematic evaluation methods used by these projects are sparse.

An interview approach to establishing impact has also been used by North East Museums, Northern Arts and the Community and Outreach Forum in their *Conversations* report (2000). Designed to demonstrate *'the impact museums and*

arts have on the lives of individuals...and how they make a significant contribution to the well-being of communities and the economic success of the region', the report consists of extended extracts of interviews with artists, curators, teachers, development and education officers who have been involved in museum and arts projects in North East England. A number of the contributions are somewhat descriptive in nature, and as there are virtually no contributions from project participants or visitors the impact discussed appears to be almost entirely from the perspective of museum and gallery staff:

'When you are working with local people you can clearly see marked changes in their lives.'

'...a successful project that can be measured by the quality of the web-site and the enthusiasm generated by young people and adults.'

Whilst its pages contain some references to evaluation being conducted within specific projects, full details of methods and results are lacking.

In an investigation of the social impact of the Open Museum in Glasgow, Dodd *et al.* (2002) conducted interviews with museum staff, teaching and community professionals and project participants. The evidence of the impact of the Museum on the lives of individuals is presented in the form of extended extracts from interviews with a limited number (four) of the project participants, together with the interviewer's reflections. The authors summarise this impact under three main categories:

New opportunities. The four participants noted, for example, that they had developed new skills (ranging from sculpture and printing, to information gathering and presentation), new interests (e.g. art, computing, local history), and that their experiences had resulted in new friends and the opening up of new horizons (e.g. employment or educational opportunities).

Confidence. All four interviewees felt that participation in an Open Museum project had enhanced their self-confidence and self-esteem, and for one participant had given him *'a reason for getting up in the morning'*.

Changing perceptions of museums. Two of the participants indicated that they had previously regarded museums as *'stuffy'* institutions, with little relevance to their lives.

The research also examined the impact of using and handling the Open Museum objects, from the perspectives of the compiler of a kit, five facilitators, and an unspecified number of users (representing groups such as schoolchildren, women, older people, and anti-nuclear protestors at Faslane). Again using extracts from interviews as evidence, impact is considered under four main categories:

Stimulation. There was some evidence that the use of museum objects helped to stimulate memories and individual creativity (e.g. in the production of artwork), and contributed towards social interaction between participants and, for example, between older people and their carers.

Representing diversity and validating diverse experiences. For example, the handling and use of historical items of clothing from Africa and China, as well as articles relating to the Sikh faith, had, it is believed, helped participants to acknowledge and recognise minority cultures and ways of life.

Communication and making connections. Interviewees believed that the historical objects had acted as a catalyst for increased communication and self-expression (e.g. with dementia patients), and had helped the participants to develop a better understanding of what the past was like.

Enhancing formal and informal learning. For instance, one secondary school art teacher, who used Open Museum object kits as an integrated part of his course, noted that four years of using such materials had contributed to rising examination grades.

4.2.3 Archives

Research into the social impact of archives in the UK has been somewhat sparse over the last five years, consisting only of a national audit of social inclusion work, and three large-scale visitor surveys.

The audit of social inclusion work in designated Places of Deposit for Public Records in England and Wales was conducted by the National Council on Archives in 2001. This survey sought to provide a snapshot of inclusion policies and practice within the archive sector, their extent, current impact and potential. Respondents were asked to identify ways in which archives might contribute to the promotion of social inclusion. The design of this research drew heavily on two previous studies: the quantitative questions were based on those asked in the *Open to All?* project on public libraries and social exclusion (Muddiman *et al.*, 2000); while the qualitative questions were based largely on that used in *The GLLAM Report* (RCGM, 2000). Indeed, some of the results of the study are grouped under a series of seven themes, similar to those used in *The GLLAM Report*:

- Personal identity and development;
- Community identity and development;
- Representing communities;
- Democracy and citizenship;
- Tackling crime;
- Promoting healthier communities;
- Promoting lifelong learning, educational attainment, employability.

As with *The GLLAM Report*, pen portraits of initiatives are provided throughout the report, to illustrate the seven areas of impact. However, the author is at pains to point out that these simply illustrate the *potential* social impact, and that there is currently a distinct lack of formal evaluation that might demonstrate archives' contribution to the inclusion agenda. Indeed, of 35 case study projects submitted in the survey, only 5 had been formally evaluated. The survey also revealed that not all archivists were convinced of the value of evaluation.

The Public Services Quality Group (PSQG) for Archives and Local Studies conducted three large-scale surveys of visitors to UK archives, in June 1998, October 1999 and February 2001. These have questioned between 11,000 and 13,500 visitors in each case. While the first two studies examined some issues relating to gender, ethnicity and disability, the most recent survey placed an additional emphasis on the wider cultural role of archives in the community.

In terms of archives' cultural role, respondents were asked to describe their experience of using archives, and to provide their thoughts on the contribution of archives to society. The responses are illustrated in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2: UK archives users' experience of using archives (Source: PSQG survey, February 2001)	
Described as:	%
A useful and enjoyable learning experience	79.0
Important source of leisure enjoyment and personal satisfaction	69.6
Stimulating or broadening my understanding of history and culture	61.4
Increasing my abilities, skills and confidence	29.5
Helping me to develop and use skills in ICT	18.0
Helping my job seeking or workplace skills	5.2

Table 3: UK archives users' views on contribution of archives to society (Source: PSQG survey, February 2001)	
Described as:	%
Preservation of our culture	82.4
A means of strengthening family and community identity	72.4
Providing opportunities for learning	65.9
Supporting administrative and business activity	20.3

In terms of existing users, then, 66% of respondents feel that archives provide opportunities for learning, and 79% regard their use of archives as a useful and enjoyable learning experience. Almost 30% believe that using archives increases their abilities, skills and confidence, with 18% noting that they help to develop their ICT skills specifically. Almost three-quarters believe that archives can strengthen family and community identity.

4.2.4 Libraries

Public libraries

Over the last five years, there have been three major surveys of UK public library authorities, each one with a focus on inclusion or community development issues. In 1997, Black and Muddiman published the results of a content analysis (carried out in 1993) of policy and service strategy documents obtained from 74 English and Welsh public library authorities. Of particular interest were the effects that local government reform and restructuring had had on community librarianship. They found that just 16% of authorities surveyed were 'enthusiastic adopters' of new entrepreneurial and consumerist approaches and were developing a new form of community librarianship based on these approaches. For these authorities, community librarianship was predominantly conceptualised in terms of a service which was innovative, popular and responsive to customer demand, and therefore comprised elements such as customer charters, commitments to market research, customer satisfaction and feedback research, and the continuous use of performance measurement and evaluation. However, the results of that evaluation in terms of impact on the community are not provided.

Also in 1997, McKrell, Green and Harris conducted a survey of community development work in 115 UK public library authorities, and elements of impact evaluation were touched upon. For example, libraries were asked, in an open question, to indicate the ways in which they might contribute to anti-poverty strategies, adult education, economic development, etc. Just over half of the libraries (58) responded to this question, giving examples of:

- Services provided (e.g. business information, adult education packs, out of school study centres, computerised community information);
- Partnerships and joint ventures with other agencies (e.g. education and careers services, local community groups, health authorities); or
- The respondents' own perceptions of the value of the library service (e.g. 'a focal point in the local community', 'a central point for those with access difficulties').

Authorities were also asked if they monitored the effectiveness of their development work with communities, and 60 (56%) indicated that they did. The methods used, in descending order of frequency, were performance indicators (used by 59% (sic) of authorities), comments from user groups (48%), qualitative evaluation by survey (47%), and monitoring groups (12%). The results of such evaluation activities, however, were not explored in this study.

Muddiman *et al.* (2000) surveyed the nature and extent of activity and initiatives relating to social exclusion in UK public libraries, concluding that only around one-sixth of authorities approximate to a comprehensive model of good practice. As with the McKrell survey above, the researchers sought details on techniques used for monitoring the effectiveness of services to socially excluded groups or communities. The mechanisms used for monitoring services on a regular basis were: issue statistics (60% of authorities), headcounts (38%), feedback from community groups (31%), user surveys (20%), consultative groups (12%), surveys of non users (9%), focus groups (9%) and social auditing (2%). In 38% of library authorities, library management did not have direct responsibility for monitoring social inclusion strategies. Whilst this survey gathered data on evaluation techniques used, it did not explore the effectiveness of library strategies or report the results of monitoring. Streatfield and Markless (2002) describe this as a golden opportunity lost.

Also worthy of note here is the current work of the Institute of Public Finance's Public Libraries Benchmarking Club, in particular its social inclusion strand (Institute of Public Finance, 2001). The object of this strand is to gather and share information on:

- How those who are socially excluded are identified and consulted;
- How needs are established;
- Current practice in meeting needs;
- Staff training;
- Service delivery;
- Evaluation.

The Benchmarking Club is subscription-based and members are guaranteed confidentiality, therefore the information they collect is not publicly available. However, Resource should be aware of this activity.

Over the last decade, there have been four major, national reviews of the UK public library network, each one attempting to provide at least some evidence of the value

and impact of the service. Whilst two of these fall outwith the prescribed time period of this current review, they are important nevertheless.

The first of these studies, Comedia's *Borrowed Time* (Greenhalgh, Landry and Worpole, 1993), was an attempt to reassess and review the function of the public library. It concluded that public libraries make an impact in five main areas of public life. As well as *cultural enrichment* and *the provision of information*, the other three 'spheres of influence' identified were:

Education. In supporting self-education and lifelong learning, responding to the impact of educational reform, providing space for homework centres, etc.

Social policy. In acting as an entry point into the wider culture for the UK's ethnic minority communities, supporting the emotional needs of disadvantaged groups, etc.

Economic development. In terms of the library's buying power, its provision of information to local businesses, and in its role in the stimulation of town centres.

A subsequent book by the same authors (Greenhalgh, Worpole and Landry, 1995), based on the same research, titled the five spheres of influence slightly differently:

1. Libraries and urban vitality
2. The invisible web: the public library and social policy
3. Education and life-long learning
4. Information and the right to know
5. Other worlds: libraries, fiction and popular reading

In both publications, however, the evidence, under each of the five themes, is generally presented in the form of quotes from interviewees (over 1,000 individuals were interviewed in total), specific findings from user surveys conducted in case study libraries, descriptive accounts of projects and initiatives in the case studies, and examples from the literature. However, the authors acknowledge the difficulties in 'measuring the intangibles' and highlight the need for further research into the social and economic impact of libraries. These sentiments were echoed in a related review of public libraries in London (Burton, Greenhalgh and Worpole, 1996).

The Aslib *Review of the Public Library Service in England and Wales* (1995), conducted for the Department of National Heritage, included an examination of the image and the value of public libraries, as perceived by library staff and by both users and non-users. The findings, obtained from large-scale surveys, were generally favourable, with all groups giving positive ratings to issues such as libraries' accessibility, the approachability of staff, and the quality of service. However, the values recorded by the general public contrasted sharply with the more positive opinions of library staff. Based on rating scales, the researchers constructed an overall public library image index (average value = 100) and it was found that the index values of professional librarians (140) and other library staff (170) were significantly higher than those of frequent users (70), occasional users (ca 62) and non-users (ca 44). (It should be noted here that the findings were generally presented in the form of bar charts, therefore exact values are difficult to ascertain). The findings also raised some questions about the inclusiveness of the public library: non-users suspected that library users are mainly middle class; while both users and non-users agreed that the library was not a good place for younger or working class people.

With regard to the perceived value of public libraries, the researchers carried out a trade-off analysis based on four types of benefit:

Direct benefit. The benefits received by active users of library space, stocks and services.

Indirect benefit. Where the library is a community asset that can enrich local life, in terms of contributing to education, democracy, employment, social bonding, cultural life, civic pride, etc.

Prospective benefit. For prospective users, the library has a 'contingency' value: when they need to use it at some time in their lives, its services are there and available.

Potential future benefit. For future generations.

Again using rating scales, the researchers found that frequent library users had a positive view of the direct benefits (a value of ca +0.2 overall) and indirect benefits (ca +0.6) offered by libraries, although their contingency value was of less interest (ca -0.7). Occasional users gave positive ratings to the library as a community asset (ca +0.4), and to the potential benefits for future generations (ca +0.7). Non-users, meanwhile, shared the occasional users' views on indirect (+0.5) and potential benefits (ca +0.25) but did not relate to direct benefits (-0.5). The opinions of the general public were in contrast to those of library staff, who gave high ratings to the library as a community asset (ca +1.6), but very low ratings to the direct benefits from day-to-day use (ca -2.6).

In 1997, the Audit Commission, in its *Due for Renewal* report, examined the role of the public library service, particularly in the context of tighter resourcing in local government. While the report indicates that libraries find themselves tackling needs in the four areas of recreation and culture, learning, social welfare and economic development, their success, or otherwise, in tackling these needs is not examined in any depth. Although this report includes some examples of good practice relating to inclusion and access, in the form of descriptive accounts of ICT-based initiatives in community information provision and services to deaf and visually impaired people, no evidence of impact is provided.

The more recent Audit Commission study *Building Better Library Services* (2002) also recognises that public libraries have the potential to contribute to specific local priorities for social inclusion, lifelong learning, e-government and so on, but, based on the findings of best value inspections, the authors suggest that the quality of such contributions can vary. Most libraries have good links with education and lifelong learning objectives, with around 68% of inspection reports containing positive comments and only around 18% of reports containing negative comments. However, concerns are raised over links with social exclusion and regeneration strategies, with around 44% of libraries receiving positive gradings, but over one-third being rated negatively by inspectors. In this report, the rather sparse evidence of libraries' contribution to wider council objectives consists of very brief examples of good practice.

Building Better Library Services also examines the relationship between the inclusion and learning agendas and the core role of the public library service. The report discusses the core role of the service in terms of the services it provides (e.g. access to books, ICTs and other information) and the space to use them in, but the authors also acknowledge that simply listing services does not explain, or do justice to, the

value that people place on libraries. They emphasise that a central element of this value is the flexibility of public library services and the freedom that individuals have to use them as they wish. They cite the most popular library activity - borrowing fiction - and suggest that it can contribute to a range of leisure, social, cultural and literacy objectives. The authors argue that it is because the core role of public libraries is so flexible and difficult to define, let alone measure in terms of outcomes, that there is a danger of it being neglected (by, for example, cutting book funds or library opening hours) in favour of high profile national objectives:

'Library services should not focus on these broader social objectives to the exclusion of delivering a good core service - as it is because libraries are a trusted and valued local resource that they are able to make these wider contributions in the first place.'

In many respects, this final point mirrors the views of some in the museums domain, who have accused the government of distorting museums' work by loading them with social policy priorities (Institute of Ideas, 2001). Appleton, for example, argues that:

'The original purpose of museums is being lost to a vast array of other social activities. Museums are supposed to care for, study and present collections. We're challenging the orthodoxy that museums should be about social and political ends.' (BBC, 2001)

Matarasso followed up his work on the impact of the participatory arts (Matarasso, 1997), with an investigation of the social benefits of public library community initiatives (Matarasso, 1998b). As a focus for the study, he examined 18 of over 100 projects submitted for the Holt Jackson/Library Association Community Initiative Awards. This research was based on interviews with library staff and voluntary workers, personal visits to 10 of the projects, and self-completion questionnaires issued to library staff and 69 project participants. It should be noted, however, that timescales precluded any interviews with the public. Matarasso again groups the impacts into six broad themes, almost identical to those used in *Use or ornament?* (Matarasso, 1997), and presents the evidence in the form of accounts of interviews, interviewees' quotes, some figures from the questionnaire responses (due to the small sample size, these are not as prominent as in the *Use or Ornament?* study), as well as references to existing literature:

- *Personal development.* The research identified that library projects make an important contribution in supporting basic literacy, after-school homework activities and developing computer skills; and that they have a marked impact on participants' self-confidence and aspirations. Forty-five per cent of participants had taken up training as a result of involvement in a library project.
- *Social cohesion.* Libraries are regarded as a key neighbourhood resource, as a meeting place and as a centre of community development. Library projects can be a valuable way of raising the profile and confidence of particular marginalised groups, such as ethnic minority populations and travelling people; they can support families through direct service provision; and they can help to bridge the generation gap.
- *Community empowerment.* Library projects can develop organisational capacity within communities, and can help them to gain a better sense of their rights and thus connect more effectively with local services.

- *Local culture and identity.* Projects can have a significant impact on community pride and confidence, contribute to perceptions of belonging and strengthen an appreciation of local distinctiveness.
- *Imagination and creativity.* Participation in library projects can help people to develop their interest in and enjoyment of cultural activity.
- *Health and well-being.* Library projects can contribute to people's quality of life. They can have a general impact on how well people feel, and a more significant impact on health through the provision of health information services.

Whilst the author concludes that library community initiatives have a real and valuable role to play in community development, he again invites caution. He argues firstly that most people whose lives may be affected by library facilities or special initiatives remain largely invisible:

'Consequently, much of the impact of libraries on individuals, and by extension the social groups and communities to which they belong, currently remains impossible to identify, still less evaluate.'

Secondly, he re-emphasises the problem of establishing a causal link between library services and impact, noting that other factors may be responsible. Despite this, however, Matarasso believes that the research findings are valid:

'In other words, in so far as research of this kind can inform policy, the evidence of social impact is at least as sound as that which informs most other areas of public service. If nothing else, the findings suggest that the social and community development potential of library services is much more significant than has often been perceived.'

He argues that the success and sustainability of library projects relies on four factors:

- An identified need and local support
- Principled partnership and effective leadership
- Clear objectives and measures of success
- Effective monitoring and evaluation

Matarasso also believes that existing library performance indicators are inadequate for measuring social impact. He provides some potential examples, but these tend to be indicators of outputs rather than of outcomes - e.g. the number of voluntary and community groups formally linked to the library service; the proportion of hours when library premises are used for organised community activities.

Interestingly, in this study, only two respondents reported negative experiences due to involvement in library projects - far fewer than with Matarasso's previous study of the arts. He suggests two possible reasons for this: that library projects make fewer demands on participants; and that the ethos of libraries is inherently more supportive.

In a deliberate move away from output-based, quantitative measurement, Linley and Usherwood (1998) used a social process audit technique to evaluate the social impact of public libraries in the city of Newcastle upon Tyne and the county of Somerset. Based largely on personal interviews and focus groups with selected stakeholders (i.e. politicians, library staff and some 180 users and non-users) they

sought to measure the impact of library activities in relation to the authorities' social objectives. The research indicated that the established and widely recognised functions of the public library remain important to stakeholders, namely:

Culture. In terms of enriching or enhancing the quality of life, or extending its possibilities.

Education. In supporting both adults' and children's educational needs.

Reading and literacy. In supporting the development of children's reading skills, and providing a suitable location for adult literacy classes.

Leisure. As an important source of free reading material, particularly for economically inactive people.

Information. As a source of public information, although this is influenced by the availability and accessibility of other information providers. The study established that libraries' information services have a 'contingency' value, similar to that identified in the Aslib study (Aslib, 1995).

However, the study also identified the social and caring role of the library. Drawing on the six broad themes identified by Matarasso (1997), the authors consider the social impact of libraries under five categories (of Matarasso's themes, 'Imagination and vision' has been omitted), with the evidence, presented in the form of authors' commentary and illustrative quotes from participants, grouped under each of the themes:

- *Personal development.* Libraries are seen as having a key role in the development of skills, confidence and social networks.
- *Social cohesion.* The library is regarded as a place where people can meet and share interests. They can help people, particularly older people, overcome loneliness and social isolation, and can help to promote intercultural understanding.
- *Community empowerment and self-determination.* The library service supports community groups and activities, and can build confidence in individuals which might then have an effect on the wider community.
- *Local image and identity.* Libraries are seen as community landmarks that can reinforce community identity. This is regarded as particularly important in smaller communities and in areas which lack other community services and facilities.
- *Health and well-being.* The library can have beneficial effects on psychological health and well-being, particularly for isolated and vulnerable elderly and disabled people.

Taking this evidence into account, the authors conclude that:

'In short, libraries enrich the lives of many people. Library use improves the life chances of individuals, in terms of education and job opportunities. Moreover, the provision of public library services helps promote social cohesion and community confidence. Public libraries are seen as community landmarks that reinforce

community identity. The library can help individuals, especially older people, overcome the problems of social isolation and loneliness.'

They acknowledge that much of their evidence is qualitative, often anecdotal in nature. However, taking into account the academic reputation of the researchers, it is perhaps fair to assume that this data will be more reliable than much of the other anecdotal evidence discussed above. Indeed, the authors defend their use of qualitative evidence, pointing to the rigour in which the data were obtained:

'The key message of this study is that qualitative data, rigorously gathered, are valid evidence and should be treated as such by both politicians and professionals.'

While Linley and Usherwood are reluctant to claim that they have developed a model for the evaluation of public library services, they believe that the social audit is a practical tool that might be used by staff in other public libraries, and in other public and voluntary sector information organisations. Indeed, the social audit approach was also used by Bryson, Usherwood and Streatfield (2002) to assess the collaborative impact of the archives, libraries and museums sector in terms of promoting social cohesion, fostering social inclusion and encouraging lifelong learning. Eight organisations from the South West of England participated in this research, with each one studying a particular project or aspect of service provision felt to have significant local community effects. Personal interviews with service heads and focus group discussions with stakeholders were again the main data collection methods used (although the numbers of groups and participants are not specified). An additional feature of this study, however, was an audit training programme designed to familiarise sector staff with the social audit approach, thus providing for a 'Do-It-Yourself' approach. This allowed services to work across disciplines, with museums, archives and libraries auditing each other's work; and also allowed an inter-authority approach, where Bristol audited Dorset and Plymouth audited Devon. This is in line with the New Economics Foundation's insistence that social auditing must include an external verification process.

