An analysis of enquiries asked at selected public and special libraries in the UK

This item was submitted to Loughborough University's Institutional Repository by the/an author.

Additional Information:

- A Master’s Dissertation, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Arts degree of Loughborough University.

Metadata Record: [https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/2134/10332](https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/2134/10332)

Publisher: © N.J. Blake

Please cite the published version.
This item was submitted to Loughborough University as a Masters thesis by the author and is made available in the Institutional Repository (https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/) under the following Creative Commons Licence conditions.

For the full text of this licence, please go to:
http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VOL. NO.</th>
<th>CLASS MARK</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 JUN 1995</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>06 MAY 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 JUN 1995</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>06 MAY 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 6 OCT 1995</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>20 MAR 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08 FEB 1996</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>27 JUL 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22/3/96</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 DEC 1993</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An analysis of enquiries asked at selected public and special libraries in the UK

by

Naomi Blake, BSc (Hons)

A Master's Dissertation, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the award of the Master of Science degree of the Loughborough University of Technology

September 1994

Supervisors: J.W. Sumsion, OBE, MA, HonFLA
G. Matthews, BA, Dip Lib CNAA, ALA

© N.J. Blake, 1994
ABSTRACT

This research set out to monitor the information activities of selected public and special libraries in the UK. An independent researcher collected enquiry data at seven different information services (two public reference libraries, two public lending libraries, a tourist information centre and two special libraries). This data was then categorised according to length of answer, mode of enquiring, type of enquiry and subject of enquiry. The sources used in answering and their formats were also examined. Results for each case study were considered separately. Across library comparisons could be made too, as the data was collected in a consistent manner. This is unlike the statistics kept by individual libraries. Findings were that the special libraries had longer enquiries and received more by telephone, fax and letter than the public libraries. Furthermore, they made the most use of computerised sources. Business and commerce enquiries were most frequently asked at the public reference libraries. Answering community information and children's enquiries were common tasks at the public lending libraries. Minimal overlap occurred in the provision of tourist information. Finally, it was observed that many directional and administrative enquiries were asked at the various cases studied.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank:

John Sumsion and Graham Matthews for all their help in supervising this research.

The staff at the libraries and information units that I visited. All were very helpful and made time to answer my many questions!

Mum and Dad for all of their support and encouragement throughout the year.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 1: Introduction and Background</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Background and Literature Review</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1 Performance indicators</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.2 Collection of enquiry data</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.3 Information that can be obtained from research</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.4 Data analysis</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.5 The problems of definition</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 2: Aims and Methodology</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Aims</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Selection of case study locations</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Methodology</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 3: Public Reference Libraries</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Yeovil Reference Library</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1 Enquiries</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.2 Sources</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Westminster Reference Library</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1 Ground Floor - Business Library</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2 First Floor - General Reference and Performing Arts</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.3 Second Floor - Art and Design Library</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 4: PUBLIC LENDING LIBRARIES
4.1 WINCANTON LIBRARY
4.1.1 Enquiries
4.1.2 Sources
4.2 QUEEN'S PARK LIBRARY
4.2.1 Enquiries
4.2.2 Sources
REFERENCES

CHAPTER 5: TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRES
5.1 YEOVIL TIC
5.1.1 Enquiries
5.1.2 Sources
REFERENCES

CHAPTER 6: SPECIAL LIBRARIES
6.1 INSTITUTION OF ELECTRICAL ENGINEERS (IEE)
6.1.1 THE IEE LIBRARY
6.1.1.1 Enquiries
6.1.1.2 Sources
6.1.2 THE IEE TECHNICAL INFORMATION UNIT (TIU)
6.1.2.1 Enquiries
6.1.2.2 Sources
6.2 ROYAL PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN (RPSGB)
6.2.1 THE RPSGB LIBRARY
6.2.1.1 Enquiries
6.2.1.2 Sources
6.2.2 THE RPSGB TECHNICAL INFORMATION SERVICE
6.2.2.1 Enquiries
6.2.2.2 Sources
REFERENCES
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
7.1 CONCLUSIONS
7.1.1 RECORDS OF THE ENQUIRIES KEPT BY THE INFORMATION CENTRES
7.1.2 ACROSS LIBRARY COMPARISONS OF ENQUIRIES
7.1.2.1 Length of enquiry
7.1.2.2 Mode of enquiry
7.1.2.3 Type of enquiry
7.1.2.4 Subject of enquiry
7.1.3 ACROSS LIBRARY COMPARISONS OF SOURCES USED
7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS
7.2.1 SIGNPOSTING AND LIBRARY TOURS
7.2.2 EXPERT SYSTEMS
7.2.3 SELF SERVICE
7.2.4 PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE OF STAFF
REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDICES
LIST OF FIGURES

(Figures are included at the end of each chapter)

CHAPTER 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Length of enquiry - Yeovil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Mode of enquiry - Yeovil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Type of enquiry - Yeovil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Length of enquiry according to type - Yeovil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Subject of enquiry - Yeovil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Format of sources - Yeovil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Length of enquiry - Ground floor, Westminster Reference Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Type of enquiry - Ground floor, Westminster Reference Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Subject of enquiry - Ground floor, Westminster Reference Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Format of sources - Ground floor, Westminster Reference Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Subject of enquiry - 1st floor, Westminster Reference Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Format of sources - 1st floor, Westminster Reference Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Type of enquiry - 2nd floor, Westminster Reference Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Format of sources - 2nd floor, Westminster Reference Library</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>Length of enquiry - Wincanton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>Mode of enquiry - Wincanton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Type of enquiry - Wincanton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>Subject of enquiry - Wincanton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>Format of sources - Wincanton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>Length of enquiry - Queen's Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>Mode of enquiry - Queen's Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>Type of enquiry - Queen's Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>Subject of enquiry - Queen's Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>Format of sources - Queen's Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 3</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Length of time taken to answer different subjects at Yeovil Reference Library</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Sources used at Yeovil Reference Library</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Number of sources used per enquiry at Yeovil Reference Library</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Sources used at Westminster Reference Library (Ground Floor)</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Number of sources used per enquiry at Westminster Reference Library (Ground Floor)</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Sources used at Westminster Reference Library (First Floor)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Sources used at Westminster Reference Library (Second Floor)</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 4</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 Sources used at Wincanton Library</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Sources used at Queen's Park Library</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 5</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 Sources used at Yeovil TIC</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 6</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 Sources used at IEE Library</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Sources used at the IEE TIU</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Sources used at the RPSGB Library</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Sources used at the RPSGB Technical Information Service</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF MAPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yeovil (used with permission)</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Wincanton (used with permission)</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The demand for information appears to be increasing in today's society. Large numbers of enquiries are asked at all types of information services. Indeed, Grogan reports (using estimates from the University of Loughborough Library and Information Statistics Unit - LISU) that: "Every year in England and Wales some 40 million reference enquiries are made in public libraries alone" (1). In 1992, Stoakley stated that during "the past four years enquiries for information in Somerset rose by some 60 per cent and show no sign of dropping off" (2). He felt that this pattern was common to many library authorities and in 1993 suggested that such an increase:

...stems from the growing complexity of the society in which we live, a greater awareness by the public of their rights, a heightened awareness of local and national issues, increases in legislation affecting the individual, changes in the educational system (especially the National Curriculum), unemployment and related factors, and in a growing determination on the part of the community to make the best of opportunities in the fields of education and artistic endeavour and purposive leisure activities (3).

Information resources are also multiplying. Estimations suggest that the quantity of information published doubles every 15 to 17 years (4). Fleming reports a great expansion in all sources. For instance, the British national bibliography added 27,513 titles in 1986, whilst in the same year 59,944 titles were added to Whitaker's British books in print online file. By 1990, these figures were 61,053 and 91,241 respectively (5).

New and more advanced sources in a wide variety of formats (many electronic) are aiding library services to become
more effective in their information provision. Hence the public's expectations are raised and further enquiries are asked. Technological advances have in many ways broadened the range of information requests. Now as well as straightforward directional and ready reference enquiries, an increased number of complex questions are raised which may require searches of online databases.

This growth in enquiries reinforces the need to conduct research into enquiry work. The reference desk is a "front of house" operation which can "heavily influence the user's attitude to the entire service" (6). Thus it must be ensured that the resources are planned and allocated effectively. A certain library may receive most enquiries on one particular subject which could influence the allocation of funds to sources and staff. Staff training and development will also be affected. The issues of networking and referral could be raised too, as certain queries may be better dealt with elsewhere and there could be arguments to form centres of excellence.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

1.2.1 Performance indicators

The Keys to Success report, 1991 sets out performance indicators for public libraries (7). It reports that performance assessment will "help you plan, communicate, sort out problems before they arise, make decisions, monitor progress and justify resource allocation" (8). A section on reference and information services is included. This sets out service input cost, service output and service effectiveness measures, followed by operational performance effectiveness, cost-effectiveness and impact indicators (9). Hence many indicators are specified but not much detail is given on how these can be put into practice.
Van House et al provide more detailed information on output measures for reference services in public libraries (10). Here two measures are suggested - the reference transactions per capita and the reference completion rate. Detailed information is given on how to collect, analyse and use the data for each measure. It is suggested that reference staff tally questions (according to stated definitions) during a sample period. Similar output measures have been set out for academic libraries by Van House, Weil and McClure (11).

1.2.2 Collection of enquiry data

Collection of enquiry data can be carried out by a variety of methods. Kennington and Edmonds set out to monitor the use of public business libraries (12). Here datasheets recording business enquiries were filled out by library staff and followed up by a telephone survey. Problems arose because the datasheets were incomplete and staff were reluctant to ask the enquirers certain questions.

Questionnaires have also been used to collect data on enquiries. Most recently, Fuegi reports on the questionnaire that the Chartered Institute of the Public and Financial Accountants (CIPFA) Public Library Statistics Working Party has been considering (13). This would be given to library users in the hope that it might provide a measure of library quality supported by the profession and perhaps later by the Audit Commission. The questionnaire includes a question which begins: "If you came to the library today to find something out, did you find what you wanted?" and then goes on to ask whether staff were consulted (14).
1.2.3 Information that can be obtained from research

Of course, the way in which the data is collected effects the results and conclusions that can be drawn from research. There is a wealth of varied information to be obtained on enquiries from surveys that are implemented differently. For example Childers, Lopata and Stafford found a high positive correlation between 'difficult' reference questions and the time spent in answering them (15).

Work has also been done on staffing levels. Perhaps most notably this has been done by LAMSAC, the Local Authorities Management and Computer Committee for the Department of Education and Science (16). It provides a formula for the number of full-time staff required to run reference and information services. This is based on the overall average time of enquiries being 6.79 minutes (17)(although it is recognised that this is variable according to subject), a 50/50 ratio of enquiries to other support duties, and an average ability of each staff member to handle 3,000 enquiries a year (18). In addition, Marsterson reports on a survey of enquiries at Newcastle upon Tyne Polytechnic Library designed to show whether enough and appropriate staff are available (19). Here, "comparison with the potential user population suggest that inquiry services are stretched as far as possible" (20).

Appropriateness of staff is important - not only in how they interact with the public but in how they answer enquiries. Several studies have been done to test the accuracy of information services. These have commonly used the technique of 'unobtrusive testing'. Unobtrusive testing analyses answers given to preset questions. Staff are not aware that they are being tested when they are dealing with the enquiry. Although some may raise ethical questions, quite telling results can emerge. Weech and
Goldhor found that library staff tend to answer a greater proportion of reference questions completely and correctly when they are aware of being evaluated than when they are unaware of the evaluation process (21).

Burton provides a summary of unobtrusive tests which show that reference services in academic and public libraries supply correct answers to enquiries only 55% of the time (22). Lea and Jackson similarly report poor performances and feel that "users approach libraries with very low expectations" which may "encourage complacency on the part of the providers" (23). Head and Marcella have conducted similar research in Scottish public libraries and again believe that "the overriding impression is one of great disappointment at the level of service" (24).

1.2.4 Data analysis

Such research can thus highlight situations that need to be improved. However, data must be analysed once found, which can be quite a task if done 'in-house' by library staff. Indeed Mann has said "data collection requires data analysis and this takes time which simply may not be available if a library authority is hard pressed for staff" (25). White has detailed methods by which directional and reference transactions can be analysed and suggests the applications of computer programs to facilitate (26). Then the combination of variables, such as the nature of enquiries and the sources used, can be assisted.

1.2.5 The problems of definition

Once the data is analysed, care must be taken in comparing data across libraries. Inconsistency is mainly due to problems of definition. Indeed, Van House et al have said that "the potential confusion over what to count makes cross-library comparisons less reliable than a within
library comparison over time (where it is more likely that the staff are all counting the same kinds of questions in the same way)" (27).

There appears to be no universal definition of a reference enquiry and of thus what should and should not be counted. Indeed, the International Standardization Organisation (ISO) seems to give no definition at all. Other bodies each have their own definition. For example, LAMSAC defines an enquiry as:

A request for assistance that requires the active involvement of staff in the identification of the problem; the search for the specific piece of information from published or unpublished biographical sources of any kind; and the transmission of the search from staff to enquirer by any convenient means (28).

The Standing Conference of National and University Libraries (SCONUL), although similar, has its own definition:

...any request for information made in person, in writing or by telephone by any library user, which requires the use of library materials or the judgement of library staff (29).

The American Library Association defines a reference 'transaction' (rather than an enquiry) as:

an information contact which involves the knowledge, use, recommendations, interpretation, or instruction in the use of one or more information sources by a member of the library staff (30).

Finally CIPFA defines an enquiry as:

Any question, however received (e.g. in person, by letter, by phone) leading to the active involvement of staff in identifying and answering problems posed by library users (31).

CIPFA also lists what should be included and excluded in the count, in the hope that their published statistics can be as consistent as possible (see Appendix 1). Then, comparisons on enquiries could be made nationally. However, a survey conducted by Billingham Walker on behalf
of the Information Services Group of the Library Association found the possibility that, "over a quarter of the published CIPFA enquiry figures are invented, either by libraries or by their authority's library management" (32).

Sumption too states that "the count for CIPFA clearly has major problems of consistency in application" (33). A LISU survey amongst different libraries sought to analyse the treatment of enquiries collected for the CIPFA count. The findings indicated that the methods for counting and defining enquiries vary. When sample questions were given to library authorities to see what should be included, it was found that there was agreement on some questions but substantial differences over many borderline cases (34).

