Changes through IT in public libraries: advantages of carrying out research via a training course

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1. Introduction

The provision, delivery and impact of information and communication technology (ICT) training for community librarians is a matter of considerable concern at the present time, since an appropriately skilled professional workforce is essential to the success of many government initiatives, including in the UK, [New Library: the People's Network](#). However, this is not simply a training issue but calls for research investigations to develop understanding of the place of

- existing provision of ICT facilities, as a baseline for research
- existing levels of ICT skills among community librarians, again as a baseline
- different approaches to, and content of, training
- the value and success of training which is currently being provided
- the potential role of different providers in meeting ICT training needs.

The findings of such research would have impacts not only on the design of training but at a national level on policy and on understanding of the complex interactions between ICT provision, professional roles and the delivery of appropriate services.

One of the problems for research in this area is that it is often difficult firstly to obtain adequate samples since many professionals are suffering from 'sampling fatigue'; secondly, to ensure that the methodologies used provide representative results (i.e. are not biased by the research exercise itself); and, thirdly to apply research results to the design and delivery of training.

In order to address these problems the authors took the approach of embedding the research within the design and delivery of training in Internet use for community librarians in the North West of England. Instead of designing a pure 'research' or a pure 'training' project, the two were deliberately brought together so that the training events provided the research environment.

This paper sets the research in the context of the changes taking place internationally with the increasing development of ICT applications in the public library sector. It then focuses on the value of the exercise from a research perspective, and provides evaluation of the methodologies used in order to achieve the research outcomes. Briefly, these methodologies were: use of questionnaires before and after the training sessions; focus groups during the day, looking at issues raised by the training, using a format whereby individuals could anonymously raise issues by writing on "post-it notes"; informal observation by a note-taker present during the day. Further details of the course content and how it was received are given in Kendall (1999).

2. Background and context

2.1 Developments world-wide

Public libraries all over the world are currently undergoing huge changes, due largely to the expansion of information and communication technologies (ICTs), a challenge which has been taken up eagerly by the public library community at national and international levels. Public libraries are also being given unprecedented levels of support at governmental level, with many policy initiatives aimed at promoting and supporting innovative electronic services embracing the role the public library has to play in the delivery of such services. An example is Singapore, where \$100 million dollars is being invested in new technologies and library infrastructure by 2003 by the [National Library Board](#).

The direction set by the [UNESCO Public Library Manifesto](#) sums up the shift in the public library arena towards a greater provision more formalised and supported access to ICTs, for a range of activities, but especially what is now commonly termed lifelong learning:

The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups. (UNESCO, 1997)

The Manifesto indicates twelve key missions which should be at the core of public library services, including "*facilitating the development of information and computer literacy skills*". Similar position statements have been issued by many countries around the world, including the Canadian report, [Canadians, Public Libraries and the Information Highway](#),

which reported that survey respondents were most likely to indicate the public library at the top of appropriate locations for public access to the information highway, and to view the provision of such access as an appropriate role for public libraries. The American Library Association's [Office for Information Technology Policy](#) states as its mission:

promoting the development and utilization of electronic access to information as a means to assure the public's right to a free and open information society. The Office's staff works to secure information technology policies favorable to library services and full intellectual participation for all the public. (American Library Association, 2000)

At the European level, the public library networking organisation PubliCA has asserted that public libraries should seek to utilise the benefits of ICTs in order to deliver to citizens services which underpin the following four themes, outlined in the Copenhagen Declaration of 1999: democracy and citizenship; economic and social development; lifelong learning; cultural and linguistic diversity. The Declaration called on national and federal governments to

- Implement a development programme for public libraries that ensures minimum standards of access to every citizen including appropriate information and communication technologies and suitable levels of investment to meet those standards.
- Ensure that public libraries are equipped to provide maximum access to the new information resources for all citizens regardless of financial, physical or educational abilities and that those libraries have adequate resources to sustain the services over time.
- Lobby the European Parliament to place public libraries high on the social agenda now and in the future.

The Declaration also called on public libraries to reassess their role and their provision of services in response to changing social needs, to work co-operatively with others providing access to community education and to effectively market services to the public.