The evidence consists of illustrative quotes from interviewees, together with references to the literature (it was emphasised that reports on the individual projects are confidential to the authorities concerned). This evidence is grouped under four broad themes, borrowing both from the Matarasso (1997, 1998b) and the Linley and Usherwood studies (1998):

- *Learning.* A contribution to learning was identifiable in all eight projects studied; focus group participants identified both formal and informal learning through their use of sectoral services.
- *Community identity and social cohesion.* Echoing the findings of the Matarasso and Linley and Usherwood studies, museum, archives and library buildings were perceived as important meeting places, local landmarks and sources of civic pride. Libraries were seen as a central source of local community information; while museums held relics of shared societal events and aided in the construction of communal memory. Archives, meanwhile, were regarded as offering opportunities for newly arrived members of a community to establish roots.
- *Economic value.* Participants believed that cultural institutions contribute to the economic value in a community. The contribution of museums and

archives to the tourism industry was noted, as was the role of libraries in business information provision and in skills development. A more detailed discussion of economic impact, including a complementary analysis of the economic impact of museums in South West England, will be found in Section 4.4 of this present report.

- *Equity and access.* Focus group participants raised issues of physical, sensory, intellectual, psychological and financial access. It was noted that the attitude of most of the professionals studied here was one that reflected an awareness of and engagement with their service's particular strengths and weaknesses in terms of equity and access.

While the authors believe that the data show that museums, archives and libraries do have some social impact, they acknowledge that the results were modest overall and that there were variations between projects. However, they feel that reasonable extrapolations are possible.

Two studies, both conducted at the University of Sheffield, examined the value of public libraries to their users in the context of library closures and/or the reduction of opening hours. The first of these, by Proctor, Usherwood and Sobczyk (1996) investigated the impact of the temporary closure of library services in Sheffield (due to industrial action) on user behaviour and attitudes. Amongst the specific questions explored were:

How important are libraries in the lives of library users?

How important are libraries to the local infrastructure?

A combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques was used throughout this study, with library users being surveyed by means of face-to-face interviews (518 users) and telephone interviews (38 users). The authors concluded that for the vast majority of library users the public library is a service of great value, enhancing quality of life, and, for many people, fulfilling an essential need. For example, 79% of respondents had missed the library for at least one reason, with 58% having missed it for educational purposes (this figure was actually lower than expected, due perhaps to library closures coinciding with the academic year). The findings also indicated that there was a greater dependency on libraries as an educational provider in those communities where residents might be expected to have less access to other sources of educational materials and less contact with higher education. Only 21% had not missed the library, the majority of whom (56%) were only occasional users. In three of the four community libraries surveyed, over half of the respondents who had missed the library said they had missed it for a reason related to their well-being or life style (i.e. studying, jobseeking, social activity) rather than a more specific book/information related reason.

The second study, by Proctor, Lee and Reilly (1998) examined the extent and impact of public library closures and reductions in opening hours in England and Wales. One of this study's main objectives was to draw conclusions about the value of public libraries to their users. Four case study authorities in the process of either closing libraries or reducing opening hours were identified, and library users were questioned before and after the changes (using a mixture of postal questionnaires and telephone or face-to-face interviews) to determine how they had been affected by them. In addition, as part of an MA dissertation, a study was conducted of the specific impact on young children and their families. Based on an overall total of 148 interviews and 663 completed questionnaires, the researchers concluded that:

'...people valued the public library highly as an educational and community resource. The local library acts as an 'information junction' helping to bind the community together and improving the general quality of life within it.'

In terms of the impact on young children and their families, there was general agreement amongst teachers, parents and librarians that the loss of a library service has a damaging impact on functional literacy, intellectual development, imagination and educational attainment. Throughout the report, the evidence is presented in the form of survey statistics and respondents' quotes.

Community perceptions of public libraries were also explored by Harris (1998), with a view to developing indicators of their social benefit. In what is described as '*a tentative exploration of an appropriate methodology*', a series of discussion meetings with community groups in three locations (in England, Scotland and Wales) was held, with the discussions structured around four basic themes: descriptions of the local community, and its 'pros and cons'; what might be needed to address the negative factors identified; the potential contribution of public libraries to such measures; and, where a library contribution can be identified, a consideration of how any differences might be demonstrated. From these discussions, Harris concluded that:

- people find it easy to describe their own community and its characteristics;
- people perceive their library to play a valuable public role, but that this perception is based on established, traditional services;
- people find it less easy to think about possible new services or roles for the library; and
- people in communities do not naturally think of justifying libraries in terms of social benefit, and therefore have difficulty with the idea of measuring what the library achieves.

The evidence is presented in the form of summaries of the meetings, including some illustrative quotes, which appear as appendices. Harris emphasises that none of the meetings came to grips with the issue of demonstrating and measuring the social benefits of libraries, and that while the exercise left us clearer about how to establish community indicators of library benefit, there is still some way to go. He suggests that a more purposive engagement with community groups is required, perhaps with the use of more deliberate direction and the provision of examples of measured benefit in workshop style sessions.

The generation of public commentary on public library and status was also the aim of Black and Crann (2000). They used written observations from 231 volunteer observers for the Mass Observation Archive at the University of Sussex, obtained as a result of the Archive's 1999 Directive on Public Libraries. The authors suggest that this study is broadly in keeping with the social audit approach, but with the additional benefit of capturing data 'at a distance'. The evidence consists of illustrative written observations from volunteers, but opinions on the value of public libraries were decidedly mixed, leading the authors to describe the public library as an 'institution replete with ambiguities'. In terms of social inclusion, the evidence revealed a general feeling that libraries were mostly reserved for the better-off social groups, and that the public library is an institution which has under-performed in relation to its liberal ideals.

Specific service provision in public libraries

A number of projects have looked specifically at the social impact of particular library services. Eve and Brophy (2001) investigated the value which users place on ICT access in libraries, and the impact on them of such access. The core aim of this study was to develop a methodology that could be used by libraries nationally. It included a questionnaire survey of over 1,000 library users and over 500 non-users across three English library authorities, and interviews with over 100 existing users of ICT-based library services in the three authorities. The evidence presented in the final report consists of survey statistics and some illustrative quotes. The authors argue that the results *indicate* that where such services are available they are valued by their users, by library users who do use ICT services, *and* by citizens who do not themselves make use of public libraries. Less than 1% of library users and just 4% of non-users regarded ICT-based services in libraries as unnecessary. ICT services in libraries were found to support a range of activities, from formal study to job seeking to building and maintaining social networks using the Internet. The authors suggest that the public library service has the potential to deliver the key aspects of the UK Government's agenda in tackling social exclusion, in providing ICT facilities within communities, and in supporting learners.

The benefits of ICT access in public libraries to socially excluded individuals, particularly jobseekers, were investigated by Roberts, Everitt and Tomos (2000) in the COOL (Creating Opportunities for Others via Libraries) project. With a purposive sample of 50 jobseekers in Newport and Powys, Wales, the project introduced participants to relevant library materials, and tuition was given on wordprocessing and Internet searching. Participants were then given use of the libraries' computer facilities during regular or pre-booked sessions. Preliminary findings (at the time of writing, the final report was not available to the Research Team) indicated that there were perceptible benefits to be gained by jobseekers through the availability of such services in local libraries. For example, it was noted that individuals who are registered as unemployed do not normally have access to the services and facilities offered by Employment Service Programme Centres until they have been unemployed for 13 weeks; whereas there were no such restraints with the COOL project, thereby making such facilities available to jobseekers at a time when the motivation to seek work and an awareness of exclusion may be at its strongest. Jobseekers living in the rural area of Powys cited the accessibility of their local library as an important factor, noting the expense and difficulties involved in travelling to use equivalent facilities in larger towns. However, participants regarded the ICT tuition as the most useful and relevant element of the project, as they believe that computer literacy is high on the list of attributes sought by prospective employers.

Cookman (2001b), as part of a wider study of the use of volunteers in public libraries (Cookman, Haynes and Streatfield, 2000), argued that library authorities, in working with and engaging volunteers, can contribute to their overall policy of social inclusion.

'On an individual level it is a way of developing social contacts, putting back into society, building skills, knowledge and experience. On a societal level it can enhance active citizenship and social cohesion'

She bases her argument on the results of a postal survey of UK library authorities, case studies, and interviews with key informants from the voluntary sector and the library and information domains. While quotes from interviewees are presented as evidence under the heading of 'Community involvement', these are few in number, not particularly extensive, and are all, of course, from library staff and volunteers - the views of library users were not investigated.

Special libraries

In order to demonstrate the relevance of hospital libraries to the health care system, Marshall (1992) explored the impact of library services on clinical decision making. A sample of 448 physicians (in Rochester, New York) were asked to request information related to a current medical case from the library and assess the impact on the care of the patients. In this critical incident approach, 80% of the 208 respondents to the questionnaire indicated that the information had changed their handling of the patient. The types of changes were reported as: advice given to patient (72%); choice of tests (51%); choice of drugs (45%); diagnosis (29%); and reduced length of hospital stay (19%). This research initiated a number of studies examining the value of information for decision making in the business and health sectors using this critical incident technique (Urquhart and Hepworth, 1995; Ashcroft, 1998; Reid, Thomson and Wallace-Smith, 1998; Grieves, 1998). The findings show that the availability of relevant and up-to-date information makes a valuable contribution in decision-making processes. This approach had the disadvantage of low response rates to questionnaires, 5% of the sample in the case of Ashcroft (1998).

4.2.5 Summary

In terms of social impact research, libraries, and in particular public libraries, have been the subject of more numerous and more extensive studies than either museums or archives over the last five years. Interest in the social impact of museums is growing, however, with the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries at the University of Leicester being at the forefront of this work. Research into the impact of archives has been somewhat sparse, consisting only of a national audit of social inclusion work and three large-scale visitor surveys.

The literature discussed here includes a number of policy and related documents that present evidence of the social impact of the sector in the form of project cameos, short anecdotal quotes and brief accounts of engagement with specific groups in the community. There is little indication of how this data has been collected or analysed, thus it is perhaps fair to say that they provide evidence of potential impact rather than actual impact.

The last five years have also seen a number of national surveys of museums, archives and public libraries that have primarily investigated the extent and nature of the organisations' service provision, in terms of social inclusion and community development. Again, though, rather than illustrating actual impact, these studies tend to provide evidence of engagement with the local community and of the organisations' belief in their potential to make a social impact.

In the museums and archives domains, the large-scale, national surveys of users and (in the case of museums) non-users, conducted by MORI and the PSQG respectively, have considered social issues, with the most recent PSQG survey (2001) revealing some significant, positive findings on the cultural and social impact of UK archives.

The other studies reviewed here, most of them conducted by the academic community, have made a more conscious effort to establish and measure social impact, and the majority claim that the sector does indeed have positive impacts. Many of the researchers have clearly been influenced by Matarasso's work on the social impact of participatory arts initiatives (Matarasso, 1997), and have attempted

to group their findings under similar broad themes. Broadly speaking, then, evidence of the social impact of the sector might be said to exist in these six areas:

- Personal development;
- Social cohesion;
- Community empowerment;
- Local culture and identity;
- Imagination and creativity;
- Health and well-being.

The evidence presented under these themes, however, varies broadly both in its extent and the manner in which it has been collected, ranging from the four interviews with participants in Glasgow's Open Museum projects (Dodd *et al.*, 2002), to the thousands of individuals surveyed (by questionnaire, interview and group discussion) during the Aslib review of public libraries in 1995. In general, the social impact research in museums has adopted a more qualitative, anecdotal approach; while the research in public libraries has combined qualitative and quantitative methods.

It is perhaps fair to assume that most of the researchers would defend their individual approaches. Indeed, some of them have explicitly done so in the literature and as will be seen from the main body of this section, and from the methods section, very few have issued caveats concerning the reliability of their data. It is perhaps also fair to suggest, though, that regardless of the rigour with which the data was collected, the sample sizes in some of the studies, particularly in the museums domain, might prove less than convincing to those influential policy makers and funders who prefer quantitative measures and the validity of scale.

In this respect, the evidence from the studies of public libraries is potentially more convincing, with much of it based on relatively large-scale investigations, conducted rigorously. For example, the three studies carried out at the University of Sheffield (Proctor, Usherwood and Sobczyk, 1996; Proctor, Lee and Reilly, 1998; Linley and Usherwood, 1998) all provide generally positive findings, obtained from large samples, on the social value and impact of public libraries. Yet, it should also be remembered that other studies, while also based on extensive research, have produced less positive results. For example, the Aslib (1995) and Audit Commission (2002) reviews of UK public libraries, and the study conducted by Black and Crann (2000), all contain negative points concerning the inclusiveness of public libraries.

In general, then, while most of the literature reviewed here conveys the opinion that the sector does have a positive social impact, extensive hard evidence of this impact, gathered systematically, is often lacking, particularly in the museums and archives domains. This tends to confirm the conclusions of previous literature reviews. In addition, throughout all three domains, there is a general acknowledgement of the difficulties of establishing a causal link between the sector and social impact.

4.3 Learning impact of museums, archives and libraries

There has been no work identified during this current review which examines learning across the domains prior to the establishment of Resource in April 2000. Since then Resource has commissioned a review of user learning needs (McNicol and Nankivell,

2001) and ongoing research into learning by the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries at the University of Leicester which will feed into the Inspiring Learning project (Resource, 2001d) which is intended to provide a framework for examining learning in any type of organisation within the sector. The report examining user learning needs provides a foundation for developing effective service provision to support learning by summarising aspects of learning, barriers to learning and detailing the methods for assessing user needs. These are key elements in enabling effective outcomes for positive impact.

All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, 1999) and *Using Museums, Archives and Libraries to Develop a Learning Community* (Resource, 2001e) are among a number of policy documents that use the evidence from research and project evaluations to advocate the role of the sector in supporting formal and informal learning. These secondary sources do not provide enough methodological or findings detail to enable sound judgements regarding the evidence of impact. The type of research and project evaluations referred to in these documents are discussed in greater detail in individual sub-sections.

4.3.1 Museums and galleries

Hooper-Greenhill and Moussouri, (2002) review research on learning in different types of museums and galleries between 1990 and 1999. The authors highlight the lack of research from the UK and question the validity of transferring the findings relating to American museums (predominantly science museums) to the British cultural and educational context. The review confirms a view identified through the current available evidence project that evaluation research concentrates on special projects or exhibitions and there is a lack of research examining the impact of general service provision, i.e. the impact of collection use for learning. The authors also indicate a lack of clear or common definitions of learning and a lack of research into the wider social impacts of museum and gallery use.

A number of policy documents consider the *potential* of museums to impact on learning and to contribute to the lifelong learning agenda. These documents give brief descriptions of specific projects and illustrate the potential for learning by giving examples of actual incidences of impact. The documents include: *The Learning Power of Museums* (DCMS/DfEE, 2000); *Museums and Social Justice* (Scottish Museums Council, 2000); *Renaissance in the Regions* (Resource 2001c); and *Museums & Galleries Education Programme* (Campaign for Learning through Museums and Galleries, [2002]). *Learning through Culture* (Clarke *et al.*, 2002) is a review of projects undertaken through the Museums and Galleries Education Programme and aims to demonstrate the potential for museums and galleries to support learning by providing illustrative examples of individual project case studies.

The case study cameos described in these documents illustrate the type of projects undertaken, provide examples of good practice, and represent a willingness by the domain to harness this potential to impact on learning (DCMS/DfEE, 2000; Clarke *et al.*, 2002). These cameos provide evidence that individual projects have stimulated learning and creative activities. They do not however provide details of methodologies used or detailed findings of the type of learning impacted upon. The benefits described in *Museums & Galleries Education Programme* (Campaign for Learning through Museums and Galleries, [2002]) are described from the point of view of the organisation, rather than the user, emphasising partnerships and staff development. Feedback and insights from the user's perspective are described in

terms of providing opportunities and stimulating enjoyment. *Learning through Culture* (Clarke *et al.*, 2002) gives greater emphasis to the learning opportunities by providing summaries of how museums and galleries can enhance the curriculum and support non-core and cross-curricula activities as well as providing summaries of the benefits of using new technologies for the user and how projects enhance professional development. Although there is undoubtedly some sound evidence of impact on individuals within these cameo reports there is no way of identifying the quality of the data collection methods, the quality of the indicators used, or the extent of the impact in terms of percentages of participants, for instance. It is argued therefore, that this evidence has limited value in assessing the extent of impact; however, like the individual project evaluations described in more detail, it does add weight to the evidence that this type of intervention does have a positive impact on some participants.

There is recognition within the policy organisations for the need for consistent methodologies to be adopted when evaluating projects. In *A Common Wealth*, Anderson (1999) expresses the view that:

'Research and evaluation of public learning needs to become an integral part of museum practice. Few museums evaluate the educational effectiveness of their galleries or other services, conduct learning research, or study the educational work of other museums, yet investment in these activities could significantly enhance the effectiveness of museums.' (p.4)

and goes on to recommend that this takes a high priority. The case study cameos and recent evaluations of funded projects indicate that in this respect Anderson's recommendations have been taken on board not only within the museum domain but also within libraries and to a more limited extent in archives.

The second survey of museum and gallery use conducted by MORI in 2001 for Resource, identifies specific learning issues. The survey of schoolchildren revealed that 29% believed that a local museum or gallery was one of the best places to learn outside school, although just 3% felt it was *the* best place to learn outside school. Seventy per cent of the children felt that a library was one of the best places to learn, with 38% believing it to be the best place apart from school.

Supporting informal or self-directed learning

An extensive research programme in the USA, Museum Learning Collaborative, (Leinhardt, Crowley and Knutson, 2002) has used the analysis of group conversation to investigate the learning of individuals within the museum setting. This research defines learning in a broad sense and the associated analysis indicates the relationship between the type of meaning making and the personal agenda of the group participants. The motivation for visiting and existing knowledge of the subject by the participants are significant factors in determining the level of learning which takes place (Falk, Moussouri and Coulson, 1998; Leinhardt, Crowley and Knutson, 2002). This research (Leinhardt, Crowley and Knutson, 2002) and other studies examining group interaction (Gilbert and Priest, 1997; vom Lehn, Heath and Hindmarsh, 2000) reveal the significance of communication in visitor group dynamics and how exhibits prompt discussion and interaction with the display. The Gilbert and Priest (1997) report shows evidence of social construction of knowledge mediated by verbal discourse. Tunnicliffe (2000) explored the learning of science in museum settings and, using conversational analysis, provided evidence that adults accompanying children in these settings did not necessarily take the opportunity to

increase scientific vocabulary, knowledge and understanding when discussing the exhibits.

The interactive nature of science museum exhibits has led to a number of studies examining user interaction with exhibits and research has extended to consider the impact on learning in work by Barriault (1999). This research is visitor focused and uses analysis of observation and open-ended interviews to establish eight discrete learning behaviours grouped into three categories reflecting increased involvement with the exhibits: Initiation behaviours; Transition behaviours; Breakthrough behaviours. The evidence in this article did not allow for an understanding of the extent of engagement of visitors or actual impact but provided one framework for considering impact in the future.

Two pieces of research, 'Making Meaning' (Hooper-Greenhill *et al.*, 2001; Hooper-Greenhill and Moussouri, 2001), were conducted at Wolverhampton Art Gallery and Nottingham Castle Museum to investigate visitor interpretative strategies. The research used a 'think aloud' technique to gather data on adult visitors' reactions and thoughts (18 at Wolverhampton and 15 at Nottingham) as they explored the exhibitions at their own pace. The findings from this research provides analysis of how visitor's art knowledge, educational background and motivation contribute to their engagement with the exhibits and what support is sought in terms of grouping, labelling and explanation. The motivation categories considered during analysis were:

- place (a place to visit in a particular location);
- education (to learn in general or something specific);
- entertainment (fun experience);
- practical (convenient, out of the rain);
- flow (enjoyment of the experience).

The use of motivation categories has been explored in some depth in museum research and provides a means of interpreting behaviour and learning in relation to the visitor's agenda rather than the organisation's agenda. The learning identified in this research relates specifically to visual analysis, socio-cultural context and subject matter, and technique and style of the art works rather than considering learning in a wider context.

The Society of Museum Archaeologists' *Art of Archaeology Initiative* tackled the issue of access and facilitating the use and interpretation of archaeological heritage using arts media. The unpublished summary report (Owen, undated) described the project as being about access, and the findings illustrate how participants actively engaged with the collections. The report provides evidence through standardised questionnaires from ten participating museums that:

'these projects have been an unqualified success in demonstrating that the material culture and information resource in our museums has considerable potential for captivating these audiences.' (p.20-21)

The evaluation sought evidence on participants' reaction to the experience of working with artefacts before and after the event, and evidence on participants' perception of increased knowledge, confidence in the tasks and inspiration through archaeology. The author presents the data to enable conclusions to be drawn in context and it is clear that although sample sizes are small participants in the projects did derive benefits: over 80% of participants in 11/16 activities felt they had increased their

knowledge of archaeology and over 80% of participants in 10/16 activities felt confident about what they were doing by the end of the day. Visitors' reactions to the project outcomes (i.e. exhibitions of participants' work) were slightly less positive and the author suggests that this *'perhaps passes comment on the ability of exhibitions to involve their audiences in the same way hands-on experiences can'* (p.13). Many of the museums felt an outcome of the project had been the promotion of the collection both within and outwith the organisation.

The report also identified a number of issues that arose from the pilot projects which need to be addressed:

- the resource intensive nature of this type of project;
- the need to change the culture of the profession to be audience-driven;
- the implications in terms of conservation and collection care in handling objects;
- the need for professional development in evaluation work.

Xanthoudaki (1998) examines the use of art museums and galleries by young people aged between fourteen and twenty-five years. This review suggests that *"parental choices, schooling, peer influence, limited specialised youth educational services and lack of understanding of young people's way of life are the main factors determining their attitude towards visiting museums and galleries"* (Xanthoudaki, 1998, p.163). Evidence from Xanthoudaki's review indicates that ineffective school visits can have a negative impact on young people whereas parental use of these organisations can set an example that encourages use in later years. It is generally recognised that teenagers and young adults represent a small percentage of the overall visitor numbers. Xanthoudaki continues to consider the type of provision offered to young people through programmes that are beginning to recognise this group in their own right and, although aware of the limitations of the secondary sources and incomplete analysis of project evaluations, states the *"outcomes of these initiatives show that they usually had a positive impact on young people."* (Xanthoudaki, 1998, p.170).

