Are community managed libraries sustainable?

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A dissertation submitted to Aberystwyth University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MSc under Alternative Regulations.

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2017

Abstract

This paper explores the sustainability of community managed libraries (CMLs) in England. The literature review examines the context in which CMLs have become an option for the delivery of library services. It reveals that relatively little is known about CMLs and more research needs to be done to enable stakeholders and decision makers to make the best choices for communities.

To gain an insight into the likely sustainability of CMLs, there were four main objectives: to examine the demographic profile of the CMLs and their volunteers; to ascertain the quality, strengths and weaknesses of the CMLs; look at the relationship between CMLs and their local authorities and see if there are any strategic plans in place.

The research is comprised of four case studies investigating independent CMLs that have been operational at least two years prior to September 2015. Quantitative and qualitative data was compiled using interviews and documentary analysis.

The research found that the CMLs had two categories of volunteers: general volunteers and managerial volunteers. There is a greater variety in the demography of general volunteers than previous research has shown and the recruitment and retention is not presenting a threat to sustainability in most cases. However, a significant threat to sustainability is finding successors to assume the onerous responsibilities of managing a CML. The other main issue was the reliance on local authority grants for funding.

Although with such a small evidence base, this paper does not offer conclusive answers; it does provide an insight into the risks and attitudes to sustainability. It suggests that more research is needed and there should be a registration and accreditation process to enable access to professional guidance and to assist in more comprehensive research.

Declaration

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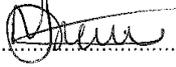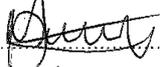
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Contents

Acknowledgments

List of tables

List of figures

List of abbreviations

CILIP	Chartered Institute of Librarians and Information Professionals
CIPFA	The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
CML	Community managed library
CPI	Capital Planning Information Limited
DCMS	Department of Culture, Media and Sport
HA	Housing association
LA	Local authority
LGA	Local Government Association
LMS	Library Management System
MLA	Museum, Libraries and Archives Council
NFWI	National Federation of Women's Institutes
PLA	Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964
PLN	Public Libraries News
SCL	Society of Chief Librarians
SLA	Service level agreement (explanation)
SUFL	Speak Up for Libraries
TLC	The Library Campaign
UK	United Kingdom

Chapter 1 Introduction

Public libraries in the United Kingdom (UK) are undergoing a period of great change. Cuts in funding and Government policies promoting localism and cuts have forced local authorities to review how they deliver library services whilst continuing to meet their statutory obligations under s7 Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

One strategy has been to increase the involvement of volunteers in the provision of library services. The last seven years has seen the emergence of community managed libraries (CMLs) on a large scale thereby changing the landscape of public libraries considerably.

However, it is not a merely a choice between local authority run libraries or CMLs that local governments and communities must make; the term 'community managed library' covers a wide range of delivery models; from totally independent to local authority with a staff of volunteers. Consequently, virtually every CML is unique to its locality and has its own particular opportunities and risks.

The research so far has proved that CMLs can be effectively set up but there is no conclusive evidence as to how sustainable they are as a long-term solution. The purpose of this study is to investigate the issues involved in running CMLs and to examine how robust they are to face the future. This study builds upon the body of research available and aims to improve the information stakeholders and policymakers have available when deciding policies for library services. There is a danger that the CML model will be widely adopted before it is known how it works best or, indeed, if it works at all.

So far the literature that looks at the success and potential longevity of CMLs reveals possible key factors: the model of CML followed and its

relationship with the local authority; the recruitment and retention of volunteers and the planning and strategic outlook of the project.

The aim of the research is to ascertain the sustainability of CMLs as a service delivery model.

The research has four main objectives based upon the issues highlighted by the existing literature:

1. To establish a profile of the CML and its volunteers
2. To identify the quality, strengths and weaknesses of the CMLs
3. To examine the relationship between CMLs and their local authority
4. To ascertain any strategic plans in place

The study begins with a review of the literature about CMLs. There is not a great deal of material on CMLs and most of which has been written since the turn of this decade. The evidence is mostly anecdotal and focusses on the setting up of the CMLs. It is only in the last few years that enough time has lapsed to be able to start looking at how successful CMLs have been. Generally, they are seen as one option but (particularly the independent model) not the preferable one (Roberts, 2015). However, there is still much research to be done and this has the added difficulty of a relatively small evidence base. Local authorities and communities are still pursuing options with very little evidence upon which to base their decisions.

This research is limited to CMLs within England. This is because the other home nations are subject to different legislation. Also, there has been recent research conducted on Welsh CMLs (Roberts, 2015). It was hoped that this study would look at a cross-section of different models of CML and in areas of different demographic; this aim, however,

has been limited by the shortage of time, resources and willing participants.

Chapter three discusses the methods considered and those eventually used, namely interviews and documentary analysis.

Chapter four describes the results of the research and is followed in chapter five by a discussion of the findings, with particular reference to existing research.

The concluding chapter reflects that there is much research still to be done and without better access to all the data, rather than just a small band of willing participants, there will never be an accurate picture of the extent and quality of CMLs and their impact on communities. At the very least, some form of registration and accreditation system should be in place with access to professional guidance.

The main threats to sustainability are finding volunteers able and willing to take on the considerable responsibility and commitment involved in running a CML. Certainly, more research into sustainability is needed before local authorities complete widespread transfers that cannot be easily reversed, thereby resulting in the loss of valuable community resources.

Chapter 2   Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This review identifies the current themes in literature concerning U.K public libraries staffed and managed by volunteers. In recent years, particularly since the economic downturn, there has been an increased interest in community managed libraries as an alternative mode of library service delivery.

Despite the fact that the use of CMLs will have a dramatic impact upon the future of public library services and librarianship there is relatively little literature available on the topic. Furthermore, the literature that is available has been written using a small evidence base examined over a short time frame and therefore cannot present any firm conclusions.

Public libraries are an emotive subject and much of the literature available on CMLs is written from a particular political, social or ideological position (CILIP, 2012). Recent researchers such as Cavanagh (2014) have recognised this difficulty when conducting objective research.

A full review of literature regarding volunteering in libraries is beyond the scope of this research but the study does look briefly at general library volunteering to provide a context to the emergence of volunteers managing libraries.

The bulk of the review examines the recent emergence of a 'new wave' of CMLs including the variety of different models and the more recent studies on the quality of provision. The literature reveals that there has been some success in setting up CMLs and also a considerable variety in approach between CMLs.

As there is no longitudinal research available on CMLs this review looks at the literature relating to volunteer run museums to gain an insight into issues that have emerged in that sector.

It is apparent that there is a need for more research especially as local authorities (LAs) and communities are making decisions that will have a dramatic impact on library services. In particular, the theme of the sustainability emerges as an area in need of further investigation.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 Terminology

Traditionally the term 'community library' was synonymous with a LA branch library. However, within the last few years it has evolved to describe a library that is managed by the community and staffed by volunteers (Public Library News (PLN), 2014).