It may be that there simply is not time for library staff to record each enquiry accurately so they can be tempted to estimate figures later. Van House et al agree that, "It is difficult to count questions when the library is at its busiest" (35). Perhaps more accuracy can be achieved by surveys such as that conducted by Mann at the Leicester Information Centre. Here a non-involved researcher monitored enquiries for a two week period (36). This method of data collection has obvious advantages and has formed the basis for the conduct of research for this project.
REFERENCES


7 Office of Arts and Libraries, ref. 3.


14 Ibid., p. 50.


17 Ibid., p. 204.

18 Ibid., p. 215.


20 Ibid., p. 128.


22 Burton, ref. 6, 201.


27 Van House, ref. 10, p. 67.

28 Department of Education and Science, ref. 16, p. 208.


30 Van House, ref. 10, p. 65.


35 Van House, ref. 10, p. 67.

36 Mann, ref. 25, p. 20.
CHAPTER 2 : AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 AIMS

This project, was designed firstly to explore further the perceived problems in the CIPFA and other enquiry counts. It was felt that if an independent researcher collected enquiry data at several different information services, the problems would be better understood. Comparisons could be made as the researcher would be gathering the same data in the same way at each place. Obviously time was limited, so the data collected only provides a brief picture of the position during the summer of 1994.

Secondly, it was hoped that information could be found on the subject and type of enquiries made at different places. This would cover several features. Length of enquiries would be monitored, so that it could be seen whether certain subjects and types of enquiry took longer to answer than others. A further aim was to discover the way in which the majority of enquiries are received at different places (for example, in person, by telephone, by letter or by fax). If in person, it was decided to see whether enquirers just asked one question to staff or whether they continuously asked for more assistance during their visit. Finally sources (as well as their formats) and places of referral were looked at to see whether any within-library or comparative trends emerged.

2.2 SELECTION OF CASE STUDY LOCATIONS

A wide variety of case study locations was chosen. Information enquiries could therefore be examined for comparisons between different types of library. The research was carried out at two contrasting geographical areas - Somerset and London. This allowed for urban and rural information provision to be considered.
Two public reference libraries were selected - Yeovil and Westminster, alongside two small public lending libraries - Wincanton (Somerset) and Queen's Park (London). It was anticipated that the results would show variation in the type, subject and length of enquiries asked as well as in the sources used to answer them. For example it is stated in Information Matters that "business information does not loom large in the 'average' branch library, being confined mainly to the major reference libraries where sufficient resources are available to tackle the task adequately" (1). It was hoped that results from the project might verify such trends.

It was also hoped to find out whether a vast difference exists between the amount of enquiries received in public lending libraries compared to public reference libraries. Thus it could be seen "the extent to which information provision is a central part of the work of public lending libraries and is not confined to reference libraries" (2).

Yeovil Tourist Information Centre (TIC) and Wincanton Tourist Information Point (TIP) (located in Wincanton library) were also surveyed. Here, although it was interesting to see the differences in sources used and so on, the main aim was to see how much overlap TICs and libraries have in their information provision. That is, whether there are questions asked at TICs that would be better dealt with at the public library and vice versa.

Finally, two special libraries in London were looked at - the Institution of Electrical Engineers (IEE) and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (RPSGB). Here, quite different results were expected, compared to public libraries. For example, it was anticipated that a greater number of queries would be received by telephone, letter or fax rather than in person; the enquiries would take longer.
to answer and finally more computerised sources would be used in answering.

2.3 METHODOLOGY

Ideally a fairly long period of time should be spent logging enquiries at each place. This should be done at different times of the year, as seasonal factors can have an effect. However, due to constraints in time, between two to five days in May 1994 were spent logging enquiries at each location. This meant that a sample of 1805 enquiries was collected altogether.

The data were taken down on a datasheet (datasheet 1) as seen in Appendix 2, where sample questions have been included. As can be seen, the actual enquiry was recorded. Also the 'mode' the enquiry was received in was logged (P=Person, T=Telephone, L=Letter and F=Fax). The resource(s) used and time taken in answering the query were then noted. Finally, the last column was filled out, which indicates whether the enquirer made a subsequent enquiry during his/her visit. In addition, simple, common enquiries such as stationery requests, were logged on datasheet 2 as included in Appendix 3.

The logging was done for the majority of time that the libraries were open. Obviously, there will be a small degree of underestimation in the numbers logged as breaks were taken by the observer (although kept to a minimum).

The log includes all the enquiries that were asked (however basic or routine) at the 'enquiry desk' and/or (as in the case of Wincanton and Queen's Park) at the 'issue desk'. The Business Library at Westminster Reference Library is the one exception. Here, three staff man the enquiry desk and there are continuous queues of people. Thus it was impossible to log all the enquiries received. Therefore
only those that were asked to one staff member were monitored. However, the library staff felt that these were a fairly representative sample. Staff themselves keep a daily tally of the number of enquiries received and this was noted, at the end of the sample period.

Once the data had been collected, it (with the exception of the routine enquiries of datasheet 2) was manually categorised into groups. A computerised database could be used for such analysis but it was felt that this method might be too lengthy and was not required for the purpose of this project. The way in which the data was analysed can be seen in Appendix 4.

The categories in the 'length of enquiry' group are not equal in terms of number of minutes. This is because it was expected (and indeed found) that a good many of the enquiries are very short. The 'mode' categories are fairly self-explanatory. However, although the division between adult and child is representative of the enquirer, it ignores those adults who are asking on behalf of children. To find this out, questions would need to be asked to the enquirers and interviews were not part of the project design. The 'initial/subsequent' group was fairly easily divided into the first enquiry asked by the user and all subsequent enquiries asked by the same user on that day.

The data was then split into 'type of enquiry' and cross-tabulated with length. The categories for types of enquiry were influenced by Grogan (3). Directional and administrative enquiries are about "elementary and routine matters" and "make no call on the bibliographical expertise of the staff, merely a basic general knowledge of where things are and how things are done in a particular institution" (4). Examples of such questions include: "Where are the Yellow Pages?" and "What does it tell you when you scan my library card?"
The next category is author/title enquiries where the user is seeking a specific work (5). This could of course be certain editions of a periodical, a monograph or any other document. An example of this type of enquiry is: "Do you have the book 2001: A space odyssey?" They also include more speculative enquiries where the existence of the work cannot be assumed. For example, "Is there a manual for the Rover 820 series?"

Fact finding enquiries are, as their name implies, the demand for specific items of information to answer a query (6). For example: "What is the address of the Shaftesbury Society in London?" and "Is the drug pefloxacin available in the UK?" Such questions require only a short answer but often take a great deal of time and effort.

Material finding enquiries are more "open ended" and less specific. Here, users require "the presentation to them of a range of information on the topic of their query" (7). For example, the question: "Have you any information on acid rain?" would be satisfied by a variety of material.

A research enquiry category was also included for questions that need "more specialized tools of research such as deduction, hypothesis, experiment, statistical analysis ...... and the like" (8). These are more likely to occur in a special library but none were collected in the course of this project. Finally a miscellaneous category was included for queries that cannot be placed elsewhere. An example of a miscellaneous enquiry is a foreign user requesting help to use a telephone directory.

The enquiries (with the exception of those at the special libraries) have then been split into different subjects and cross-tabulated with length. This was done first with all the enquiries and then with all except directional and
administrative enquiries which are generally much shorter in length.

The subjects chosen were influenced by the *Survey of Reference Library Use* currently in operation at Yeovil (see Appendix 5). Other categories were also added once all the data had been collected. It is realised that some categories are very specific such as 'electoral roll' and some rather broad such as 'arts, humanities and social sciences'. However this seemed to be the only way to manage such large volumes of enquiries on such varying subjects.

Finally the types of sources were looked at. Here directional and administrative enquiries are excluded as no sources are used in answering them. The categories are divided between primary sources that provide the information themselves; secondary sources that do not provide the information but direct to sources that will and tertiary sources that direct to further resources and also give the information. The list is not exhaustive but contains most/all the sources used during the case studies of this project.

The formats for the sources are then categorised in a fairly self-explanatory manner. Finally the number of sources used per enquiry was also noted. This has been counted in a fairly modest way. For instance, if a bound volume or box of different numbers of periodicals was used, only one source was counted.

Once the data had been categorised in this way, conclusions could be drawn from it. These are described alongside the description of individual case studies in the subsequent chapters.
REFERENCES


CHAPTER 3 : PUBLIC REFERENCE LIBRARIES

3.1 YEOVIL REFERENCE LIBRARY

Yeovil library (where the reference library is housed) is part of the Somerset County Library Service. The county is divided into seven areas, each having an area library, with its headquarters at Bridgwater. Yeovil is the area library for several smaller libraries (such as Milborne Port, Martock and Sunningdale) located nearby.

Somerset libraries have been reported as being used regularly by 70% of the total county population (1). Indeed "over 4,000,000 visits were paid to libraries in 1992/93, or equivalent to nine visits for every resident in the year" (2). The population of Yeovil parish was 28,316 in the 1991 census (3). Age structure, as well as total population can effect usage of library facilities. Within the parish, 20% of the residents are aged between 0-15 years old, 13.6% are aged between 16-24 years old, 29.3% are between 25-44 years old, 17.8% are between 45 years old and OAP, and 19.4% are OAPs (4). This relatively high number of OAPs form a large group of users in the library. South Somerset also has almost the lowest ethnic population in the country with 99.5% of the population classified as white (5).

Yeovil library is used by more than the residents of Yeovil parish. The surrounding area is of rural make-up with no other major town. Thus Yeovil is in relative isolation from other large libraries. Users are from an approximately 20 mile radius with many from a large part of Dorset. Yeovil college students also make great use of the library, especially the reference section. In addition, some tourists use the library for information, particularly in the summer season, as it is situated in the centre of the town (see Map 1: used with permission).
MAP 1

YOEVIL

Map showing main shopping area, public buildings and amenities

- P Car Park
- T Public Convenience
- G Garage/Petrol Station
- Pedestrian Precinct

Traffic lights/Pedestrian crossing

NOT TO SCALE
The library is divided into three floors. One floor houses the main lending collection. The county music and drama library is based on another floor. A further floor contains the reference library, alongside some non-fiction lending material.

The reference library (where this project was based) is staffed by three full-time staff, each trained to help users find the information they need from a wide range of sources. The enquiry desk is continually manned by these staff who have virtually no working time away from the public. Thus they carry out all other work (in addition to answering enquiries) with continual interruptions at the enquiry desk. Their other work includes acquisitions, journal and other material receipt, updating information, participation in the organisation of training courses and so on.

There are four reference libraries in the county. All of these cover general reference material. However each also specialise in a particular subject. Yeovil's specialist collection is in education, training and careers information.

Yeovil Reference Library takes part in the CIPFA enquiry count. In addition, the reference staff take a week's log of enquiries, quarterly. Various ways of collecting this data have been employed. The most recent counting sheet is the Survey of Reference Library Use shown in Appendix 5. In the count done for the week, 16th May to 21st May 1994, 555 enquiries were recorded. This was an increase of 8% on the previous year. Indeed enquiries in Somerset have been consistently rising in recent years. Reports suggest that the provision of information is the "fastest growing aspect of the County Library Service" (6).
3.1.1 Enquiries

A total sample of 447 enquiries was taken for Yeovil over the period: Monday 23rd May to Friday 27th May, 1994. A further 126 very routine enquiries were recorded on datasheet 2. Of these, photocopying enquiries amounted to the rather high number of 77, perhaps because the copier is located right beside the enquiry desk. This may encourage people to ask before making a personal attempt. The log was taken from 9.30-5pm minus an hour over the lunch period. Thus there may be a slight underestimation of the total number of enquiries for the day. However, all enquiries were recorded during the time period present and the traditionally quieter lunch hour (1-2pm) was taken by the observer.

As can be seen from Figure 1 the majority of the enquiries asked were short in length - the modal time period being 1-3 minutes. In addition, 41% of the enquiries took less than a minute to answer. It is also interesting to note that there were very few long enquiries. None registered over 15 minutes and only 2% fit into the 7-15 minute category.

Figure 2 (illustrating mode of enquiry) indicates, perhaps not unexpectedly, that a large majority of questions were asked in person by adults. Telephone enquiries occurred fairly infrequently and letter enquiries were even less common. However, it is interesting to note that these figures can be easily influenced by external factors. For example, on one of the sample days when there was very wet weather, telephone enquiries rose to 19% of the total. Presumably this was because enquirers did not want to 'venture out'. Therefore, they either received the information over the telephone or checked to see that it was available in the library first, to avoid a wasted journey.
The only day that any school children were the enquirers was on the Friday. This was the Friday before half term when some children were off school. Such results show how easily this type of research can be influenced by the week chosen for the sample period.

There were only two child enquirers in total. However, several adults said they were searching for information for their child's project. Of the two questions that were asked, one was directional whilst the other child was looking for material on 'pop art'. This query took three minutes to answer, as the child was shown how to use the subject index (as well as directed to the shelves) - in the hope that this would encourage more 'self help' in the future.

Ten percent of the enquirers returned to the enquiry desk for further assistance. This may have been for further help on the initial question asked. For example, one enquirer wondered if the library had "anything on organising workshops/presentations". This was dealt with by using the OPAC and directions to the appropriate book section. However, the enquirer returned to the desk unsatisfied and volunteered further information. Thus a better keyword search could be done on the OPAC and a relevant work was found. Subsequent enquiries however, may be on a completely different matter. In such cases the enquirer has a variety of information needs to be met.

When 'type' of enquiry was analysed (see Figure 3), it was found that directional and administrative enquiries were the most common. This may be because of the lay out of the library. As soon as a user enters the reference library, they see a staff member (on the enquiry desk) who is willing to give assistance. Thus they may ask without looking for themselves first. In addition, it is likely that many of the enquirers are referred from the lending
Material finding enquiries were the next most common. This may be because large numbers of Yeovil college students use the library for project work. Thus often the same question is asked repeatedly in one day. For example, during the sample period - the common enquiry appeared to be requests for information on the "Data Protection Act".

Fact finding questions were fairly common too. These were often on local and community matters. Therefore many questions such as: "Is there a Women's Guild locally?" were asked. The author/title queries appear to be comparatively less common at Yeovil. This may be because a public OPAC is available or because such questions are asked before the enquirer has reached the reference library (as discussed previously). The miscellaneous enquiries recorded were requests for help to use sources. For example, one enquirer wanted to know what part of the electoral roll meant.

When type of enquiry was cross-tabulated with length, fairly unsurprising results emerged (which can be seen in Figure 4). The majority of directional and administrative enquiries took less than a minute to answer, whilst the other categories (excluding miscellaneous) were most frequently answered in 1-3 minutes. However, material finding enquiries in general, took the longest to answer.
(as often a greater volume of information was required) with five taking between 7-15 minutes.