Two projects, *Museum Fever* and *Represent*, aimed at encouraging young people to become involved with museums were evaluated for West Midlands Regional Museums Council (Hawthorne, [2002]). Both projects employed co-ordinators experienced in working with young people and the emphasis of the projects was on fun and socialising while providing a range of activities and opportunities to learn new skills and build self-confidence. The projects illustrate successful partnerships between youth, youth workers and museums. Although the museums aspect was not necessarily central, it was reported that *'both projects exceed[ed] all expectations'* (Section 1.0), thus suggesting that even unlikely partnerships are possible and could be encouraged through a number of agencies.

'Both groups of young people had poor opinions of museums initially...Some of the young people expressed an indifference to museums at the end as well as at the beginning of the project. However, many had warmed a little to museums while a significant minority were much more positive.' (Section 3.2)

The summary of benefits for the young people is described as:

- increase in communication skills and confidence to use them;
- increase in technical skills such as computer work and photography;
- an understanding of what museums can provide;
- basic skills development;
- accreditation for work;
- enjoyment;

- greater motivation to visit museums;
- increased confidence. (Section 4.2)

The evaluation includes a section evaluating the impact on the museums and indicates both improved awareness of the needs of young people and increased use of the museum by young people. Both projects had built evaluation into the planning and employed an external evaluator. The methods used for evaluation were museum staff diaries, observations, informal interviews, video recordings and focus groups.

The type of data included is described as:

- an understanding of the commitment to the projects in terms of time and effort;
- the range of skills developed and their relevance to participants' lives;
- the amount of enthusiasm from users about the project through talking to them;
- evaluators' perceptions from their conversations with all those involved;
- the testimony on the social element and the creation of a wider cultural experience;
- perceptions from those that know the young people;
- evidence of repeat visits alone or with friends independent of the project;
- intentions to visit museums again in future (representing a change in attitude rather than a change in behaviour);
- desire to develop further cultural experiences and skills;
- evidence of impact on museum policy. (Section 6.3).

The quality of the reporting and discussion of methodologies within this report suggests rigour in the evaluation process.

Family Interactions was a West Midlands Regional Museums Council project which aimed to help small museums cater for families. The evaluation (Hawthorne, 2001) describes the individual projects in three small museums. The emphasis of the report is on the practical processes undertaken to select appropriate activities and the evaluation is from the point of view of the organisation rather than the users. The evaluation of one project was described as:

'the least successful part of the project as most of the evaluation that was carried out was informal with a reliance on anecdotal evidence rather than data gathered through questionnaires and observations. If we ran the project again we would be clearer about what evaluation we expected and build this more firmly into the project.'

This quote highlights the importance of considering evaluation at the planning stage, i.e. what evidence and how it is collected, and that casually collected anecdotal data does not provide sufficient evidence. Implied in this quote is the uncertainty of repeating the project. Sustainability is an essential element for creating long-term impact. There was evidence that for some families involved the experience was positive and for the museums there was a perception that visitors numbers increased, they were perceived to be staying longer and having more fun. The rest of the report gives guidelines for practitioners.

A very brief report for the Campaign for Learning in Museums and Galleries on Maths Year 2000 "Sum-a-Holiday" projects, *Time, shape, work, play, people and money*, (Anon. 2000a) indicates that from the small number of feedback sheets (137 in total

from 60% of the projects) 53% of participants perceived their confidence in maths was '*much greater*' and 45% '*a bit better*' after attending the activities.

Supporting formal learning using museum collections

GCSE students used historical and interpretative resources in the Cabinet War Rooms for research for coursework, the marks for which constituted about 12% of their overall grade. The evaluation of the project (Heywood, 2001) used motivation (had their attitude to coursework changed) and learning and attainment (had the visit been useful for their coursework) as categories for examining impact. Although the findings are presented in an informal manner and do not allow detailed analysis of impact, the report does illustrate the areas in which teachers and museum educators are looking for evidence.

Small-scale research projects into how museums support student learning through school visits do provide an insight into the value-added (unique) quality of learning in these non-conventional educational settings. Gilbert and Priest (1997) studied a class of 8-9-year olds before, during and after a visit to the Science Museum, London in order to supplement a curriculum unit on food. The visit was carefully planned and used a critical incident approach to analysing discussion within defined groups to establish the making of meaning, conditioning factors and aspects of delayed and indirect learning experiences of certain students as a result of the class visit. This research illustrated how visual stimuli presented by museum displays acted as '*exemplary models*' for more abstract representations of objects, events, or systems and thus provided added value to the learning and prompted connections to be made. This was dependent on the knowledge and understanding of the adults involved to enable further learning to be built upon these observations. In the evaluation data of *Loans for a New Millennium* project, McAlpine (2002) attempts to establish the significance educationally of handling real or replica objects and thus understanding the unique quality of using museum collections. Of 25 teachers, 96% believed that students learned something unique from the use of the loans collection and the suggested responses were categorised as: the loans offered something over and above books and pictures (30%); the loans gave a sense of reality (26%); the loans increased enthusiasm for learning (14%); touch (16%) and materials (14%). Fifty-five per cent of 20 teacher's said '*Yes, it does matter educationally that an object is real*' (McAlpine, 2002) and after considered discussion of all the relevant data gathered, concluded that the use of real objects does have educational value and teachers view '*discussion*' as the skill most developed by using the loan material.

Loans for the New Millennium project generated such interest in the museum domain that the actual evidence was made available on the web (McAlpine, 2002). This is a significant departure from the other project evaluations in that it ensures transparency and enables further analysis of the data and validates claims made using quotes by providing summaries and all the raw data. Much of the data refers to use and effectiveness of the loans in supporting the curriculum rather than impact on student learning.

Alive with Learning (Education Extra, 1999) and the follow up report of one project a year later (London's Transport Museum, [2001]) provide evidence of the stakeholders' perceptions of the impact of the projects, as well as highlighting strategies that enabled success. In *Alive with Learning* (Education Extra, 2000), the original 17 projects were categorised into three types:

- projects helping students to make sense of their personal and social world by using museums collections as a mediator;

- projects that encouraged the development of knowledge and skills;
- projects encouraging creativity.

Three types of learning benefits are described: new knowledge; new skills; and improved self-esteem and confidence; and three which describe opportunities: experience of learning from artists and experts; handling artefacts, tools and new technology; and risk-taking in learning through creative and independent thinking. The evidence from this work is about engagement with the activities provided and the learning of new skills. The problem with this evaluation is that the original data is not available in a format that can be checked for credibility within the overall context of the sample. In the follow up report *Our transport your transport*, questionnaires completed by participating children, teachers and head teachers were used to examine the long-term impact in terms of what children remembered about the project and teachers' perceptions of the impact on their pupils' self-confidence, motivation and attainment. Quotes taken from questionnaires are used to illustrate the responses from participants. However, there is no indication of the number of total responses or clear indication of any coding of the qualitative data to enable simple statistical analysis. The responses to questions about what the children learned were enthusiastic; children discussed the project with others and indicated they would recommend the museum and activities to others and this does provide evidence that individual children enjoyed the experience. These responses are not put in the context of overall numbers of children participating and responding to each question. It is also admitted that there was no means of establishing baseline data and subsequent changes in academic progress or the project's contribution to any changes in at risk or underachieving status.

Long-term impact

A few studies have attempted to investigate the long-term impact of the interaction with the museum on visitors/users. Gilbert and Priest (1997) studied students in the classroom following their visit to the Science Museum. They discovered that an unspecified number of interactions observed during the museum visit were followed up by the teacher and/or students during the following weeks to produce pieces of work reflecting the visit and that the students themselves made reference to the visit when questioned. Falk and Dierking (1997), in the USA, attempted to assess the long-term impact of school field trips and established that of the 34 fourth-grade students, 48 eighth-grade students and 46 adults, 96% remembered a school field trip and it is claimed that nearly 100% could recall one or more things learned on the trip, mainly related to content or subject matter. In another piece of research Falk and Dierking (2000) studied a particular child's visit to the Smithsonian's Natural History Museum and examined his learning both in the immediate context and four months later. The authors concluded that the child's brief experience at the museum:

'resulted in demonstrable, albeit modest, changes in Benjamin's knowledge and thinking...Benjamin could discuss changes in interest, understanding, and knowledge; he could describe facts and ideas he experienced and relate them to pieces of knowledge gleaned from other sources.' (Falk and Dierking, 2000)

The evaluation of the *Loans for a New Millennium Project* (McAlpine, 2002) claimed that children using the loans could remember the experience six months later and similar discussions with young children about their visits to museums confirm this.

4.3.2 Archives

There is less research into the relationship between use of archives and impact on learning. A limited number of references have been made to individual projects that have used archival resources (Heywood, 2001; Clarke, 2002) and individual projects using primary source collection material indicate the potential for learning in this context.

The previous section on social impact has already discussed the 2001 large-scale survey of visitors to UK archives conducted by the Public Services Quality Group. The questionnaire sought data on visitors' perception of learning associated with archival use and the results indicate visitors do see an educational value in archival use: 79% of respondents described using archives as a useful and enjoyable learning experience; 66% felt that archives provide opportunities for learning; 61.4% felt using archives stimulating or broadened their understanding of history and culture and 29.5% indicated they felt it increased abilities, skills and confidence (see Table 2, Section 4.2.3).

Economou (2002) conducted a formative evaluation of the four archive strand websites: A2A, AIM25, Archives Hub, and SCAN and, although the report concentrates on the navigational and design needs of the users, suggests that the websites appeal to a wide audience, that they were positively received and offered potential for further development and use. This provides the starting point for future evaluation of the learning impact of web access to archival material.

4.3.3 Libraries

The Role of Libraries in a Learning Society (Morrison *et al.*, 1998) uses case studies to advocate the potential for libraries to support lifelong learning in a variety of educational, health and work contexts. *Libraries and Lifelong Learning* (The Library Association, 2001) reflects the complexity of library and information contexts by drawing together the numerous strands that need to be taken into account when considering future strategy, including the challenges of dealing with public and private institutions to establish standards and collect data.

Supporting reading in public libraries

Checking the Books (Toyne and Usherwood, 2001) uses social audit, uses and gratifications studies and reader-response approaches to determine the value and impact of book reading by library users and non-users, including both readers and non-readers. This academic research uses a grounded theory approach for the systematic analysis of qualitative data to support their findings that the '*public library was revealed as making a unique contribution to the reading experience.*' (p.5) and '*enriches the lives of many people and has the potential to influence many more.*' (p.7). The evidence has been grouped in a number of categories to establish how the reading of fiction benefits readers:

- Escapism and relaxation;
- Reading for instruction;
- Personal insight.

The research examined how crucial reading imaginative literature was in participants' lives and the importance of the public library in supporting this activity. The

presentation of the qualitative evidence makes it difficult to establish evidence of impact.

A recognition of the importance of the links between literacy and early book use has resulted in a number of initiatives within the library domain over the years, for instance *Bradford Book Flood* (Ingham, 1981); *Bookstart* (National Centre for Research in Children's Literature, 2001) and the partnerships with libraries in *Sure Start* programmes. Hall (2001) indicates the research findings from the *Birmingham Bookstart* programme show consistent superiority in baseline assessment in the Key Stage 1 curriculum assessment by children taking part in the project and this is reiterated by Hammond and Gough (2000). Hall (2001) continues to evaluate the '*Babies Need Books*' North Tyneside scheme and this piece of academic research does indicate evidence of impact of the project on parental ideas and practices in reading with young children although the overall sample was small. The evaluation of the *Bookstart* programme (National Centre for Research in Children's Literature, 2001) uses data from a quantitative study and observations and semi-structured interviews of two groups of carers reading with babies. The control group had not been involved with the *Bookstart* programme while the observed group had received the Sainsbury's *Bookstart* pack through their health visitor. The report sets out the problems encountered in this research, for example suspicion by carers of judgements on parenting skills, training of local and trusted observers and keeping track of families over a period of time. The report is not directly related to the impact of the library on reading development but does make indirect links with questions related to changes in public library borrowing habits and provides evidence that early reading interaction between babies and carers does have an impact on parental/carers ideas and practices in relation to book use. The value of this report is in the use of an experimental approach and the use of both qualitative and quantitative data set out in an accessible format for future scrutiny.

In undertaking the Barking and Dagenham family reading project (McNicol and Dalton, 2001), greater emphasis placed on book borrowing and challenges associated conducting the project than on the impact the project had on learning or reading development. The aims and objectives of the project were linked to the Library Service aims and objectives and included maximising membership and access and promoting new partnerships with schools and colleges. The project was as much about adult literacy as promoting family reading. It is difficult to assess the impact from the evidence in the report which uses quotes to illustrate perceptions but recognises that the impact on learning is difficult to evaluate because of its long-term nature. The use of taster collections does appear to have enabled parents to select a wider variety of reading materials, and enjoyment from attending the groups was another benefit cited. However neither can be quantified or placed in context.

Interestingly, Proctor and Bartle (2002) found in their research on Low Achievers and Lifelong Learners that reading was not always associated with or recognised as part of the learning process, particularly by low achievers who therefore did not describe their use of the public library for fictional and recreational reading as learning. The use of terminology most appropriate for user understanding has implications for data collection.

The *Mind's Eye* promotion introduced two specially selected book collections, entitled '*Reflect*' and '*Decide*' with accompanying promotional material to stimulate adult male reader interest in narrative non-fiction books. The *Mind's Eye* evaluation report (Train, 2001) provided evidence that, at least in the short-term, interventions and promotions can stimulate engagement with users and visitors. The evaluation also

gauged the impact of the project on library staff and reported increased knowledge and confidence of staff in promoting literature.

It is recognised that impact can be long term and therefore more difficult to track given the typical timescale of project evaluations. In the evaluation report *Reading Our Future*, Wallis, Moore and Marshall (2002) expresses the concern that 'a one-year timescale was too short to demonstrate effective long-term outcomes.' (p.3).

Supporting formal and informal learning through school library provision

Two literature reviews explored the evidence of the impact of school library provision on learning (Williams, Wavell and Coles, 2001; Williams, Coles and Wavell, 2002). The reviews concluded that there is compelling evidence from the USA which relates higher test scores of school age students to the use of quality library collections in schools managed by suitably qualified and proactive librarians who engage in collaborative working relations with teachers (Lance *et al.*, 1993, 2000a,b,c; Smith, 2001; Baughman, 2000; Hall-Ellis and Berry, 1995). The latest in this series of quantitative studies concludes that the schools with librarians on average demonstrated 15% more students reaching the minimum performance in the reading portion of the state tests in primary and early secondary aged students. This research is backed by qualitative studies investigating the impact of a major investment programme in primary school libraries in the USA where funding was given to schools committed to improving the quality of stock, management and collaborative library use. There is also research which supports the view that young children exposed to a variety and abundance of reading material have a greater chance of developing good reading literacy (Elley, 1992, 1994; Krashen, 1993). Krashen explored the literature available on the impact of free voluntary reading in school and concluded that voluntary reading was the best predictor of comprehension, vocabulary growth, spelling ability, grammatical usage and writing style. His argument continued to stress the need for a wide variety of reading material and for school and public libraries to contribute to this variety. Martin and Morgan (1994), who contributed to the later international studies conducted by Elley (1994) in Irish schools, indicated that, although a causal relationship could not be established, the findings consistently showed a link between reading achievement and access to books.

Williams and Wavell (2001) took a qualitative approach to establishing the relationship between the school library resource centre and secondary student learning. The evidence from this report suggests that a great deal of learning takes place in the context of the school library setting and the quality of learning is affected by a number of conditioning factors, one of which is discussion and interaction with others. The significance of discussion and interaction with others is backed up by the use of conversational analysis in museum learning studies (Gilbert and Priest, 1997; Falk, Moussouri and Coulson, 1998; vom Lehn, Heath and Hindmarsh, 2000; Leinhardt, Crowley and Knutson, 2002) which indicate interaction with the exhibits and other members of a visiting group provide a framework for understanding and meaning-making.

A librarian, who was involved in the Williams and Wavell (2001) study, has subsequently written a paper on the subject of performance measurement and self-evaluation in the learning resource centre. This librarian advocates the use of evidence of skills development, motivation and quality of completed work as evidence of the impact of the library on learning (Scott, 2002). As yet her evaluation is at an early stage and findings are not available.

There are a number of studies in the educational field considering the provision and benefits of study support, homework clubs and after schools activities and the longitudinal study by MacBeth *et al.* (2001) indicates that extra help for students in this way does have an impact on academic attainment and attitudes to learning. Museums and public and school libraries have been involved in the provision of after schools activities and this review has examined a limited number of evaluation reports in both domains. *Playing for Success* (Sharp *et al.*, 1999 and 2001); *Children, Access & Learning* (McNicol *et al.*, 2002); and *Value and Impact of Homework Clubs* (Train, 2000) provide evidence that afterschool clubs can stimulate learning and suggest the evidence of learning is wider than academic achievement. However, not all these reports get to grips with indicators of impact and stringent methods of data collection. The research Sharp *et al.* (2001) conducted on the *Playing for Success* programme provides details of methodology, analysis and tests used which might prove useful for others evaluating out of school activity programmes. In the school library context, the non-curriculum based activities do provide a unique opportunity for students to experience or participate in activities that extend the formal curriculum and encourage informal learning to extend the knowledge base and develop the less tangible personal and social attributes which are increasingly stressed as important in the lifelong learning context. However, these experiences are not necessarily taken into account when librarians and teachers consider the role and impact of the school library.

There is extensive research into learning and how to assess or measure learning at all educational levels and this current review would suggest that practitioners do not necessarily show sufficient awareness of the potential parallels of research in fields where the goals are similar.

Formal learning in academic libraries

There is evidence that school, FE and HE libraries are beginning to consider their contribution to student learning, teaching and scholarly activity. In the academic library context, the studies concentrate on exploring methods of measuring impact. Markless and Streatfield in their work on *The Really Effective College Library* (2000) consider the challenge of finding appropriate indicators and the confusion this causes, and they stress the need for baseline data. Lindauer's academic research (1998) uses regional accreditation and ACRL (Association of College and Research Libraries) standards; higher education outcome assessment research findings; and findings from performance evaluation to identify the institutional outcomes to which academic libraries contribute. Lindauer (1998) examined a number of standards from the different regional higher education commissions operating at the time of writing and since then work has continued to develop Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education (2000). Lindauer (1998) states that the library's contribution is not explicit in educational or institutional outcomes and has to be found by looking at where there is suggested or implied library involvement. The author recognises the problems of proving causal effects of impact and suggests that the literature review confirms the reliability of student self-report data and other types of qualitative data to demonstrate impact. The important emphasis should be on teaching-learning outcomes, such as teaching students to be information literate, training staff to use technology and the library's role in the development of new knowledge or information retrieval products. The author suggests the following methods of data collection:

- the use of unobtrusive computerised data on student response to questions;
- the use of senior or alumni surveys or focus groups;

- the use of assessment instruments where library use is implicit.

Dow (1998) examines how the libraries at the University of Rochester focused on learners and learning and the interpersonal aspects of campus life to assess the service provision, particularly in terms of emotional access to the library, before embarking on the evaluation of the impact on learning (the evidence of which is not available). Hull (2000) examined the barriers which discourage access to libraries and found evidence that public library users are more likely to borrow from a college learning resource centre and suggests that this might indicate that students benefit from use of libraries throughout life. This adds weight to the argument that introduction to libraries, museums and archives, provides awareness and tools that can be called upon whenever there is a need.

The value of information for particular learner needs and the part libraries can play in this is demonstrated in a number of projects and studies. The *HyLiFe* Project (Wynne, 2000) sought to establish a hybrid academic library that recognised the increasing need for electronic sources held locally and nationally and provide an integrated, economic service to end-users. The evaluation report is mainly concerned with impact across a number of input, output and process areas. A small section does consider the impact on users and, although it recognises the difficulty of establishing a causal relationship and does not specify numbers, states that *“both staff and students considered that HyLiFe was having a beneficial effect upon their learning”* (p.44), specifically IT skills and information handling skills. A small number of students expressed the belief that access to appropriate documents was enhanced.

Supporting lifelong learning in special libraries

LISU conducted research, commissioned by the Library Association, in which a telephone survey of the top 250 UK companies in the list Key British Enterprises was used to examine the support for employee development and lifelong learning in the corporate sector (Murphy, 1998). The study indicates current provision and the case study reported gives an indication of the *potential* for support for employee development schemes within special libraries. However, the authors express the view that *“Library and information services in these organisations seem to be missing opportunities to provide services for employee development, and the organisations to be underusing skills and services already present on site.”* (p.2). There was no attempt to examine impact or perceptions of impact where such support was provided.

4.3.4 Summary

To summarise, learning in museums has been the subject of a number of academic studies in the US and, although Hooper-Greenhill (2002) expresses reservations about the transferability across cultures and museums environments, there is evidence to suggest that there are fundamental principles to learning that can be applied in a variety of contexts. What are less well established are the definitions of learning used across cultures and sectors and how the first stages in the learning cycle, i.e. engagement with the learning environment and the creation of a real or metaphorical dialogue between the environment and the visitor, is then applied to create a change or impact in the visitor.

There is an increasing number of project evaluation reports in the public domain. However the variety of approaches taken and varying quality of rigour in the

evaluation process and reporting provide little scope for sound conclusions to be drawn. The quantity of anecdotal quotes does suggest that well prepared and organised project interventions do have a positive impact on some participants and organisers. These examples may well be valid for the individual but do little to establish the overall impact of a clearly identified sample. In a practical guide to evaluating arts projects the author indicates that:

'Your evidence is likely to include many 'quotable quotes'. Used alone these may give a flavour of the project, and can often sum up unexpected outcomes, but they will be most convincing if you can provide some quantitative evidence and analysis to support them.' (Woolf, 1999, p.27)

The reports examined in this evaluation study have often responded to additional funding being made available to support government agendas; others serve the organisations' purposes but the evidence would suggest that they are rarely user initiated and the emphasis of reports is not necessarily from the visitor/user perspective.

There is less evaluation being conducted on the core services provided by the organisations or the unique nature of handling primary source material in the learning process. In view of the complex nature of the learning process it is likely that this type of evaluation is more suited to academic research than undertaken by practising professionals. Indeed it is suggested that even project evaluations require skills and resources that professionals find difficult to access. However evaluations are conducted, there is some consensus that the objectivity of external evaluation is desirable.