CMLs are a new and fast-paced topic of interest therefore there is no universally-agreed definition of a CML; rather the term covers a wide range of approaches to delivery.   As the terminology is not as yet standardised, a wide range of search terms and combinations of terms have been used to identify relevant literature: 'volunteer-led', volunteer-run', 'community libraries', 'community-managed', and 'community-run' and variations of the aforementioned.

2.2.2 Search strategy

Using the above terminology, searches were performed on the following search engines, online catalogues and databases: Aberystwyth University Primo; TALIS; LISU; LISTA; Google; Google Scholar; Access to Research and Newsbank.

The following websites were also consulted for their lists of resources:

The Library Campaign (TLC)- the national charity supporting friends and users of libraries: www.librarycampaign.com/resources

Public Libraries News (PLN): www.publiclibrariesnews.com

Chartered Institute for Libraries and Information Professionals (CILIP): www.cilip.org

Community Knowledge Hub- Libraries by Locality: http://libraries.communityknowledgehub.org.uk

Speak Up For Libraries (SUFL) http://speakingforlibraries.org/resources/speak-up-for-libraries-resource-sheet/

The following types of documents were retrieved: academic literature; government legislation; online and hardcopy articles from newspapers and periodicals; literature compiled by local governments; literature compiled by community, voluntary, charitable groups and trusts; reading lists, bibliographies and references from located sources.

2.2.3 Parameters of literature review

Most of the literature has been written within the last seven years therefore, to gain some insight into sustainability and longevity, the review also looks at the literature on volunteer-run organisations in other arts sectors and at experiences of CMLs abroad.

2.3 Background

2.3.1 Volunteers in public libraries

Volunteering in English public libraries is a well-established tradition (Casselden et al., 2015; Locality, 2013; Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), 2014) and not only in times of austerity (PLN, 2015). Volunteers play a valuable role in public libraries but their use has traditionally been limited to providing additional services to those offered

by professional staff (Blake Stevenson, 2015; Goulding, 2006: 2013). Very few library services have developed a strategy for using volunteers and consequently are ill-prepared for a shift to large-scale volunteer operations (Goulding, 2006, 2013).

The profile of the 'typical' library volunteer is: 'late middle age or elderly, white, middle class and quite often female' (Capital Planning Information Limited (CPI), 2000, p.10) and their roles have traditionally been at a low-level of responsibility (CPI, 2000). With the emergence of CMLs many volunteers now have a managerial role in the but there has been very little research into this.

More recently there has been a look at the changing nature of what volunteers are looking for from the experience and how this impacts upon success. As the 'baby boomers' are retiring and becoming the most likely source of volunteers they are looking for roles that offer them flexibility and personal development (Williamson et al., 2010).

It appears that a more strategic approach is needed and careful consideration given to the motivation and skills of volunteers and how a wider demographic might more accurately reflect communities and create a more sustainable pool of volunteers.

2.3.2 The 'age of austerity' and 'Big Society'

Following the global economic downturn, L.A.s have been forced to make cuts to their budgets and many have sought alternative ways of providing a library service in an attempt to reduce spending.

The Local Government Association (LGA) (2012) use the term 'empowering communities' and advocate the benefits of CMLs. However, in 2012 there were not enough CMLs operating to provide evidence whether or not there is a positive outcome.

The cuts in government spending are generally seen as contributing directly to the increase in CMLs (Cavanagh, 2014). Some disagree that such drastic cuts to the library service were necessary (PLN, 2015) whereas others believe that there is evidence that a reorganisation of libraries was long overdue (Roberts, 2015; DCMS, 2009).

There is disagreement regarding the motivation of those setting up CMLs: community empowerment (Locality, 2013) or lack of an alternative due to the threat of closures (National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI) 2013). Concerns were also raised that setting up CMLs could encourage further cuts and closures (Blake Stevenson, 2015). It is important to understand the motivations of those setting up CMLs as this will help to predict the likelihood of finding volunteers to succeed those currently managing the libraries.

The Big Society was one of the flagship policies of the 2010 Conservative election campaign (Cabinet Office, 2010). It claimed to build on British philanthropic traditions and mend society rather than an attempt to reduce spending (Goulding, 2013); whereas those sceptical of the policy saw it as an attempt to drive through further cuts (Goulding, 2013; PLN, 2015). CMLs appear to enshrine everything that the Big Society was supposed to achieve (PLN, 2014; Goulding, 2013) and using volunteers in a local library service has become a key theme of 'localism' (Casselden et al, 2015).

Local media provides much of the available evidence. There have been numerous conflicts between communities and their LAs. Legal challenges in Doncaster, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Surrey (amongst others) (Stothart, 2012a) suggest that localism might not be the perfect solution it is proclaimed to be (Chartered Institute of Librarians and Information Professionals (CILIP), 2012; Goulding, 2013).There are also divisions

within communities between those who want to save the library with professional staff and those who are willing to take it over (PLN, 2015).

Casselden et al (2015) are in the first phase of investigating the challenges facing public libraries in The Big Society. Like most CML research, it only uses a small sample and acknowledges that it is only at the beginning of the research into the matter.

2.3.3 The impact upon the profession

The impact upon the profession is a significant theme in the literature and one of the main reasons for the difficulty in achieving objectivity. Many within the library profession have concerns about the increasing use of volunteers and the rise of CMLs (CILIP, 2012; Cavanagh, 2014; Casselden et al, 2015). The NFWI (2013) has a history of volunteerism and is a fervent supporter of libraries; they raise concerns about the impact of CMLs upon the library profession and consequently the quality of the library service. The recommendation from the Department of Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS) (2014) stress that volunteers should support not replace professional staff. Controversially, Locality's (2013) cost saving solution to the loss of professional posts is to make use of part time or retired librarians as volunteer.

2.3.4 Volunteers managing libraries

Volunteers managing libraries is not a new phenomenon. Some smaller (particularly rural) branch libraries were managed by volunteers until the 1970s and 1980s (CPI, 2000). However, in the proceedings by Sugg et al (1999) on the viability of volunteers in libraries, CMLs are not mentioned and by 2011 there were only 29 CMLs (1% of public libraries) in England (Woolley, 2011). These few CMLs received little attention from policy makers or commentators (some exceptions in Brown, 1999; Goulding, 2009; George, 1999) and no sustained study.

In the last few years there has been an increased interest in CMLs from local authorities and stakeholders. CMLs that had previously been ignored, or even discouraged, by their respective local authorities were approached for information (Brooks, 2012). Consequently, much of the initial literature to emerge on the topic of CMLs was created by the small number of existing CMLs (Brooks 2012; Dorset County Council n.d). These are pro-CML documents written by organisations who have enjoyed success in establishing CMLs and thereby CMLs as a viable option. The documents by Dorset County Council (n.d) give an indication of the scale of practical and legal issues in the running of a CML some of which have implications for the sustainability of such a project.