Figure 5 illustrates the breakdown of subjects asked at Yeovil. The results are probably most telling when directional and administrative enquiries are excluded (that is, the white bars in the chart). Here, 'arts, humanities and social sciences', 'business and commerce' and 'other and general' are the most frequent subject requirements. Business is of most note as it may seem unusual that this category would dominate in a library such as Yeovil (particularly as Bridgwater library is now the base for the Business Information Service). The reason for its dominance may be because of the large number of businesses which have been encouraged to set up and develop in rural areas.

Most of these organizations are too small to justify their own reference and information services, and perforce rely on the library service for essential information, including much technical and legal data and matters relating to standards, marketing and export (7).

Community and local information is also frequently sought at Yeovil. Often these enquiries seemed to concern local clubs and evening classes. Such questions are now very effectively answered (which may be encouraging more to be asked) by the community information database on Geac. This is accessible through all the computerised libraries in the county and has 6,500 entries.

Geographical and map requests are also common. This may be a reflection on the prominence of agriculture in the area. Recent changes such as the 'set aside' policy may be encouraging more use of maps as land is evaluated. Education and careers questions are the next most popular in the analysis. This of course is not surprising, as Yeovil is the specialist reference library in this subject area. Finally local history enquiries feature strongly.
Although the local history library is based at Taunton, Yeovil holds a fairly large amount of material on the history of nearby areas.

It is also interesting to note that 'hobbies and leisure', 'tourist and travel' and 'telephone and postcode' enquiries appear to be mainly directional in type. It seems that the majority of these enquiries were satisfied by indications to the appropriate section of the library.

Subject (excluding directional and administrative enquiries) was then cross-tabulated with time and the results can be seen by Table 1.
Table 1: Length of time taken to answer different subjects at Yeovil Reference Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>&lt;1 min</th>
<th>1-3 mins</th>
<th>4-6 mins</th>
<th>7-15 mins</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts, humanities and social sciences</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law and Government</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and commerce</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science and technology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment and nature</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and welfare</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and careers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family history</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral roll</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local history</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community and local matters</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobbies and leisure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist and travel</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographical and map requests</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone and postcode</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other and general</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 1 it can be seen that the modal time period for all but one subject is 1-3 minutes. The one exception is the 'telephone and postcode' queries which mostly took under a minute to answer. Seven subject categories include enquiries that lasted between 7-15 minutes. These are
'arts, humanities and social sciences', 'business and commerce', 'science and technology', 'education and careers', 'community and local matters', 'hobbies and leisure' and 'other and general'. Finally all subjects except 'environment and nature', 'electoral roll', 'tourist and travel', 'telephone and postcode' and 'other and general' had enquiries in the 4-6 minute category.

3.1.2  Sources

The sources used to answer enquiries can be heavily influenced by individual library stock and staff members' preferences. Indeed an enquiry could be satisfied by using one of a variety of different sources. An indication of the sources used at Yeovil can be seen from the Core Reference Collection list in Appendix 6. Those sources in the "New editions" section are thus used very frequently.

The results of the case study at Yeovil can be seen in Table 2.
Table 2: Sources used at Yeovil Reference Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Frequency of use</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject reference works</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lending books</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directories</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journals/periodicals</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timetables</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaflets/posters</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers/cuttings</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulations (for building)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Datafiles/databases</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictionaries</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encyclopedias</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferences/minutes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlases/maps</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own/locally/council prepared resources</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff knowledge</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstracts/indexes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalogue/OPAC</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliographies</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referrals</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of these sources, perhaps not surprisingly, the one that is used most frequently is the OPAC. The Geac system that is
in operation, not only satisfies author/title requests but also helps answer material enquiries on subjects, as keyword searching can be done.

Directories are the next most relied upon source. These are generally used to answer fact finding enquiries. The directories commonly in use at Yeovil include, The Directory of British Associations, Whitaker's Almanack, Willing's Press Guide, and of course business directories (such as Kelly's Business Directory, the Kompass Register and Key British Enterprises).

'Own/locally/council prepared resources' are also frequently made use of at Yeovil. Of course, the community information database (as described previously) accounts for a large proportion of the total given in the table. However staff also maintain a card index. This contains items that staff feel may be useful, such as answers to enquiries that took a long time to find and which may be asked again in the future. In addition, files of information on matters of local concern (such as supermarket developments) are kept at the enquiry desk.

The District and County Council also produce some useful documents that are frequently used to answer queries. For example Who does What is a Somerset County Council publication that can be used to answer local questions such as: "Where can I get a form for a proxy vote for the European elections?" Meanwhile, local populations are easily found in the Census Atlas that is produced by the District Council.

The next most popular source is 'subject reference works'. These are reference books in the sense that they cannot be removed from the library. The intention is that there will always be some coherent information available on most subjects. Lending books are frequently used too and have
the added advantage (for the enquirer) that they can be borrowed. Thus further research can be done away from the library building.

Atlases and maps are also frequently used. This is not surprising as it was seen in section 3.1.1 that geographical and map requests are rather common. Yeovil thus keeps a comprehensive collection of OS maps as well as street plans of local towns.

The datafiles and databases used at Yeovil mainly satisfied requests to see census returns or the electoral roll. In addition statistics were sometimes required. These were commonly found in sources such as *The Monthly digest of statistics*.

Finally, it is of interest to see which organisations referrals were made to. Of the 15 referred enquiries only one was made to another Somerset library. This may seem surprising, particularly as the reference libraries have their own specialised collections in an attempt to form centres of excellence. However one was made to the Rural Business Information Service which is a partnership between Cannington (agricultural) college and the Somerset Library Service. This offers a current awareness service, a business enquiry line and a rural business lending service.

Four of the referrals were made to libraries outside Somerset. These included the Bristol Local Studies Library and the National Art Library. Other referrals were to places such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, Social Services, the Economic Development Unit and the District Council. It can therefore be seen that often the library can only provide limited help and thus acts as a pointer to an information service that specialises in the area of the enquirer's needs.
The formats of the sources used can be seen in Figure 6. From this it is clear that the majority were in the printed form. Of the 'computer' sources - 62 were the OPAC and 12 were the community information database. This makes a total of 74 which is likely to increase at Yeovil, as a CD-ROM is being acquired which will be situated next to the enquiry desk. In the 'personal' category, 11 enquiries were answered by a staff member's own knowledge whilst 15 were referrals.

Finally from Table 3, it can be seen that the vast majority of queries could be satisfied by just one source.

Table 3: Number of sources used per enquiry at Yeovil Reference Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of sources</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is probably the material enquiries that require the use of more sources. For example, an enquirer wanting the "history of a local pub" was shown the local history collection and the census returns for the area.
Westminster Reference Library has over half a million books and magazines in stock, available to the public for reference purposes (no lending facilities exist) (8). Indeed, it is one of London's foremost general reference libraries with over 20 reference staff assisting the public. It is estimated that 1,000 enquiries are asked at the library daily.

The library is located in central London between Leicester Square and the National Gallery. It is thus situated in one of the major tourist areas. This is the 'heart of theatreland' which is largely non-residential (apart from the nearby Chinese community). Huge volumes of people visit the library with a multitude of information needs. There is a great variety of users including many foreign people, students and business people.

There are three floors within the library, each specialising in different areas of information. On the ground floor, the business and official publications are held. The first floor is used for general reference and holds the performing arts collection. Finally, the second floor specialises in art and design. One day was spent logging the enquiries on each of these floors. The data for each will thus be considered in turn.

The library is open to the public during the week from 10-7pm. It was decided that the sample for this project would be taken in 'shifts'. Thus enquiries were logged each day from 10-12pm, 1-3pm and 4-6pm on each floor.

3.2.1 Ground Floor - Business Library

This is the busiest floor of the library. Here, the enquiry desk is manned by three staff during the day and
two in the evening. All of the staff at the Reference Library work in shifts and therefore do not have contact time with the public during the whole day. This is partly because working on the desk is mentally demanding, as staff are continuously asked questions. Indeed, in the business library there are often queues of people.

A total of 138 enquiries were logged on Monday 9th May, 1994 (with a further 25 routine enquiries on datasheet 2). However, these are only the questions asked to one of the staff members, as it was impossible to collect all queries. The staff themselves keep a count of the number of enquiries asked at the desk each day. This is rather 'crude' though, as often there is little time to keep a count. Thus only an estimate can be made. The tally made by all of the ground floor staff at the end of the sample day (at 6pm) was 312.

As can be seen from Figure 7, the majority of the enquiries took less than three minutes to answer (the modal time period being 1-3 minutes). No queries were logged as taking over 15 minutes to answer. Reasons behind this lie in the fact that the business library is always very busy so that there is not much time to spend on each question asked. Indeed it has been reported that, "only a minimum of help can be provided for enquiries and undertaking any kind of research is out of the question. This is frustrating to users who often express a willingness to pay to have work done for them"(9). To overcome this problem 'Information for Business' was set up in a flat above the Reference Library in 1986. Here a more personalised, value-added service can be given to clients. No time was available to log the enquiries at Information for Business for this project. However it was said that the service has been very successful. In addition, it has aided the Reference Library in making it "better known among the business community in Westminster"(10).
When 'mode' was looked at, it was found that 83% of queries were asked in person - the remaining 17% being telephone enquiries. However, often the telephone cannot be answered, as staff are too busy dealing with other customers in the library. Unanswered calls were not logged but seemed to occur frequently on all floors of the library. Such a problem may discourage some users from attempting to ask telephone enquiries.

Figure 8 indicates that directional and administrative queries were the most common. These were followed by author/title requests. It seemed that many users knew what they wanted and were therefore only enquiring as to whether it was held in the library - and if so where it could be found. For example, many students had booklists of sources that they wished to find.

The two longest enquiries asked were both in the author/title category. These took a long time to answer as legal references, which appeared to be somewhat incomplete, were required. Thus they took some time to locate. Otherwise material queries generally took the longest time to answer.

When subjects were analysed, it was found that there were many directional and administrative enquiries in the 'other' category. These included requests for back issues of newspapers, directions to other parts of the library and so on. Therefore the more interesting results occurred when these were excluded, and can be seen in Figure 9. As can be seen, fairly unsurprising results were found. 'Business and Commerce', followed by 'Law and Government' were by far the most common subject requirements. 'Law and Government' enquiries seemed to take the longest time to answer, with 48% of them taking four or more minutes to be adequately dealt with.
When the sources used were considered it was found that directories were used most frequently. However, secondary sources (such as the catalogue, referrals and abstracts/indexes) also featured strongly. This can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4: Sources used at Westminster Reference Library (Ground Floor)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Frequency of use</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject reference works</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directories</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journals/periodicals</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers/cuttings</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards/regulations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Datafiles/databases</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictionaries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encyclopedias</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferences/minutes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlases/maps</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own/locally/council prepared resources</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff knowledge</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstracts/indexes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalogue/OPAC</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referrals</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fetching from stores</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ten of the referrals made were to other London libraries not in Westminster. City Business Library and the British Library (BL) Business Information Service were frequently referred to. The Science Reference and the Newspaper libraries of the BL were also suggested to customers. There were seven 'internal' referrals to other floors, colleagues and Information for Business. Finally, one referral was made to the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, as a legal definition was required and could not be located in the various law dictionaries.

Reports were also used fairly often. In particular, Key Note Reports were suggested as sources to satisfy requests on certain industries. Annual reports were frequently used too, for company information.

From Figure 10, it can be seen that the vast majority of sources used were in 'print' (the 3% of computer sources being the OPAC). This category is boosted due to the extensive use of the dictionary card catalogue. Staff often favour this to the Geac online system as at present it is better for keyword searching. Cards are filed by subject which assists the search for material. In addition, the older stock has not yet been put onto the computer.

Table 5 shows the number of sources used to answer each enquiry.
Table 5: Number of sources used per enquiry at Westminster Reference Library (Ground Floor)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of sources</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This suggests that often several sources were used in answering one enquiry. Maybe, this is because staff frequently indicate to users a range of sources that could be used in their own research. In this way, users may not need to approach the enquiry desk (and perhaps queue) a second time. Indeed, it was found that only 11% of users asked a subsequent enquiry.

3.2.2 First Floor - General Reference and Performing Arts.

The first floor is manned by two staff. Therefore, it was possible to log all enquiries asked at the desk. A total of 168 queries were logged on Tuesday 10th May, 1994. In addition, 58 enquiries were recorded on datasheet 2. Eight of these were requests for help to use the microfilm readers. The staff had recorded 192 enquiries on their counter by 6pm.

Very similar patterns to the business floor (see 3.2.1) appeared in the results. For example, almost identical trends occurred, in length of answer and type of enquiry. Similar results also emerged when these two variables were cross-tabulated. A slightly larger percentage (24% compared to 17%) of telephone enquiries were recorded.
This may have been because several of the calls were intended for the business library but could not get through, so callers phoned the general reference library instead.

Fifteen percent of enquirers returned to the desk for subsequent help. One interesting example of a subsequent enquiry occurred because the enquirer was rather unspecific of her needs. First, a general history of the Duke of St. Albans' family was requested. Later the enquirer wanted a history of Nell Gwyn's family. Then, it was discovered by the staff member that the enquirer really required information on the title, "Hereditary Grand Falconer" which was apparently held by members of each of these families. Thus heraldry and symbolism books were consulted.

From Figure 11 (which excludes directional and administrative queries) it can be seen that as expected, most enquiries fell into the 'arts, humanities and social sciences' category. These were mainly on the performing arts - such as drama, dance, film, television and radio. Thirty one percent of these took four or more minutes to answer.

Business queries were the second most popular which might seem curious. However, these were often telephone enquiries which came through on the wrong line. The same staff work on both the ground floor and the first floor enquiry desks and so were able to help to some extent. Also, there were several requests for information on companies, which was needed for job interviews.

Education and careers information was also frequently sought. This is probably because many students use the library and consult the files of careers information. Map requests were also popular, perhaps because one of the largest map collections in a London public library is held
on this floor. These requests were very varied and sometimes took quite some time to answer. For example, it took seven minutes to find maps of "ancient Rome in the Republican period".

The sources used are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Sources used at Westminster Reference Library (First Floor)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Frequency of use</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject reference works</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directories</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journals/periodicals</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers/cuttings</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Datafiles/databases</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictionaries</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encyclopedias</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlases/maps</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own/locally/council prepared resources</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff knowledge</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstracts/indexes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalogue/OPAC</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliographies</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referrals</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fetching from stores</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This table indicates that referrals were very frequently made in the General Reference library. Thirteen of these were to other libraries in Westminster. In particular, six were referred to Victoria Library where a large music collection is held. Other London libraries were referred to on 12 occasions. These included, for example the Barbican Library where more specialised works (such as audition pieces) can be obtained. Other London colleges and institutions were also frequently suggested as possible sources of information. For example, an Opera House enquiry was directed to the London College of Fashion to find the origin of a fedora hat.