The type of learning discussed as evidence can be categorised under broad headings of motivation and enjoyment; skills acquisition and opportunities to try new experiences; and changes in self-confidence or attitude. In this report a distinction has been made between informal and self-directed learning and formal learning associated with education and academic achievement, however this distinction has more to do with the learning environment, visitor/user agendas and the outcomes expected than the type or process of learning experienced. The visitor or user response is usually described at the point of interaction or engagement and provides some evidence of immediate outcome rather than longer-term impact. With reference to the museum domain, Hein (1998) and Tunnicliffe (2000) suggest that it is not enough just to provide the experience, the user needs to interact (make meaning) with the collection in order to build on previous experience and this can be achieved through mediation in the exhibition design and/or through interaction with other visitors, users or staff. Hein (1998) and the review by Hooper-Greenhill and Moussouri (2002) discuss the literature on learning in the museum and gallery context and there has been considerable work in this area.

The research by Williams and Wavell (2001) explores the school library context and the impact it has on learning and there is research into library and book use and young children (Hammond and Gough, 2000; National Centre for Research in Children's Literature, 2001) but within the scope of this evaluation study there is less evidence of research into the learning associated with libraries and archives in other age groups. These studies use a broad definition of learning which is not restricted to the higher cognitive aspects of increased knowledge and understanding. The relationship between motivation, entertainment and learning has been explored (Falk, Moussouri and Coulson, 1998), however there appears to be a gap in the research within the museums, archives and libraries sector which explores the relationship between entertainment and health and well-being and thus the therapeutic potential

impact in a wider social context, although this is an implied potential within the work of Matarrasso (1998a), Coalter (2001) and Jermyn (2001).

4.4 Economic impact of museums, archives and libraries

With regard to the economic impact and value of museums, libraries and archives, recent studies have considered impact in a number of different ways. There are those that have examined the economic impact of the sector, in terms of its status as an employer and a purchaser of local goods and services; while there are those that have focused on the sector's role in attracting tourists and visitors, with the resultant impact on the local economy. Some studies have attempted to establish monetary values for the sector's services; while others, looking specifically at public libraries, have examined the value to local businesses of information services, or the societal benefits to citizens from the provision of, say, employment or welfare benefits information. While some studies have been based on complex economic impact or cost benefit analyses, other qualitative and quantitative approaches have also been used.

Much of the literature found is international, with a significant proportion emanating from North America. Indeed, a perusal of the websites of, for example, Americans for the Arts or the Economic Development Research Group in Boston will reveal large numbers of economic impact studies relating to arts, culture, recreation and visitor attractions. A systematic investigation of all of these studies was, of course, outwith the scope of this present project, although some recent and key items are discussed here. There are some indications, however, of a developing interest in economic value and impact studies within the UK sector.

When reviewing the literature published throughout the last five years, it became apparent that a number of key studies relating to the economic impact of public libraries were conducted prior to 1997. These are also discussed here.

4.4.1 Arts, culture and visitor attractions

A number of the items discussed here relate to arts and cultural services in general (as opposed to museums, libraries and archives, specifically), or to other tourist and visitor attractions, but are included here for methodological illustration and discussion.

For example, Jura Consultants and Gardiner and Theobald (2001) conducted an economic impact assessment of *Millennium Commission* projects, focusing on employment as the key impact measure. This research was based on a questionnaire survey of almost 50 Capital Projects, Festivals, and Award Schemes, together with additional interviews with key project representatives (It should be noted that, whilst sample project titles are listed, their nature is not detailed, therefore it is not always possible to determine which are arts/culture-related). Using capital and revenue costs, and employment multipliers applied to direct employment figures, the study estimated the combined short-term and long-term impacts of the projects, expressed as the FTE employment, to be the creation of 13,300 FTE employment. There was, however, also some evidence from the survey of projects having impact on the regeneration of surrounding areas, although this was not verified or measured directly.

In 1998, the Welsh Economy Research Unit and DCA (Cardiff) assessed the impact of the arts and cultural industries on the Welsh economy (Bryan *et al.*, 2000). Data were collected by means of a questionnaire survey of almost 190 individuals, firms and organisations in the arts and cultural industries, plus over 70 in-depth interviews; and the direct and indirect economic contributions of the industries were calculated within an input-output model of the Welsh economy developed for the South Wales Economic Research Forum. The study established, for example, that the Welsh arts and cultural industry provides employment for 28,600 people (or 2.6% of the working population in Wales) and supports an estimated 6,674 FTE jobs in other Welsh industries. The researchers also estimated economic multipliers for the separate arts and cultural sectors. The multipliers for the 'Libraries, museums, and heritage sector', which were the lowest multipliers of all the sectors, are provided below (for the purposes of the study, art galleries were included in the 'Visual arts, craft, and design' sector, and therefore cannot be identified separately).

Output multiplier (1.60). An extra £1 million of gross output generated in the libraries, museums and heritage sector results, via supplier and induced-income effects, in a final output impact of £1.6 million.

Income multiplier (1.31). A £1 increase in sector wage income, associated with the initial increase in demand, creates an estimated additional £0.31 of wage income in other Welsh industries.

Employment multiplier (1.37). Every new job created in the sector would support an estimated 0.37 of a job in other parts of the Welsh economy.

Selwood (2001) charted the distribution of funding to the UK cultural sector (i.e. the built heritage, film, libraries, literature, museums and galleries, performing arts, public broadcasting and the visual arts) based on the largest survey of cultural sector organisations ever undertaken in the UK. She presents a number of key findings from the period 1998-99, relating to the cultural sector as a whole, or libraries, museums and galleries in particular, including:

- In Spring 1999, 647,000 people had their main job in the cultural sector, representing about 2.4% of total employment, in main jobs, in the UK.
- There were 70 million (sic) registered or regular users of national libraries, 2.4 million of higher education libraries and 34.4 million of public libraries.
- There were between 80-114 million visits to museums and galleries.

Selwood points out, though, that beyond these key facts, data on the cultural sector are often incomplete, inaccurate or unavailable. She therefore argues that policy decisions and government initiatives are rarely based on an accurate picture of the sector, and questions the reliability of the evidence for arguing the economic impact of cultural venues and events.

Coomes and Narang (2000), conducted a quantitative assessment of the economic importance of arts and cultural attractions (ACAs) in Louisville, Kentucky. Based on interviews with the executives of over 40 arts and cultural organisations (who also provided attendance, budget and other economic data), they established, for example, that ACAs collectively employ about 2,000 persons, and that their activities generate at least \$5 million p.a. in tax receipts. They collectively support an

attendance of almost 8 million p.a. (45% to libraries, 15% to museums), with around 15% of these attendees visiting from outside the Louisville area, thus bringing 'new' money to the local economy (although estimates of the extent of this new money are not investigated).

Other studies, however, have paid more attention to 'incoming' money. Vaughan, Farr and Slee (2000), for example, using the Exmoor National Park as an illustrative case study, examined the local economic benefits of visitor spending. They used the proportional multiplier analysis (PMA) method, which combines a modified form of input-output analysis with Keynesian multiplier analysis. In PMA the economic impact of visitor spending consists of four stages:

- the initial spending by the visitors in the local economy (known as the multiplicand);
- the direct impacts: the incomes and jobs resulting from visitors' spending in destination businesses;
- the indirect impacts: the incomes and jobs visitor spending generates as a result of businesses buying goods and services locally;
- the induced impacts: the incomes and jobs resulting from people spending some, or all, of any income earned as a result of the visitor spending.

The data for this study were gathered by means of a face-to-face interview survey of over 140 businesses, gathering information on workforce, income, expenditure, etc.; and an interview survey of over 400 visitors, recording their expenditure on accommodation, food and drink, travel and transport, etc. Visitors were identified as those living in 'agrotourism' accommodation (e.g. farm accommodation) or those in 'nonagrotourism' accommodation (e.g. hotels). The authors present a series of impact statistics, but the results in general can be summarised as follows: that every £100,000 unit of visitor spend created similar levels of employment and income in both agrotourism and nonagrotourism; but as nonagrotourists had a higher 24-hour expenditure rate than agrotourists (£42.95 per day compared with £15.90), nonagrotourism created economic impact at a faster rate.

As its name suggests, the Cambridge Local Area Tourism Model estimates the local direct and indirect economic impacts of tourism. It has been used to estimate region-wide impacts, such as in the Heart of England Tourist Board study (1998) of the Newark and Sherwood District; and it has been used to estimate the impact of particular visitor attractions, such as the Eden Project in Cornwall (Geoff Broom Associates, 2002). The Cambridge Model is designed to utilise local data (e.g. local tourist board survey information) and/or nationally available information (e.g. the United Kingdom Tourism Survey and the International Passenger Survey). The Eden Project study, for example, used existing regional and county data, but also included its own surveys, of 4,500 visitors, 530 tourism related businesses, and almost 50 Eden Project suppliers. Amongst the study's findings were: that just over half a million holiday visitors said their trip to Cornwall was influenced by the existence of Eden; they spent an estimated £111 million in the region; and that each visitor stayed an average of 5.6 nights. The DCMS (1998) notes that the Cambridge Model and the Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor (STEAM) are the two approaches to estimating tourism impact that have been most widely used to date; and that while both have acknowledged weaknesses, they provide estimates which would not otherwise be available.

In an investigation of the economic value of the natural and built environment, the National Trust (2001) combined the findings of a 1998 study conducted in South

West England, with three new regional studies, in Cumbria, North East England and Wales. The four regions each adopted a different approach to measuring economic impact: the Cambridge Model was used in South West England; the STEAM model was used in Cumbria; the Welsh Economy Research Unit's input-output tables were used in Wales; while an unspecified model was utilised in North East England. The findings demonstrated an increasing dependence of the rural economy on the tourism and leisure industry, and that there was a critical link between the quality of the environment and future economic sustainability in rural communities. It was estimated, for example, that 40% of employment in tourism depends directly on a high quality environment, and that, in a rural context, this dependency rises to between 60% and 70%.

Using evidence from the Wales and Cumbria studies, the National Trust also argued that day visit expenditure, particularly in rural areas, can be as economically powerful as those visits involving overnight stays. It was estimated, for example, that:

- In Cumbria in 2000, tourists' day visits generated £344 million, while in the same year holiday staying visits generated £468 million.
- In Wales, day visits in 1998 generated an estimated £893 million, compared with £895 million from staying visits in 1999.

This study also examined the more specific impact and influence of the National Trust and its properties on the rural economy. It was estimated, for example, that:

- depending on the size of their operations in each region, the Trust generates between 5 and 9 FTEs for each job for which they are directly responsible.
- the Trust directly influences a total of just over 137,000 FTEs in the four regions, mostly in the rural economy.

The use of economic impact analyses when studying cultural and heritage projects was debated by Hansen, Christoffersen and Wanhill (1998). They compare such analyses with the contingent valuation method (CVM), which sets up hypothetical markets for the resource being studied and surveys a sample of individuals for their willingness to pay (WTP) for the resource: i.e. if the community's WTP exceeds the actual costs of a cultural activity, then there will be a net increase in the benefits to the local population from carrying out a cultural or heritage project. The authors provide a broad summary of their argument:

'If the project objective is to create a viable cultural tourist attraction from the public sector standpoint, then assessing the economic impact appears most appropriate. If the objective is to establish a project that is of cultural value to the local community, then CVM should be the chosen technique.'

In discussing the economic impact analysis approach, the authors cite previous UK studies, but also one of their own studies, of the Brandt's Textile Factory (a heritage complex containing a number of museums and galleries) and Hans Christian Andersen's House in Odense, Denmark. Both attractions had contributed to economic growth in the local area, although the effects were more significant in the case of the House, which was the main reason for many tourists being in Odense. When examining the CVM approach, the Odense study was again discussed, as was a study of the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen. Danish visitors displayed a positive

WTP for both Odense attractions, although this was more so for the Factory, which is strongly oriented towards a Danish visiting public. While both measures arrived at the same project accept or reject decision, the authors emphasise that this cannot always be true; they argue that the CVM method is the best yardstick available.

4.4.2 Museums and galleries

The documents above have tended to discuss the economic impact of arts and cultural services, or tourist and visitor attractions, in general, although evidence relating to the specific impact of the museums, archives and libraries sector has been presented where possible. There have, however, also been some studies relating solely to museums, archives or libraries.

Plaza (2000) attempted to quantify the influence of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain in the attraction of tourism, using data on visitor numbers from the Guggenheim Foundation Bilbao and data on visitors to the Basque Country and overnight stays from the Basque Government's Statistical Authority. In order to distinguish the Guggenheim effect from others, several statistical regressions were undertaken, where the dependent variables (number of incoming travellers, overnight stays and levels of occupation) were regressed against time trends, seasons, and the number of visitors to the Guggenheim. Here, time trend was regarded as a proxy variable of alternative variables, such as business cycle, tourism upward trend, and the dynamism of Bilbao's International Fair Centre. The study concluded that the Guggenheim is having a significant positive impact on Bilbao, with visitors to the museum accounting for 54% of the growth in tourism experienced by the Basque Country from October 1997 to January 2000. The author raises the question as to whether a large internationally famous cultural artefact of this type will demonstrate the growth and decline found in a typical product life cycle.

The impact that museums and galleries have on the regional economy of the South West of England was assessed by the South West Economy Centre on behalf of the South West Museums Council (2000). The direct economic contributions were measured by means of a questionnaire survey of 153 museums in the region, which gathered data on income, visitor numbers, employment, operating costs and capital expenditure; while the indirect contributions (via museums' purchases from local suppliers and via employees' consumption expenditure) were estimated using an input-output model for the South West region designed by the South West Economy Centre. Amongst the key findings were that:

- total employment in South West Museums was around 1,270 FTE, 75% of which was paid employment;
- total wage and salary payments amounted to almost £13.3 million, while voluntary work was worth around £4.4 million to the sector;
- around 71% of operating expenditure went to suppliers within the South West region, as compared with an average for all SW industries of around 63%.

This study also attempted to estimate the impact of spending by tourists visiting museums. As there was no information to indicate what proportion of tourist trips were principally motivated by the museum visit, nor a measurement of the number of museum visits made by tourists during their stay, the authors warn that theirs is a brief and necessarily rather speculative analysis. They estimated, however, that:

- total museum-related spending in the South West was £27.5 million;
- this spending supported around 680 FTE jobs and contributed approximately £13.5 million to the South West's gross domestic product (GDP).

A cost benefit analysis approach to measuring the value of galleries has been discussed by Baker *et al.* (1998). Their analysis was undertaken in the course of preparing three alternative proposals for a major new gallery in Scotland, each one of differing sizes and costs. This particular exercise attempted to measure the value of the benefits to gallery visitors, although the authors emphasise that three other types of beneficiary could equally be investigated: 'users' (i.e. the professional beneficiaries of the gallery and its staff), 'stakeholders' (e.g. politicians, conservationists, donors, artists) and 'society at large'. The authors indicate that the total *social benefits* [the authors' terminology] to all gallery visitors may be measured by subtracting the total of all the entrance charges from the sum of the maximum amounts that all visitors would be prepared to pay for visiting the gallery. In calculating these benefits, they used three methods:

Subjective method: establishing subjective estimates of visitor numbers at different prices; these were obtained from the management of the organisation putting forward the proposal for the new gallery.

Extrapolation from known examples of the effect of charging: using existing data from museums and galleries.

Statistical approach: a multiple linear regression model was constructed to explain gallery visitor numbers, using data collected from the Museum and Galleries Commission's DOMUS database, and other data obtained by phoning galleries.

The three methods came to more or less the same conclusions. For example, the subjective method estimated a social benefit of around £2 million a year for a large gallery, slightly less for a medium-sized gallery, and around £180,000 a year for the smallest option. The authors suggest, however, that the statistical approach, although the least satisfactory because of its sophistication, has the greatest potential. They also issue a caveat: that in all three cases the same factor was applied to allow for a proportion of the visitors' not paying full price; variation in this factor would affect all the results equally.

4.4.3 Archives

An initial attempt to explore the economic role of UK archives was made in the most recent user survey conducted by the Public Services Quality Group (PSQG) for Archives and Local Studies, in 2001. In considering the contribution made by archives to the local economy, the PSQG survey established the respondents' other activities, in connection with their visit to the archive. Table 4 illustrates the response. Almost 80% of users had used local public transport, and less than 5% paid for overnight accommodation. The authors point out that this is because 50% of the users questioned lived within 20 kilometres of the archive being visited.

Table 4: Economic activity connected with visit to archives (Source: PSQG survey, February 2001)	
Activity	%
Use local public transport	78.2
Use local shops and services	36.2
Eat out locally	28.6
Visit other places of interest in the area	17.7
Pay for overnight accommodation	4.8

For 87% of the users, visiting the archive was the prime reason for visiting the area. It would appear, therefore, that this has a significant impact for the local economy, with 36% of archive users also using local shops and services, 29% eating out locally, and 18% visiting other local places of interest. As 12% of visitors intended to stay in the area for more than one day, the authors point out that this impact will be magnified.

4.4.4 Libraries

Public libraries

Sawyer (1996), in a paper based on unpublished research conducted by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, discussed the economic and job creation benefits of Ontario public libraries. He cites their direct and indirect impact in terms of jobs (over 9,000 in 1993-94) and their contribution to the GDP (\$486 million in the same year), and suggests that libraries follow a framework to show their economic impact, focusing on:

- Employment data and GDP/GNP (gross national product) contributions;
- Publicity for electronic information access, showcasing the services they provide;
- Collecting anecdotal evidence of an economic nature, supported by user surveys with an economic focus;
- Entrepreneurial and value-added services, to local businesses, chambers of commerce, boards of trade, etc.

Sawyer acknowledges, however, that more research is needed on the contribution libraries make to the economy, in particular their indirect contribution. He suggests, for example, that research might be conducted into incidences where: jobseekers have found employment by using the library resources; individuals have found more fulfilling jobs because of literacy and other skills acquired with the library's assistance; or where companies are attracted to a location because of factors such as the quality of the local library facilities and the existence of a skilled workforce (which in itself may be influenced by use of library resources).

In an investigation of the value of the services of the St. Louis Public Library in Missouri, Holt, Elliott and Moore (1998) argued against the use of economic impact analyses in the public library setting:

'By their very nature and mission, most public libraries do not have large economic impacts in the sense measured by traditional economic analyses. Most libraries do not attract substantial numbers of visitors or extensive funding from outside the region and, thus, do not attract new dollars into the region.'

In a related article (Holt, Elliott and Dussold, 1996), the authors suggest that economic impact analyses are only relevant for libraries like the New York Public Library or other research-oriented institutions which attract visitors and contributions from outside of the regional economy; although, curiously, they do not cite the St. Louis Public Library, which contains one of the major genealogical collections in the USA, as one such visitor attraction. For most public libraries, then, they believe that cost benefit analysis is a more appropriate analytical framework, as it is a methodology that matches the way public libraries deliver services and the way benefits flow from library services. In this study, the researchers conducted a telephone survey of 322 'general' library users, 75 'teacher' users and 25 'business' users, with the grouping dependent on the type of membership card held. During the 1998 survey, users were asked a series of questions pertaining to the monetary value they would place on library services. Three measurements were used:

Consumer surplus: The value that library users place on borrowing materials above and beyond any cost of travelling to and the time involved in using the library.

Contingent valuation: Both in terms of users' WTP for library services, and their willingness to accept (WTA) compensation for the loss of services.

Cost of time: The value of the users' time in travelling to a library service point and in actually using library services

The findings of this study left the authors in no doubt as to the economic value of the library:

'With no hesitation, it is now possible for St. Louis Public Library spokespersons to tell board members, city officials, civic leaders - and even economists - that the library's users are receiving back more than \$4 in direct benefits for every \$1 of tax revenues that the public is contributing to the institution.'

The authors suggest their finding is all the more credible because it is a conservative estimate, based on direct benefits only. Indirect, societal benefits (e.g. a new business offering employment to unemployed residents after information on how to start the new business was provided by the library; local residents attaining employment because of increased literacy skills acquired via the library) are not included in their calculations, because, the authors emphasise, these are hard to identify and even more difficult to estimate. They suggest that the time for estimating indirect benefits will come, but that it should come after more is known about the measurement of direct benefits. The researchers acknowledge that for their methodology to be transportable to other public libraries it will have to be tested in services with different demographics and operating environments. They also suggest that further attention be paid to business users, and to special audiences such as visually impaired and disabled people. Walk-in use by individuals who are not library members should also be investigated.

As part of a wider study of the economic value of public libraries, Morris, Hawkins and Sumsion (2001) conducted a WTP exercise based on book borrowing. Over 550 users across four English libraries were asked to indicate an amount they would be willing to pay to borrow books. The results, in their simplest form, were described as follows:

'Borrowing books allows the user to get the benefit at a fraction of what it would cost to buy the book, or to read books that would be too expensive to buy. This

takes different forms for people according to their education, wealth, age and personal interest. The result is a mixture of educational, informative, cultural and recreational benefit'.

This partial approach to assessing economic value has been criticised by Streatfield and Markless (2002), who point out that it does not examine the results of using information obtained from libraries, the opportunity costs of borrowing books, or the value added to reading. Streatfield and Markless are also critical of the fact that while the report mentions issues such as the impact and value of business information, the impact of libraries on local regeneration, and the value of libraries' ICT-based services compared with home computer use, the report does not explore how this economic value might be systematically measured.

McClure, *et al.* (2000) attempted to identify and describe the economic impacts and benefits of Florida public libraries, although not in monetary terms. They used a multi-method approach, including: focus groups with, and a survey of, library directors and branch managers; group interviews with librarians and local economic development officials; and a survey of almost 2,000 library users. The study found overwhelming agreement among patrons, librarians and others that public libraries provide economic benefits to the community. For example, 73% of users felt that libraries contribute to their financial well-being, 82% believed they provide economic benefits to local businesses, and 91% agreed that libraries support the prosperity of the community. The authors acknowledge, though, that the economic benefits of libraries are numerous, varied and complex; and that they have not yet made a systematic attempt to measure these benefits in a way that is verifiable, widely applicable and statistically defensible.