2.2 Developments in UK public libraries

The need for change has been recognised by the UK's Library & Information Commission (LIC), a body set up by the government in 1995 to oversee developments across all library sectors. In 1997 the Commission produced the influential vision statement, [New Library: the People's Network](#). This set out the direction public libraries should take in response to the challenges presented by the impact of rapidly changing new technologies, and emphasised the opportunities in having a highly trained library workforce able to assist the public in accessing electronic services:

A comprehensive training initiative in information and communication technology (ICT) for the public library sector will be seen as an important component of the government's plan to foster a learning society. There will be a considerable impact as a result of reskilling a large group of people who

come into contact with over half the population, including all ages and social classes. By building on the skills and commitment of public library staff, the government has the chance to develop a high-quality training initiative that will enable the public to understand and exploit the potential of ICT in daily life.

The report was favourably received by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Three working parties were established to look at the specific areas of: content creation, infrastructure, and training. The result was [Building the New Library Network](#), which set out a detailed strategy for the roll-out of the People's Network. The strategy is now being implemented by the recently created [People's Network Team](#).

2.3 Lifelong Learning

All these developments have taken place against a backdrop of international and national policies designed to stimulate demand for and deliver lifelong learning for citizens, not least to equip them for the opportunities and challenges presented by ICTs in the coming century. These policy statements range from the more visionary UNESCO report, *The Treasure Within* (Delors et. al., 1996), which stressed the role of education as a "necessary utopia", to the more pragmatic statements issued by the European Community (for example, the European Commission's recently published [eEurope: An Information Society For All](#) statement) and the UK government, which place a greater emphasis on economic competitiveness and re-skilling the workforce. All these high level documents stress the need for citizens to develop ICT skills for their professional and personal lives, and emphasise the risks of exacerbating social exclusion if a so-called "digital divide" is allowed to strengthen.

Within the UK, a number of position statements and policy documents have been issued over the last few years, all of which emphasise:

- the need for lifelong learning to be made more accessible
- the role of ICTs in providing access to lifelong learning opportunities
- the need to create learning networks which can be accessed by people in the most convenient location for them, be it workplace, home, or, as is the case for many, the local library.

The UK government's approach has been to set up a number of initiatives which will stimulate demand for lifelong learning and "make the most of technological change" to deliver learning opportunities (DfEE, 1997, p.6). Such initiatives include the National Grid for Learning, which aims to be a series of interconnecting networks to support learning, located in universities, colleges, schools and libraries. This, and other developments emphasise the role the public library has to play in providing ICT services, particularly for those who do not have home or work access. The availability of funding for public libraries to develop IT services is also at an all-time high, with schemes ranging from the [DCMS/Wolfson Public Libraries Challenge Fund](#), specifically targeted at public libraries, which has provided £3 million each year since 1997, to more general funding schemes such as the Capital Modernisation Fund, established in 1999, with a budget of £470 million for

the development of ICT centres. The government has indicated that the Public Library Network will enable public libraries to *more and more take their place as 'Street Corner Universities'* (DCMS, 1998).

Two of the areas stressed by government as well as the People's Network developments, and specifically outlined in the *Building the New Library* report, are content creation and staff training. The UK's [New Opportunities Fund](#) (NOF), which administers funds raised from the UK lottery, has set aside £50 million for content creation and £20 million for the training of all public library staff to a basic level, in a programme running until 2004.

2.4. The need for training

A skilled library workforce is, then, an essential requirement for the success not only of the People's Network but also of the wider programme to encourage UK citizens to develop and exploit ICT skills. Existing skills and training in this area vary widely between and within library authorities, and some staff have been left behind. The setting aside of money specifically to provide basic ICT training for all staff by NOF has therefore been particularly welcomed. The *Building the New Library* report established a range of skills necessary for staff to:

feel comfortable both when using it themselves and when helping others to make constructive use of it. (LIC, 1998, Part 2)

Two sets of skills were established, basic IT skills which all staff should have, and advanced skills which would allow staff to develop the necessary confidence to take on some of the new roles identified by the report.

For basic skills, the report suggested that

the basic level of competence which should be attained by all public library staff should consist of a foundation in information and communication technology, supplemented by competence in ... four functional areas.

The foundation would be provided by use of the international standard of competence for computer users known in the UK as the [European Computer Driving Licence](#). This was launched in the UK in May 1998 by the British Computer Society. The four additional functional areas would enable library staff to:

- use and exploit the technology to support people's learning
- provide improved access to information
- support reader development
- assist access to remotely delivered public services.