Therefore, the evidence base was (and remains) small and largely anecdotal. The percentage of respondents to the CILIP survey of CMLs was lower than expected suggesting that CMLs may have proved more difficult to set up than originally envisaged (CILIP, 2012).

2.4 The 'new wave' of CMLs

The initial studies into the broader picture of CMLs were largely positive (Woolley, 2011; Locality, 2013, 2013a). However, very few CMLs were operational when the Woolley (2011) study (commissioned by the Museum, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA)) was conducted and the discussion of large scale transfers of libraries are in terms of what LAs are planning rather than what has been achieved. It is therefore an idealised vision of what is possible with very little evidence to support the long term viability of these projects. Likewise, the evidence in the Locality (2013) report was gathered in 2012 and focussed on the transition process and emergence of different models. There was no longitudinal aspect to the case studies but they did provide a base line for further study. The predominant themes that emerged from the study are the relationship with the LA; economic stability and diversity; the profile of the volunteers and the local context.

The evidence concludes that communities have shown a large degree of enterprise and commitment in successfully setting up their CMLs (NFWI, 2013). However, even the most positive of commentators concede that the successful setting up of a CML is not the same as sustaining one (Locality, 2013).

2.5 Researching the 'new wave' of CMLs

Gaining an accurate picture of CMLs has proved difficult for researchers. There is still no definition of what a CML is, how it is run and how it fits into statutory obligation (CILIP, 2012). Indeed, the Leadership for Libraries Taskforce has recently commissioned Plymouth University to research the topic (CILIP, 2017). The situation is a rapidly changing one; most CMLs have emerged in an isolated and ad hoc manner and there is no official or definitive list of CMLs. There have been a couple of attempts to gather the information; Locality's Community Hub website and the PLN website (which relies upon public contributions to keep an accurate list of CMLs). This is used as a source of data in much of the literature (Cavanagh, 2014; Blake Stevenson Ltd, 2015; CILIP, 2012).

2.6 Different Models

It is not merely a choice between a LA run library and one that is run by volunteers. By 2015 'Community Managed Libraries' had been accepted as the broad term but there are many different 'degrees' of CML. As early as 2011, Woolley identified three models but believed that more were likely to emerge.

The literature includes a range of definitions of a CML ranging from its widest sense including all models (Roberts 2015) or all uses of volunteers (Woolley, 2011) to the narrowest definition of totally independent libraries managed and run solely by volunteers (Cavanagh, 2014). Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)

only gather data on those CMLs with direct LA involvement and thereby contributed to LA statistics regarding statutory provision; therefore, these differences mean that the results from the various studies are not always directly comparable.

Locality (2013) categorize CMLs as independent (either asset owning or non-asset owning) or co-produced (divided into three sub-categories according to the relationship with the local authority (community managed; community supported or commissioned community. Their report looks at successful examples of the models using case studies but is more descriptive account of the options available rather than a comparative evaluation.

In his study of Welsh CMLs, Roberts (2015) also uses case studies to examine operational and management issues, performance levels and key/core areas of provision under the new arrangements. This analysis of what is in place as of December 2014 includes changes that were imminent or at the advanced planning stage. However, it is now apparent that some of these changes did not actually come to fruition.

The pace of change was so fast that Roberts felt it necessary to increase the number of case studies from three to six and believed that the pace would continue such as to make a further review necessary after twelve months. He evaluates the suitability of the various models to form part of the statutory provision.

Roberts (2015) experienced problems in gathering sufficient data to assess if CMLs are experiencing migration of users or not. One of the reasons for further review is because the lack of data makes it too early to assess effectiveness. There is a need to measure performance against targets, evaluate sustainability and get feedback from users.

Policy makers should carefully consider the options and select the best mode of delivery for that local community (Locality, 2013; DCMS, 2014). Some communities have expressed concerns about how a wholly volunteer model will be sustainable (Woodcock, 2015)   The latest literature suggests that only CMLs run in partnership with the local authority, with professional support are sustainable (Roberts, 2015; Blake Stevenson Ltd, 2015).

2.7 Quality and Equality of Service Provision

An important theme is that all citizens have access to the same level and quality of provision (Stevenson (2015) and the Sieghart (DCMS, 2014) report). The main academic research into the extent and quality of the service provided is Cavanagh's (2014) exploration of the effectiveness of CMLs in England. The use of a web survey to obtained a wide geographical spread but a relatively low response rate therefore can only be treated as an indicator. The data was gathered in 2012 when CMLs were relatedly new therefore it provides little conclusive evidence but it can use it as valuable baseline for future longitudinal study.

There has been widespread variation in the range of services offered by CMLs (Cavanagh, 2014) but most of the volunteers questioned believe that the service has improved since their takeover (NFWI, 2013; Cavanagh, 2014). This is difficult to prove as the data is not available for libraries before they became CMLs. In other research, the ability of CMLs to support digital literacy is a key theme (NFWI ,2013; DCMS, 2014) and the failure to do so could be a real threat to sustainability (Roberts, 2015). There is also the wider issue that librarians in public libraries are not good at gathering the qualitative data that is evidence of the impact they make and their value and performance (Halpin E. et al., 2015). It is unlikely that this measurement will be any easier in volunteer managed libraries.

Training is a significant issue in CMLs. There are differences of opinion between professional librarians and volunteers as to what is essential training for a CML (Cavanagh, 2014). Volunteers are not realising the full legal and administrative responsibilities of their role and they are not always receiving adequate training and support (NFWI, 2013). This is leading to problems in retaining volunteers and is suggested as a key factor in sustainability (NFWI, 2013).

2.7.1 Demography and diversity

The NFWI (2013) was the first major report to look at issues beyond the initial setting up. The Women's Institute is a passionate supporter of public libraries and has a long history of volunteerism. Their report focuses on the experience of the volunteers but also it raises interesting issues about meeting user needs. It provides a 'snapshot' of seven CMLs at arm's length from their local authorities; although this is too small an evidence base to draw absolute conclusions from, it gives an insight into the views of the volunteers and some suggestions as to what they feel is crucial to sustainability.

The issue of diversity and retaining of volunteers is a concern for sustainability (NFWI, 2013). The literature suggests that most of the volunteers in CMLs are retired professionals and their involvement in the CMLs takes a considerable amount of their time (NFWI, 2013). Changes in pensions and retirement age have the potential to reduce the availability of the 'active retired'. (Hill & Yates, 2013). The reliance on key people and the potential sustainability are key themes emerging from this study.