Directories were again in continual use. Many of these were on more specialised arts areas such as The Actor's Handbook, International Film Directory and The Directory of Publishing. Subject reference works were also frequently used. These are parts of the collection which may well be available for lending in other Westminster libraries. However, they are often consulted for quick research at the Reference Library, especially if they are continuously on loan elsewhere.

Figure 12 shows that 'print' was used predominantly (again due in part to the extensive use of the card catalogue). The 'personal' section is also rather large reflecting the frequent referrals made. Microform was used to answer certain enquiries, particularly when old editions of newspapers were needed. For example, one enquirer wanted "a particular interview with Doris Lessing" which was found in a 1992 Sunday Times. CD-ROMs were used on three occasions (the other computer sources being the OPAC). These were to check a reference in The Guardian, to find out whether a book was available (via Whitaker's Bookbank) and to find out the producer of a film (via Film Index International).
3.2.3 **Second Floor - Art and Design Library**

Here, there is one staff member on the enquiry desk. This meant that all the queries could be logged. A sample of 48 enquiries (plus four queries concerning opening hours) was collected on Friday 13th May, 1994. Staff felt the day to be quieter than normal. Perhaps this was because it was a Friday and there was good weather.

Apparently this floor experiences more seasonal variation than the others because it is used heavily by students. Also, it is particularly busy in August and September when many of the Art Institutions are closed. For example, the Victoria and Albert Museum, where the National Art Library is based, closes for two weeks in September.

The enquiries received in the library took a very short time to answer: no queries took over six minutes. This may be because the size of this floor is smaller than the others so that directing users to different sources takes less time. The modal time period, was as the other floors, 1-3 minutes. Also similar to the other floors, 81% of enquiries were asked in person with the remaining 19% by telephone.

Author/title enquiries (as can be seen by Figure 13) were the most common to be asked. Many of these arose because much of the library is on closed access (due to space and security problems). Therefore users have to complete book request forms, so that staff can collect the items they need. Fact finding enquiries were surprisingly low. It seemed that most people were doing their own research and therefore were searching for material rather than for single facts. Of these enquiries, the modal time period for directional and administrative queries was found to be less than a minute. However, this was calculated to be 1-3 minutes for the other 'type' categories.
The majority of enquiries asked were obviously classified in the 'arts, humanities and social sciences' subject category (therefore no subject chart has been included). These were mainly on topics such as art, sculpture, design, antiques, architecture and so on. There was also one 'business' and one 'education and careers' enquiry asked. However both of these had to be referred to other floors.

The sources that were used can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7: Sources used at Westminster Reference Library (Second Floor)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Frequency of use</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject reference works</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directories</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journals/periodicals</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictionaries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own/locally/council prepared resources</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff knowledge</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstracts/indexes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalogue/OPAC</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referrals</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fetching from stores</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this it can be seen that the most common category is, 'fetching from stores'. This is due to the closed access problem as explained earlier. The catalogue again was much used, as were referrals. Referrals were mainly to other more specialised libraries, such as the National Art
Library, the British Architectural Library and the Greater London History Library. Staff knowledge was also used in 8.7% of the cases (a higher percentage than found on the other floors). This may be because staff in the Art and Design library work solely on this floor. Thus they are more specialised with good knowledge of stock.

Figure 14 shows that 'printed' sources again dominate. The card catalogue is favoured on this floor for additional reasons to those stated earlier (see 3.2.1). The Art and Design library uses an adaptation of the Dewey Decimal Classification scheme. This is not satisfactorily displayed on the computer which can cause obvious problems. The 'none used' slice is unusually large, due to the frequent fetching of books from the stores.

Eighteen percent of enquiries were satisfied by more than one source. In one case, five sources were used. This was to satisfy a request for information on architecture in Middlesex and Brent in the Edwardian period.
REFERENCES

1 Somerset County Council Library Service. Statistical review for the year ending March 1993, [1994], p. [1].

2 Ibid., p [1].


4 Ibid., p. 264.

5 Ibid., p. 9.


7 Ibid., p. 60


10 Ibid., p. 83.
FIGURE 1: Length of enquiry - Yeovil

- <1 minute: 51%
- 1-3 mins: 6%
- 4-6 mins: 41%
- 7-15 mins: 2%
FIGURE 2: Mode of enquiry - Yeovil

- Adult: 87.70%
- Child: 11.40%
- Telephone: 0.40%
- Letter: 0.40%
FIGURE 3: Type of enquiry - Yeovil
FIGURE 4: Length of enquiry according to type - Yeovil

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>&lt;1 min</th>
<th>1-3 mins</th>
<th>4-6 mins</th>
<th>7-15 mins</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Directional/admin</td>
<td>160</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author/title</td>
<td>140</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact</td>
<td>120</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc.</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURE 5: Subject of enquiry - Yeovil

- Other
- Tel/postcode
- Geographical
- Tourist
- Hobbies
- Community
- Local history
- Electoral roll
- Family history
- Education
- Health
- Environment
- Science
- Business
- Law
- Arts

- Enquiries excluding 'directional/admin' category
- All enquiries
FIGURE 6: Format of sources - Yeovil
FIGURE 7: Length of enquiry - Ground floor, Westminster Reference Library

14% 1% 25%
60%
FIGURE 8: Type of enquiry - Ground floor, Westminster Reference Library
FIGURE 9: Subject of enquiry - Ground floor, Westminster Reference Library

- Other
- Tel/postcode
- Geographical
- Tourist
- Hobbies
- Community
- Local history
- Electoral roll
- Family history
- Education
- Health
- Environment
- Science
- Business
- Law
- Arts
FIGURE 10: Format of sources - Ground floor, Westminster Reference Library
FIGURE 11: Subject of enquiry - 1st floor, Westminster Reference Library

- Other
- Tel/postcode
- Geographical
- Tourist
- Hobbies
- Community
- Local history
- Electoral roll
- Family history
- Education
- Health
- Environment
- Science
- Business
- Law
- Arts
FIGURE 12: Format of sources - 1st floor, Westminster Reference Library

- Print: 50%
- Microform: 34%
- Computer: 7%
- Personal: 4%
- None used: 5%
FIGURE 13: Type of enquiry - 2nd floor, Westminster Reference Library
FIGURE 14: Format of sources - 2nd floor, Westminster Reference Library

- Print: 24%
- Computer: 44%
- Personal: 28%
- None used: 4%
CHAPTER 4: PUBLIC LENDING LIBRARIES

4.1 WINCANTON LIBRARY

Wincanton Library is a medium sized lending library in the rural region of South Somerset. It is situated in the centre of the town, alongside other public amenities such as the health centre (see Map 2: used with permission). Frome Library is the area library for Wincanton. However Yeovil Reference Library (see section 3.1) also assists Wincanton in answering certain reference questions. Both of these libraries are approximately 17 miles away from Wincanton.

The 1991 Census Ward Resident Population of Wincanton was 4,653 - 3.3% of the total population of South Somerset (1). Within the ward of Wincanton, 19.8% of residents are aged between 0-15 years old, 10.9% are between 16-24 years old, 27.9% are between 25-44 years old, 18% are between 45 years old and OAP and 23.4% are OAPs (2). Thus there is a large number of OAPs in the ward, many of whom use the library regularly. Indeed only 56.5% of residents are economically active (3) - that is, aged 16 to pensionable age.

A Tourist Information Point (TIP) is located inside the library. This is only manned on Monday and Friday. On days when it is unmanned the library staff can give some assistance.

All of the library staff are part time (apart from the librarian). Generally two staff (three on Friday mornings) man the issue desk continually. There is no separate enquiry desk. Therefore staff on the desk deal with book issues, shelving and administrative tasks as well as answering enquiries.
4.1.1 Enquiries

Two days (Thursday, 31st May 1994 and Friday, 3rd June 1994) were spent logging the enquiries at Wincanton. A total sample of 136 questions was recorded altogether (with a further 41 requests on datasheet 2). This included all the enquiries asked at the issue desk and the TIP during the opening hours - 9.30-1.30pm and 2.30-5pm.

From Figure 15, it can be seen that the majority of these enquiries took under three minutes to answer (the modal class being 1-3 minutes). None of the queries registered as taking over 15 minutes of staff time. Indeed only 2% fit into the 7-15 minutes category.

When 'mode' of enquiry was looked at, it was found that the vast majority were asked in person by adults (see Figure 16). There were frequent telephone calls but most of these were 'book renewals' rather than information enquiries. Six of the enquirers were children. These were visiting the library during the day as it was the half term holiday. Mostly material for school projects was required, such as information on "transport in Victorian times". Some of these queries took a relatively long time to answer. For example it took 10 minutes to find information and pictures on the "giant squid".

When 'type' of enquiry was analysed, it was found that the majority were fact finding. This can be seen by Figure 17. Many of these were requests for local and tourist information, such as: "Is there a launderette nearby?" or "How far is the coast from here?". Such enquiries may dominate due to the library's central position in the town. The enquirers seemed to want quick information and thus 38% of the factual requests could be satisfied in under one minute.
Directional and administrative enquiries were the next most common. These were mainly questions about borrowing procedures and directions to certain book sections. The majority of these could be answered in less than a minute.

Material finding enquiries followed by author/title enquiries were less common. It may seem surprising that the volume of author/title queries was so low in a lending library such as Wincanton. However, it was observed that many of the users were content to browse the shelves rather than ask for a particular book. The modal classes for both of these types of enquiry was found to be 1-3 minutes.

The subjects of the enquiries asked were then considered. After analysis it was found that the results were more interesting when directional and administrative enquiries were excluded. This was because there were many administrative enquiries asked on library procedures, such as: "What does it tell you when you scan my library card?" These tended to over-emphasise the 'other and general' category, thus deflecting from the remaining subject categories.

The results (excluding directional and administrative enquiries) can be seen in Figure 18. From this it can be seen that the largest number of enquiries could be categorised as 'tourist and travel'. This may have been unusually high because it was the beginning of the holiday season. However the TIP is situated right beside the entrance to the library. Therefore many locals pass the desk as they enter the library. This may encourage them to seek tourist information. The TIP is also used by non-locals. For example, there was one French visitor who required information on the local attractions.

Much community information was also requested. This was on a wide variety of matters. For example, one enquirer
wanted "the opening times of the Citizen's Advice Bureau" whilst another required information on "local book clubs".

'Arts, humanities and social sciences' requests were also common. These were often 'literary' based concerning sections of the book stock. 'Geographical and map' enquiries were asked fairly frequently too. For example, there were many enquirers wanting directions to nearby locations.

Finally, it is interesting to note those enquiries that were infrequently asked. For instance, there were very few 'business and commerce' queries - this being very different to the results found at Yeovil Reference Library where business information was repeatedly requested (see section 3.1.1). It may be that enquirers needing such information will either telephone or travel directly to Yeovil (where adequate resources are held) rather than approach a smaller library such as Wincanton.

When subject was cross-tabulated with time it was found that most subjects could be adequately answered in 1-3 minutes. However, 37% of the 'tourist and travel' enquiries could be satisfied in under a minute. Presumably this was because often a leaflet was available which contained all the information the enquirer needed.
4.1.2 Sources

The types of sources used at Wincanton are shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Sources used at Wincanton Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Frequency of use</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lending books</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directories</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journals/periodicals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timetables</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaflets/posters</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral roll</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlases/maps</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own/locally/council prepared resources</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff knowledge</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalogue/OPAC</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referrals</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this it can be seen that the 'leaflets/posters' category has the largest frequency. This is mainly due to the TIP. For example, enquiries such as, "Do you have any information on Bristol Zoo?" could be answered by a leaflet.

The OPAC was the next most frequently used source. The Geac system allows the catalogue for the whole of Somerset to be accessed. Thus material requests such as, "Do you
have any material on exam techniques? as well as author/title requests can be more satisfactorily answered.

Staff knowledge was used in 17 cases. In particular, this was used for local information and for directing users to nearby locations. Also, several users asked what certain books were like. In some of these cases, staff could give their opinion.

Finally, lending books also featured strongly. This is perhaps not surprising in a library such as Wincanton which holds predominantly lending material. Indeed it has a fairly small reference collection. That is, relatively few directories, encyclopedias and so on are held. Also, much of what is held is not the most recent edition. This is because stock is sent from the Reference Libraries to the smaller libraries once new editions have been received.

When formats were considered it was found that the majority of sources used were in the 'printed' form. This can be seen by Figure 19. All of the 'computer' sources used were the OPAC as no CD-ROM facilities are available. Finally 17 of the 'personal' sources were staff knowledge whilst eight were referrals.

4.2 **QUEEN'S PARK LIBRARY**

Queen's Park Library is part of the Westminster Libraries business unit. It is one of smallest libraries in Westminster with a total stock of approximately 25,000 books, cassettes, videos and so on. Four full time and four part time staff run the service.

The area surrounding the library is one of the poorest parts of Westminster. It is largely residential with a multi-cultural population of 10,097 (4). The library itself is over 100 years old. Therefore it has become well
established in meeting the needs and interests of local residents. For example, Afro-Caribbean and Irish collections are held for both these sectors of the community.

Census data is readily available for the Westminster wards. This shows that the age structure of Queen's Park ward is as follows: 23% of residents are aged between 0-15 years old, 13% are between 16-24 years old, 52% are between 25-64 years old and 12% are OAPs (5). Thus the population is much younger than that of Wincanton (see section 4.1). Children are catered for by the Children's Library which is contained on a separate floor to the main collection. In addition, there is a "lively section for teenagers" (6).

4.2.1 Enquiries

Two days (Wednesday, 11th May 1994 and Thursday, 12th May 1994) were spent logging the enquiries received at Queen's Park. A total sample of 102 queries (plus 48 logged on datasheet 2) was collected altogether. Staff felt that the days chosen were fairly representative of the norm. However, it must be noted that Wednesday and Thursday have been found to be quieter days - Monday, Friday and Saturday being much busier (7). All of the enquiries asked at both the enquiry desk and the issue desk were logged (both of these desks being situated alongside each other). The log was taken between the hours of 9.30-5pm minus one hour over the lunchtime period - which is generally the quietest time in the library (8).

First 'length' of enquiry was analysed. Figure 20 shows that most of the enquiries could be answered in less than one minute. Queen's Park was the only library in this project where this result occurred.
When 'mode' of enquiry was looked at, it was found that 70% were asked in person by adults. This is illustrated by the pie chart in Figure 21. From this it can also be seen that telephone enquiries amounted to 18%. In addition, there was one letter enquiry. Here the enquirer (who was not a local) wanted information on an Irish author. Queen's Park was contacted because of its Irish collection.