The advanced skills were identified as:

- Net navigator: helping people find their way around the information resources contained on the Internet and on other digital information sources.
- Information technology gatekeeper: concerned with the management and deployment

of information and communication technology in the library and with planning its use to develop the service.

- Information consultant: responsible for advising people on the sources of information that are most appropriate to their needs.
- Information manager: responsible for organising and exploiting the information resources of the library.
- Educator: this role encompasses the training of both staff and users in their use of information and communication technology and the application of that technology to support a wide range of lifelong learning objectives.

As the report indicated, these are new roles, representing *"a significant change of direction for many staff, and there will be a need for advanced training designed both to support these roles and to stimulate a wider process of culture change among library staff"*.

In early 1998, the then British Library Research and Innovation Centre funded an eleven month research project, 'Training the Future', a partnership project between two very different library services in the UK, Birmingham (a metropolitan authority) and Shropshire (a rural authority) and supported by the Centre for Information, Research and Training (CIRT) at the University of Central England in Birmingham. The focus for the project was "the changing role of staff in the networked library environment", and aimed to find "realistic" ways for staff to acquire the necessary level of skill they would require for their future roles (Jones et. al., 1999). The main findings of the project were:

- Management of change: individuals will respond differently to change, but most public library staff will respond positively if managers are open and honest with them.
- An "overwhelming need" amongst all levels of staff to feel confident using ICTs
- The inadequacy of some training currently provided in public libraries
- Providing staff with the necessary tools and support for learning, particularly methods such as open learning, which allow staff to take control of their own training, can be highly effective.

One of the major recommendations from the report of the project was that a cultural shift is necessary in public libraries, in order to develop a true "learning culture" which emphasises active learning under the control of the learner.

3. The Making Connections project

The impact of information technology on libraries has been the subject of several research projects within the the [Department of Information and Communications](#) at Manchester Metropolitan University, including Oulton (1982) and Wood et al (1995). As members of BAILER (the British Association for Information and Library Education and Research) the Department contributed to the collective response to the proposals for the National Grid for Learning and *New Library: the People's Network* (Johnson, 1998). Teaching in the Department pays particular attention to the rapid changes in information technology and to the implications for librarians in all sectors. The Department, which has existed for over 50 years, has long-standing links with public libraries in the region, including the provision of

advice, training and education.

In January 1998, internal funding from the University's Continuing and Vocational Education budget provided the opportunity for the 'Making Connections' project. The aim of the project was twofold: firstly, to provide training in using the Internet for community librarians in the North West; secondly, to use a one day training course as a research tool, with the aim of discovering:

- Existing provision of ICT facilities in public libraries in the area
- Existing levels of ICT skills amongst community librarians in the area
- The value and success of providing training through a combination of seminar and online learning materials.

When the project began, the vision statement of *New Library: the People's Network* (Library and Information Commission, 1997) had been published three months earlier, but government approval was yet to come. The recommendations of *New Library: the People's Network* informed the design of the training. Fundamental to those recommendations is the concept of the local community library as a place which people of all ages will be able to visit to develop skills and to access information and resources through new technology. Unlike staff in the larger subject departments of central libraries in the UK, staff with responsibility for community or branch libraries perform very different roles. At the time the project was carried out, it was anticipated that many would have had little previous opportunity to use electronic information resources whether online or on CD-ROM. Expecting people to identify their own training needs when unaware of the range of electronic information services available was thought likely to be of limited value, so a one-day course demonstrating the potential of future networked public library services was chosen as a means of gathering responses from participants.

3.1. The one-day course

From March to November 1998, 6 repeat sessions of a one-day course for staff with responsibility for community or branch libraries were used as a means of collecting data through a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods (see Appendix One, Course outline). This approach enabled a deeper insight to be gained of the levels of support and training needed, and the appropriateness of the delivery methods, than might have been possible otherwise. Each training course was held in the Department of Information and Communications at Manchester Metropolitan University, for a maximum of twenty participants. Two members of staff were involved; the researcher/trainer (Margaret Kendall) who designed the course and was responsible for the overall facilitation of the day, and a research assistant who acted as note-taker during the focus groups and as a general observer throughout the day.

The overall aim of the course was to provide focused training relevant to the participants' responsibilities. The objectives were:

1. To raise participants' awareness and understanding of the future role of public libraries in increasing public use of information and communication technologies

2. To demystify the technology and help participants to develop confidence, enthusiasm and practical skills in using World Wide Web resources and tools.
3. To raise the awareness of participants of existing examples of co-operation between librarians and resources created by or for librarians.