Communities in areas of deprivation may not have the capacity or resources to deliver a CML (CILIP, 2012; NFWI, 2013). There are also differences in how rural and urban areas can implement the models (Woolley, 2011). The ideals and needs of the middle-class will dominate (Blake Stevenson Ltd, 2015). These are all issues that need further investigation.

2.7.2 Neutrality

Roberts (2015) has concerns regarding the relationship between volunteer staff and users. There is certainly a need to discover more about the impact that management by the community has upon users' trust in the neutrality of libraries.

Libraries managed by other organisations such as Trusts could be susceptible to 'mission drift' when trying to balance their obligations (Goulding, 2013; Roberts, 2015) also, the involvement of religious institutions (such as Parish Councils) could be a threat to neutrality.

The needs of the community have to be adequately assessed and this involves an impartiality and resources that volunteers and members of that particular community may not have (NFWI, 2013; Roberts, 2015). In the NFWI (2013) study, the CMLs met the targets imposed on them by the local authority by maximising the potential of their existing user groups rather than reaching out to marginalised groups. This reveals a danger that CMLs could become niche libraries.

2.7.3 Equality

There is also the issue of equality and fairness; everybody pays the same taxes but some will have local access to a professional library service, others to a volunteer-run library and some to both (NFWI, 2013; Blake Stevenson Ltd, 2015). CMLs are not free; they receive local government, town or parish council support in many cases (Woolley, 2011). This can result in the situation where some communities are paying twice for their library service. In Trafford, CMLs have proved to be more expensive to run (Hands Off Old Trafford Libraries (HOOT), 2012) an experience that CMLs in Huddersfield (Huddersfield Daily Examiner, 2015) and Wales

share (Roberts, 2015). There is currently no available research on per capita spending on library services that includes CMLs.

2.7.4 Monitoring Standards

Cavanagh (2014) believes that it is the lack of national standards and not the rise in CMLs that is leading to the variety of effectiveness. The most recent government report into public libraries recommended that a national task force is set up to improve service and provide a strategic framework (DCMS, 2014). and Roberts (2015) stresses importance of Welsh framework standards. Ref.

Certainly, Locality (2015) are correct when they argue that not all local authority libraries are of a good standard but some of the most in depth research into recent CMLs reveal a picture of an inconsistent approach resulting in varying success (Cavanagh, 2014; NFWI; 2013).

2.8 Relationship with the Local Authority

CMLs are rarely totally independent (Locality, 2013) and the relationship between CMLs and their LAs is seen by many as a key factor in success (Woolley, 2011; Locality, 2013; Cavanagh, 2014; Roberts, 2015).

The research by Roberts (2015) and Locality (2013) reveal the importance of a comprehensive service level agreement (SLA) between a CML and its Local Authority. The agreement should cover operational costs; staffing; ownership and supply of stock; role in library structure; access to LMS; technological support; expected standards; statutory obligation; communication; assets and renewal (Locality, 2013).

2.8.1 Statutory Obligation

The most recent literature explores the impact of CMLs on the statutory obligation of LAs under s.7 of the 1964 Museums and Libraries Act to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons'.

The definition of what constitutes a statutory library service has long been a topic for debate (Locality, 2013). The Charteris report (DCSM, 2009) gives some guidance stressing the importance of taking a service wide approach whilst also assessing local needs.

The role of CMLs within statutory provision is unclear (2013). Many CMLs remain part of the statutory provision (Locality, 2013) and this raises concerns for some (Goulding, 2013; NFWI, 2013; Casselden et al, 2015) as it could lead to the emergence of a 'two-tiered' library service or put Local Authorities at risk of failing their statutory obligation. The suitability for inclusion of CMLs as part of statutory provision was the focus of Roberts' (2015) study.

2.9 A sustainable option?

It is widely accepted that CMLs can be established and take various forms, however, there is also a great deal of scepticism about CMLs being a widespread sustainable option (CILIP, 2012; Goulding 2013; Beardmore, 2015; Roberts, 2015; Stothart, 2012a).

There is anecdotal evidence showing concern that all volunteer libraries are vulnerable to closure especially those reliant upon council grants as their main method of funding (Reid, 2011; Woodcock, 2015). NFWI (2013) state that all of the libraries involved in their study had major concerns about the continued acquisition of funding and its threat to their ongoing viability. Naturally, financial strategy is seen by many as a crucial element (Locality, 2013; Blake Stevenson Ltd, 2015). In Roberts' research into

Welsh CMLs, finance and retaining community interest are perceived as the main threats to sustainability. Other reports site effective strategy and planning as necessary to sustainability (CILIP, 2012; Locality, 2013). It is also unrealistic to hand over responsibility of already failing libraries to inexperienced groups and expect them to be a success (Roberts, 2015). In their response to the Sieghart report (DCMS, 2014) Locality (2015) defend their trust model CMLs but do concede that CMLs reliant upon donations and volunteering are not sustainable in deprived communities.

There is some anecdotal evidence from local press. The Leicester Mercury (2014) claims that the Leicester experience is not sustainable and in Stoke (McInnes, 2015) a CML set up in Swan Bank in 2012 is now employing a paid member of staff. Reports from the Manchester Evening News (Fitzgerald, 2015) state that the CMLs set up in the Manchester area have reduced their hours and have seen a significant drop in footfall. There is very little evidence available on CMLs who have either closed completely or reverted to local authority control. It is not easy to identify them as there is no official information about them and once community groups have disbanded they may not be available or willing to cooperate with research.

2.10 Experiences of other sectors and abroad

As there is relatively little longitudinal evidence regarding CMLs it is useful to investigate the experiences of other sectors. Volunteering in museums is well-established with over 100,000 volunteers involved in independent museums in the United Kingdom (Hill & Yates, 2013) and the numbers of volunteer-run museums increasing since the 1960s (Babbidge, 2009).

The focus of the literature tends to be the day-to-day issues involving volunteers but where strategy is examined staffing and its impact on the sustainability of volunteer run museums emerges as an important topic (Babbidge, 2009; Hill & Yates, 2013). One study suggests that to sustain

even the smallest, seasonal volunteer-run museum requires a minimum of 40 volunteers contributing 5000 hours (Babbidge, 2009).

Whereas volunteering across society is equally spread across all groups, the profile of museum volunteers echoes that of volunteers in libraries (Babbidge, 2009)

Independent volunteer-rum museums have started to experience the departure of the 'founders' and the process of adapting to the different characteristics of subsequent generations. (Babbidge, 2009). Concerns have emerged regarding the sustainability of these projects and their reliance upon one or two core volunteers (Big Lottery Fund, 2014). CMLs have not reached this stage yet. The experience of the Museum sector also reveals the importance of planning and strategy when trying to achieve sustainability (Babbidge: 2009; Big Lottery Fund: 2014).