Eleven of the enquiries logged were asked by children. These all occurred after 3pm when school had finished for the day. Many children seemed to use the library for a variety of purposes. All of the enquiries however, appeared to be concerned with school projects. Three were requests for information on the Channel Tunnel. Thus there was a great deal of pressure on the material available in this area. Other child enquirers were very unspecific of their information needs. For example, one asked whether there was "anything available on the Truman doctrine?" but could not volunteer any further information at all. Such factors influenced the time taken to answer children's enquiries. Indeed the modal time class for these enquiries was found to be 1-3 minutes. This indicates that they took longer to answer than the 'norm' at Queen's Park.

'Type' of enquiry was then considered and the results are presented in Figure 22. From this it can be seen that directional and administrative enquiries dominated. This may explain why the modal length class was found to be less than one minute. Indeed most of these enquiries could be answered very quickly. Many directional enquiries arose because a new organisational system had recently been implemented. That is, non-fiction books had been grouped into categories, such as "Computing", "London", "Pets" and so on. Thus several queries arose such as, "Under the new arrangement which section are the religious books in?"
Fact finding enquiries followed by material finding were the next most common; author/title queries being less frequent. All of these 'types' of enquiries mostly took between 1-3 minutes to answer. The longest enquiry in the sample was the material finding request regarding the Irish author (as discussed previously).

The subjects of the enquiries asked were then analysed. Directional and administrative enquiries have been excluded in the analysis, this being for the same reasons as explained in section 4.1.1. Indeed there were 38 enquiries on general, administrative matters such as, "How do I join the library?" which rather deflected from the other findings.

The results have been presented in Figure 23. This shows that excluding the 'other and general' category, questions on the 'environment and nature' were most frequently asked. This is largely due to the child enquirers wanting information on trees, plants and so on for school projects. Other popular subject categories included, 'Arts, humanities and social sciences', 'health and welfare' and 'community and local matters'. Community information in particular is valued highly at Queen's Park. Indeed an enquiry count (organised by the Community Information Service of Westminster libraries) is being conducted on the different types of enquiries received in this area (see appendix 7).

Finally, it is of interest to note those subjects that were seldom or never asked for at Queen's Park. For instance, no 'business and commerce' questions were recorded. This probably reflects the interests of the local population. Also Westminster Reference Library is within travelling distance where a comprehensive business collection is held (see section 3.2.1). No 'tourist and travel' enquiries were asked either. This is quite contrary to the results
found at Wincanton (see section 4.1.1). However, such a result is not too surprising as the surrounding area is not one visited by tourists.

When subject was cross-tabulated with time, it was found that the modal time period for most categories was 1-3 minutes. The one exception was the 'geographical and map' category. However, only one question was asked in this subject area and this could be answered in less than a minute.

4.2.2 Sources

The sources that were used in answering the enquiries can be seen in Table 9.

Table 9: Sources used at Queen's Park Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Frequency of use</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lending books</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directories</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaflets/posters</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encyclopedias</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlases/maps</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own/locally/council prepared resources</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff knowledge</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstracts/indexes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalogue/OPAC</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referrals</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This shows that lending books were used most frequently which is somewhat unsurprising. In addition, it is similar to the result found at Wincanton Library (see section 4.1.2).

'Own/locally/council prepared resources' were often used too. For example, the Community Information database, accessible on the Geac system, was used to answer several enquiries. On one occasion, the name and addresses of local amateur dramatics clubs were found on the database for an enquirer. Other sources counted in this category include information produced by 'Westminster City Council' and by 'Westminster Libraries'.

Staff knowledge was used in 17.0% of the cases. This again was similar to Wincanton (see section 4.1.2). Finally, it may be of note to mention the use of encyclopedias. The Macmillan Family Encyclopedia was used on five occasions to answer children's enquiries. Staff will photocopy (free of charge) a few pages of information from this source, if it is to be used for school work.

Finally, figure 24 shows the formats of the sources used. It can be seen that printed sources were used predominantly. Next most popular were 'personal' sources (nine being staff knowledge and two being referrals). Finally, computer sources were used in 15% of the cases. Five of these were the OPAC and three were the Community Information database.
REFERENCES


2 Ibid., p. 217.

3 Ibid., p. 217.


5 Ibid.


8 Ibid., Appendix 31.
FIGURE 15: Length of enquiry - Wincanton

- <1 minute: 35%
- 1-3 mins: 55%
- 4-6 mins: 8%
- 7-15 mins: 2%
FIGURE 16: Mode of enquiry - Wincanton

- Adult: 92%
- Child: 4%
- Telephone: 4%
FIGURE 17: Type of enquiry - Wincanton

[Bar chart showing types of enquiry: Directional/admin, Author/title, Fact, Material, Misc. with the 'Fact' category having the highest frequency.]
FIGURE 18: Subject of enquiry - Wincanton

- Other
- Tel/postcode
- Geographical
- Tourist
- Hobbies
- Community
- Local history
- Electoral roll
- Family history
- Education
- Health
- Environment
- Science
- Business
- Law
- Arts
FIGURE 19: Format of sources - Wincanton

- 50% Print
- 25% Computer
- 24% Personal
- 1% None used
FIGURE 20: Length of enquiry - Queen's Park

- 6% <1 minute
- 1% 1-3 mins
- 54% 4-6 mins
- 39% 7-15 mins
FIGURE 21: Mode of enquiry - Queen's Park

- Adult: 70%
- Child: 18%
- Telephone: 1%
- Letter: 11%
FIGURE 22: Type of enquiry - Queen's Park

- Directional/admin: 60
- Author/title: 50
- Fact: 40
- Material: 30
FIGURE 23: Subject of enquiry - Queen's Park
FIGURE 24: Format of sources - Queen's Park

- 64% Print
- 21% Computer
- 15% Personal
CHAPTER 5: TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRES

A Tourist Information Centre (TIC) was chosen as a case study for this project because a great deal of enquiry work is carried out at such places. In fact, many similarities can be made between TICs and public libraries. For example, Fotheringham has said that, "Working in a TIC demands many of the same skills as a librarian, in acquiring, organizing and disseminating information" (1). In addition, like public libraries, the users of TICs can have varied information needs. Indeed, the centres are used by "residents, workers and students as well as by tourists and visitors" (2).

5.1 YEOVIL TIC

Yeovil TIC, in South Somerset, carries out many tasks. Each of these are common to TICs around the country. Primarily the centre holds and displays information on local attractions - including detailed maps of the area. However, much more local information is available than this. For instance, community information is held on matters such as local bus times, lists of doctors and so on.

Brochures are also available on holiday destinations elsewhere in the country. In this way an element of travel agency work is involved (3). Accommodation can be arranged too, through the TIC. This can be at local hotels (or the equivalent) that are registered with the centre, or elsewhere in the country, booked through the network of TICs.

Finally some 'selling' is involved. The TIC acts as a ticket agency for local events. For example, during the sample days for this project, tickets for the Royal Bath and West Show were being sold. Other items are also
continually for sale, such as maps, tea towels, postcards, books and so on.

These varied functions make TICs very busy in the provision of information. Of course, the volume of enquiries received, is easily influenced by factors such as seasonality and the locality of the TIC. Yeovil may not be one of the premier tourist destinations in the West Country. However, the area still attracts large numbers of holiday makers - including those 'travelling through' on the way to the coasts of Devon and Cornwall. Locals also use the centre extensively, as it is situated in the same building as the Citizen's Advice Bureau, the Housing Office and the Treasurer's Department. In addition, it is close to the town centre (see Map 1 in section 3.1).

The TIC is run by all part time staff apart from one. Generally two staff man the enquiry desk. However, this is dependant upon staff availability and public usage of the centre. That is, if it appears to be a quiet day, staff may be involved in other activities, such as preparing displays.

5.1.1 Enquiries

Two days (Wednesday, 1st June 1994 and Thursday, 2nd June 1994) were spent logging the enquiries received at Yeovil TIC. A total sample of 224 enquiries was recorded altogether, with a further five requests for directions to the public toilets. The sample includes all the enquiries asked at the centre during the period 9.30-5pm (minus one hour over the lunch period). It should be noted that this was one of the more busy times at the centre as it was half term for the schools and the beginning of the holiday season.
The majority of the enquiries asked at the TIC could be answered in three minutes or under - the modal time period being 1-3 minutes. This can be seen in the column chart of Figure 25. The longest enquiry took 20 minutes to answer. This was when a TIC elsewhere in the country phoned requesting accommodation near Yeovil for one of their clients. Therefore various local hoteliers had to be contacted to check whether rooms were available.

Next the 'mode' of the enquiries was considered. Here, it was found that the majority were asked in person. However, as can be seen by Figure 26, 31% were telephone enquiries. In addition, there were two letter enquiries. One of these was a request for a 'cycle route' leaflet. This was in response to an advertisement in a cycling magazine.

Of all the enquiries logged, the observer could ascertain that at least two were concerned with school or college projects. One of these was when a college student requested information on "old industries in Yeovil". The other enquiry involved a parent asking on behalf of their child. Here "literature on London" was required for a school project.

Fifteen percent of enquiries were recorded as subsequent requests for information. These were mainly enquiries asked by tourists rather than by locals. That is, tourists often appeared to want to ask more than one question about the local area. For example, one enquirer asked, "Is there a swimming pool in Yeovil?", "Where is the Midland Bank?" and also wanted information on local attractions.

When 'type' of enquiry was analysed, it was found that fact finding questions were by far the most common. This is illustrated by Figure 27. Examples of such queries include: "How far is Cheddar from here?" and "Is there an early closing day in Yeovil?" The majority of these were
answered in 1-3 minutes. Many of them required short answers. Thus 30% of fact finding enquiries could be satisfied in under one minute.

Directional and administrative enquiries were the next most common. A large number of enquiries classed in this category were administrative in that tickets were requested. In particular, these were for the Royal Bath and West Show which was being held over the sample period. Forty four percent of these directional and administrative enquiries could be answered in less than a minute.

Next most popular were material requests. Here, enquirers wanted more than just the basic facts. A typical example of a material enquiry asked at the TIC is, "Have you any information on Birmingham?" Here the enquirer was moving to Birmingham and thus required as much information on the area as possible.

Two miscellaneous enquiries were recorded. These were both requests for accommodation in the local area. Therefore, they did not easily fit into the other 'type' categories.

Finally, it is of interest to note that no author/title enquiries were asked. This then is a major difference between the TIC and the libraries. However, it is not a surprising result as obviously no book stock is held at the TIC.

The subjects of the enquiries asked were then considered. First, it was discovered that the modal and median time period taken to answer each subject was 1-3 minutes. Next, it was found after analysis, that the results excluding directional and administrative queries were not very different from those found for the whole sample. However, Figure 28 does not include directional or administrative enquiries.
From Figure 28 it can be seen that predictably 'tourist and travel' requests were by far the most common. 'Geographical and map' requests were the next most popular. These included geographical requests such as, "How many miles is it to Lyme Regis?" as well as requests for particular maps of the area.

Nineteen 'community and local' queries were asked. These included enquiries such as, "Is there a list of Beefeater restaurants in the area?" The only other subject category where a fairly substantial number of enquiries were asked, is 'hobbies and leisure'. Enquiries classed in this category cover many interests such as sport, theatre, cinema and so on.

5.1.2 Sources

Table 10 portrays the sources that were used at Yeovil TIC.

Table 10: Sources used at Yeovil TIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Frequency of use</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Directories</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journals/periodicals</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timetables</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaflets/posters</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlases/maps</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own/locally/council prepared resources</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff knowledge</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referrals</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This shows that leaflets or posters were used in almost half of the cases. Colourful and informative leaflets are provided on the majority of local events and attractions. The category also includes brochures that are compiled on other counties for holiday makers. This frequent use of leaflets is similar to the results found at Wincanton TIP (see section 4.1.2).

Staff knowledge was used on 35 occasions. Obviously the range of subjects asked for at TICs is less than that asked for at public libraries. Therefore staff can develop a more specialised knowledge of tourism.

Atlases and maps were popular sources too. These were particularly used in giving directions. Many tourists who visited the TIC needed a street map of Yeovil. The TIC is signposted from the roads. Therefore this is often the first place that non-locals travel to, in order to find their way to other parts of the town.

Finally, referrals were made on 13 occasions. Five of these were to other TICs in the country. These were particularly made when enquirers were planning to visit other areas. Thus they could immediately contact a TIC when they arrived. Other referrals were to local amenities in Yeovil. For example, the Museum, the Reference Library and the Bus Station (which is also a ticket agency) were suggested as possible sources of information.

Most of the enquiries could be satisfactorily answered by one source. Indeed there were only 20 occasions when more than one source was used. However, in each of these cases the enquiry could be answered by two sources.

Seventy four percent of the sources were used in the printed form. The remaining 26% were 'personal' sources (35 being staff knowledge and 13 being referrals).
Therefore no computerised sources were used - even though a computer had recently been installed to store tourist information. However, various 'teething' problems have been experienced. This means that at present the computer is deemed as being less efficient and more time consuming than the traditional sources used to answer enquiries.
REFERENCES

1 Fotheringham, Margaret. Tourism and libraries. 

2 Brewer, Stuart. Tourist information and public 

3 Ibid. p. 52.
FIGURE 25: Length of enquiry - Yeovil TIC

- 1-3 mins: 129
- 4-6 mins: 70
- 7-15 mins: 21
- 16-30 mins: 3

Legend:
- <1 minute
- 1-3 mins
- 4-6 mins
- 7-15 mins
- 16-30 mins
FIGURE 26: Mode of enquiry - Yeovil TIC
FIGURE 27: Type of enquiry - Yeovil TIC
FIGURE 28: Subject of enquiry - Yeovil TIC

- Other
- Tel/postcode
- Geographical
- Tourist
- Hobbies
- Community
- Local history
- Electoral roll
- Family history
- Education
- Health
- Environment
- Science
- Business
- Law
- Arts
CHAPTER 6 : SPECIAL LIBRARIES

6.1 INSTITUTION OF ELECTRICAL ENGINEERS (IEE)

The IEE was founded in 1871 and is now the largest professional engineering society in Europe, with a worldwide membership of over 130,000 (1). Its interests cover all aspects of electrical, electronic, software and manufacturing engineering. In these areas the IEE sets standards and regulations, organises technical meetings and acts as the voice of the profession to the Government. The Institution has a library and a technical information service (both based in London). One day was spent logging the enquiries in each of these. The data for each was analysed and therefore will be considered separately.

6.1.1 THE IEE LIBRARY

The library (although in existence since the IEE was founded) was formally set up in 1880. Over the years it has grown and now holds 60,000 books and 2,500 periodical titles (currently subscribing to 1,100 titles). These are on all aspects of electrical, electronic and manufacturing engineering.