The first session of the day was a short presentation to set the course into context. This used quotations from reports from 1997 onwards (Department of National Heritage, 1997) identifying the public library as a key location for public access to electronic information resources. This provided the opportunity to investigate levels of awareness of the reasons for the changes taking place. A handout with quotations was included in the course pack and participants were asked to refer to this as a reminder when completing the end of course questionnaire.

This was followed by a practical session introducing participants to the World Wide Web using resources likely to be interesting and relevant to their work. The first focus group was held immediately after this session. The afternoon sessions consisted of a presentation looking at existing examples of co-operation between libraries in the usage of electronic services, for example, services provided by the UK's [Electronic Access to Resources in Libraries](#) Consortium (EARL). The presentation was followed by another practical World Wide Web session using examples of queries from public library users, and finally, a plenary discussion session to examine future possibilities.

Evaluation of the benefits of the training methods used was shared with the 'Training the Future' project (Jones et al, 1999), which began around the same time, and the training task group which went on to produce the recommendations in [Building the New Library Network](#). The results were also disseminated in the UK in the professional press, Kendall (1998b, 1999).

4. Research Methods

4.1 Questionnaires

Invitations to send one participant to the pilot course in March 1998 were posted to each of the 10 Greater Manchester public library authorities (Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan) and the neighbouring authorities of Cheshire, Lancashire and Kirklees. Charging a nominal fee for the pilot course with an explanation that it formed part of a research project produces a positive response and ensured that each library authority was represented. Questionnaires are a traditional method of training needs analysis (Williamson, 1993) and can give useful indications of existing skills. A pre-attendance questionnaire was distributed in advance to delegates on the pilot course, with the dual aims of identifying existing skills and gaining a "snapshot" picture of provision of access to the Internet for the general public in the Greater Manchester area. The questionnaire was designed for ease of completion, using tick boxes and closed questions, with some opportunities for comments. This pre-attendance questionnaire was modified slightly for the subsequent courses to gather more information about individual access to the Internet, including whether or not participants had access

from home.

An anonymous questionnaire at the end of the course [See Appendix 2] was used to gather more detailed responses to the different elements of the course than would normally be expected on a one-day course, with the aim of being more than a "*happiness sheet*" (Whetherley, 1994, p.25). In addition to asking for evaluation of the usefulness and appropriateness of the training methods according to a five-point scale, participants were encouraged to make comments after each question. The questionnaire had a dual purpose:

- to allow participants the opportunity to evaluate the training methods used during the course
- to enable the researcher to assess current levels of awareness of key developments in the sector over the previous year or so.

Participants were asked to indicate which from a list of seven key documents they had either heard about or had had an opportunity to read. Time was allowed for completion of the questionnaire during the refreshment break before the final discussion session, in order to encourage a full response rate.

A further questionnaire was sent to participants from the first four courses to gather their views as to the usefulness of the course since attendance and to identify additional training needs. This questionnaire also asked for details of any changes in the provision of access to the Internet in the library at which the participant was based.

4.2 Individual responses and focus groups

The courses provided a unique opportunity to collect the views and responses of participants to World Wide Web resources, their potential uses in public library services and the changes likely to be required in the workplace.

In order to capture individual responses anonymously, participants were given a pad of adhesive "post-it notes" at the beginning of the day, with an invitation to record their "*thoughts and ideas*" (for example, for introducing the World Wide Web to users) as they happened. It was also thought important to allow participants to record negative responses, called "*issues and fears*" (for example, changes in the workplace, training needs, theft) throughout the day. Towards the end of the morning and afternoon sessions, people were invited to come up individually to stick their post-it notes on appropriately headed flipcharts, and were given a short amount of time to read each other's responses, prior to discussion sessions. One aim of this as a method of data collection was to complement the end of course questionnaire in evaluating the online tutorial as a means of raising enthusiasm and interest. Also, as the courses were designed for participants with little or no experience in using the World Wide Web, it was felt that some participants might be reluctant to participate in discussions, for fear of revealing their lack of knowledge. Additionally, however carefully facilitated, some more vocal participants might deter contributions from the more reticent.