There is little available literature regarding CMLs abroad. The Public Libraries News website cites examples from Canada, Australia, Spain, New Zealand and Holland. In the United States many libraries in small towns have been kept open using volunteers (Driggers et al.,2002). England and Wales, however, appear to be at the forefront of CMLs in recent years.

2.12 Conclusion

From this review of literature, it is apparent that CMLs can be successfully established and remain operational. There is, however, still there is very little academic research available on their performance as libraries and their long-term sustainability. It is a concern that policy makers and stakeholders are making decisions that will have huge ramifications for the future of the U.K public library system based on a very small evidence base.

There is a consensus that research into CMLs is only just at the beginning and there is a need to keep learning and evaluating different ideas and practices (Cavanagh, 2014; Locality, 2013; CILIP, 2012, Davies, 2015, Roberts, 2015). It is only now that there is enough time passed and examples to start to add depth to the existing research.

Some themes have emerged such as quality, financial security and strategy for the future. The literature has also revealed the importance of the quality and quantity of the volunteers, the model used and the relationship with the local authority.

The Speak Up for Libraries campaign (2015) has recently requested information on CMLs to bridge the gap in current research. They ask for data on what works/does not work; challenges/considerations and the impact on the library service.   Also. Locality (2013) stresses the importance of continuing to research and learn about CMLs. Certainly, this study will not address all the issues but it will add to the current research; with particular regard to the sustainability of CMLs.

Chapter 3   Methods

3.1 Introduction

The literature review in the previous chapter reveals the shortage of academic research on CMLs in the U.K. In the literature that is available there is a lack of conclusive evidence about CMLs and the issue of long term sustainability has emerged as a key concern. Local authorities and communities are currently without enough data and objective research to make an informed decision about library provision.

The aim of this study is to investigate if CMLs are a sustainable option. Based on the themes which emerged from the literature, this study has the following objectives:-

1. To establish a profile of the CML and its volunteers
2. To evaluate the quality, strengths and weaknesses of the CMLs
3. To examine the relationship between CMLs and their local authority
4. To ascertain any strategic plans for future

This chapter outlines the methodology chosen to achieve these objectives in addition to considering the options not chosen.

3.2 Data required

The overall aim of the research is to ascertain if CMLs are sustainable. With the time and resource constraints it is unlikely that it will provide a definitive answer to that question but it is hoped that it will add significantly to the emerging discussion. Sustainability has been identified in the literature review as the aspect of research that is most needed to allow stakeholders to make the most appropriate choices.

The significant themes in the literature have shaped the significant objectives of this study there this study aims to build a profile of different models of CML with particular regards to:

- What services they have provided and strengths or weaknesses have they shown
- Demography of community and volunteers (including 'management')
- The relationship with local authority
- Any strategic planning (including funding) in place

As little is known about CMLs and what is available is based on a very small evidence base therefore, if time and resources allowed, a full study of all CMLs would have been a been a very worthwhile undertaking.

This research used a mixed approach of both quantitative and qualitative methods but predominantly qualitative. The statistics provided were of limited use as they did not directly compare with each other and no data was available for the libraries pre-CML. Also, the data was incomplete so did not provide much indication regarding performance over the period. The quantitative data was secondary data gathered by the CMLs themselves and provided as documentary evidence either already existing or produced specifically to answer the questions in this research.

Ideally, the study would have been longitudinal but there was not a significant amount of data available about the CMLs involved in the study nor was there the time or resources to carry out the investigative process twice or more over a set period. It would have been valuable to have data from before the handover of the CMLs to the community but on initial investigation this was not readily available.

3.3 Methods considered

Observation was considered as a method to complete the picture of the different characters of the CMLs, their roles within the community and staff and user interaction. However, it is not the most efficient way to answer the research questions as to get a worthwhile study would have to observe the subjects over an extended period of time. Also, there would be the issues of remaining objective and ensuring that the behaviour of subjects remains authentic.

Using a survey to gather all of the data was considered; however, it would rely heavily on the respondent's interpretation and communication of the data they have available. It was therefore decided that some of the data would be gathered using a survey approach but it would be used in conjunction with other methods.

The different methods of conducting the survey were considered. A questionnaire would have also allowed research into a larger number of participants over a wider geographical area as it is a relatively inexpensive technique (particularly if conducted online). Questionnaires also make it easier to ensure confidentiality and anonymity (Patton, 1990) and can help to maintain an objective distance between the subject and the researcher. However, they were ruled out for this study because they tend to have a poor response rate (Pickard, 2007). Attempts at broad national studies (Cavanagh, 2014; CILIP,2012) using questionnaires have provided interesting and valuable data but the response rate was low and therefore could not provide conclusive results. The other negative factor of using questionnaires is the lack of opportunity to talk directly to subjects to allow for clarification and explanation from both parties. CMLs are all different and have unique characteristics therefore a questionnaire would not allow enough scope for digression to issues specific to that library.

3.4 Case studies

A case study research design was chosen for its flexibility and depth, using interviews and document analysis as the research methods. A number of different sources of information can be used to corroborate data and to provide context. As there is very little research so far, this is an appropriate method to develop a more in-depth understanding and to complement the broad approaches taken in the recent study by Cavanagh (2015).

Roberts (2015) uses a combination of methods including visits, meeting representatives, key documents (both public and private), emails and interviews. The case studies for this research was initially intended to use only interviews and emails but the variation amongst CMLs and the conditions which respondents put on their involvement (some insisted upon site visits and speaking to numerous key people) in the study meant that adjustments needed to be made.

3.5 Subject Selection

It was decided that this study would not include Scotland, Northern Ireland or Wales as these countries are subject to different legislation. Also, a similar study was recently conducted on Welsh CMLs (Roberts, 2015).

This study is a snapshot of CMLs in 2015-2016. It focusses on CMLs that have been established in the period since the economic downturn.

The previous research into CMLs has suffered from the lack of longitudinal data available on these newly formed libraries; therefore the subject selection in this study was limited to CMLs that have been established for at least two (but ideally three) years as of July 2015. This time scale ensured that established CMLs were studied. Also, it

tended to be the more robust CMLs which have a sufficient information base to work with.

3.5.1 Identifying CMLs

The initial problem is identifying CMLs. There is no official or definitive list of CMLs. As Cavanagh (2014) noted in his study, the only way to identify them is using desktop research. As with the literature review, the different terminology makes identifying relevant CMLs difficult.

In the absence of an official list, the list on the PLN website (which is reliant upon public contributions and is not entirely accurate) was used as a starting point followed by a further internet search to gain as much information as possible about the listed CMLs. Some CMLs have their own websites, or are part of a larger organisation website and some are still linked into the local authority website. Therefore, there is a selection bias towards those who are better at publicising their library/social media presence or have the media output of a larger organisation. However, some local authority websites are not always explicit about the status of CMLs.