The social audit of public libraries in the city of Newcastle upon Tyne and the county of Somerset conducted by Linley and Usherwood (1998) also examined the economic impact of public libraries although the authors indicate that the findings are tentative and somewhat inconclusive. Three areas of economic impact are discussed, with illustrative quotes from stakeholders also provided:

Business information services. There was a general perception amongst library staff and elected members that libraries' business information services had an impact on the local economy, although they could provide no hard evidence of this impact. It was believed that library services brought benefits to new and small businesses, particularly when these services were delivered in partnership with other organisations, such as Business Links. Again, though, this evidence appears to be based almost entirely on the perceptions of the information providers. (Other studies relating to the impact of public libraries' business information services are discussed later in this section).

Jobseeking and training opportunities. It was recognised by all stakeholders that libraries are an important source of information for people seeking employment and training opportunities. Although library staff acknowledged that it was not possible to unequivocally prove that individuals had benefited from using these services, for example in terms of them gaining employment as a direct result of obtaining information from the library.

Supporting economic vitality. From the Newcastle focus groups, there were suggestions that a library might provide a focus that would attract people to the local centre, thus adding to the economic vitality of the area. In Somerset, these feelings were more pronounced with some library staff and users believing that there was a positive relationship between the library and local shopping activity.

While extensive evidence to confirm these beliefs is not presented, the authors cite a local household survey which established that the library was the most frequently used leisure facility in the area. (Other studies relating to the library's role in stimulating town centres are discussed later in this section).

Public libraries stimulating town centres

The impact that public libraries have on the surrounding retail economy has been examined by some authors. The Comedia report (Greenhalgh, Worpole and Landry, 1993) identified a vital role for libraries located in shopping centres. Based on a case study in Bournemouth, and surveys of retailers in Weymouth and Hartlepool, it was established that key shops had noted increased footfall and significant increases in turnover when libraries were re-located to central shopping areas, although retailers were relatively unaware of the significance of the library as an attraction drawing people into the area. There appeared to be an increasing belief amongst property developers, however, that putting libraries into shopping centres may be a way of revitalising these centres. The authors note that there also appears to be benefit for the libraries, with usage increasing by up to 100% when located in shopping complexes.

In 1989, the Berkshire Library and Information Service conducted a survey of some 29,000 users in 58 service points (Stevens, 1991). It was established that, county-wide, 64% of users combined their library visits with other activities, with 42% of users combining it with shopping. Proctor, Usherwood and Sobczyk (1996) cited the Berkshire survey when examining the impact of library closures, due to strike action, in Sheffield. The Sheffield study, of over 500 users, found that 23% had visited their local centre less often than usual during the library closure. This led the authors to infer, from the Berkshire findings, that the fall in the frequency of users' visits to local centres will have had a corresponding effect on their frequency of visits to shops, businesses and community facilities in the same area.

Provision of business information

While the role of UK public libraries' business information services in contributing to local economic development has been touched upon by some authors - for example, Greenhalgh, Worpole and Landry (1993), and Linley and Usherwood (1998) - some more extensive investigations have been conducted in North America.

By means of a questionnaire survey of 70 business information users, Ellis (1994) attempted to measure the economic impact of using business information obtained from the High Point Public Library in North Carolina. All respondents indicated that the information obtained had affected their business decisions positively, with local entrepreneurs reporting new customers, clients and prospects, and the opportunity to bring new business into their company. Two other user groups reported benefits: 'individual investors' reported that information from the library's investment advisory services had increased their confidence by decreasing uncertainty when making investment decisions; while 'career seekers' believed that the information obtained had made a positive difference in the outcome of the job-seeking process. The author states, however, that the real challenge still faced is '*to prove this claim by reporting our economic impact in dollars*'.

Vaughan (1997), meanwhile, conducted a survey of 114 medium-sized businesses across Ontario, with business success being measured using self-rating scales. The author does issue a caveat concerning his methodology, however, suggesting that business people who were more 'information conscious' were more likely to have

found the survey interesting and relevant and thus more likely to respond; a free Internet workshop offered to respondents may have further enhanced any bias. This study found a significant relationship between public library use and business success, with those who used the library being more successful (i.e. according to their self-ratings). The author believes that while a causal relationship between the two variables has yet to be established, this finding at least provides evidence for the usefulness and importance of public library services. The survey also established that if the public library was to be closed, then 31% of the businesses anticipated some or significant impact on them, although a greater proportion (43%) said there would be no impact. Those businesses that had already used the library were more likely to indicate impact, with service-type businesses more likely to be affected by library closure than manufacturing businesses.

There is little research outwith the public library context. Wilson, Stenson and Oppenheim (2000 and project in progress) explore the value of information for companies in terms of their economic contribution and concludes that at present information is highly valued but its contribution is not placed on the balance sheet. This would suggest, therefore, that the economic impact of information to the business community cannot be quantified at present and that the contribution of company archives and libraries in providing that information is not readily quantifiable.

4.4.5 Summary

The studies of the economic impact of the sector have considered impact in a number of different ways. There are those that have examined its status as an employer and a purchaser of local goods and services; there are those that have focused on its role in attracting tourists and visitors; there are those that have established monetary values for the sector's services; while there are those that have tentatively investigated indirect impacts, such as jobs gained due to information or skills acquired in public libraries.

Much of the literature is international, although there are some indications of a developing interest in economic impact studies within the UK sector. Many of the studies have used relatively complex analytical techniques and have been conducted by economists or special consultants. These have either been economic impact analysis or cost benefit analysis techniques. The very nature of these techniques has resulted in hard, statistical or monetary evidence of impact.

Economic impact analyses have been used, for example, to measure the impact of: arts and cultural industries in general (Bryan *et al.*, 2000); public libraries (Sawyer, 1996), museums and galleries (South West Museums Council, 2000) or the natural and historic environment (National Trust, 2001) within a particular region; and specific cultural venues or visitor attractions (Vaughan, Farr and Slee, 2000; Hansen, Christoffersen and Wanhill, 1998). A variety of input-output models have been used, some developed specifically for analysing the impact in particular geographic areas. The local impact of tourism is most frequently measured using the Cambridge or STEAM models, which utilise local data and/or nationally available information.

While some studies of particular visitor attractions, such as those of the *Eden Project* in Cornwall (Geoff Broom Associates, 2002) and the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (Plaza, 2000), have specifically measured the influence of the attraction on tourist/visitor numbers and spending, others (e.g. South West Museums Council, 2000) have had to make more speculative analyses of economic impact, due to a

lack of information on tourists'/visitors' principle motivations for visiting the local area and the number of visits to cultural venues they make during their stay.

Cost benefit analyses have been used to measure the impact of public libraries (Holt, Elliott and Moore, 1998; Morris, Hawkins and Sumsion, 2001), galleries (Baker *et al.* 1998) and other cultural attractions (Hansen, Christoffersen and Wanhill, 1998). Much of the research has measured respondents' willingness to pay for sector services, although it has been suggested that this might be more appropriate for a service which does not attract substantial numbers of visitors or external income in the way that some major cultural venues might. The difficulties of measuring indirect economic impacts by cost benefit analyses have also been identified.

In addition to the studies using economic impact or cost benefit analyses techniques, other studies have attempted to identify economic impacts, although not in monetary terms. Here, the data has been collected using more 'traditional' methods, such as questionnaire surveys and discussion groups. These have largely studied public libraries (e.g. Ellis, 1994; Vaughan, 1997; Linley and Usherwood, 1998; McClure *et al.*, 2000), although the most recent UK archives user survey (PSQG, 2001) also began to explore economic issues. These studies have tended to investigate one or more of three areas of economic impact: the impact of business information provision in public libraries on business success; the role of public libraries and archives in attracting visitors to the area or its town centre; and the more indirect economic benefits of libraries in providing, for example, jobseeking and training opportunities. However, the authors of these non-monetary studies have tended to issue caveats regarding their findings. Again, a recurring theme throughout these studies has been the difficulty in identifying and measuring indirect economic impacts.

4.5 Perspectives of other organisations working with museums, libraries and archives

The discussion above has focused on impact as perceived by, or observed in, users/visitors. Another perspective, explored in this section, is how other agencies and organisations perceive the impact of the sector. The value of the contribution of museums, archives and libraries to neighbourhood renewal and social inclusion projects, as perceived by other agencies and organisations, was examined by Parker *et al.* (2002). By means of over 50 in-depth interviews with representatives of 'Key Publics' (i.e. agencies and organisations whose sphere of operation is likely to involve renewal and inclusion work) and 140 telephone interviews with representatives of selected projects, together with case studies, an electronic discussion list and a round table of 'key informants', this study found clear evidence that the sector is actively involved in renewal and inclusion projects, although museums and libraries are significantly more active than archives. There were significant variations of perception, however: while 89% of respondents felt that the projects had made a difference to the individuals involved in the project, only 33% believed that the project had had an impact on the community as a whole. Where projects had been deemed to make a difference to individual participants, perceived benefits included: new skills development, leading to employment; increased self-esteem; help with learning difficulties; and increased confidence in ICT. Despite such variations, the authors found widespread public recognition that the sector is an important public service that currently contributes positively to renewal and inclusion, and has the potential to be involved further. The authors also established, however, that there is a lack of effective, and comprehensive, evaluation methodologies to

measure museums', archives' and libraries' impact. In particular, they recommend that longitudinal evaluation of key projects be commissioned to enable 'real benefits' to be identified. They also believe there is a need for qualitative data to be accorded 'parity of validity' by influential bodies, such as funders, local authorities and government agencies.

Interestingly, this study also examined issues which might impede the involvement of museums, archives and libraries in renewal and inclusion projects. Factors identified included: staff availability; staff education and training; access; opening hours; knowledge of critical success factors; cultural barriers; and public perception. The majority of those agencies and organisations questioned that had not worked with museums, archives and libraries said that this was because they had never been asked or because they had not considered the idea of working with the sector.

4.6 Access and barriers

While not in itself a direct measure of impact, the issue of access is fundamental to enabling museums, archives and libraries to have an impact on users/visitors. Issues of access are directly related to overcoming exclusion, and evidence of access could be viewed as evidence of impact on social inclusion or at least equality of opportunity to benefit from the positive impact of the sector. Issues of physical, emotional and intellectual access to museums, archives and libraries, both by the general public as a whole or by groups in the community with special needs or who otherwise might be deemed to be in danger of exclusion, have also been investigated throughout the last five years. The resultant literature has also discussed barriers to such access, as well as related management issues.

For example, MORI's second survey of museum and gallery use (2001) attempted to go beyond the issue of how many people visit museums and explore issues such as 'who visits' and what they get out of the visit. Over 5,000 adults and 2,500 schoolchildren were questioned. In terms of inclusion, the survey found that people in higher social classes are more likely to visit, with people in social classes A, B and C1 accounting for 70% of museum and gallery visitors but only 49% of the UK population. It was also established that Black and Asian visitors tend to visit less frequently than White (European) visitors. The survey of schoolchildren revealed that one third of children visiting a museum with their school have chosen to make a return trip, usually with members of their family. This led Neville Mackay, the then Chief Executive of Resource, to state, in the report's foreword, that:

'It testifies to the importance of working with schools as a means of developing new audiences and provides valuable advocacy evidence reinforcing the value of museums.'

Interestingly, this MORI poll examined reasons why people do not visit museums and galleries. Barriers to visiting were identified as: nothing I wanted to see (41% of adult respondents); museums are boring (12%); difficult to get out/health reasons (12%); admission charges too high (10%); poor transport/too far to travel (8%); inconvenient opening hours (8%); my children wouldn't be interested (6%); no time (6%).

Barriers that prevent people from using the museums, archives and libraries sector as a whole have also been identified by the DCMS (1999a, 2000,) and the Scottish Museums Council (2000). They state that these barriers can be:

Institutional - e.g. restrictive opening hours; inappropriate staff attitudes and behaviour; charging policies which disadvantage those on low incomes.

Personal and social - e.g. lack of basic skills in reading, writing and communication; low self esteem.

Perceptions and awareness - i.e. perceptions that museums, archives and libraries are 'not for us'.

Environmental - e.g. difficult physical access into and within buildings; poor transport links.

The concept of equity, or fairness in the distribution of services, was studied by Linley and Usherwood (1998) as part of their social audit of the Newcastle and Somerset public library services. They found that these services were administered fairly, with only isolated examples where equity had been counter-balanced with considerations of economic efficiency. Equity of physical and geographic access was provided through designated services and policies, although with regard to access for people with disabilities there was a call for a more user-focused approach. In terms of economic equity, Newcastle had policies directed at priority groups (e.g. those on low incomes) and geographic areas, although cost factors (i.e. travel costs, fines, fees and charges) sometimes deterred use of Somerset libraries. With regard to particular groups in the community, the library was perceived as an equitable service by most older people, by people with disabilities and by people from ethnic minorities (thereby contradicting the results of some of the other studies discussed here), although a sense of equity was less obvious amongst lone parents and young unemployed people.

As has already been mentioned, the surveys of visitors to UK archives conducted by the Public Services Quality Group (PSQG) for Archives and Local Studies have examined some issues relating to gender, ethnicity and disability. The 1998 survey, for example, established that younger people, women and ethnic minorities are underrepresented in the archive user population. While in the 1999 study, respondents with a disability, when compared with the general user population, gave significantly lower ratings to archives' facilities. The survey results relating to disabled users appeared even worse in the 2001 survey: while 70% of visitors with physical disabilities and 61% of visitors with hearing impairments described archives' facilities as good or excellent, this proportion falls to 50% for visually impaired people and just 44% for people with learning difficulties. This led the PSQG to highlight the challenge that archives face in implementing the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

National and other major surveys of service provision by libraries, archives and museums to particular disadvantaged groups have also been conducted throughout the last five years, and much of this work has related to issues of access.

4.6.1 People with disabilities

Kinnell, Yu and Creaser (2000) surveyed current provision to visually impaired people in UK public libraries, and found that there had been little progress made since a previous survey conducted by the Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB) in 1997. For example, 42% of authorities surveyed did not have a specific policy statement on meeting the needs of visually impaired people. It was established that 70% of library authorities use some form of evaluation of their services to the visually

impaired, with user satisfaction surveys and performance indicators used most frequently. The authors concluded, however, that there was difficulty in assessing how effectively visually impaired users were able to use general public library services. A further survey by Davies, Wisdom and Creaser (2001), this time of 582 visually impaired people, established that 37% of respondents were current users of public libraries, with 87% of these being satisfied with the service provided. However, 50% had not used a public library for at least three years. The main reason given for this lack of use was that the services of other organisations were preferred. The findings of these and other previous studies led the RNIB (2002) to produce a somewhat scathing report on public library services for visually impaired people, describing the current situation as a *'picture of unacceptable exclusion'*.

Hetherington (2000), in a study of access for visually impaired people in 36 museums in London and South East England, established that *'most had done something recently to improve their accessibility to people with disabilities but few had done very much and very few indeed had done anything at all prior to 1990'*.

In 1998, INTACT, the Intellectual Access Trust, published the results of research that examined the accessibility of museums and galleries for people with learning and communication disabilities (Rayner, 1998). Using interviews and observational visits to museums (largely in the central belt of Scotland), the researchers found that whilst much work was already being done to improve access for people with learning and communication disabilities, this was often the result of developments designed to improve access for people with other disabilities, particularly visually impaired people, or to encourage more visitors from ethnic minorities and from a wider social background. INTACT believed that the specific needs of people with learning or communication disabilities should be recognised and catered for. A copy of the INTACT project results was sent to every registered museum and gallery in the UK, and Mitchell and Rayner (2000) conducted a subsequent evaluation of the project by means of a survey of the members of the Scottish Museums Council. This survey found that the project had had an appreciable effect on raising awareness of the needs of visitors with learning or communication disabilities amongst the Scottish museum community, and that this increased awareness had resulted in a number of encouraging improvements in facilities. However, the majority of responding organisations had no plans to implement an access policy or to carry out an access audit. The authors concluded that the level of awareness of disability issues in the museums and galleries community is still very uneven.

In 2001, SOLON Consultants mapped services and facilities for disabled people in 132 libraries, 123 museums and 85 archives throughout the UK. This survey showed that while there is a great deal of experience and good practice to build upon, provision is uneven. Services to disabled people often rely on committed individuals rather than being integrated into organisational policy. Sixty-seven per cent of organisations had conducted a disability audit, 21% within the last year. While 85% had carried out some form of consultation work (most frequently customer satisfaction surveys, informal conversations with users, and/or suggestion boxes/comments books) the survey established that most consultation is reactive and informal, and targeted at users rather than non-users. It was established that the three sectors have different strengths. Broadly speaking, museums are good at building links and consulting with outside groups, archives are effective at utilising technology and providing one-to-one support, while libraries' chief strengths are in outreach work and providing material in a variety of accessible formats.

4.6.2 Ethnic minority populations

Issues relating to ethnic diversity were explored in two 1998 studies, one focusing on public library service provision, the other looking at ethnic minority populations' attitudes towards museums and galleries.

Roach and Morrison, using a postal audit of 12 English public library authorities, plus four extended case studies, examined how public library services have responded to the growth of an ethnically diverse society. They discovered that public libraries were failing to meet the needs of the country's ethnic minority population. Amongst the key findings were that:

- the public library service has not yet managed to engage fully with ethnically diverse communities;
- a social distance exists between the public library and ethnic minority communities which tends to exclude ethnic minority citizens whilst preserving professional autonomy;
- the public library is not yet central to or sufficiently supportive of the social and community networks established by ethnic minorities;
- the structure, culture and ethnic profile of the public library service is restrictive in terms of service access and denies ethnic minorities a stake in the public library system.

In terms of evaluation, Roach and Morrison noted that few services had established measurable objectives and service standards linked to racial equality and ethnic diversity. They recommended that the public library community should develop and implement national public library objectives and performance criteria in respect of racial equality. Pateman (2002) has expressed his anger at the apparent lack of positive change in the public library domain since the publication of the Roach and Morrison report, and has discussed how his own authority, Merton Library and Heritage Services, will use Annual Library Plans, Public Library Standards, Best Value and Commission of Racial Equality Standards as mechanisms for achieving 'quality and equality' (Pateman, 2000, 2001).

The study of ethnic minority populations' attitudes towards museums and galleries was conducted by BMRB International on behalf of the Museums and Galleries Commission. By means of a series of focus groups, the researchers established that the image of the museum was common across all ethnic groups: a quiet, reverential and unwelcoming establishment regarded as being more suitable for intellectuals and the upper classes. Art galleries were perceived as even more distant and elitist. There were real concerns about the view of history presented by museums, which was seen as being constructed from a white, 'colonial' perspective, with little regard to the achievements of individuals and communities from ethnic minority groups. Black, South Asian and Chinese people want to see exhibitions that relate to their own lives, cultures and histories. The researchers also investigated barriers to participation, and those cited are similar to the barriers already identified above, namely:

- Lack of time;
- Cost;
- Lack of interest;

- Lack of awareness;
- Effort;
- Fear of not understanding the displays.

Despite these negative attitudes, though, participants were reassured by the existence of museums, even if they didn't actually visit them. There was a general consensus that museums are valuable to society as a whole, and that they have a number of key roles: to preserve the past; to educate (in particular, children); to broaden people's horizons and increase mutual tolerance; and as places in which people could engage emotionally with beautiful objects.

4.6.3 Lifelong learners

During a piece of academic research, Hull (2000) examined the barriers to libraries as agents of lifelong learning, exploring the conviction of information professionals that resources are not used to their full potential. The research described the barriers in two groups: barriers to access, including social exclusion, literacy and numeracy problems, and lack of information retrieval skills; and psychological considerations, including fear of the unknown, losing face, computerphobia, and cognitive styles. Hull (2000) also identified public library use as a predictor of *book borrowing* in college learning resource centres.

Other academic research into learning in museums and libraries (Leinhardt and Crowley, [2002]; Williams and Wavell, 2001) suggests that there is also a barrier to effective use of collections due to the lack of knowledge or understanding by mediators (teachers, librarians, other educators). This lack of knowledge or understanding could relate to the potential value of resources, specialist knowledge about particular collections, or the learning or curriculum needs of the mediated group. *Objects of Learning, Objects of Talk* (Leinhardt and Crowley, [2002]) examines student teachers' understanding of the American civil rights movement during a tour of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute in Alabama, USA. These studies highlight the need for teachers to fully explore exhibits and understand the subject before undertaking the activity with children. Equally there is a need for librarians, archivists and museum educators to familiarise themselves with learning theory and curriculum requirements.

4.6.4 Professional understanding

Professional understanding is a key factor in overcoming barriers to access and use. The majority of impact evaluation project reports discuss not only the evidence but also success criteria and problems encountered. Some actually focus on the impact of the project or intervention on the organisation rather than the user (e.g. Hooper-Greenhill and Nicol, 2001; Train, 2001). This is an important aspect that needs to be considered when planning and preparing for service provision and evaluating future provision. An understanding of how a project or intervention impacts on the organisation could enable staff to maximise impact of the service on the users either as individuals, groups or the community it serves. Identifying the conditioning factors plays an important role in helping practitioners to understand the whole project, and challenges and failures should be reported and used for future advantage, not seen as a deterrent for further service provision and promotion. It is equally important to report success in achieving targets, even though, again, this does not indicate impact

(Markless and Streatfield, 2001). Several of the research and project evaluations also give examples of good practice (Barriault, 1999; McAlpine, 2002).

Linley and Usherwood's social audit work (1998) identifies issues that might affect the social impact of library services, such as:

- Financial restrictions;
- A lack of public awareness of library services and policies;
- Public perceptions of library rules, culture and atmosphere;
- A lack of integration with the wider local authority;
- The location of a library and the fear of crime in the area.

Bryson, Usherwood and Streatfield (2002), when conducting their social audit of South West Museums, Archives and Libraries, identified similar factors affecting the attainment of social objectives:

- Awareness and marketing;
- Service image;
- Facilities: location, access and aesthetics.

In many respects, these factors relate to the barriers to sector use already identified above. While many (e.g. financial resources, marketing, integration with other local authority services, staff attitudes) are institutional in nature and are reliant to a degree on how the individual services and their parent organisations are managed, the others (e.g. the physical location of the service, or an unwillingness to enter the area in which the service is located for fear of violence) are outside the immediate control of sector staff.