Goulding (1997) maintains that one of the major benefits of focus groups "*is that*

participants engage with one another and, thus, articulate the issues and themes of most interest and importance to them within the subject of discussion" (p.334-335). Whilst there was limited time available for focus groups, two half-hour discussion sessions were scheduled for the end of the morning and afternoons sessions of the *Making Connections* courses. A Research Assistant made notes on the discussion, and also noted relevant comments and conversations throughout the day.

The first focus group was loosely structured, with the researcher asking someone to start off with a response to the question "*Which of the web sites in the tutorial would you most want to show to a user in your library and why?*", moving onto someone else and another web site after discussion.

There were lively second focus group discussions at the end of each course. On the pilot course, a series of questions were asked about the options for further training provision from the Department of Information and Communications. On the subsequent courses, participants were asked to discuss ways in which public libraries could interest their users in the World Wide Web, and the changes which would need to take place in order for this to happen. As time was limited, the use of overhead transparencies to pose the two questions was found to be effective in signalling time to move on. Other than that, care was taken by the researcher not to influence the discussion.

5. Results

In total, 99 participants attended six one-day courses, the first of which was a pilot course, and one was a customised version for staff from an individual authority. Decisions about who should attend were left to each authority. Approximately 76% of participants were from branch or community libraries, the remainder being based in large town or central libraries. 63 were professional staff at varying levels of seniority, 36 were paraprofessionals: 25 (69%) senior library assistants, 11 (31%) library assistants.

5.1 Internet Access in the region

The pre-course questionnaire revealed that, at the time of the pilot course, 8 (62%) of the 13 library authorities provided access to the Internet for the general public, with some services having been established very recently. However, in some cases, access for the public was limited to only one library per authority, and only two authorities had more than 5 libraries connected. This reflected the national situation at the time, although there have been rapid developments since, as shown on the [People's Network](#) site. Batt (1998) found that 77% of UK library authorities had Internet access at the time of his survey, but only 215 of 4095 service points (5%) provided public access. The follow-up questionnaires sent out after the courses revealed that by July two further authorities had introduced public access, bringing the total to 11 (85%).

From the pre-attendance questionnaire used on 5 of the 6 courses, it was found that 32 (45%) of the participants had had some prior training in using the web. A checklist of their awareness of search tools revealed that even those with the most experience were unaware

of some resources which could be helpful in responding to users' enquiries.

5.2 Levels of awareness

A key factor in the success of the future networked public library will be a shared understanding of the need for change. The results of the question about course participants' awareness of recent reports showed that no assumptions can be made about staff knowledge of current developments, both in their own and related fields (see Appendix 2, question 2). For example, a third of participants had not heard of the most recent report (a copy of which was sent to all UK public library authorities), the LIC's *New Library: the People's Network*, and a further 35% had heard of, but not read it. *Connecting the Learning Society*, a 1997 government report setting out plans for the development of the National Grid for Learning, had been read by a mere 10% of participants, and over half (52%) had not even heard of it. This is significant because libraries are expected to play an important part in the developments. The results indicate that, in addition to ICT skills-based training, there is a need for staff to be given explanations of the reasons why these skills are becoming essential if the public library service is to continue to fulfil its complementary role to formal education. There is also a necessity for library managers to ensure that their staff are given opportunities and assistance with keeping up with new developments.

6. Evaluation of the research methods

6.1 Pre-attendance questionnaires

For the pilot course, sending the pre-attendance questionnaire with the invitation to attend the course resulted in a 100% response. Return in advance of attendance was perhaps influenced by the nominal cost of the training course and the explanation that it formed part of an on-going research project. The distribution of one postal questionnaire to each authority asking about Internet access might have achieved a similarly full response, but sending further postal questionnaires regularly over the following months would have been likely to have had reduced success and risked irritating busy practitioners.

By using the subsequent training courses as a means of further data collection (both through the pre-course questionnaires and the focus group discussions), it was possible to gain an awareness of changes as they happened as well as their impact on the library authorities concerned.

6.2 Post-attendance questionnaires

In the case of the questionnaires sent out after the first four courses, 36 out of a possible 63 responses were received, a 57% response rate which compares favourably with many postal questionnaires. This may have resulted from the positive experience reported by participants, and from the fact that they had met the trainer/researcher. The results gave information about recent developments, for example the introduction of coin-operated Internet access points in one authority. They also showed that individual ownership of personal computers with Internet access was as prevalent amongst staff at non-professional

as well as professional levels.