Another problem is that the situation is a rapidly changing one with libraries being transferred to and from communities. This makes it difficult to have an accurate picture, as Roberts (2015) experienced in his Welsh study.

3.5.2 Finding participants

It was originally intended that purposive sampling would be used and this study would have 5/6 case studies with participants from the different models. Initially, it was also to be a North West study using the administrative bodies within the North West Consortium. This would

25

have provided a snapshot of a defined area that could have been examined in detail. Unfortunately, there was not a high enough response rating from the region to make this possible.

Criteria for participants:

1. Solely staffed and/or managed by volunteers
2. Have been operational as such for at least two years (September 2015) but ideally 3 years so there is a longer operational period available for study.

Inclusion as a subject of research requires a willingness to participate. Initially, twenty-eight CMLs which met the criteria were contacted by email (Appendix 1). These had been identified in the initial research as meeting the criteria and having a contact email address. Representatives from eight of these CMLs responded to the email and were then sent a letter (Appendix 2) explaining in detail what participation would involve and a consent form to complete and return if they were willing to participate.

Some CMLs showed initial interest but could not participate because of lack of consent from local authority, not enough time or did not have the required data. Some potential participants may have been concerned about the image of their library or the motivation of the research with this being a contentious issue both politically and professionally. Maintaining confidentiality and anonymity of the libraries should have reassured subjects about revealing information but some volunteers may be reluctant to make the decision on behalf of the organisation.

All this has resulted in a selection bias inadvertently favouring those who are willing to cooperate and who have the time and resources to be able to do so. Thereby, the results of this study are likely to be representative of the most successful CMLs.

3.6 Initial Quantitative Data

The starting point for the case study was that participants were asked (by email) to provide some statistical data (Appendix 2). The participants did not all have the information requested and what they did have was in varying formats. Some had ready prepared statistical informational but others compile them specifically for this study. This is indicative in itself of the capabilities of individual CMLs to compile the data and echoes the concerns that Roberts (2015) had when conducted his study. There is no reason to doubt the validity of the figures provided. However, one respondent did acknowledge that the statistics were collected manually and that not all volunteers remembered to collect the data. Ultimately the quantitative provided more of a context and corroboration for the qualitative data but did little to answer the aims and objectives of this study.

3.7 Documents

A range of documents were used to gain information and provide context prior to the interviews. The documents provided were not prepared specifically for this study so they do not cover exactly the needs of this research and include a great deal of information that is not relevant. An advantage of this source of data is that documents produced in the course of everyday operation are an unobtrusive form of data and representative of the values and beliefs of the organisation (Marshall and Rossman, 1999) thereby negating any 'reactive' effect (Bryman, 2008). The availability of documents in itself can be an indicator of the structure and operation of a CML.

Scott's (1990) criteria for assessing documents was followed so each document (hard copy and digital) was interrogated and examined for

authenticity; credibility; representativeness and meaning. The same approach to coding and analysis was used as for the interview transcripts (see 3.9 for methods of analysis).

Case Study	Documents Provided
A	Library Manual Website
B	Website Constitution Document Usage statistics
C	Reports to Trustees Website
D	Volunteering Policy Website

Table 1 Documents used as evidence

3.8 Interviews

From the literature review it is apparent that each CML is unique. Interviews allow exploration of these individual characteristics. One of the potential problems is that qualitative answers given by an individual are subjective and the study is reliant upon the honesty and integrity of the interviewee (O'Leary, 2004).   Another issue is the potential bias of the interviewer as a professional librarian with personal experiences of CMLs, volunteers and the impact of cuts to library services.

If the questions were closed, straightforward and factual then it would have been more cost and time effective to do a questionnaire. However, it was important that the participants were able to express their own thoughts and themes and for both parties to be able to ask for clarification.

Another benefit of interviews is that one can pick up subtleties and nuances that written response would not and it has been argued that participants will disclose information face-to-face that they would not on paper (Gillham, 2000)

As the participants were from various locations around the county it would have been costly and time consuming to conduct them all face to face. Conducting the interviews by telephone was considered but there was concern that rapport and body language would be lost. Interviews conducted via Skype could offered a compromise as it offered ease of recording without being intrusive and body language/facial expressions can still be seen. A mixture of all these methods was used depending on the individual circumstances of each participant.

3.8.1 Structure of interview

A semi-structured interview with both open and closed questions was chosen for this study. This provided more flexibility and depth than a structured interview would have provided. The interview cannot be totally unstructured as there are specific issues raised in literature review that need addressing. To make it possible to compare responses, questions were asked using similar wording and some structure was needed for 'cross-case comparability' (Bryman, 2008). It was also important to give the participants the opportunity to talk freely and to raise the topics they feel are significant to sustainability, especially as there are so many different manifestations of CML.

3.8.2 Selection of interview questions

The overall approach is that of a semi-structured interview. The initial questions are specific to each participant depending on the documentary

evidence provided in the first part of the study. This presents an opportunity to clarify anything that was unclear and a natural way to bring the conversation to a start.

As much as possible the participants were allowed to talk naturally and raise the issues they considered important. Some issues were specifically initiated by the interviewer as they had emerged as significant themes in the literature review (see Appendix 3 for interview schedule). The advice of Dawson (2002) was followed regarding the ordering of the questions and the importance of phrasing as was the advice of Bryman (2008) in respect of the structure of the interview and opening questions. The phrasing of the questions had to be altered for the non-librarian respondent as they were not accustomed to some of the professional terminology.

3.9 Methods of data analysis

The interviews were transcribed by the researcher rather than using software. This was time consuming but it facilitated a total familiarity with the data and its context.

The data was transcribed and analysed before the other interviews as new themes might be raised that should be addressed in subsequent interviews.
The data analysis technique for qualitative data suggested in Bryman (2008) and Gillham (2002) was used and care was taken to ensure that context was retained.

The same analysis process was followed for the interview transcripts and the documents. A first analysis involved all points of interest being marked out. On the second analysis, the highlighted data was categorised into themes based on the four objectives plus a category for

themes that had emerged but needed further analysis as to whether they answered the research question. Examples of the transcription and coding process are in Appendix 4. It was necessary to return to original transcripts (and documents) to ensure that coding had not impacted on the context.

3.10 Ethical considerations

3.10.1 Guidelines followed

This research adhered to the following guidelines and legislation:

The policy of AU Ethics Committee for Research Procedures
http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/quality-assurance/research-practice/section-4/

Data Protection Act 1998

The policy of AU Records Management/Information Governance e.g. data storage, access to data, security, procedures to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, and record/data disposal
http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/infocompliance/

DIS Ethics Policy for Research:
https://disdl.aber.ac.uk/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp

The British Sociological Association (BSA) Statement of Ethical Practice for guidelines on professional integrity, responsibilities towards participants, informed consent, covert research, anonymity, privacy and confidentiality.