In relation to impact on learning, there is evidence (Kelly and Sullivan, 1999; Markless and Streatfield, 2001; Williams, Wavell and Coles, 2001) that the staff and organisation need to be part of the learning cycle in order to improve the delivery of effective learning opportunities. Thus, looking critically at what happens at the issue desk, improved understanding of learning and inclusion issues, and taking ownership of new organisational developments are important steps forward. Hooper-Greenhill and Dodd (2002) consider the increasing professional knowledge of those working in museum education again implying the need for training or greater understanding by practitioners. The meta-analysis (McAlpine, 2002) of the *Loans for the New Millennium* project considers the impact of the project on the museum sector and host organisation and gives evidence of increased professional understanding indicated by changes in strategy, staff awareness and partnership development. *Learning through Culture* (Clarke, *et al.*, 2002) identifies three examples where the impact of specific programmes has led to the creation of education posts or funding for freelance educators to ensure the sustainability of the benefits of the programmes. It also states examples of where the experience of taking part in a programme has led to museum visits becoming part of schools' agenda. However the report also expresses the concerns of those involved in projects that the cessation of funding and support would mean the impetus dies with it. It is important to keep some form of check on where and why sustainability is maintained.

Reading our Future (Wallis, Moore and Marshall, 2001) provides evidence of organisational learning within libraries through two successful applications for further funding to the *DCMS/Wolfson Reader Development Programme* and the appointment of one permanent member of staff to enable long-term reader development to continue in one project area. However it also suggests that one of

the major challenges *'is the negative attitude of some of the established staff to reader development work.'* (p.2). Until barriers of this type are overcome, impact will remain *potential* and not measurable, however these projects do suggest that progress is being made to overcome factors that limit impact.

Project evaluations give an indication that the sector is demonstrating an awareness of particular social groups. The targeting of services to provide opportunities for these groups does indicate that in some areas the profession is attempting to address the access, learning and social inclusion issues. However, the evidence above suggests that this is not consistent or widespread and is dependent upon sustained external funding and changes in attitude of practitioners within the professions.

5 Methods used for impact evaluation

Section 4 examined the available evidence on impact but a consistent theme throughout was the lack of, and need for, appropriate methodologies to examine impact. This is a key issue affecting the quality of current evaluations. Equally a lack of reporting of methodologies can make it difficult to assess the quality and validity of so called 'evidence'. Another key factor is the identification of appropriate and meaningful indicators of impact, rather than the more traditional output measures.

A variety of standard research techniques have been used throughout the studies reviewed and this section examines issues related to methods and indicators used.

5.1 Research designs and approaches

5.1.1 Large scale organisational surveys of museums, archives and public libraries

Large scale surveys provide the quantitative measures and validity of scale that are required by policy makers. They have primarily investigated the extent of the organisations' service provision, in terms of social inclusion; or, in economic studies, have gathered financial and attendance data. In the inclusion studies, these surveys have also sought information on the services' methods of performance measurement and evaluation, but the results and effectiveness of such monitoring have not been investigated. These surveys (McKrell, Green and Harris, 1997; Muddiman *et al.*, 2000) have revealed, however, that public libraries tend to rely heavily on quantitative measures, such as performance indicators, issue statistics, headcounts and questionnaire surveys; although more qualitative data, from focus, consultative and user groups, are also collected. Museums, while making use of 'traditional' data collection tools, such as questionnaire surveys and face-to-face or telephone interviews, also utilise more unusual methods, such as note diaries, video recording and the use of photographic evidence. It should be re-emphasised, however, that data gathered in museums are rarely analysed and summarised in reports (RCMG, 2000). Even less is known about evaluation methods and results in archives, with the National Council on Archives audit of social inclusion work in England and Wales (2001) revealing that less than 15% of inclusion projects had been formally evaluated.

5.1.2 Surveys of the general public

A significant proportion of the research discussed in this report has involved surveys of the general public. While some of these surveys have effectively been studies in their own right (e.g. Eve and Brophy, 2001; MORI, 1999, 2001), others have formed part of a larger investigation (e.g. Aslib, 1995; Proctor, Lee and Reilly, 1998). Depending on the nature of the research project, the individuals surveyed have been questioned in terms of their roles as: users or non-users of museums, archives or libraries; participants in particular social or learning projects or initiatives; or, in economic impact studies, as tourists or visitors to a particular geographic area or visitor attraction. The sample sizes have varied tremendously, ranging from small

numbers of participants in particular projects e.g. 69 participants from 18 library projects (Matarasso, 1998b), to the 13,500 archives users questioned in the 1999 PSQG visitor survey.

The data collection tools used in these surveys have also varied, although the 'traditional' tools of self-completion questionnaires, face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews have been prominent, being used either singly or in combination. There has also been regular use of focus/discussion groups, but less conventional methods, such as Black and Crann's use of written observations from the Mass Observation Archive (2000), have been rare.

There have been very few caveats from researchers concerning their chosen methods when conducting surveys of the public. Black and Crann (2000) felt that the Mass Observation Archive volunteers who submitted their written observations probably constituted a sample that was unrepresentative of the UK public as a whole. The limited timescales available for the University of Sheffield studies of the impact of library closures and the reduction of opening hours (Proctor, Usherwood and Sobczyk, 1996; Proctor, Lee and Reilly, 1998), resulted in research which, the authors believed, was '*quick and dirty*', yet still of considerable value.

In addition survey approaches have also been used to assess economic impact in non-monetary terms. Here, the data has been collected using more 'traditional' methods, such as questionnaire surveys and discussion groups. These have largely studied public libraries (e.g. Ellis, 1994; Vaughan, 1997; Linley and Usherwood, 1998; McClure *et al.*, 2000), although the most recent UK archives user survey (PSQG, 2001) also began to explore economic issues. These studies have tended to investigate one or more of three areas of economic impact: the impact of business information provision in public libraries on business success; the role of public libraries and archives in attracting visitors to the area or its town centre; and the more indirect economic benefits of libraries in providing, for example, jobseeking and training opportunities.

The authors of these non-monetary studies have tended to issue caveats regarding their findings. For example, in terms of measuring the impact of public libraries on local business success, Vaughan (1997) believed his data would have been more valid if it had been based on actual performance figures rather than perceptual rating scales, although he highlighted the unwillingness of business people to disclose such information. A recurring theme throughout the other studies, meanwhile, is the difficulty in identifying and measuring the indirect economic impacts.

5.1.3 Surveys of sector staff and project workers

The individual perceptions of sector staff, as well as those of workers involved in social and learning projects and initiatives, have formed a major part of the research discussed in this report. Other interested parties, such as elected members and representatives of the voluntary sector, have also been questioned during particular studies. As with the surveys of the general public, this information has been collected using a variety of methods, including self-completion questionnaires, discussion groups, and telephone and face-to-face interviews.

Staff and project workers in public libraries (e.g. Proctor, Usherwood and Sobczyk, 1996; Muddiman *et al.*, 2000) and museums (e.g. RCMG, 2000; North East Museums *et al.*, 2000;) have been relatively well represented in these studies. However, other than in the cross-domain social impact audit in South West England

(Bryson, Usherwood and Streatfield, 2002), where the number and the domain of participants was unfortunately not specified, the views of archives staff have not been investigated in any detail.

Visitor and user surveys have been used at a local level for a number of years to assess user views on a variety of issues relating to service. It has been noted in the museum domain that the data is not necessarily analysed and acted upon. Kelly (1998) suggests that greater use could be made of this established data collection method for assessing outcomes and impact by using '*imaginative use of questions*.' The use of postcard sized questionnaires have been used successfully in both the museum (Stainton, 2002) and library domains (Lance *et al.*, 2001) and could provide a practical tool for local use.

5.1.4 Social audit

The social audit technique is used to measure the impact of sector activities in relation to the individual organisations' social objectives, and combines community profiling with interviews and focus groups with stakeholders (i.e. users, non-users, politicians, sector staff). It has, however, been used infrequently. Linley and Usherwood (1998) used it to evaluate the social impact of public libraries in Newcastle and Somerset, while Bryson, Usherwood and Streatfield (2002) used it across the entire museums, archives and libraries sector in the South West of England; although the results of the latter study were described by the authors as 'modest'. It should also be noted that social auditing, as developed by the New Economics Foundation, includes an external verification process. With this in mind, sector services considering the use of this technique might want to consider some form of external audit.

5.1.5 Case studies

Detailed case studies, as opposed to brief cameos, have been used in a number of the investigations of social, learning or economic impact. These have examined the activities and perceived impact of individual organisations or projects, and have covered the arts and cultural sector in general (e.g. Matarasso, 1997), libraries (e.g. Roach and Morrison, 1998; Muddiman *et al.*, 2000; Williams and Wavell, 2001) or museums (RCMG, 2000; South West Museums Council; Hooper-Greenhill and Moussouri, 2001). Archives have not been the subject of any detailed case studies. A range of data collection techniques has been used in these case studies, including face-to-face or telephone interviews, user surveys and observation. This method is particularly useful for understanding why things happen. The need for triangulation needs to be made explicit if this method is to be recommended for practitioner use in project evaluations.

5.1.6 Project evaluations

A particular form of case study is the project evaluation. The quality of evidence and the ability to adopt sound practice in evaluating impact are amongst the concerns arising from project evaluations. Project evaluation is necessary to understand what worked and the problems encountered. Reflection and dissemination of the results can inform future projects both within the organisation and in other organisations where professionals are working towards similar goals. Judging by the number of small-scale project evaluations, professionals in the sector are beginning to

understand the potential of project evaluation as a development tool, although there was evidence from the National Council on Archives audit of social inclusion work (2001) that not all archivists were convinced of the value of evaluation.

The evaluations examined revealed some common issues:

- Evaluation requires training and understanding of the practical applications and limitations of particular techniques. The quality of the evaluations examined during this study varies considerably with several references to the need for external evaluation by trained professionals.
- Where project evaluations make use of qualitative data there is a need to integrate and present that data within a rigorous research framework which addresses issues of validity and reliability within the context of the overall sample under consideration.
- Project evaluation provides information on the user's immediate interaction with the service but provides limited information on longer-term impact or how the experience or interaction enables further action or development. There was evidence that evaluators felt a need to re-evaluate the project at a later date and this was not always possible given financial and reporting constraints imposed by funding bodies.
- For results to be of any use on a regional or national basis some form of standardisation of approach is needed which also allows for local variations in either project or evaluation aims and objectives.
- Project evaluations can provide useful information on the impact on the organisation, particularly staff attitudes and understanding. Staff attitudes and understanding are important to enable projects that require high levels of commitment to be sustained.
- There is a recognition of the value of studies which offer a "before and after" comparison, establishing sound base-line data prior to developments, and/or which compare perceptions of users and non-users to provide a clearer measure of change and impact.

While these are points that have been raised during examination of a number of project evaluations, there was no evidence from this review that project evaluations provide the most effective or efficient means of demonstrating impact to satisfy policy makers. There is undoubtedly conflict in trying to balance the provision of effective service with the need to conduct time-consuming and expensive formal evaluation in order to satisfy external funding bodies. The value of these project evaluations lies in their ability to strengthening the learning culture within organisations and individual professionals and to demonstrate that in given circumstances impact can be demonstrated.

Clearly, while these issues emerge from the many project evaluations, which tend to characterise much of the impact evaluation to date, many of these issues will apply equally to attempts to assess service-wide impact.

5.1.7 Critical incident technique

In the library domain this technique has been used in academic research to assess the impact of information use on decision-making in a variety of special libraries serving the health and business communities (Marshall, 1992; Ashcroft, 1998; Reid, Thomson and Wallace-Smith, 1998). This approach attempts to get closer to impact by focusing on the user identifying a need and assessing the perceived change in action as a result of satisfying that need through information provision.

The approach has also been used in the museum domain (Gilbert and Priest, 1997) when the researchers identified a critical incident as a point in which the observed school students changed their attention or focus to another topic thus establishing a point of conclusion for that focus. As this research showed, this change in focus does not necessarily imply finality in the learning continuum but provides a means of breaking the case study observation into convenient units for analysis.

5.1.8 Economic analysis

Many of the economic impact studies have used relatively complex analytical techniques and have frequently been conducted by economists or special consultants. These have either been economic impact analysis techniques or cost benefit analysis techniques.

Economic impact analysis

Economic impact analysis has been used, for example, to measure the economic impact of: arts and cultural industries in general (Bryan *et al.*, 2000); public libraries (Sawyer, 1996), museums (South West Museums Council, 2000) or the natural and historic environment (National Trust, 2001) within a particular region; and specific cultural venues or visitor attractions (Vaughan, Farr and Slee, 2000; Hansen, Christoffersen and Wanhill, 1998). Various input-output models have been used, some developed specifically for analysing the impact in particular geographic areas. The local impact of tourism is most frequently measured using the Cambridge or STEAM models, which utilise local data and/or nationally available information.

While some studies of particular visitor attractions, such as those of the Eden Project in Cornwall (Geoff Broom Associates, 2002) and the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (Plaza, 2000), have specifically investigated the influence of the attraction on tourist/visitor numbers and spending, others (e.g. South West Museums Council, 2000) have made more speculative analyses of economic impact, due to a lack of information on tourists'/visitors' principle motivations for visiting the local area and the number of visits to cultural venues they make during their stay.

Cost benefit analysis

Cost benefit analysis has been used to measure the impact of public libraries (Holt, Elliott and Moore, 1998; Morris, Hawkins and Sumsion, 2001), galleries (Baker *et al.*, 1998) and other cultural attractions (Hansen, Christoffersen and Wanhill, 1998). Much of the research has focused on respondents' willingness to pay for sector services. This might be more appropriate for a service which does not attract substantial numbers of visitors or external income in the way that some major cultural venues might.

As has already been noted, Baker *et al.* (1998) consider that, in terms of cost-benefit analysis, the method with the greatest potential is also the most sophisticated. In a

similar way, those methods which tend to provide a more in-depth understanding of social or learning impact, tend also to be the more complex in terms of data collection and analysis and, thus, time-consuming e.g. observation, critical incidence technique. The use of such techniques may not necessarily be practical for frequent use but have their place in terms of targeted, less frequent but more in-depth evaluations of specific aspects of service, perhaps on a cyclical basis.

5.2 Data collection techniques

Within the above research approaches a number of different data collection techniques have been adopted.

5.2.1 Discussion/Focus groups

While the organisational surveys discussed above indicated that discussion and focus groups are being used for evaluative purposes in the libraries and museums domain, the extent of this use was not really specified. While discussion groups have been used in studies of libraries (e.g. Muddiman et al, 2000; Cookman, Haynes and Streatfield, 2000) and museums (e.g. BMRB International, 1998), this use has been relatively limited, at least when compared with self-completion questionnaires or one-to-one interviews. These discussion groups have involved users, non-users, sector staff, project workers and/or other stakeholders. Apart from the social impact audit in South West England (Bryson, Usherwood and Streatfield, 2002), there has been no reported use of discussion groups in archives impact studies over the last five years. Potential and actual drawbacks of using discussion groups have not been reported in the literature, although Harris (1998), when using discussion groups as a means of identifying and developing indicators of libraries' social benefits, suggests that such work should be conducted by someone who is independent of the local authority

5.2.2 Pre- and post- interviews

Pre- and post- interviews are primarily used to gather qualitative data in conjunction with observation during case study work or for project evaluation. This technique has been used to examine the impact of museum and library use on visitor/user learning as well as other participants' reactions to project, intervention, change. The interview is usually semi-structured and conducted face to face or by telephone. A telephone interview approach was used to establish memorable events in a child's visit to the Smithsonian's Natural History Museum (Falk and Dierking, 2000).

5.2.3 Observation

A variety of methods is used to track visitor/user movements and actions. A researcher is commonly located in the observation area and discretely records visitor/user movements and actions. During projects involving groups of children it is common to be a participant observer, although this is not always explicitly stated within the report. Research in the museum and gallery environment has made use of video recording to observe actions; some specialist knowledge of behavioural science is required for detailed analysis of the recordings.

The recording and analysis of observation data is time-consuming but provides rich data on behaviour in the immediate context and can be used to verify other forms of

data. It does not explain the reason for visitor/user actions and behaviour. Observation has been used in the museum environment to identify the effectiveness of exhibition and exhibit design. It has been used in project evaluation in both the museum and library setting as one method of assessing immediate impact. In the library environment, two reports (Williams and Wavell, 2001; Lance *et al.* 2001) have identified problems with observation inhibiting users' actions and one museum study (Orna-Ornstein, 2001) also expressed concerns about observation arousing suspicion among visitors. This latter report provides detail on the type and quality of information provided by individual methods. However, this evaluation was less about impact on the visitor than establishing the effectiveness of the exhibit layout and design.

5.2.4 Personal reflection

This technique has been used during academic research projects (Leinhardt, Tittle and Knutson, 2002) and by staff for project evaluations (Train and Elkin, 2001) to establish changes in emotion and skills development. Again analysis of this type of data is time-consuming and requires careful preparation, however the insights can be particularly illuminating.

Audio recorded personal reflection has been used to capture discussions and conversations in conjunction with observation and movement tracking to assess social and exhibit interaction and potential learning. Audio recording is done with the consent of the participants to enable close recording, thus limiting external noise. The studies using this technique have not reported technical or behavioural problems associated with this technique.

Comments books or cards are frequently used in the museum domain, however, it is recognised that the respondents are self-selecting and not necessarily representative of the visitor population. It has also been noted that the data gathered in this way is not necessarily analysed and acted upon.

5.2.5 Mind/concept mapping

A modified mind or concept mapping technique has been used during research (Leinhardt & Gregg, 2002) projects to establish knowledge of subject area prior to and after a museum visit in order to analyse learning. Analysis may require extensive knowledge of the subject area and is more suited to research purposes.

5.2.6 Library management systems

Libraries have been collecting statistical data for a number of years and the introduction of sophisticated computerised management systems have enabled this data to be easily collected and accessed. The use of data gathered through the library management system was explored during the Mind's Eye evaluation (Train, 2001). Comments by library staff suggested a perceived lack of technical knowledge to access and/or manipulate the data and the report also identified a lack of planning for data of this type (for instance increased borrowing of particular books) in the initial project stages. Problems have been encountered with compatibility of statistics across different participating organisations using different systems and data sets.

5.2.7 *Electronic discussion lists*

Electronic discussion lists were used as part of one study, the University of Northumbria's investigation of the perceived role of museums, archives and libraries in neighbourhood renewal and social inclusion (Parker *et al.*, 2002). This closed list observatory, *Neighbourhood-Renewal-Obs*, created at JISC-mail, supported general discussion on renewal and inclusion initiatives, although details of the extent of its membership and its success are lacking.

5.3 Quantitative versus qualitative research?

The review has demonstrated that quantitative methodologies have been successfully used to investigate social, learning and economic impact. These methods have the advantage of providing statistical data expected by government bodies and, assuming rigour of collection methods, enables a degree of cross-sectoral, cross-domain or longitudinal comparison. The instruments need to be based on sound academic research to ensure appropriateness of question design and analysis and can be targeted at particular aspects of service. If conducted on a large scale, this type of research requires external funding and expertise.

The surveys discussed in Section 4 demonstrate how quantitative methodology can be used to ascertain users' and non-users' perceptions of impact of a service. It has to be borne in mind that such approaches have relied on self-reporting of perceptions of impact rather than demonstrating actual impact. Nevertheless this may be as close as we can get at this stage until we understand more about impact.

A disadvantage of quantitative methods is that they do little to establish why and how impact occurs. The review of available evidence indicates widespread acceptance of the value of qualitative data if impact is to be fully understood and assessed. However, this does not preclude the use of such data within an overall quantitative or semi-quantitative approach. Indeed, the value of much of the early, highly qualitative studies will be to lay down the grounding required for organisations to begin to identify useful indicators which can be measured more quantitatively.

The value of qualitative evidence is widely recognised:

'It is very difficult to measure how the museum, archive or library experience affects learning. Almost every museum, library or archive user is a voluntary user, and learning in these contexts is often informal and experimental, with impacts on feelings and attitudes rather than leading to the acquisition of concepts.' (Resource, 2001e, p.10)

'Museums, archives and libraries need more information about how to measure the impact of the work that they do on the quality of life, creativity, attainment, skills motivation, self-confidence and enjoyment of the people who use or could be using their collections and resources.' (Resource, 2001e, p.12-13)

The value of harnessing qualitative data is also recognised by academic researchers (Linley and Usherwood, 1998; Toyne and Usherwood, 2001). However, it is important to find appropriate methodologies to ensure rigorous gathering, analysis and presentation of qualitative data and to overcome the problems of reliance on anecdotal data noted in this and other literature reviews.

However, it is important to find appropriate methodologies to ensure rigorous gathering, analysis and presentation of qualitative data and to overcome the problems of reliance on anecdotal data noted in this and other literature reviews.

5.4 Frameworks and toolkits

The review shows that there is already a wide range of evidence of *potential* impact which could be used to suggest more appropriate quantitative indicators. In addition there are already a number of guidelines and frameworks which will facilitate the process of selecting indicators and methods.

Some of the more comprehensive project evaluations include practical guidance for future project evaluation (Hawthorne, 2001, 2002) and the Museum of Reading website supports the *Loans for a New Millennium* evaluation findings and data (McAlpine, 2002). In *Learning through Culture*, Clarke *et al.* (2002) pull together the experiences, examples of good practice and guidelines for evaluation from the experiences of the reported programmes. *Museums and Social Justice* (Scottish Museums Council, 2000) provides a strategy framework for tackling the barriers to inclusion over a five year period, including:

- Year One: gathering a community profile, making contacts and identifying target groups.
- Year Two: conducting evaluations on pilot projects, drawing conclusions and drawing up a plan of action.
- Year Three: begin implementing the action plan.