6.3 End of course evaluation questionnaires

Time for completing these questionnaires was built in to the training day, during the refreshment break before the final discussion session. This proved to be a successful strategy, since only one respondent (who went outside the building to smoke!) did not comply. However, not everyone answered all the questions, and some questions were added after the pilot course. As described in 5.2, responses to the question about current awareness indicate very poor levels of awareness amongst the librarians attending the course (see Appendix 2). The responses to this question may have benefited from the participants' positive feelings at the end of a training course, resulting in a fuller, more honest response than might have been the case had the question been posed in a separate survey, e.g. a postal questionnaire. An atmosphere of trust had been created, which made assurances of individual anonymity more credible.

6.4 Individual responses and focus group discussion

The extent to which the post-it notes were used varied with individuals: it seemed to appeal to some more than others. The number of responses generated however indicate that it was a useful way of collecting additional data. It worked successfully as a means of capturing initial reactions to web sites relevant to the workplace, with many very positive comments given in greater detail than discussion time would have allowed. For example, one participant would have been able to answer a query about regulations for employment in another European country the previous day, had she known about the Citizen's Europe site. For some participants, the anonymity seemed to enable fears to be raised more easily and some issues raised were not subsequently discussed in the focus groups. For example, one woman expressed concerns that a male colleague was a "netaholic", which meant that managers tended to give him responsibility for Internet services, leaving her with less recognition for an increased workload of traditional duties.

The ensuing focus group sessions were very lively, perhaps helped by the fact that some thought had been given to the issues individually in advance.

Completion of the end of course evaluation questionnaire prior to the second discussion session may also have helped individuals to prepare their contributions. The plenary discussion on the pilot course centred on the options for further training. The group showed a strong preference for attendance on courses away from the workplace. Given the low levels of Internet access in some parts of the region, with limited opportunities for staff to use the facilities, attendance on courses provided at a central location is likely to continue to be appropriate. Apart from any other considerations, the opportunity for up to 40 people to have individual hands-on access at the same time to the University's high speed network connection, is unlikely to be matched by training resources available in each local authority for some time to come.

A proposal for a more advanced course, with attendance over a number of weeks, was enthusiastically received. The need to develop searching skills was highlighted as being the

greatest priority. The option of providing this course via open or distance learning was thought more appropriate than a course for beginners, with the suggestion being made that it be preceded by attendance on an introductory course. Interestingly, the national BECTa survey carried out several months later (LIC, 1998) found that a short course with continuing online support in the workplace was one of two most popular methods of training, the other being in-house training.

When the course was planned, the end-of-the-day discussion session was thought to be more for the benefit of the researcher than the participants. However, it became evident that it was a valuable part of the course in its own right. Some participants swapped contact addresses and agreed to keep in touch about developments in their authorities. Informal collaboration could lead to the co-operation which networking between public libraries will require.

7. Conclusions

The idea of using a training course as a means of carrying out research was effective in enabling both quantitative and qualitative data collection. The advantages of collecting data in this way were that :

- it enabled a snapshot of Internet access in the region to be gained
- high numbers of responses to questionnaires were obtained
- detailed answers to questions about awareness of recent reports were given
- individual responses to web resources and to the changes taking place were collected
- ideas for future action and issues of concern to library staff were collected
- feedback was obtained from participants on possible future courses.

As the training plans funded by NOF are put into effect during the next few years, both internal and external research will be essential to monitor progress and the effectiveness of investment. However, there are limits to the extent to which staff undergoing unprecedented change will have the time or willingness to respond to numerous surveys by external researchers. The use of data collected as part of the process of providing training could be a way of assessing its value and impact on those being trained. Although the 'Making Connections' project was small in scale, the idea of combining training with research has wider relevance, given that similar developments are taking place in other countries throughout the world.

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APPENDIX 1: Course programme

Making Connections for Connections

9.30 Introduction: What will be the role of public libraries in the information society? What is the World Wide Web?

10.30 Practical session 1: World Wide Web resources for fiction, community information and for children

11.30 Discussion: thoughts and ideas, issues and fears

12 Lunch

1pm Presentation: Searching for Answers

2pm Practical session 2: Introduction to searching using examples of queries from public library users

3.15 Tea / coffee

30. Discussion and plenary: Where do we go from here?

Appendix 2: Quantitative results from the end of course questionnaire

In total, 99 participants attended the 5 *Making Connections* courses. 98 completed the end of course questionnaire, but not everyone answered all questions. Some questions were added after the pilot course. The numbers of respondents to each question are shown below.