Chartered Institute of Information Professionals (CILIP)
http://www.cilip.org.uk/get-involved/policy/ethics/Pages/default.aspx

3.10.2 Concerns and preventative measures

The main ethical concern of this study was the exposure of the identity of the participating libraries and participant individuals. Another concern is the potential for bias.

Every effort has been made to ensure the anonymity of the libraries and any individual respondents from those libraries. This was identified by Roberts (2015) as a problem when investigating Welsh CMLs. Initially, this study was going to be a detailed study of CMLs in the North West region but there were too few CMLs to be able to sufficiently provide anonymity to individual libraries.

Bryman (2008) advices against giving an absolute guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity as theft of data cannot be totally safeguarded against. Appropriate measures have been taken to reduce the risk to participants taking part in this study. The researcher was the only person to listen to the original recordings and, once transcribed, the recordings were securely destroyed. All identifying information was removed at the transcription stage. In accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 all information was kept securely in password protected files and was only used for the purpose identified in the information letter and will not be kept longer than necessary.

A transcribed copy was sent to the interviewee so they could make any corrections or clarifications. Also, consent was sought on the Consent Form (Appendix 2) for the use of direct (anonymised) quotations from the transcript. A further consent was obtained from the participant whose transcript sample has been included in Appendix 4.

Initially, the interviewees were identified by number after any direct quotes but it was decided that this could have made identification possible if numerous quotes were attributed to a particular number and

was therefore removed. A sample of the results matrix is included in Appendix 5 but the full results could not be included in this form as it would make it possible to identify the participants.

The other main ethical concern was maintaining objectivity and separation. The researcher had to remain mindful of not presenting questions in a leading way and to remain objective when analysing the data. Positive professional   relationships developed between the researcher and some of the respondents during the study and this was beneficial in obtaining data. Any issue about reporting anything negative should that have arisen was negated by the measures taken to provide anonymity of respondents.

It is important that participants gain something from research and the respondents expressed interest in the results and identified a need for the sharing of information between CMLs and getting feedback on their performance. A debrief including the results of the study was offered to all participants.

3.11 Pilot study

Although a pilot study would have been a valuable process (O'Leary, 2004; Oppenheim 2005), there were not enough respondents to use one as a pilot. However, feedback was obtained from the interviewees and used to adapt questions in subsequent interviews and the questions were tested on people no involved in the study.

There was nothing drastically wrong in the first case study and no significant changes needed to be made so it was decided that it did not need to be kept as a pilot. The first respondent was very helpful and asked for clarification regarding terminology which could then be amended or clarified for subsequent participants.

3.12 Limitations and lessons learned

There was a great deal of variation in the standards of the statistics kept by the organisations especially where the local authority or trust involved were not asking for statistics.

The response rate was much lower than expected with the main reasons being time and resource constraint or the local authority not wanting to participate. This created an inadvertent bias towards the more successful CMLs as there is more information available about them, a greater social media/internet presence and they have the resources to be able to participate.

3.13 Methods Summary

- A mixture of qualitative and quantitative data was needed to fulfil the aims of the research
- A case study approach was taken using a mixture of methods to allow for triangulation of results and to enable effect research into such unique entities
- Interviews and documentary research were used and the same method of analysis and coding was used for both
- The interviews were semi-structured to ensure important issues raised in literature review were addressed as well as allowing flexibility for participants to express issues relevant to their CML
- Identifying CMLs was a major problem as was getting enough participants
- Maintaining the anonymity of the participants was the main ethical concern.

Chapter 4   Results

4.1 Introduction

After the data was coded and analysed as detailed in the previous chapter, the results were divided into sections to correspond with the four main objectives of the study:

1. The demographic profile of the CML and its volunteers
2. The quality, strengths and weaknesses of the CMLs
3. The relationship between CMLs and their local authority
4. Strategic plans for future

4.2 Response rate

Initial contact was made in October and November 2015 with twenty-eight CMLs who could be identified on their website as meeting the relevant criteria of being established for at least two years and managed by volunteers.

Eight CMLs responded to the initial email. Two passed details to partner organisations then did not respond to further contact. One could not participate because their local authority did not consent and another could not take part for lack of time and resources. Therefore, four CMLs participated in the research.

4.3. Profile of participating CMLs

The four participating CMLs were:

- Independent

- Operating as Registered Charities
- Established April 2013 or earlier

Three of the four participants described their areas as affluent, and middle (or even upper class). Another prevalent characteristic was having a well-defined area. The three CMLs that stated the significance of the demography also stated that there was already a strong community network in their localities and an existing infrastructure of community projects. They identified this as significant to their sustainability:

> *'We're a united community, we're a very special area and [the local authority] felt that the other areas in the [local authority area] just wouldn't get a group together to create or run a CML'*

Only one of the CMLs had been established in a relatively poor area with a mobile population and a high number of residents with English as a second language.

In one area the local library was one of the few places where people could meet and the loss would have been significant as a community centre and not just as a library:

> *'The number of shops and things was diminishing, places to meet were scarce so it was seen as vital to keep to stop the rot'.*

4.4 Profile of the volunteers

4.4.1 The respondents

The four CMLs had a 'core' management group of ten members or less with the smallest group being comprised of three members. These core groups mainly consisted of retired professionals. The respondents all came from these management groups and had been founding members of the CMLs. They were all retired or semi-retired professionals with

three being retired librarians. The availability of these professional skills within their communities was key to their success.

> *'One of our advantages is that we've got people with all sorts of different areas of expertise…we have been very fortunate in that when we've needed a particular skill the right person has just come along'.*

4.4.2 Demography
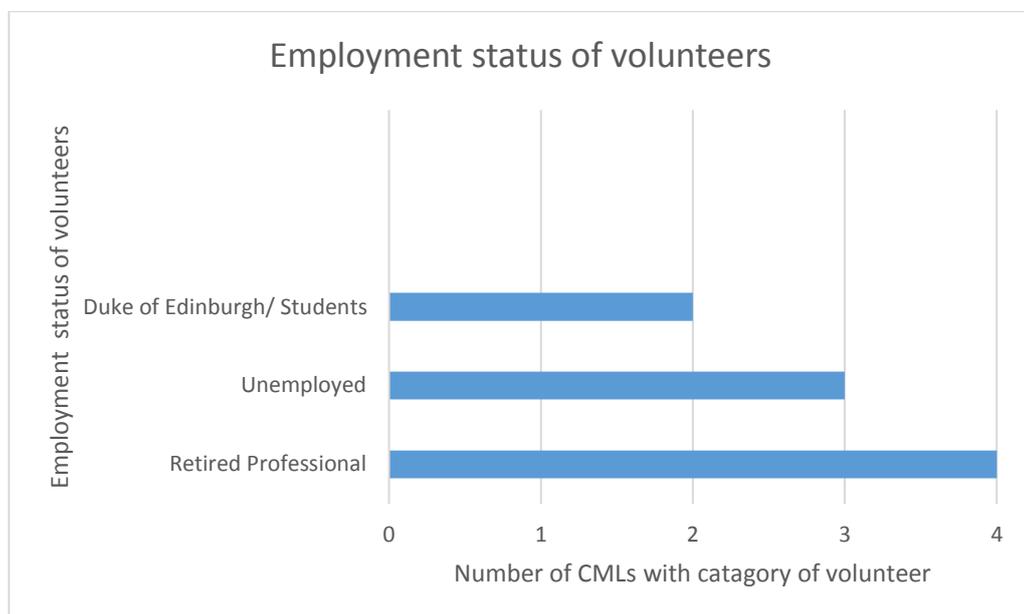
**Fig. 1 Employment status of volunteers within CMLs**

All four CMLs reported that originally all their volunteers had come from within the local area but two of the CMLs were now recruiting volunteers from a wider area.