The library has been enhanced over the years by the merging of various collections. In 1977, the IEE took on the British Computer Society (BCS) library. Since then mergers have occurred with the Institution of Electronics and Radio Engineers in 1988 (which has 15-20,000 members) and the Institution of Manufacturing Engineers (with its 25,000 members) in 1991.

The members of each of these bodies have slightly different information requirements. Staff at the IEE suggest that electrical engineers are satisfied with a 'pointer' in the right direction (such as a relevant paper) to answer
enquiries. However manufacturing engineers prefer to be told the information exactly.

The library is open for public reference with lending facilities available for members. It is used extensively by the 'profession'. Visitors include consultants, market researchers, students, academics, IEE staff and so on.

Seven staff run the library service under the Information Manager (who is also responsible for the Technical Information Unit). The majority of these have a library/information qualification rather than one in electrical engineering. The enquiry/issue desk is manned continuously during opening hours (9-5pm) by two staff. All staff spend some time on the desk on a rota basis - each doing approximately one morning and one afternoon a week. While on the desk, as well as answering enquiries, staff deal with book issues, shelving and other administrative duties.

6.1.1.1 Enquiries

A total sample of 52 enquiries was logged at the library on Thursday 5th May, 1994. The log was taken from 9.30-5pm minus half an hour over the lunch period. No official log is made of the volume of enquiries on a daily basis. However, staff felt that the day was fairly representative in terms of the volume and range of questions asked. It must be stressed though, that the usage of the library is highly variable and relatively unpredictable. May, is traditionally a quieter month as students are less involved in researching for project work.

As can be seen from Figure 29, the time taken to answer enquiries varied greatly. However, the modal time period was found to be 1-3 minutes. The longest query was a request for material on "how and where to get computer
programs for dress-making in CAD?" and took 35 minutes to answer. Here, one of the technical information staff was involved too and it was decided that a quick CD-ROM search should be done (see 6.1.2).

Sixty two percent of the enquiries logged were asked in person, with the remaining 38% asked by telephone. However telephone queries may be slightly underestimated. This is because the telephone is automatically switched to the back office (where library staff carry out other work) if it is not answered within a certain time. These calls were not logged.

It was also found that 73% of the enquiries were the first asked by the users, while the remaining 27% were subsequent enquiries. This 27% is fairly significant, as many enquirers may be just visiting London for one day only. Thus they 'save' up several enquiries for their visit. Subsequent enquiries can also be born out of a reader's own research. For example, one enquirer first had an author/title enquiry. This led onto a subsequent directional enquiry as cross-references had been found from the first source.

It can be seen from Figure 30 that directional and administrative enquiries were the most common. These were unduly increased on the sample day by a fault in the photocopier which encouraged many users to ask for administrative assistance. It may seem surprising that there were only nine material finding enquiries (17% of the total). This may be explained by the knowledge amongst many users that more in-depth, technical queries should be asked to the technical information staff (rather than at the enquiry desk) who are also situated in the library.

When cross-tabulated with time, it was found that most directional and administrative enquiries took 1-3 minutes
to answer. The lengthier administrative queries included requests such as, "Is it possible to put a hold on some books?" Fact finding enquiries also have a modal time period of 1-3 minutes. This is presumably because mainly short answers (such as addresses) were required.

The majority of author/title queries took over 3 minutes to answer. This may be because, often when an enquirer asked whether a particular journal was held, it was found that it was not stored in the library (due to space shortages). Thus a great deal of staff time is spent fetching items from stores for the readers.

The longer queries are generally material finding. The two longest in this category both required added assistance from the Technical Information staff. In general, those enquiries that appear likely to take more time to answer are transferred to the Technical Information Unit. This is especially the case, if a search on a computerised database is required (see 6.1.2).

The IEE data was not analysed by subject. This is because obviously, the vast majority of enquiries are on the broad subject area of engineering. However, there was one exception when a member of the public visited the library just to ask, "Where is St. Martin's Academy?" Thus, as the library is made available to the general public, staff are prepared to answer enquiries on any subject.
6.1.1.2 Sources

The sources used in answering the enquiries can be seen in Table 11.

Table 11: Sources used at the IEE Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lending books</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directories</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journals/periodicals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Datafiles/databases</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferences/minutes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlases/maps</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own prepared resources</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstracts/indexes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalogue/OPAC</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referrals</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fetching from stores</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The list of source categories is fairly short in length. However this may be because the sample of enquiries taken was small.

It can be seen that the most commonly used source was the OPAC. A CAIRS system has been in use at the IEE since 1990 (2). Both the book and periodicals catalogue are accessible through this system.
Directories were also used in 17.6% of the cases. Those directories that were used include a Trade Associations Directory, The Electrical and Electronics Trade Directory, World of Learning, Directory of European Professional and Learned Societies, The Computer User Yearbook and The Software Users Yearbook. These were generally used to answer factual queries such as requests for telephone numbers and addresses of organisations.

Referrals were also made on six occasions. Of these, four were 'internal' to other parts of the IEE. Two were referred to the technical information unit, for reasons stated in the previous section. The other two were to the sales department and registration. It is interesting to note that libraries within larger organisations seem to get many queries that should be directed to other sections. This is probably because the library is often the one visible section that the public sees and hence directs all their enquiries towards. The remaining two referrals were to the Engineering Council and the BSI (as a standard was required).

Figure 31 shows that 'printed' sources were used most frequently. Computerised sources however, feature quite strongly (nine of these being the OPAC and one being a CD-ROM search). Referrals make up the whole of the 'personal' category. Perhaps not surprisingly no questions were answered by a staff member's own knowledge - especially as the library staff are not required to be qualified in electrical engineering. The 'none used' slice represents those queries that required staff to fetch books from the stores. Finally, it is of note to mention that 28 of these queries could be sufficiently answered from one source, while three queries were satisfied by two sources.
6.1.2 THE IEE TECHNICAL INFORMATION UNIT (TIU)

The TIU provides a well established and fast information service with over 95% of enquiries answered within 24 hours (3). The Unit provides online access to over 1,000 of the world's major technical and business databases (4). In addition the staff have developed their own in-house database on sales, forecasts and market shares.

The Unit can be divided into two specialist areas and one brokerage service. The specialist divisions are the Public Affairs Board Information Unit (which acts as the 'mouthpiece' of the IEE to influence Government and other bodies) and the Courses Information Service (which supports the professional development requirements of the Institution). The brokerage service provides information which is either free or charged for. Generally the free service consists of enquiries that take less than 10 minutes to answer. Often a quick search is done and perhaps an abstract provided. Other searches are generally charged for. These are available to all but there are differential rates for members and non-members. Prices also vary according to length of enquiry and whether the search is conducted manually or online.

Five full-time and two part-time staff run the service. Each of these perform other duties as well as answering enquiries. For example, a fortnightly current awareness bulletin is produced which is sent to Board and Committee members. Staff also create subject bibliographies which are edited from INSPEC (the Institution's Information Service for the Physics and Engineering Communities) and made available for sale. These have proved to be very popular as sales of bibliographies increased by 83% over the 1991/92 period (5). Finally staff have to keep up-to-date with the latest developments so that their
professional knowledge can be maintained. Thus much time is spent reading current journals and newspapers.

A log is only made of the longer enquiries. For example, in 1993, the brokerage service recorded 2,779 free enquiries and 329 'charged for' enquiries. Staff suggest that these figures should be multiplied by ten for an estimate of all enquiries. This illustrates that many enquiries asked at information centres are never recorded. During the same year, 104 enquiries were logged in the Public Affairs Board and 541 in the Courses Information Service.

6.1.2.1 Enquiries

Twenty TIU enquiries were logged between 9.30-5pm (minus half an hour over the lunch period) on Wednesday 4th May, 1994. This total includes mainly enquiries to the brokerage service, although one was directed at the Courses Information service. The sample day chosen was felt to be particularly quiet, although it is impossible to predict the number of enquiries likely to be asked on any given day. However, staff felt that seasonal factors have a great effect, with the service being particularly busy after Christmas. Monday is also generally a busy day with Friday being much quieter.

On the sample day there were three staff answering the enquiries. Each of these had a library and/or information qualification and two had a first degree in a science subject. Staff felt that experience 'on the job' is an important factor in answering the queries efficiently. Thus it was found that the staff answering had two, five and 11 years experience respectively.

As can be seen from Figure 32, enquiries appeared to take longer to answer than those received in the library (see
section 6.1.1.1). The median class being 4-6 minutes. One enquiry took over 60 minutes to answer. Here the enquirer wanted material on the "status of engineers in Japan". This involved an extensive search of periodicals.

From Figure 33 it can be seen that 75% of the enquiries logged were received by telephone. The service has a national reputation and therefore many 'practitioners' telephone from other parts of the country for information. There were two 'letter' enquiries. These were both from students asking for material for projects. Apparently such letters are quite common. Only limited help is given in reply (such as references to relevant books) as students are encouraged to do their own work. Finally it is of interest to note that one query was received by fax. This is something that did not occur during the sample days at the public libraries.

It can be seen from Figure 34 that most of the queries were either fact or material finding. Author/title enquiries were the least common, presumably because they are generally dealt with by library staff. The directional and administrative enquiries recorded, mainly concerned the prices of booklists, searches and so on.

When type was cross-tabulated with time it was found that directional and administrative queries took the shortest time to answer, with most taking less than a minute. Material finding enquiries took the longest time to answer having a modal time period of 7-15 minutes. The one author/title enquiry asked, took 20 minutes to answer. Here a Department of Employment document was requested which took a great deal of time to locate.
6.1.2.2 Sources

Table 12 shows the sources used to answer the enquiries.

Table 12: Sources used at the IEE TIU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Directories</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journals/periodicals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Databases</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff knowledge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalogue/OPAC</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referrals</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet (suggested)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this it can be seen that referrals and directories were used most frequently. The referrals were made to the Electricity Association, the National Inspection Council, the British Computer Society and the International Telecommunications Union.

Of the four directories used, two were an IEE publication - *The Electrical and Electronic Trades Directory*. In addition two of the three databases used were internal. Thus these sources could have been classed as 'own prepared resources'.

The Internet was suggested as a source to one enquirer. Here the caller wanted some information on a new organisation that has been set up in America. This had occurred too recently to appear in the periodicals. Therefore it was thought that the Internet may be one of the only possible sources.
When looking at the formats of the sources used (see Figure 35) - it is interesting to note the majority are 'computerised' (three of these being the OPAC, three being online databases and one being the Internet). This is perhaps not surprising in an organisation such as the IEE. Of the 'personal' section, four were referrals whilst just one was staff knowledge. This was to answer whether a course was accredited by the Institution. Finally, 16 enquiries were satisfied by one source, whilst one needed two sources for a satisfactory answer.
6.2 ROYAL PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN (RPSGB)

The RPSGB was founded in 1841. Since then it has grown into a worldwide body representing nearly 38,000 pharmacists working in the community, industry, the hospital service and academia (6). All registered pharmacists are members and therefore take on the obligations and privileges of such membership.

The Society is entrusted with the administration and enforcement of certain parts of the law relating to pharmacy and medicines. Thus it is always consulted when changes are to be made to legislation affecting pharmacy. The RPSGB is also directly concerned with the quality assurance of the education of pharmacists at all levels. To fulfil this role, the Pharmaceutical Journal (a weekly publication aimed to make pharmacists aware of developments affecting the profession) and many other reference books are published by the Society. In addition, both a library and a technical information service are based at the headquarters of the RPSGB in London. Two days were spent logging the enquiries received at each of these. The samples collected will be discussed separately.

6.2.1 THE RPSGB LIBRARY

The RPSGB has "one of the leading libraries of pharmacy in the world with over 65,000 books, manuscripts and pamphlets comprising works on pharmacy, materia medica, pharmacology, chemistry, botany and allied subjects" (7). The library also subscribes to over 500 periodical titles including 290 foreign pharmaceutical journals (8).

The service is open for public reference with lending rights available for members. Thus a great variety of visitors use the library including members from all
branches of pharmacy, students, foreign scholars, the media and so on. In addition, staff based at the headquarters, working on the Society's own publications, use the library extensively.

Three staff run the library. Two of these have a formal library qualification. None however has a degree in pharmacy. Each of the staff has a desk in the public area of the library. Therefore enquiries can be directed to any of them, whilst they are performing other duties.

6.2.1.1 Enquiries

A total sample of 55 enquiries was logged on Tuesday, 3rd May 1994 and Friday, 6th May 1994. Staff do not generally keep a log of the enquiries that they receive throughout the day. However, they felt that the days chosen were particularly quiet. This may have been for several reasons including the fact that it was the week containing the May Day Holiday. Also students make little use of the library at this time of year.

The 'length' of the enquiries recorded in the sample varied greatly. This can be seen by Figure 36. Here, it can be seen that the modal time period to answer queries was 1-3 minutes. However, the median period was found to be 4-6 minutes.

One enquiry took over sixty minutes to answer. This was one of the longest enquiries recorded in the project. The enquirer wanted a particular annual report traced from 1960 to the present day. This took some time to find and more time to ensure that the correct years were available. The enquiry was received by telephone which meant that time had to be spent contacting the enquirer after the material had been found.
When 'mode' was considered, it was found that over half of the enquiries were asked by telephone. This can be seen in Figure 37. The members of the RPSGB are spread throughout the whole country and indeed the world. Therefore the library has attempted to market itself as being able to cater for those not resident in London. For example, it implements a postal photocopying service and issues books by post. In this way, pharmacists are also encouraged to phone the library with other enquiries that they might have.

Fifteen of the enquiries were asked in person. However, seven of these were asked 'internally' by staff from the building. Such staff carry out research necessary for the Society's publications. Therefore they rely on assistance from the library.

Letter enquiries made up 16% of the total. In particular, these seemed to be requests for non-urgent information. Typically the letter enquiries were from retired pharmacists (perhaps researching the history of pharmacy), students and members of the public.

Finally two enquiries were received by fax. These were requests for more urgent information. Staff suggested that this 'mode' is used predominantly by hospitals or by the industry. A fax machine was installed in the library in 1993. This has encouraged more enquiries to be asked via this 'mode'. Before, there was a delay in the library receiving the fax from the central administration.

'Type' of enquiry will now be discussed. From Figure 38, it can be seen that fact finding enquiries were the most common. Some of these were facts needed on the subject of pharmacy. However several seemed to concern matters about the functions of the Society as a professional body. For example, one enquirer wanted to know whether there was a
"Quality Group in the RPSGB". Another member had paid an OAP fee but had not received a voting paper. Thus he wondered whether this was correct. Such enquiries may be received as the library is one of the 'public faces' of the Society. That is, members unsure of which departments to contact, may prefer to ask at the library first.