Q1 How useful was it to be given an overview of recent reports about the role of the public library in providing access to the Internet?

Very useful	Useful	Neither useful nor not useful	Not very useful	Not useful	Total no of responses
29 (30.5%)	58(61%)	6 (6.3%)	2 (2.1%)		95

Q2 Before today, which of the following reports had you

	Heard of but not read?	Read?	Not heard of?	<i>Total no of responses</i>
Department of National Heritage (1997): Reading the future	35(35.7%)	29 (29.6%)	34 (34.7%)	98
Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) (1997): The People's Lottery	55 (56%)	10 (10.2%)	33 (33.7%)	98
Audit Commission (1997): Due for Renewal	43 (43.8%)	31 (31.6%)	24 (24.5%)	98
Library and Information Commission (LIC): New Library: the People's Network	34 (34.7%)	32 (32.6%)	32 (32.6%)	98
Department for Education and Employment (DfEE): Connecting the Learning Society	37 (37.7%)	10 (10.2%)	51 (52%)	98
DfEE: The Learning Age: a renaissance for new Britain	24 (29.6%)	4 (4.9%)	53 (65.4%)	81
DCMS: New Library: the People's Network: the Government's response	32 (39.5%)	25(30.8%)	24 (29.6%)	81

Q.3. Which of the following statements describes your reactions to the animation introducing the Internet and the World Wide Web? (*Please tick the response you feel is most appropriate*)

It was too basic for me	15 (15.3%)
It was at the right level for me	82 (83.6%)
It was too complex for me	1 (1.0%)

Q4 How useful did you find the Netscape Navigator Screen guide?

Very useful	Useful	Neither useful nor not useful	Not very useful	Not useful	<i>Total no of responses</i>
42 (45.6%)	47 (51.1%)	3 (3.3%)			92

Q5 How easy did you find it to use the online tutorial introducing you to World Wide Web resources for fiction, community information and for children?

Very easy ¹	Easy	Neither easy nor difficult	Difficult	Very difficult	<i>Total no of responses</i>
34 (43.6%)	30(38.5%)	14 (17.9%)			78

Q6. How appropriate do you think an online tutorial is for learning about World Wide Web resources?

Very appropriate	Appropriate	Neither appropriate nor inappropriate	Inappropriate	Very inappropriate	<i>Total no of responses</i>
58 (74.4%)	20 (25.6%)				78

Q7 How useful did you find the video *Your library: your future* ?

Very useful	Useful	Neither useful nor not useful	Not very useful	Not useful	<i>Total no of responses</i>
11 (14.6%)	42 (57.3%)	21 (28%)			75

Q8 Before today, which of the following had you

	Heard of?	Seen?	Not heard of?	<i>Total no. of responses¹</i>
Ask a Librarian	18 (23.1%)	8 (10.2%)	52 (66.6%)	78

The Virtual Reference Desk	8 (10.4%)	2 (2.6%)	67 (87%)	77
Stumpers-L	10 (13.2%)		66 (86.8%)	76

Q9 Did you use the worksheet *Questions seeking Answers* to explore EARLWeb?

Yes: 71 (91.1%) No 7 (8.9%)

If yes, which of the following statements describes your feelings?

It was too basic for me	1 (1.4%)
It was at the right level for me	72 (97.3%)
It was too complex for me	1 (1.4%)

Q10 Did you use the worksheet *Introduction to searching*?

Yes 45 (97.8%) No 1 (2.2%) If yes, which of the following statements describes your feelings?

It was too basic for me	2 (4.4%)
It was at the right level for me	42 (93.3%)
It was too complex for me	1 (2.2%)

Q11 Did you use the Department's *Search Tools* page?

Yes 30 (65.2%) No 16 (34.8%) If yes, how useful did you find it?

Very useful	Useful	Neither useful nor not useful	Not very useful	Not useful	Total no of responses
15 (46.8%)	15 (46.8%)	1 (3.1%)	1 (3.1%)		

Q12 What is your overall assessment of today's course?

Very useful	Useful	Neither useful nor not useful	Not very useful	Not useful	<i>Total no of responses</i>
79 (82.3%)	17 (17.7%)				96

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