A number of toolkits were also examined for their potential usefulness in overcoming some of the challenges facing practitioners in evaluating impact. Information Management Associates have developed a comprehensive web-based tool for impact evaluation (2000) which provides a bridge between impact evaluation and performance measurement. Although this practical document is aimed at practitioners working in the library domain, it provides guidance that could be relevant for practitioners working in the other areas, including the museum and archive domains. Diamond's *Practical Evaluation Guide* (1999) and the Bedfordshire Museums *Prove It!* (Anon, 2000b) are comprehensive guides for museum practitioners covering all aspects of evaluation. Two examples from the USA are the *W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook* (Anon, 1998) which is designed for use by projects funded by the foundation, and *Taking Stock* (Bond, Boyd and Rapp, 1997) which is designed for use by school librarians. The Scottish Arts Council and the Arts Council of England have both commissioned toolkits for the evaluation of arts projects and these provide concise practical guidance for practitioners. *Partnerships for learning* (Woolf, 1999) provides guidance on evaluating arts education projects with an emphasis on partnerships while the Scottish version (Dean, Goodlad and Hamilton, 2001) concentrates on social inclusion areas. *Counting on Results* (Lance, *et al.* 2001) was a piece of research and resultant toolkit examining the use of Palm personal digital assistants as a new method for gathering data for outcome evaluation in the library context. The document considers the problems encountered during the project both with the digital assistants and

librarians' reactions to observing users and concerns over intrusion, and discussed the advantages of postcard size questionnaires.

The problem of intrusion on visitors and users is one that is implied in a number of documents discussing museum visitor observation and the use of questionnaires prior to and after an exhibition visit. Williams and Wavell (2001) encountered the intrusive nature of discussing student's ad hoc use of the school library. A simple question card was considered less intrusive than interviews with little loss of data during Stainton's research as part of the Museum Learning Collaborative (Stainton, 2001). The cards acted as prompts for visitors to refer to when recording reactions to exhibits. The frequency of questionnaires was a problem for some young people involved in the *encompass* projects (Hooper-Greenhill and Nicol, 2001) and this should be taken into account during project evaluations.

5.5 Choice of appropriate indicators

Another key to ensuring good quality assessment of impact, meaningful to practitioners and decision-makers, is the choice of appropriate indicators.

The Task Force responsible for *Renaissance in the Regions* recommends that Resource take responsibility for 'creating an appropriate model which will include a robust set of indicators to measure achievement of the deliverables offered by museum and galleries' (Resource, 2001c, p.64). It is clear from the review of evidence that a pattern is emerging in the indicators chosen to reflect social and learning impact amongst UK museums, archives and libraries, although the identification of indicators of economic impact is at an earlier stage of development, restricted to a small number of research projects largely outwith the UK.

Throughout the documents a number of indicators recur in relation to social and learning impact; some are more concrete and easier to measure and some are less tangible:

- Level of student/visitor/user engagement/discussion:
 - length of time spent interacting with exhibit;
 - conversation;
- Enjoyment, enthusiasm or motivation;
- Enrichment of school curriculum, learning environment, people's lives;
- Stimulated to learn more:
 - return visit;
 - recommend to others;
 - uptake of courses;
- Level, depth, breadth of subject knowledge:
 - memorable facts;
 - pre- and post- test of factual memory;
- Skills acquisition:
 - use of equipment;
 - basic/life skills (literacy, numeracy);
 - investigative methodologies (historical, scientific);
- Changes to the participants' self-confidence, or self-esteem, attitudes (perceived, actual);
- Changes within the organisation:
 - staff attitudes;

- professional achievements;
- confidence in tackling different approaches.

In addition to the above, academic researchers have used indicators which relate to specific motivations and agendas:

- Quality of decision making;
- Academic achievement;
- Satisfaction in relation to expectations.

Indicators of economic impact used to date have focused around:

- Economic impact analyses: direct impact:
 - Income - grants, admission charges, retail sales, donations, etc.;
 - Attendance and visitor numbers;
 - Capital funds;
 - Employment - FTE, wages and salary payments;
 - Purchases - wages and salaries, running costs, operating expenditure, etc.;
 - Contribution to Gross Domestic Product;
- Economic impact analyses: indirect impact:
 - Supplier and induced effects, using economic multipliers - i.e. the impact on other local industries and businesses in terms of output, FTE, GDP;
 - Tourist spending levels;
- Cost benefit analyses:
 - Users' willingness to pay for services.

These indicators have been generated from perceptions of practitioners and/or researchers' examination of the context within which museums, libraries and archives operate, their aims and priorities, and knowledge of user/visitor groups. Although they can be seen as 'naturally occurring indicators', they reflect the priority areas of funding bodies which in turn reflect government priorities such as social inclusion, learning, and economic impact. However, the extent to which these indicators really reflect the full extent of impact or, indeed, the extent to which some may prove more reliable than others, has yet to be fully explored.

A further complication which emerges from the review is the differing interpretations which may be placed on indicators. For example, Proctor and Bartle (2002) interpreted the reading of fiction borrowed from the public library as an indicator of learning, yet library users interviewed did not necessarily see this as learning. If evidence is to be of wider relevance to the practitioner community, some common agreement is needed on how indicators will be used and reported. This agreement should take into account the views of all stakeholder groups prior to data collection.

This is not to suggest that the assessment of impact in relation to any one broad indicator should not vary. Indeed, the review demonstrates the current use of a variety of approaches to collecting data and reporting in relation to any one indicator. The challenge is to allow for local contextualising of impact evaluation, using methods and data most suited to the service, environment, and the particular user/visitor group while at the same time allowing for the wider sharing and meta-analysis which may be of interest across the sector. There is a need for the sector to address issues related to the localisation as well as the compatibility of data related to impact.

Related to this is the issue of local and national priorities and agendas. The development of a framework for reporting of impact evidence will need to allow for

mapping of data from voluntary, local and national organisations. Given that there is no earmarked funding for organisations other than at a national level, the methods used will have to take account of the fact that many museums, archives and libraries will need to address local agendas and priorities as well as the broader picture. Can the sector work towards a set of indicators which will be meaningful across the sector at national level while also allowing for museums, archives and libraries to analyse the impact they are making in relation to local priorities? It is too early yet to give a clear answer to this question. The review shows that studies and evaluations in the UK have tended to be done in relation to specific services, authorities and projects and there is little evidence that there has been any attempt to examine the potential for pooling of data. This is clearly related to the fact that the sector as a whole is still at a relatively early stage in the evaluation of impact and studies have tended to have an exploratory role in helping practitioners begin to understand the nature of impact evaluation compared with more traditional performance measures. Deeper understanding of the relationship between performance (in more traditional output terms) and impact might also facilitate the identification of proxy or surrogate indicators where the data may be more easily captured and shared.

This issue assumes even greater importance in the context of moves towards greater evidence-based practice as well as more public accountability. As has already been seen in relation to, for example, environment and sustainability, high quality decision and policy making at all levels leads to a requirement for locally relevant as well as nationally relevant evidence and information. Is it possible to satisfy both local and national needs by developing a reporting framework which is based on the extent to which each service is meeting its own objectives and priorities for impact within the broad context of social, learning and economic impact? In taking this discussion further, the sector may benefit from examining more closely the experiences of sectors who are further ahead in the impact evaluation process: in areas such as environment and health where there are both national and local priorities operating; education where there is a much greater emphasis on a common national agenda; or, closer to home, other culture and leisure sectors, such as tourism or sports.

There are already moves towards enabling/facilitating the fuller exploration and identification of appropriate indicators. Markless and Streatfield (2001) investigate indicators of process and indicators of outcome and how this relates to performance and impact indicators. The work enables a useful understanding of indicators. In a similar way, the *Best Value and Better Performance in Libraries* (Information Management Associates, 2000) toolkit also explores in detail the importance of an appropriate choice of indicators to reflect the type of impact being assessed.

A number of frameworks have been developed in relation to learning which may be useful in selecting indicators of impact. The work of Hooper-Greenhill (2002), Barriault (1999), Gammon (2002); Williams and Wavell (2001) provide frameworks for considering learning and potential indicators that might be used to examine the type of interaction taking place across the sector.

Matarasso (1997) provides a framework of potential social impacts for participation in the arts and a more specific framework (Matarasso, 1998) for the developmental role of public libraries. These provide a useful starting point for selecting indicators of social impact.

The frameworks mentioned above help with understanding the potential areas for impact and the selection of indicators. Resource's *Inspiring Learning* (2001d, 2002) project provides a flexible framework in which organisations can assess access and learning outcomes in relation to the organisational, regional and national agendas.

The title reflects the significance of access and learning in underpinning other social and economic benefits but use of the framework should allow for these wider outcomes and impacts to be built into the assessment process as and when required. The flexibility of frameworks like this enable the use of a variety of methods of data collection at the local level while supporting professionally agreed goals that reflect national priorities. However, the *Inspiring learning* project is still in progress and how well it achieves these objectives remains to be seen.

6 Conclusions

6.1 Evidence of impact

6.1.1 *Social impact*

In terms of social impact research, libraries, and in particular public libraries, have been the subject of more numerous and more extensive studies than either museums or archives over the last five years. Interest in the social impact of museums is growing but research into the impact of archives remains sparse.

The evidence presented in the social impact studies varies in extent and the rigour with which it is reported. At present museums are taking a qualitative approach with an anecdotal format used in reporting. This is more exploratory in nature and demonstrates potential for a wide range of social impacts. Research in public libraries has combined qualitative and quantitative methods to assess impact and this has provided validity from large samples. While much of the resulting evidence points to a positive impact, some studies, conducted with equal rigour, have produced less convincing results.

The last five years have also seen a number of national surveys of museums, archives and public libraries that have primarily investigated the extent and nature of the organisations' service provision, in terms of social inclusion and community development. Again, though, rather than illustrating actual impact, these studies tend to provide evidence of engagement with the local community and of the organisations' belief in their potential to make a social impact.

In the museums and archives domains, the large-scale, national surveys of users and (in the case of museums) non-users, conducted by MORI and the PSQG respectively, have considered social issues, with the most recent PSQG survey (2001) revealing some significant, positive findings on the cultural and social impact of UK archives.

Other studies reviewed have made a more conscious effort to establish and measure social impact, and the majority claim that the sector does indeed have positive impacts. Many of the researchers have clearly been influenced by Matarasso's work on the social impact of participatory arts initiatives (Matarasso, 1997), and have attempted to group their findings under similar broad themes. This has been investigated to the fullest extent in the library domain. Broadly speaking, then, evidence of the social impact of the sector might be said to exist in these six areas:

- Personal development;
- Social cohesion;
- Community empowerment;
- Local culture and identity;
- Imagination and creativity;
- Health and well-being.

Not all the studies provide evidence in all these categories and different studies provide a variety of similar and interrelated categories; and the museum and archives domains have attempted to establish that there is potential for impact in areas such as tackling crime and unemployment. There is an indirect link between public library

use and social inclusion in terms of the development of literacy skills and actual information on welfare and employment obtained to support citizenship.

The evidence presented under these themes, however, varies broadly both in its extent and the manner in which it has been collected, ranging from the four interviews with participants in Glasgow's Open Museum projects (Dodd *et al.*, 2002), to the thousands of individuals surveyed (by questionnaire, interview and group discussion) during the Aslib review of public libraries in 1995. It is perhaps fair to suggest, though, that regardless of the rigour with which the data was collected, the sample sizes in some of the studies, particularly in the museums domain, might prove less than convincing to those policy makers and funders who prefer quantitative measures and the validity of scale.

In this respect, the evidence from the studies of public libraries is potentially more convincing, with much of it based on relatively large-scale investigations, conducted rigorously. For example, the three studies carried out at the University of Sheffield (Proctor, Usherwood and Sobczyk, 1996; Proctor, Lee and Reilly, 1998; Linley and Usherwood, 1998) all provide generally positive findings, obtained from large samples, on the social value and impact of public libraries. Yet, it should also be remembered that other studies, while also based on extensive research, have produced less positive results. For example, the Aslib (1995) and Audit Commission (2002) reviews of UK public libraries, and the study conducted by Black and Crann (2000), all contain negative points concerning the inclusiveness of public libraries.

The most compelling evidence of impact from the major studies was found to be in the areas of personal development if only because the immediate outcomes are more easily identified and less problematic in terms of establishing causality. These outcomes are expressed in terms such as:

- Source of enjoyment and personal satisfaction;
- Acquisition of skills;
- Trying new experiences;
- Increased confidence and self-esteem;
- Changed or challenged attitudes;
- Developing creativity, cultural awareness, communication and memory;
- Providing support for educational courses, job seeking and workplace skills.

Studies in the library domain which concentrate on specific aspects of service provision, such as ICT (Eve and Brophy, 2001 and Roberts, Everitt and Tomos, 2000) indicate that these services also contribute to personal development. Another area where evidence is more compelling is where the service or interaction fulfils a specific user need, such as employment, business or health information (Marshall, 1992; Urquhart and Hepworth, 1995; Ashcroft, 1998; Reid, Thomson and Wallace-Smith, 1998; Grieves, 1998). The longer-term impact of that interaction has not been fully explored.

In general, then, while most of the literature reviewed here conveys the opinion that the sector does have a positive social impact, particularly in relation to aspects of personal development, extensive hard evidence of this impact, gathered systematically, is often lacking, particularly in the museums and archives domains. This tends to confirm the conclusions of previous literature reviews. In addition, throughout all three domains, there is a general acknowledgement of the difficulties of establishing a causal link between the sector and social impact.

6.1.2 Learning impact

There is empirical research on the relationship between museum and library use and learning although the majority of these studies concentrate on learning in children. The archive domain is beginning to investigate the impact of archival use on learning, particularly in the social context of leisure pursuits and lifelong learning (Public Services Quality Group for Archives and Local Studies, 1998 & 1999). In the majority of this research, learning is not explicitly defined but the implication is that a broad definition is used which includes the early motivational and engagement stages. Research into learning in British museums has adopted visitor agenda-based approaches used more extensively in the US and provides an understanding of how visitors engage with the learning environment created by museums.

The literature discussed in this report includes a number of policy and related documents that present evidence of social and learning impact of the sector in the form of project cameos, short anecdotal quotes and brief accounts of engagement with specific groups in the community. There is little indication of how this data has been collected or analysed, although it is perhaps fair to say that they provide evidence of actual impact for particular individuals at specific points in time. These documents demonstrate the potential for impact and, when properly conducted, provide examples of good practice for organisations beginning the process of improving access and examining outcomes from the point of view of the user.

There is an increasing number of project evaluations reporting on education activities available for public inspection, however the variety of approaches taken and varying levels of rigour in the evaluation process and reporting provide little scope for sound conclusions to be drawn. The quantity of anecdotal quotes does suggest that well prepared and organised project interventions do have a positive impact on some participants and organisers. These examples may well be valid for the individual but do little to establish the overall impact on a clearly identified sample and the extent of the positive impact is not possible to determine from these reports.

These project evaluation reports give an indication of participant interaction with the service or collection and also raise awareness and show a willingness by the sector to address the issues of access for particular target groups. Again, it is less clear how widespread this awareness and willingness to meet national agendas is and the picture may even be distorted by the extensive use of project evaluation cameos in policy and strategy documents.

Overall, while available evidence is limited in quality, and patchy in nature, there is sufficient evidence from project evaluations to demonstrate a positive contribution of museums, archives and libraries to skills development and building a knowledge base. The type of learning discussed as evidence can be categorised under broad headings, for example:

- Engagement and enjoyment;
- Acquisition of new skills;
- Trying new experiences;
- Encouraging creativity;
- Increased self-confidence or changes in attitude;
- Higher order cognitive learning, increased knowledge and understanding;
- Academic achievement, particularly in reading and language development.

The review found some evidence to indicate that it is the unique nature of seeing and handling primary source material that is significant in the learning process (Gilbert and Priest, 1997; McAlpine, 2002). In a similar way, references to individual projects that used archival resources (Heywood, 2001) reinforce the potential for impact on learning.

In this report a distinction has been made between informal or self-directed learning and formal learning associated with education and academic achievement, however this distinction has more to do with the learning environment, visitor/user agendas and the outcomes expected than the type or process of learning experienced. The visitor or user response is usually described at the point of interaction or engagement and provides some evidence of immediate outcome rather than longer-term impact. With reference to the museum domain, Hein (1998) and Tunnicliffe (2000) suggest that it is not enough just to provide the experience, the user needs to interact (make meaning) with the collection in order to build on previous experience and this can be achieved through mediation in the exhibition design and/or through interaction with other visitors, users or staff. The significance of mediation and interaction was also borne out in empirical research by Williams and Wavell (2001) in the school library context.

The research by Williams and Wavell (2001) explores the school library context and the impact it has on learning and there is research into library and book use and young children (Hammond and Gough, 2000; National Centre for Research in Children's Literature, 2001) but within the scope of this evaluation study there is less evidence of research into the learning associated with libraries and archives in other age groups. The studies investigating learning use a broad definition which is not restricted to the higher cognitive aspects of increased knowledge and understanding. The relationship between motivation, entertainment and learning has been explored (Falk, Moussouri and Coulson, 1998) in the museum context, however there appears to be a gap in the research which explores the relationship between entertainment and health and well-being and the therapeutic potential impact in a wider social context. This is identified as a potential impact within the work of Matarrasso (1998a), Coalter (2001) and Jermyn (2001).

The most compelling evidence of impact exists where services target younger age groups and are backed by academic research particularly in the education fields (Krashen, 1993; Lance *et al.*, 2000a,b,c; Smith, 2001; Martin and Morgan, 1994; National Centre for Research in Children's Literature, 2001). This finding suggests the importance of developing understanding, both within and outwith the sector, of the ways in which museums and libraries can contribute to early learning and building opportunities through pre-school and formal education agencies. There is also limited evidence that early use of these services enables continued awareness of the potential to support lifelong learning (Xanthoudaki, 1998).

Projects targeting young groups for after-school, holiday, or youth activities or targeting less traditional users, such as male readers or at risk groups, demonstrate positive interaction by individuals. These projects are about providing access and opportunities for new experiences. There is some evidence that a positive experience raises awareness amongst individuals of the potential for use at a later date.

Academic libraries in the FE and HE sectors are also concerned with tackling the issue of impact assessment and, at present, are at the stage of attempting to find appropriate indicators and data collection techniques.

The majority of evidence of actual impact is related to the immediate and direct benefit of engagement with a service or collections by the user. A small number of attempts have been made to examine long-term impact on learning and some evidence of impact on cognitive learning was found when data collection techniques looked beyond the immediate sector environment (Gilbert and Priest, 1997; Williams and Wavell, 2001). However, the evidence from these studies is confined to very specific individuals and it is not possible to generalise from them. The review found little evidence of how immediate engagement with the learning environment creates change or impact in the individual, group or community.

Partnerships beyond the sector encourage awareness of where museums, libraries and archives have the potential for greater impact. Partnership provides a useful means of tackling government agenda in areas that are not immediately associated with the sector, such as health and crime. However, little evidence was found for external agencies initiating the partnerships and therefore fulfilling a recognised need, except from formal educational establishments, such as schools. The review would also suggest that practitioners do not show sufficient awareness of the potential parallels of research in other areas or present the evidence in a meaningful way to those working towards the same goal in other areas so that the potential contribution of the sector can be recognised.

There are recognised difficulties over the terminology and understanding of impact evaluation and challenges over the practical issues of determining indicators and gathering data. The problems are best illustrated in the area of learning which has received most attention within the sector to date. The definition of learning taken by Resource encompasses not only the cognitive aspects traditionally associated with learning but also the broader aspects of learning that can in certain circumstances be considered learning in their own right or can be considered factors that enable higher order learning. There is a body of academic research providing compelling evidence that under optimum circumstances, museums and libraries make a positive contribution on visitor/user understanding or meaning and decision making. At present the research demonstrates that the sector provides conditions, stimulants and the means by which higher order learning should be encouraged. Some researchers, such as Dierking (1989) challenge whether this interaction actually leads to learning in the cognitive sense. Hammond and Gough (2000) describe a literature review by Borun *et al.* (1995) who conclude that *'to date, no one has shown a correlation between observable behavior in the free-choice museum environment and an independent measure of learning'* (p.264) and they suggest that this is because of the methodological difficulties.

If physical, emotional and intellectual access is achieved with the appropriate amount of mediation then engagement with the collection occurs. This could be termed as immediate impact or as an outcome. The sector is concentrating on access. What has become evident from this literature review is, not surprisingly, the fact that this immediate impact is most effective when there is either a need initiated by the user or a particular intervention has enabled specialist partnerships (teachers, youth workers, health visitors). There needs to be greater understanding outside the sector of how the sector supports society and in particular how learning is closely related to social and economic impact in terms of underpinning lifelong learning, health and well-being and business information needs.

6.1.3 Economic impact

Much of the literature on economic impact is international and the majority of studies on economic impact so far in the UK has concentrated on the arts and cultural industries in general. The studies of the economic impact of the sector have considered impact in a number of different ways. There are those that have examined its status as an employer and a purchaser of local goods and services; those that have focused on its role in attracting tourists and visitors; those that have established monetary values for the sector's services; while there are others that have tentatively investigated indirect impacts, such as jobs gained due to information or skills acquired in public libraries. Many of the studies have used relatively complex analytical techniques and have been conducted by economists or special consultants. These have either been economic impact analysis or cost benefit analysis techniques.

Economic impact analyses have been used, for example, to measure the impact of: arts and cultural industries in general (Bryan *et al.*, 2000); public libraries (Sawyer, 1996), museums and galleries (South West Museums Council, 2000) or the natural and historic environment (National Trust, 2001) within a particular region; and specific cultural venues or visitor attractions (Vaughan, Farr and Slee, 2000; Hansen, Christoffersen and Wanhill, 1998). A variety of input-output models have been used, some developed specifically for analysing the impact in particular geographic areas. The local impact of tourism is most frequently measured using the Cambridge or STEAM models, which utilise local data and/or nationally available information.

While some studies of particular visitor attractions, such as those of the Eden Project in Cornwall (Geoff Broom Associates, 2002) and the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (Plaza, 2000), have specifically measured the influence of the attraction on tourist/visitor numbers and spending, others (e.g. South West Museums Council, 2000) have had to make more speculative analyses of economic impact. This was due to a lack of information on tourists'/visitors' principle motivations for visiting the local area and the number of visits to cultural venues they make during their stay.

Cost benefit analyses have been used to measure the impact of public libraries (Holt, Elliott and Moore, 1998; Morris, Hawkins and Sumsion, 2001), galleries (Baker *et al.*, 1998) and other cultural attractions (Hansen, Christoffersen and Wanhill, 1998). Much of the research has measured respondents' willingness to pay for sector services, although it has been suggested that this might be more appropriate for a service which does not attract substantial numbers of visitors or external income in the way that some major cultural venues might. The difficulties of measuring indirect economic impacts by cost benefit analyses have also been identified.