Material finding requests were the next most common. Many of these were asked by telephone. Here, enquirers asked for the library staff to find material on particular topics - as they themselves could not come in to browse the shelves. In this way, they made use of the postal photocopy and book loan services.

There were eleven author/title requests on the sample days. Many enquirers were searching for particular works in pharmacy. These enquirers were generally pharmacists who did not live in London or near to a pharmacy school. Also, there were many enquiries as to whether certain periodical titles were held. Much of the Society's collection is not available elsewhere. This places a great deal of demand upon some titles.

Finally, there were nine directional and administrative queries. These covered a variety of matters. For example, one non-member wanted to know if he could consult the Society's archives. Another enquirer wished to know about the cost of CD-ROM searching.

Type of enquiry was then cross-tabulated with time. The modal time to answer material requests was found to be 4-6 minutes. However, the modal time period for all the other types of enquiry was found to be 1-3 minutes.

The subject of the enquiries recorded at the RPSGB was not analysed. This being because all had their basis in the subject of pharmacy. However, two could be classed as
'family history' enquiries. These were from members of the public wishing to trace ancestors whom they knew to be pharmacists. Therefore they consulted the RPSGB for any information available in the archives or in any of the old registers.

6.2.1.2 Sources

The sources used in answering the enquiries received at the Society's library can be seen in Table 13.

Table 13: Sources used at the RPSGB Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Frequency of use</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lending books</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directories</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journals/periodicals</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferences/minutes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlases/maps</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own prepared resources</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff knowledge</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalogue/OPAC</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliographies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referrals</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this it can be seen that journals and periodicals were used most frequently. This emphasises the importance of journals in the field. Books in science tend to be out-of-date as soon as they are made available. However, journals
are more likely to contain up-to-date information. Indeed there is much pressure upon the editors of such media, to ensure that their publisher is the first in the field to disseminate a discovery.

Staff knowledge seems to be particularly high as it was used in 17.0% of the cases. This may seem surprising as none of the library staff have a pharmacy qualification. However this category was increased during the sample period because an open day for librarians in pharmacy was being organised by the Society. Therefore there were several enquiries concerning this matter. Also, staff knowledge was used to answer general questions about the functions of the RPSGB (see section 6.2.1.1).

Referrals were made on seven occasions. Five of these were to the Museum of the RPSGB. This is closely connected to the library. Indeed the staff of the museum use the library resources to answer any of the more historical enquiries. The other referrals were to a colleague at the headquarters (for some Society guidelines) and to the Science Reference Information Service (for some bibliographical checking).

Figure 39 shows that printed formats were used predominantly. Indeed 'computer' sources were only used in 9% of the cases. These were all the OPAC which is accessible on the Soutron Library System. CD-ROM searching is available but was not used to answer enquiries on the sample days. Finally, there were 16 'personal' sources used - seven being referrals and nine being staff knowledge.

In 42 of the cases the enquiry could be satisfied by one source. However, one needed two sources to provide the answer. In addition, three material requests required three sources. For example, three different journals were
used to provide information on "the side effects experienced with herbal remedies".

6.2.2 THE RPSGB TECHNICAL INFORMATION SERVICE

The office of the Technical Information Service is situated within the library of the RPSGB. On the sample days it was manned by three qualified pharmacists. One of these also has an information science qualification. Another is currently studying for this qualification on day release.

Staff have estimated that the service receives more than 18,000 enquiries per annum (9). Approximately 75% of these are from members employed in all branches of pharmacy (10). Some are from pharmacists working at other information centres. For example, a survey at the South Western regional drug information centre revealed that the Society was used for "formulation inquiries" (11). The remainder of the enquiries originate from allied professions, non-pharmaceutical firms, libraries, the media and members of the public.

The enquiries cover a wide range of matters including, "drug usage, adverse drug reactions and interactions, equivalents to foreign drugs, investigational drugs and old formulations" (12). Staff will also trace references on clinical aspects and on current affairs in pharmacy practice. Such enquiries cannot be easily answered by the library staff who have no pharmacy qualifications (see section 6.2.1). Indeed, it could be potentially dangerous for them to do so and could lower the esteem of the Society as a professional body.
6.2.2.1 **Enquiries**

A total sample of 107 enquiries was logged on the sample days (a Tuesday and a Thursday in May 1994). The enquiries were collected during the opening hours of the service, 9-5pm. This sample was one of the more difficult to collect due to the complexity of some of the enquiries that were asked. Often these were received simultaneously by different information pharmacists. However, fairly accurate results were gained as additional help was found from records kept by the staff.

The time taken to answer the enquiries can be seen in Figure 40. This shows that there were no enquiries that took less than one minute to answer. Such a result is unique to the information service of the RPSGB. Thus there is an indication of long enquiries, perhaps because of their technical nature. The modal time period was found to be 1-3 minutes, whilst the median time period was 4-6 minutes.

All of the enquiries were received by telephone. Staff suggested that this was quite normal as the enquiries often result from matters arising in the workplace of professionals. Thus they will not travel into London to ask the question in person and will want a reply faster than that possible by letter. An example of such an enquiry occurred when a locum pharmacist telephoned the service wanting to know why "a doctor was not prescribing the drug diconal".

However, the technical information service does sometimes receive letter enquiries which are mainly from non-members. Often these are from students of all levels. Here, limited help is given and the heuristic nature of project work is stressed. In addition, the information pharmacists will aid some of the library users if drug information is
required. This is typically those questions that require more pharmacy knowledge than that possessed by the library staff.

The results found when 'type' of enquiry was analysed can be seen in Figure 41. From this it can be seen that fact finding enquiries were by far the most common. These were often requests for UK equivalents to foreign drugs. Other frequent questions included tablet identification and requests for the telephone numbers of pharmaceutical companies and organisations. The modal time period to answer fact finding enquiries was found to be 4-6 minutes.

Material finding queries were the next most common. These were often from pharmacists involved in research. For example, material was requested on subjects such as "wound management", "child poisoning" and the "cost of non-compliance". The requests were not exclusively from researchers. For example, one practitioner wanted material on "how to open a pharmacy". This type of enquiry had two modal time periods as 13 questions took 1-3 minutes to answer and 13 took 4-6 minutes to answer. The longest query in the sample was material finding. This took 30 minutes to answer and was an historical question on "blister packs".

There were 12 author/title enquiries. These generally took the shortest time to answer (the modal time period being 1-3 minutes). Often these enquiries could have been answered by the library staff but were put through to the information services, perhaps because the library telephones were engaged. Some however were requests for leaflets that are produced by other departments of the Society.

Two of the enquiries were classed as miscellaneous. One of these was a complaint about a pharmacist which had to be
referred to the Law Department. The other was a telephone call to the "Martindale Online Help Desk". This is situated in the information office. Martindale Online is a computerised drug databank produced by the RPSGB. Although the information pharmacists did not create the databank they use it frequently in their work. Therefore they are well qualified to give advice to those subscribing to the service.

Finally, it is of note to mention that there were no directional and administrative enquiries asked. This was the only case study where such a result occurred. However, it is likely that all of these enquiries were directed towards the library staff.

The subjects of the enquiries asked were not analysed, as all were pharmacy related. A pharmacist may have divided the enquiries into categories such as, "dosage", "adverse effects", "identification", "storage" and so on. This was done in the study at the South Western regional drug information centre (13). However, such divisions are outside the boundaries of this project and require more technical knowledge.
6.2.2.2 **Sources**

The types of sources used to answer the enquiries received at the technical information service can be seen in Table 14.

**Table 14: Sources used at the RPSGB Technical Information Service**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Frequency of use</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject reference works</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proprietary books</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lending books</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directories</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journals/periodicals</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaflets/posters</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers/cuttings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Datafiles/databases</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own prepared resources</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff knowledge</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstracts/indexes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalogue/OPAC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referrals</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this it can be seen that 'own prepared resources' were used most frequently. Included in this category is the service's card index. Thirty journals are scanned regularly by the staff which has enabled over 500,000 references to be indexed under a multitude of subject
headings (14). The system has recently been developed into a computerised database. The database is far more powerful than its manual equivalent and is a valuable source on pharmacy practice.

The 'own prepared resources' category also includes publications prepared by other staff at the RPSGB. For example, *Martindale: The Extra Pharmacopoeia* is used frequently by the service in hard copy and in computerised form (see section 6.2.2.1). The 30th edition was published by the RPSGB in 1993 and received worldwide recognition. Indeed Holloway has said that, "As a source of drug information it is as authoritative and comprehensive as the *Oxford English Dictionary* is for the English Language" (15).

Referrals were made on 21 occasions. Eleven of these were made internally to other sections of the Society. For example, calls were transferred to the library, the Law Department, Registration and so on. Three referrals were made to drug manufacturers. These were regarding queries on the availability of certain drugs. Other referrals were to other pharmacy organisations such as the National Pharmaceutical Association and the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine.

Databases were used in answering 18 enquiries. However, this category could be larger if the service's own database and *Martindale Online* were included. The other databases used by the staff are *Drug Launch*, *Medline* and *International Pharmaceutical Abstracts*. These are all held on CD-ROM.

Proprietary books were used in 18 cases. These are held at the Society for a multitude of different countries. Thus lists of drugs patented in other countries can be found.
Such information is needed in answering the enquiries on equivalents to foreign drugs.

Finally, journals and periodicals were used frequently. This result is similar to that found in the RPSGB library (see section 6.2.1.2). The most common journals used were the Pharmaceutical Journal, the Chemist and Druggist, the Lancet and the British Medical Journal. Staff of the service scan these each week and therefore are aware of their contents.

The formats of the sources used can be seen in Figure 42. This indicates that 51% were used in the 'printed' form. However computerised sources were used on 40 occasions (that is, in 31% of the cases). Twenty of these were the service's own database, 18 were other CD-ROMs and two were the OPAC. 'Personal' sources were used in answering on 23 occasions - 21 of these being referrals and two being staff knowledge.

Finally, 89 of the enquiries were satisfied by one source. However, 12 needed two sources whilst six needed three sources before satisfactory answers were obtained. Some of these enquiries required verification from additional sources as important and precise information was required.
REFERENCES

1 The Institution of Electrical Engineers. *Learned society,* 1993, p. [1].


3 The Institution of Electrical Engineers. *Information services,* 1993, p. [3].


5 Ibid., p. [4].


7 Ibid., p. 423.

8 Ibid., p. 423.


10 Ibid. p. [1].


12 The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, ref. 9, p. [1].

13 McNulty, ref. 11, p. 759.
14 The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, ref. 9, p. [1].

15 Holloway, ref. 6, p. 422.
FIGURE 29: Length of enquiry - IEE Library

- <1 minute: 4
- 1-3 mins: 28
- 4-6 mins: 12
- 7-15 mins: 5
- 16-30 mins: 2
- 31-60 mins: 1
FIGURE 30: Type of enquiry - IEE Library

- Directional/admin: 21
- Author/title: 11
- Fact: 11
- Material: 9
FIGURE 31: Format of sources - IEE Library

- Print: 6%
- Computer: 47%
- Personal: 29%
- None used: 18%
FIGURE 32: Length of enquiry - IEE TIU

- <1 minute: 2
- 1-3 mins: 5
- 4-6 mins: 5
- 7-15 mins: 5
- 16-30 mins: 1
- 31-60 mins: 1
- Over 60 mins: 1
FIGURE 33: Mode of enquiry - IEE TIU
FIGURE 34: Type of enquiry - IEE TIU
FIGURE 35: Format of sources - IEE TIU
FIGURE 36: Length of enquiry - RPSGB Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Interval</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1 minute</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 mins</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 mins</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-15 mins</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-30 mins</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-60 mins</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 60 mins</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURE 37: Mode of enquiry - RPSGB Library

- 53% Letter
- 27% Telephone
- 16% Fax
- 4% Person
FIGURE 38: Type of enquiry - RPSGB Library
FIGURE 39: Format of sources - RPSGB Library

- Print: 61%
- Computer: 30%
- Personal: 9%
FIGURE 40: Length of enquiry - RPSGB Technical Information Service

- <1 minute: 0
- 1-3 mins: 47
- 4-6 mins: 44
- 7-15 mins: 14
- 16-30 mins: 2
FIGURE 41: Type of enquiry - RPSGB Technical Information Service
FIGURE 42: Format of sources - RPSGB Technical Information Service
CHAPTER 7 : CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 CONCLUSIONS

This study was concerned with the large numbers of enquiries that are asked at different types of information centres. These enquiries are on very varied topics which demand the usage of a wide range of sources. Users have many information needs to be met; some having several to be satisfied during their one visit to the library.

Answering enquiries is not a task confined to the staff of reference sections. Indeed, it can be seen from the results that staff at other service points in public and special libraries also devote time to reference work. This being in addition to the other duties that they perform.

7.1.1 RECORDS OF THE ENQUIRIES KEPT BY THE INFORMATION CENTRES

It was found that most of the information services studied (the one exception being the library at the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain - RPSGB) keep some sort of record of the enquiries that they receive. These records vary greatly according to the way in which enquiry data is collected. Therefore it would be virtually impossible to make across library comparisons of the case studies using their records alone.

First, there are differences in the time periods when the logs are collected. For example, Westminster Reference Library and Yeovil Tourist Information Centre (TIC) count every enquiry made each day. However, Yeovil Reference Library only counts the enquiries made during sample weeks which are conducted quarterly.
There are arguments supporting each method of collection. Principally, a daily count ensures that external factors such as school holidays, adverse weather conditions and so on can be included. Therefore an annual figure may be more complete. However, sample weeks allow more detail to be obtained (which would be too time consuming to collect throughout the year). Concentrating on one week may discourage staff from simply estimating a daily figure from past experience. Yeovil's sample week (conducted during the week prior to this study) certainly produced similar results to those analysed for this research (see section 3.1), particularly with regards to the volume of enquiries received.

There are also differences in what is recorded at each information centre. None of the records allow for as much detail as that collected for this study. In addition, each place includes different elements in their records. For example, Yeovil TIC takes account of the enquirer—assessing them as being either 'locals' or 'tourists'. Definitions vary too, as some centres do not record certain enquiries. For example, the Technical Information Unit (TIU) at the Institution of Electrical Engineers (IEE) only records the longer queries that are asked. Westminster Reference Library however counts all questions asked at the enquiry desk.