In addition to the studies using economic impact or cost benefit analyses techniques, other studies have attempted to identify economic impacts, although not in monetary terms. Here, the data has been collected using more 'traditional' methods, such as questionnaire surveys and discussion groups. These have largely studied public libraries (e.g. Ellis, 1994; Vaughan, 1997; Linley and Usherwood, 1998; McClure *et al.*, 2000), although the most recent UK archives user survey (PSQG, 2001) also began to explore economic issues. These studies have tended to investigate one or more of three areas of economic impact: the impact of business information provision in public libraries on business success; the role of public libraries and archives in attracting visitors to the area or its town centre; and the more indirect economic benefits of libraries in providing, for example, jobseeking and training opportunities. However, the authors of these non-monetary studies have tended to issue caveats

regarding their findings. Again, a recurring theme throughout these studies has been the difficulty in identifying and measuring indirect economic impacts.

Although economic impact has not been fully explored, methodologies are still being investigated and the evidence is not quantifiable at present, there is evidence that:

- The sector has a direct (and indirect) impact on employment;
- Major national attractions encourage tourists to visit an area;
- The location of local public libraries has an economic impact;
- Business information provision can impact on business success.

The research has concentrated on the public sector and major public spending initiatives. Research into business information provision and the economic impact of health information is limited.

General issues

Throughout the review, while there is an abundance of anecdotal evidence and descriptions of best practice in the sector, extensive hard evidence of impact, gathered systematically, is often lacking. Much of the research has adopted an exploratory, qualitative approach which tends to demonstrate *potential* for impact rather than provide consistently convincing evidence of impact.

Where impact evaluations have been conducted, systematic and rigorous reporting of the data collection methods used and the results obtained is often absent; therefore the quality and validity of the evidence is difficult to establish. While synoptic accounts of impact investigations exist, these have not, so far, been integrated into a growing body of evidence.

There has generally been less evidence for services that do not attract direct public funding or are not seen as a government priority. This is not to say that there is no impact but more likely reflects the situation whereby the pressure to demonstrate impact is directed particularly at the public sector.

Where funding bodies (public or private) are committed to monitoring the effectiveness of their investment there is awareness by practitioners for the need to evaluate and demonstrate outcomes and impact. The evidence examined by this review reflects this emphasis of funding in certain areas, such as public libraries, national institutions, museum education. Areas where this drive is less overt or additional funding is less forthcoming (for instance information services, local museums or archives) the practitioners are under less pressure to demonstrate outcomes and impact. There is a need for methods of collecting evidence that enables funding bodies to monitor the effectiveness of their investment as well as a system that allows for evidence to be gathered through other channels.

In addition, evaluation has concentrated on looking at particular projects or new services. While this serves to increase staff awareness and understanding, there is a need for more examination of the ongoing impact of core services, whatever these might be for a specific organisation, and the unique value of these services in supporting social, learning and economic impact.

Matarasso (1998b) also identified factors which he argued were important for the success and sustainability of library projects, which might equally apply to the other domains:

- An identified need and local support;
- Principled partnership and effective leadership;
- Clear objectives and measures of success;
- Effective monitoring and evaluation.

6.1.4 Access and barriers

While access is not itself a direct measure of impact, it is nevertheless fundamental to enabling museums, archives and libraries to have an impact on users/visitors. Issues of access are directly related to overcoming exclusion, and evidence of access could be viewed as evidence of impact on social inclusion or at least equality of opportunity to benefit from the positive impact of the sector. Issues of physical, emotional and intellectual access to museums, archives and libraries by individuals or groups deemed to be in danger of exclusion have been investigated.

The MORI survey (2001) attempted to examine the type of social groups who visit museums and galleries and why others do not visit. The results indicate that people in higher social classes are more likely to visit and that White Europeans are more frequent visitors than Black and Asian visitors. The barriers to visiting identified in this report fit within the framework of barriers identified by DCMS (1999a, 2000) and the Scottish Museums Council (2000):

- Institutional - restrictive opening hours, inappropriate staff attitudes, charging policies;
- Personal and social - lack of basic skills, low self-esteem;
- Perceptions and awareness - perceptions that the organisation has nothing to offer the individual;
- Environmental - physical access, poor transport links.

Other studies provide additional perspectives to these barriers, such as fear of the unknown, a lack of appropriate mediation, location and aesthetics and organisational learning.

The surveys of visitors to UK archives (PSQG, 1998, 1999, 2001) established that younger people, women, ethnic minorities, and respondents with disabilities are underrepresented as archive users.

Studies that have targeted people with disabilities have tended to survey current provision (Kinnell, Yu and Creaser, 2000; Davies, Wisdom and Creaser, 2001; Rayner, 1998; SOLON, 2001). The evidence from these reports suggests that provision for the visually impaired, people with learning and communication disabilities and other disabled people is uneven across the sector. However, Rayner (2000) indicated that conducting the research and disseminating the findings had raised awareness of disability issues.

Two studies explored the issues relating to ethnic diversity, one focusing on public library service provision (Roach and Morrison, 1998) and the other looking at the attitudes towards museums and galleries by ethnic minority populations (BMRB International, 1998). The evidence from public library authorities indicate that:

- The service has not engaged fully with ethnically diverse communities;

- The social distance between library professionals and minority citizens forms a barrier to use;
- The public library is not a central part of the ethnic community networks;
- The structure, culture and ethnic profile of the service restricts the means by which they can become stakeholders.

Ethnic minority populations' perceptions of museums and galleries were that the domain is elitist, unwelcoming and reflected a particular view of history that was not shared by the ethnic communities themselves (BMRB International, 1998).

Another significant factor in the issue of access is the need to develop awareness and understanding of what the sector has to offer particularly in young people. There is evidence that early public library and museum use enables future use as need arises in later life (Xanthoudaki, 1998; Hull 2000). Appropriate mediation is instrumental in enabling effective use in young visitors/users and again highlights the need for awareness and understanding both within the sector and amongst agencies or partners who have an influence in the development of the young.

A key factor in overcoming barriers to access and use that has been identified during this review is one of professional understanding and commitment to the issues of outcomes and impact in terms of the visitor/user. The evidence from this review would suggest that there is still much to be learned and acted upon in order to improve emotional, physical and intellectual access and this is an area on which the sector is concentrating at present.

6.2 Methodologies used for impact evaluation

A consistent theme throughout this review has been the lack of, and need for, appropriate methodologies to examine impact. This is a key issue affecting the quality of current evaluations. Equally a lack of reporting of methodologies can make it difficult to assess the quality and validity of so called 'evidence'. Another key factor is the identification of appropriate and meaningful indicators of impact, rather than the more traditional output measures.

A variety of research designs and approaches and data collection techniques have been used throughout the studies reviewed. None are suitable for all situations and all have advantages and disadvantages.

There is widespread acceptance of the value of qualitative data to understand and assess impact. This does not preclude the use of such data within an overall quantitative or semi-quantitative approach. Qualitative data provides the grounding for quantitative approaches by identifying useful indicators.

Large-scale surveys provide the quantitative measures and validity of scale that are required by policy makers. These surveys take a variety of approaches, some investigating the extent of an organisation's service provision and others questioning staff, users and/or non-users about particular aspects of the service. The latest Public Services Quality Group for Archives and Local Studies (2001) survey has attempted to incorporate questions on the impact of services on the individual user and user perceptions of impact of the service to the wider community. This provides a relatively convenient means of demonstrating perceived impact through established channels of data collection. Academic research needs to underpin surveys of this

type to demonstrate the causal relationship and therefore the most appropriate use of indicators.

Detailed case studies have been used in a number of investigations of social, learning and economic impact. These have examined the activities and perceived impact of individual organisations or projects, and have covered the arts and cultural sector in general (e.g. Matarasso, 1997), libraries (e.g. Roach and Morrison, 1998; Muddiman et al, 2000; Williams and Wavell, 2001) or museums (RCMG, 2000; South West Museums Council; Hooper-Greenhill and Moussouri, 2001). Archives have not been the subject of any detailed case studies. This method is particularly useful for understanding why things happen. The need for triangulation needs to be made explicit if this method is to be recommended for practitioner use in project evaluations.

A particular form of case study is the project evaluation. The quality of evidence and the ability to adopt sound practice in evaluating impact are amongst the concerns arising from project evaluations. Project evaluation is necessary to understand what worked and the problems encountered. Reflection and dissemination of the results can inform future projects both within the organisation and in other organisations where professionals are working towards similar goals. However, emphasis of evaluation is often from the point of view of the organisation rather than the user. Where there is evidence of actual impact there has been an attempt to focus on the visitor/user rather than the organisation. There is no evidence from this review that project evaluations provide the most effective or efficient means of demonstrating impact to satisfy policy makers.

Many of the studies examining economic impact have used relatively complex analytical techniques and have been conducted by economists or special consultants. While some studies have been based on economic impact or cost benefit analyses and result in statistical or monetary evidence of impact, other studies have used qualitative and quantitative approaches where economic impacts are not necessarily defined in monetary terms.

Economic impact of the sector is dependent upon data sources that are often incomplete, inaccurate or unavailable.

Research has concentrated on the public sector and major public spending initiatives. Research into the economic impact and value of business information is limited. Research into the relationship between public libraries and town centre regeneration is limited.

Within these research approaches a number of different data collection techniques have been adopted, including discussion groups, interviews, observation, personal reflection and to a limited extent concept mapping, library management systems and electronic discussion lists. It is clear from the project evaluations that if these research approaches and data collection techniques are to be used effectively, either for internal or advocacy purposes, then understanding and training of the practical applications and limitations needs to be provided for sector practitioners and professionals. Large scale surveys and economic approaches need the funding to engage expert consultants. An approach that has only been identified within small project evaluation is experimental research. If the sector is serious in pursuing impact then carefully planned long-term experimental research would be one approach worth adopting. This would be particularly appropriate when investigating alternative approaches to service provision.

The review has demonstrated that quantitative methodologies have been successfully used to investigate social, learning and economic impact. These methods have the advantage of providing statistical data expected by government bodies and, assuming rigour of collection methods, enables a degree of cross-sectoral, cross-domain or longitudinal comparison. A disadvantage of quantitative methods is that they do little to establish why and how impact occurs. The review of available evidence indicates widespread acceptance of the value of qualitative data if impact is to be fully understood and assessed. However, if this approach is to be adopted, it is important to find appropriate methodologies to ensure rigorous gathering, analysis and presentation of qualitative data and to overcome the problems of reliance on anecdotal data noted in this and other literature reviews.

A number of toolkits and frameworks provide guidance on how and what to evaluate. For example, Information Management Associates (2000) provide a comprehensive discussion of the evaluation process, while Matarasso (1998b) provides a useful framework for considering areas of impact and possible indicators of impact, particularly on social, and to a lesser extent learning, issues. The 1998 framework, which is based on naturally occurring areas of potential social impact from previous research, includes personal development (education, employment, information seeking and well-being) and community development (building of cultural and community cohesion and supporting the economic structure of communities). The framework does not include the more complex economic impact issues but does provide one of the broadest frameworks to support selection of indicators. Resource's Inspiring Learning framework (2001d, 2002) provides a perspective of how impact evaluation can be incorporated into service provision as a whole.

The research has identified commonly used and naturally occurring indicators of impact for social and learning benefits of sector use. Some of these indicators are more concrete and easier to measure or assess and some are less tangible. Although they can be seen as 'naturally occurring indicators', they reflect the priority areas of funding bodies which in turn reflect government priorities such as social inclusion, learning, and economic impact. However, the extent to which these indicators really reflect the full extent of impact or, indeed, the extent to which some may prove more reliable than others, has yet to be fully explored.

6.3 Gaps

A gap has been identified in the research into impact evaluation and, therefore, evidence of impact in the archive domain. There is evidence that the domain itself is beginning to rectify this and is building on the research experience of the museum and library domains.

There is little evidence in the public domain of impact evaluation from private or independent organisations, such as special libraries and private museums.

While there is some positive exploration of the impact of information services on the health and business communities, this is limited and has not been related to social or economic impact.

There is a lack of evidence of the impact of public and dedicated specialist information services to their users or in areas of public or government interest, such as solving crime.

There is evidence of impact on learning in specifically designed programmes. There is less research establishing the links between core services (whatever the organisation feels these to be) and informal and self-directed learning and the relationship between engagement and interaction and the longer-term impact on education, health and quality of life.

Although there is some evidence that the use of primary source material in museums has a significant role to play in impact, there is less evidence of the added value of the sector, e.g. the unique quality of a particular domain experience; what differentiates the library from other sources of information, or the museum from the history book.

There is little evidence of longer-term impact or the causal relationship between sector use and impact. For example, little evidence has been found to establish:

- How immediate interaction and engagement with collections is related to cognitive learning and decision-making;
- The therapeutic benefits of interaction and engagement;
- How availability of services impacts on inward investment in a particular area.

The most appropriate methodologies and indicators have yet to be identified, particularly in relation to economic impact.

There is a need for the sector to address issues related to the localisation as well as the compatibility of data related to impact. Existing evaluations are highly localised, and therefore useful at the organisational level, but there is a lack of research into the ways in which locally relevant evidence can be collected and shared to the benefit of the entire sector.

Although Resource has funded research to investigate the current use of quantitative data collections, there needs to be further research to establish how data already collected could or should be used with the findings of this review to demonstrate impact within the sector or in a way that would enable funding bodies to monitor the effectiveness of the sector.

7 Recommendations

Further consultation

- There is evidence that the sector can support learning in young people but that this requires appropriate and informed mediation within the profession, through other professions (e.g. teachers) and parents. Further discussion needs to ensure that all relevant agencies and stakeholders are fully aware of the potential of the sector and that effective partnerships can be established. There is a need for training and understanding for appropriate and informed mediation, through initial training programmes for teachers and social workers, for example.
- There needs to be consultation with professionals, practitioners and researchers to establish the practical ability and capacity of the domains to commit to impact evaluation and how this should mesh with self-evaluation initiatives already in place. Consultation needs to establish whether there will be any additional pressures arising from implementing impact evaluation measures. There will need to be confidence that providing evidence of impact will be beneficial in terms of support for the domains.

Further research

- Resource should encourage impact evaluation not only of specific projects and initiatives but also of core services, as defined by the organisation but in consultation with stakeholders.
- Further research is needed to develop consistency of indicators, data collection, and analysis in order to facilitate comparative research.
- Research into the economic impact of the sector should be treated as a priority. As well as investigating the areas of economic impact already identified, further studies should investigate the sector's contribution towards attracting inward investment, the value of information, and the impact of location of services on the local economy.
- Research into the social, learning and economic impact of the archive domain should be treated as a priority. At this stage the use of case studies would be the most appropriate approach in order to increase understanding of impact.
- Resource should continue to support research into establishing causal relationships between use of the museums, archives and libraries sector and social, learning and economic impact, including the social and therapeutic benefits of leisure activities pursued through the sector.
- Long-term impact has not been established and there are significant challenges in demonstrating causality when investigating longer term impact. Resource, in collaboration with an appropriate Research Council, should seek to establish long-term impact, where the specific influence of the museums, archives and libraries sector is disaggregated from other factors.

- Funds should be made available to allow for further development in the impact evaluation of alternative approaches to core service provision, such as in the use of museum objects for reminiscence therapy.
- Resource to continue to support research investigating the impact of private sector information services or independent museums or organisations.

Techniques and tools

- There needs to be full commitment to a programme of staff development to encourage understanding and adoption of the principles of self-evaluation, the processes involved and the most appropriate approaches, data collection and dissemination techniques. There is a role for the regional agencies in facilitating staff development.
- There is a need for further development of toolkits and guidelines through consultation and research and for these to be widely and readily available to the profession and practitioners. This is a role for Resource in consultation with the profession, practitioners and researchers.
- There is a need to ensure that any large scale user/non user surveys are underpinned in the following ways:
 - There needs to be commitment to funding externally conducted surveys.
 - Discussion between the commissioning body and research agent is needed to ensure the survey design and analyses reflect the research questions of the sector.
 - Consideration needs to be given to the frequency of surveys and whether they should be conducted within the domains or across the sector.
- While project evaluations should not be considered a substitute for the evaluation of core services, where project initiatives require evaluation they can be made more useful if the following are in place:
 - Consultation and guidance needs to ensure that the purpose of such evaluation is clearly indicated, i.e. is it for internal project development, is it to be used to demonstrate impact, is it a quality assurance of value for money?
 - In the light of the above, decisions need to be made as to whether this is best conducted internally or externally.
 - Funding should reflect the need for staff time, training for internal evaluation or funding for external consultants, and time to enable evaluation to be embedded at all stages of the project, including evaluation some months after project completion.

Supporting evidence-based practice

- Resource should continue encouraging professionals to be more aware of, and committed to, evidence-based practice, the value of assessing outcomes and impact as well as outputs, and the value of recognising all stakeholder needs, as begun through the introduction of the Inspiring Learning framework.
- Resource to establish a national forum for discussing best practice in impact evaluation, perhaps in consultation with the Institute of Public Finance. This

forum should involve all three domains, and should cover all aspects of social, learning and economic impact.

- Resource should consider approaches taken by other professions, such as in education and medicine, to set up research centres to review, collate and disseminate research.
- Resource to encourage the sector to disseminate impact evaluation methodologies and results via the professional literature, conferences, seminars, etc. Funding to be provided to enable the sector to access appropriate subscription-based publications and for sector staff to attend dissemination events.
- Resource to host or fund the establishment and ongoing maintenance of a public access portal encompassing, for example: research, toolkits, evaluations, and examples of best practice to inform practice and advice on consultancy. This should build upon current Resource initiatives, such as the evidence pages on the Resource website and the Resource database of learning and access projects.
- A data archive would need to be established to support comparative research.
- There needs to be a means of enabling organisations to pursue local priorities and objectives while contributing to regional and national data collections. There is a role for the regional agencies in collecting and collating local data.

Strategic considerations

- Assessing social, learning and economic impact in the sector is a complex issue to which there is no single approach. A strategic plan is therefore recommended. As a first step, an advisory group should be established to determine Resource's strategy for impact evaluation.

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Appendix A:

Matarasso's 50 social impacts of participation in the arts

From: Matarasso, F. (1997). *Use or ornament? The social impact of participation in the arts*. Comedia: Bournes Green.

The study shows that participation in the arts can:

Personal development

1. Increase people's confidence and sense of self-worth
2. Extend involvement in social activity
3. Give people influence over how they are seen by others
4. Stimulate interest and confidence in the arts
5. Provide a forum to explore personal rights and responsibilities
6. Contribute to the educational development of children
7. Encourage adults to take up education and training opportunities
8. Help build new skills and work experience
9. Contribute to people's employability
10. Help people take up or develop careers in the arts

Social cohesion

11. Reduce isolation by helping people to make friends
12. Develop community networks and sociability
13. Promote tolerance and contribute to conflict resolution
14. Provide a forum for intercultural understanding and friendship
15. Help validate the contribution of a whole community
16. Promote intercultural contact and co-operation
17. Develop contact between the generations
18. Help offenders and victims address issues of crime
19. Provide a route to rehabilitation and integration for offenders

Community empowerment and self-determination

20. Build community organisational capacity
21. Encourage local self-reliance and project management
22. Help people extend control over their lives
23. Be a means of gaining insight into political and social ideas
24. Facilitate effective public consultation and participation
25. Help involve local people in the regeneration process
26. Facilitate the development of partnership
27. Build support for community projects
28. Strengthen community co-operation and networking

Local image and identity

29. Develop pride in local traditions and cultures
30. Help people feel a sense of belonging and involvement
31. Create community traditions in new towns or neighbourhoods
32. Involve residents in environmental improvements
33. Provide reasons for people to develop community activities
34. Improve perceptions of marginalised groups
35. Help transform the image of public bodies
36. Make people feel better about where they live

Imagination and vision

37. Help people develop their creativity
38. Erode the distinction between consumer and creator

39. Allow people to explore their values, meanings and dreams
40. Enrich the practice of professionals in the public and voluntary sectors
41. Transform the responsiveness of public service organisations
42. Encourage people to accept risk positively
43. Help community groups raise their vision beyond the immediate
44. Challenge conventional service delivery
45. Raise expectations about what is possible and desirable

Health and well-being

46. Have a positive impact on how people feel
47. Be an effective means of health education
48. Contribute to a more relaxed atmosphere in health centres
49. Help improve the quality of life of people with poor health
50. Provide a unique and deep source of enjoyment

Appendix B:

Matarasso's developmental role of public libraries

From: Matarasso, F. (1998). *Learning development: an introduction to the social impact of public libraries*. Comedia: Bournes Green.

The research shows that effective library services can:

Personal development

Education and learning

- Be central to developing people's literacy at all ages
- Support education through school libraries and homework clubs
- Provide resources for self-directed education and skill development
- Help develop community-based IT access and training

Employment

- Contribute to people's skills, confidence and employability
- Support job-seekers by offering information and research facilities
- Work with employment services to offer in-depth support
- Provide important, reliable support to small businesses and self-employed people

Families and young people

- Support pre-school literacy and social development
- Be a valuable source of information, contact and support for young families
- Provide constructive out of school activities for young people
- Offer meeting places and informal education sources for teenagers

Poverty

- Be a major source of information about benefits and services
- Remain financially accessible to most people
- Be used heavily by people on low incomes, who often have no alternatives
- Target support and services effectively to meet the needs of poor people

Health

- Provide accessible health information services to patients and relatives
- Support health services in meeting their information responsibilities
- Contribute to people's well-being through leisure opportunities
- Offer valuable informal social support, especially for older people

Community development

Community

- Be important contributors to corporate development strategies
- Nurture a wide and rich range of local partnership networks
- Contribute to successful bids for developmental resources

Social inclusion

- Provide essential services to thousands of isolated people
- Work with ethnic minority communities to meet their needs and interests
- Extend across society, connecting the margins to the centre

Democracy

- Facilitate people's involvement in local consultation
- Help develop and support community organisations
- Develop an empowering role and promote democratic participation

Local culture

- Be diverse and popular sources of cultural and artistic work
- Encourage participation in culture as well as consumption
- Be cornerstones of local identity and promote a sense of belonging
- Stand as visible signs of a vibrant, confident community