The main factor affecting the provision and accuracy of enquiry counts of individual libraries seems to be time. Indeed, the time needed to make correct records is not always available in busy libraries. For example, Westminster Reference Library has large volumes of enquirers who often have to queue for information. Therefore there is no time to record queries between dealing with different users. The result found in this survey was an underestimation in their recording of the volume of enquiries asked.
Time is also limited in those libraries (such as lending libraries) that provide other services, as well as answering enquiries. User surveys conducted in Westminster lending libraries (1) show that the majority of people visiting their libraries are there to return or borrow books. However, users do also approach staff with reference enquiries. Statistics on all the activities are prepared but limited time means that reference enquiries are recorded in less detail. In addition statistics on book loans are more easily prepared due to automated library systems.

This study allowed for standardised results to be obtained. As an independent observer there was time to collect the information in a more accurate fashion. Thus comparisons could be made of the results across libraries. These will now be summarised.

7.1.2 ACROSS LIBRARY COMPARISONS OF ENQUIRIES

Comparisons have been made across libraries according to the length of answer, mode of enquiring, type of enquiry and subject of enquiry. It was not expected to find great similarities between the seven information services studied. Indeed the results of this research demonstrate that substantial differences were found.

7.1.2.1 Length of enquiry

The results indicate that the shortest enquiries were recorded at Queen's Park library. Here, most queries took under one minute to answer. The enquiries asked at the special libraries seemed to take the longest time to answer. Both of the special libraries had a median time period of 4-6 minutes. This being longer than that found
in the other cases studied. In addition, the RPSGB and the IEE had the two longest enquiries recorded in the sample.

Reasons for such results are due to the complexity of the enquiries asked. Many queries asked at a special library need more attention than those asked at a small public lending library. Furthermore, the special libraries studied are there to serve their fee paying members. More assistance is expected from these members who wish to receive a 'return' on their membership fees.

7.1.2.2 Mode of enquiry

The results for 'mode' of enquiry also divide the special libraries from the others in the sample. This is because the enquiries at these specialised information units were predominantly asked by telephone (except at the IEE library). In addition, the IEE TIU and the RPSGB library received a proportionally higher number of letter and fax enquiries than the other case studies. Such results reflect the fact that both these bodies are serving non-local members who often cannot visit the library. Also they are used frequently by practitioners in their workplaces.

In the remaining cases, most enquiries were asked in person. The Somerset libraries received a proportionally lower number of telephone calls than the Westminster libraries. As expected, enquiries from children occurred almost exclusively in the public lending libraries. Seemingly school children (particularly of primary school age) approached the local lending library rather than visited a central reference library for the information they needed.
7.1.2.3 Type of enquiry

The results according to 'type' of enquiry suggest that fact finding enquiries dominated in Wincanton library, Yeovil TIC, the IEE's TIU and the RPSGB's library and information service. That is, those information centres involved in tourist information and the special libraries. Author/title enquiries however, were predominant on the Art and Design floor of Westminster Reference Library.

Directional and administrative enquiries dominated in the remainder of the case studies. A great deal of time is therefore spent in directing users to parts of the collection or in answering routine matters. Such questions make limited call on the skills of a professional librarian. However, it seems that they are frequently and genuinely asked by users. Thus the answers are an important aspect of the service provided.

7.1.2.4 Subject of enquiry

The classification used to analyse enquiries by subject raised three main issues. First, enquiries on 'business and commerce' were very frequently asked at both the reference libraries. However, such questions were among the least common at the two public lending libraries. This then is a result similar to that discussed by the Information Services Group of the Library Association (2) (see section 2.2).

Next, 'community information' was requested very frequently at both the public lending libraries. The provision of such information is therefore an important part of their service. Information on the community was often required at Yeovil Reference Library too. Yet, this was not the case at Westminster Reference Library. The result seems to reflect the location and clientele of both the libraries.
That is, the area surrounding Yeovil library is largely residential whereas this is not the case at Westminster.

Finally, tourist information must be considered. It is interesting to note that enquiries in this area were among the least common to be asked at Yeovil Reference Library. However, Yeovil TIC (situated nearby) received a huge volume of enquiries. Therefore it would seem that the queries are directed to the correct information service in Yeovil. In this way there is not much wasteful duplication in information provision.

7.1.3 ACROSS LIBRARY COMPARISONS OF SOURCES USED

The sources used in answering the enquiries will now be considered. Here, some definite trends began to emerge. For instance, in both the reference libraries there was frequent use of the catalogue and directories, and frequent referrals. The catalogue is obviously a much needed tool in finding stock to satisfy enquiries. In addition, there are many different directories which are invaluable to the reference librarian. Finally, the large number of referrals made may reflect the rather specialised nature of some of the enquiries asked. Several went beyond the boundaries of the information held in these libraries. However, virtually no question was regarded as being 'unanswerable' as some help was given - even if only a suggestion as to where the information may be obtainable from.

In both the public lending libraries staff relied heavily on their knowledge and on the lending material to answer enquiries. Staff knowledge was used particularly to answer local queries. The use of lending books enabled the enquirer to satisfy their information needs away from the library. This was particularly useful for children doing school projects.
The cases where tourist information was provided, mainly used leaflets and posters. This result is not too surprising. No clear trends emerged with the sources used at the special libraries. However, all made frequent referrals - many of which were to other departments within the organisation. In addition, the RPSGB library and technical information service both used journals frequently in order to satisfy requests.

Finally, it is of interest to note the formats of the sources used. Change from printed materials to other formats is obviously occurring. Many of the traditional book-based reference materials are now being published in other formats. However, the speed of this change must not be exaggerated. Indeed from the results it would appear that "books are still seen by many as primary sources in libraries and information centres" (3). All but one of the case studies used predominantly printed sources to answer their enquiries. The one exception was the IEE's TIU where most queries were answered from computer databases. This may be because of the profession that the IEE supports. Yet, in this study it would appear that the special libraries are leading the way in adopting computerised sources. For example, the technical information service of the RPSGB is certainly also answering many enquiries from computer databases.

7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.2.1 SIGNPOSTING AND LIBRARY TOURS

There are several recommendations that could be made, all of which need further research. First, section 7.1.2.3 highlights the prevalence of directional and administrative enquiries. Perhaps many of these could be anticipated by clearer systems of signs and notices. In addition, library
tours could be organised so that users can make better use of the sources without needing to ask questions.

However, research in the individual cases would have to be conducted before any action was taken. This is because the staff at some of the libraries studied, felt that many users ignore the existing signs. That is, they prefer to ask anyway, perhaps because they do not wish to waste any time or they feel the need for 'expert' help. Tours would also be difficult to implement at places such as Westminster Reference Library because of the large numbers of users involved. Many of these are not regular users and may only visit the library spasmodically.

7.2.2 EXPERT SYSTEMS

Another recommendation could be the use of expert systems. An expert system seeks "to embody within a computer the knowledge and decision-making skills of a human expert in a particular 'domain'" (4). That is, a user's enquiry could be answered by non-human means. Seemingly, at present such systems are restricted to quite small "domains". For example, they can be designed to answer questions on very narrow subject fields such as 'gardening'. It appears unlikely that any existing expert system could cope with the range of queries received in the case studies of this project (although they could be designed to answer directional and administrative enquiries in individual libraries). In addition, research needs to be done to see whether users would appreciate this method of solving their information needs. Indeed there are those that "believe it is impossible for machines to solve problems the way humans do" (5). Some users would also miss the social contact that they as present receive from the staff of their local library.
7.2.3 **SELF SERVICE**

It would be interesting for the libraries to see how many users can satisfy their own enquiries without asking for help. Obviously in busy libraries, some users will not want to queue and thus decide to 'make do' with their own skills of information retrieval. The success of such actions are not easy to record without questioning the users directly. This idea has been incorporated into the standardized national questionnaire that the CIPFA Library Statistics Working Party has been considering (6).

7.2.4 **PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE OF STAFF**

Finally, a further study may wish to take account of the professional expertise of staff. It was observed that experience is of great value when conducting reference work. Indeed, this may affect the length of time taken to answer an enquiry. For example, an experienced professional may direct the user straight to a relevant source, whereas another staff member may have to consult some secondary sources first.

These recommendations are intended as topics for further research to promote future improvements. They are not meant to belittle the reference services that already exist. Indeed the observations made suggest that a wide variety of enquiries and requests for help are being met by a service which is vital in the provision of information to modern society.
REFERENCES


5 Ibid., p. 144.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Lea, Peter and Lotta Jackson. The exception or the rule? The quality of the reference service in public libraries. Library Association Record, 1988, 90(10), 582-585.


APPENDIX 1

ITEMS INCLUDED IN THE CIPFA DEFINITION
THE CIPFA ENQUIRY COUNT

INCLUDED ARE:

1. All requests for information from published, unpublished, personal and organisational resources.

2. Enquiries leading to assistance of users in the use of the library catalogue or bibliographical aids.

3. Membership interviews involving description of library services available.

4. Assistance in library use (i.e. informal, non-programmed instruction in library use)

5. Directional enquiries relating to sources external to the library.

6. Recent request for bibliographical information - e.g. a subject request which then results in a book request.

EXCLUDED ARE:

1. Directional enquiries within the library, i.e. usually relating to the location of individual areas of bookstock, catalogue or special services. These would become enquiries when it is necessary to leave the enquiry desk to show the book stock to the reader or where a more lengthy description of the library service is required.

2. Requests for library stationery and items for sale i.e. book and periodical request forms, publications and carrier bags.

Source: CIPFA
## Library: Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enquiry</th>
<th>Mode T/E/P/F</th>
<th>Resource used (no answer or referral)</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>1st 2nd enq</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Where could I find some war time cake recipes?</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Cookery</td>
<td>2 mins</td>
<td>1-st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Market data wanted on multimedia integrated circuits.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Internal database &amp; PTS PROMT</td>
<td>60 mins</td>
<td>1-st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Information wanted on a founder member of the RPSGB.</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Referred to Museum of RPSGB.</td>
<td>1 min</td>
<td>1-st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. When is Easter in 1995?</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Whitaker's Almanack</td>
<td>3 mins</td>
<td>1-st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Do you have any information on Longest Safari Park?</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Tourist Information Leaflet</td>
<td>1 min</td>
<td>1-st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Where is the nearest swimming pool?</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Personal Knowledge</td>
<td>1 min</td>
<td>Sub</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Library**

**Date:**

**Time:**

**No. of staff answering:**
Help with photocopier:
am
pm
evening

Change / card for photocopier:
am
pm
evening

Directions to toilet:
am
pm
evening

Stationery request:
am
pm
evening

Opening hours:
am
pm
evening

Qualifications of staff:
APPENDIX 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA
Date:
Library:

Length of enquiry
< 1 minute
1-3 minutes
4-6 minutes
7-15 minutes
16-30 minutes
31-60 minutes
Over 60 minutes

Mode
Person - Adult
- Child

Telephone
Letter
Fax

Initial / subsequent
1st
sub

Types of enquiry
Directional/admin
Author/title
Fact finding
Material finding
Research
Misc.
Subject of enquiry
Arts, humanities and social sciences
Law and Government
Business and commerce
Science and technology
Environment and nature
Health and welfare
Education and careers
Family history
Electoral roll
Local history
Community and local matters (incl Local Government)
Hobbies and leisure
Tourist and travel
Geographical and map request
Telephone and postcode
Other and general
Sources

Types of sources

Primary
Subject reference works
Lending books
Directories
Journals/periodicals
Timetables
Leaflets/posters
Newspapers/cuttings
Standards
Reports
Datafiles/databases (e.g. electoral roll, census data, statistics)
Dictionaries
Encyclopedias
Conferences/minutes
Atlases/maps
Theses/dissertations
Own/locally/council etc. prepared resources
Staff knowledge

Secondary
Abstracts/indexes
Catalogue/OPAC
Bibliographies
Referrals

Tertiary
Reviews

None
-Fetching from stores
Formats of sources

Print

Audiovisual

Microform

Computer  -OPAC
            -CD-ROM
            -Online

Personal  -Individual
          -Referred

None used

Number of sources used per enquiry

1
2
3
4
5
APPENDIX 5

SURVEY OF REFERENCE LIBRARY USE - YEOVIL

(used with the permission of Yeovil Reference Library)
Survey of Reference Library Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AM</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>PM</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>EVENING</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>5+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUSINESS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATION</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVIRONMENT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEALTH &amp; WELFARE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAW</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCAL HISTORY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCAL MATTERS (including Councils)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAPS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TELEPHONE &amp; POSTCODE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELECTORAL ROLL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CL/198
APPENDIX 6

CORE REFERENCE COLLECTION - SOMERSET LIBRARIES

(used with the permission of Yeovil Reference Library)
Core Reference Collection

Items held in every branch

Titles published annually, if not bought for every branch, will be circulated according to patterns set out in the Standing Order list. New editions of other titles will be purchased in response to requests from Area Librarians.

New editions

032.02  Guinness Book of Records
032.02  Whitaker's Almanack
T282.423  Bath & Wells Diocesan Directory
314.2  Key Data
912.42  OS Landranger 1:50,000 maps of local area

British Rail Timetable
National Express Timetable
Somerset & Avon Street Plans (Red Book) – C2 w.d. 1993
Electoral Register for immediate locality
Telephone Directories – South West Region & London
Postcode Books – Taunton District and Bath, Bristol & District

No more than one edition old

300.5  Statesman's Yearbook
331.702  Occupations

Recent editions

032  Encyclopaedia
069.025  Museums & Galleries in Great Britain
361.763  Charities Digest
423  English language dictionary
503  Science & technology dictionary
610.3  Black's Medical Dictionary
745.1  Miller's Antiques Price Guide
769.56  Stanley Gibbons Stamps of the World
769.569  Stanley Gibbons British Commonwealth Stamp Catalogue
808.02  Writers' & Artists' Yearbook
808.882  Dictionary of quotations
912  World atlas
912.41  UK Road atlas
914.1  Historic Houses, Castles & Gardens
920.02  Biographical dictionary
920.041  Who's Who
941.085  Britain – an official handbook

Children's titles

C032  Encyclopaedia
C032.02  Factfinder
C912  World atlas
C920.02  Biographical dictionary
APPENDIX 7

COMMUNITY ENQUIRY COUNT - QUEEN'S PARK LIBRARY

(used with the permission of the Community Information Service - Westminster Libraries)
Please use a five bar gate system to mark each enquiry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENQUIRY WORK</th>
<th>9th Monday</th>
<th>10th Tuesday</th>
<th>11th Wednesday</th>
<th>12th Thursday</th>
<th>13th Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing rights</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estate offices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Security</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding a job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights at work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redundancy or dismissal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College or university courses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student grants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money and debt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income tax</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer rights</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration or nationality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce or separation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services for disabled people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement and old age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights in the NHS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with the police</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with solicitors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public transport in London</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under fives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>