> *'Volunteers have always been the worry but recruiting outside [the local area] seems to have worked.'*

There were three main categories of people volunteering but were mostly students (including Duke of Edinburgh and Scouts) or unemployed people in their twenties and thirties looking for work experience.

4.4.3 Recruitment and retention of volunteers

All four CMLs used traditional methods of recruitment such as flyers and word of mouth.
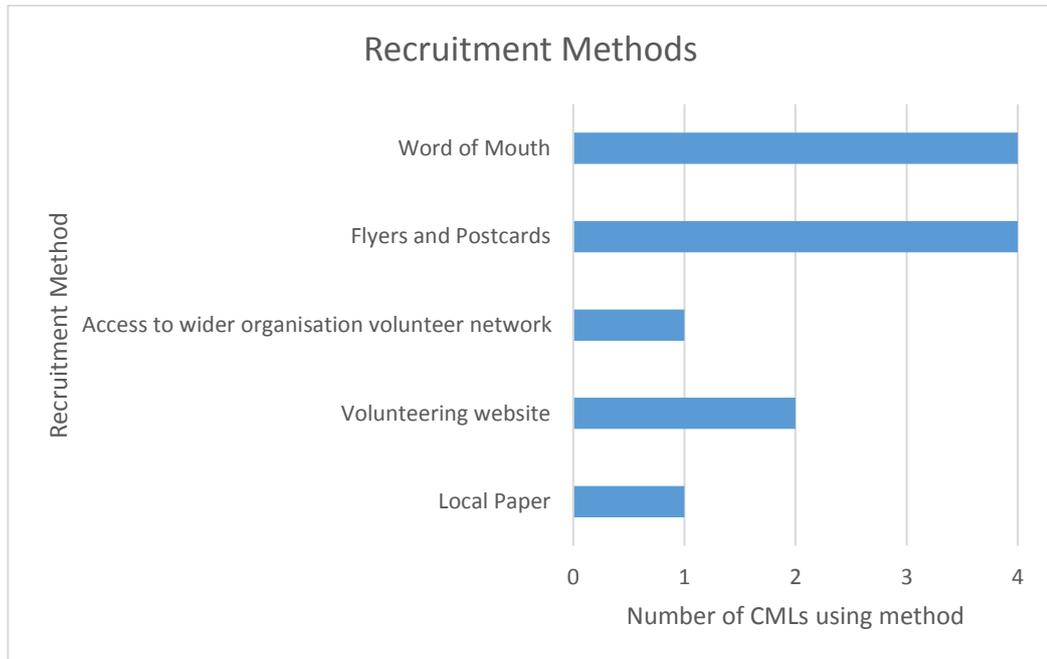
Fig. 2 Recruitment methods

Two representatives commented that their advertisements on volunteering websites were very effective and attracted younger volunteers and more from further afield. One respondent said that this method was:

> *'so successful that we have had to a couple of times turn the source'.*

Whether travel expenses could be provided had an impact on the distance people were willing to come to volunteer. One CMLs involvement with the local Housing Authority had helped with this as they offered to pay expenses and offer training.

There was little emphasis placed on the skills of the volunteers. None of the interviewees cited a need for specific skills to fulfil the volunteer roles:

> *'We'll use any skills if they've got them but we don't actually ask for any'.*

The only characteristic specifically mentioned in respect of 'staff' volunteers was people skills:

> *'A lot of it is you want people who are people people. It's very much a community centre as well and that's a very important part of the library as well, being there for when people come in'.*

Two of the respondents commented that the skills and experience of the volunteers varied but, unlike with paid staff, they were grateful for anyone who gave their time:

> *'I think with volunteers you have to tread quite tactfully. They are giving their time and are genuine'*

Only one respondent expressed concern regarding the lack of diversity amongst the volunteers but more as a desired outcome than an essential one in terms of sustainability.

Also, one respondent viewed the retention of volunteers as a potential threat to their sustainability:

> *'We worry that boredom is our biggest problem. We just got one volunteer who's developing a feedback form and that's going to be really useful because I think a lot of volunteer are going to comment that there isn't enough to do'.*

Overall, a steady, but not concerning, turnover was reported with the main reason for leaving cited as finding employment.

4.4 4 Motivation for volunteers/Volunteers' expectations

The motivation of volunteers was highlighted as a theme in all the interviews and significant in sustaining the numbers of volunteers and enthusiasm for the project.

> ″ [It is] *important to discover what are they expecting, how much time they've got to volunteer.'*

Most expressed the importance of understanding what volunteers hope to gain from volunteering. Indeed, three of the respondents credited the benefit to the volunteers themselves with as much importance as what they could contribute to the CML.

> *'A community library is there for all sorts of reasons so maybe we sometimes have had volunteers who have come to us because they are looking for something for themselves'*

Social reasons for volunteering was mentioned by all respondents:

> *I think it is very good outlet for people, as we've talked about, and older people who might be a bit isolated and want something to occupy their mind and make contact with people.*

Two of the CML has people with special needs and/or health conditions volunteering with them to help the volunteers gain confidence.

Most of the recent recruits have been younger people looking for work experience. These have tended to be relatively short term as they tend to leave when they find paid employment but the CMLs with younger volunteers were satisfied that they were getting enough hours from them to merit the training. The improvement in the employment situation in one area has had an impact on volunteer recruitment.

4.4.5 Working pattern of the volunteers

The figures given by three of the CMLs were approximations of the numbers of volunteers. There was a difference between the number of volunteers each CML had registered with them and the number of regularly active volunteers available for working on the counter.

In all four CMLs the average 'active' volunteer worked 2-4 hours per week and a regular pattern of hours. Regular and frequent attendance was cited as important to ensure quality of service and sustainability.

> *'most successful are the ones who can volunteer once a week or once every two weeks because the trouble is that if you have someone who volunteers once a month they don't remember anything'.*
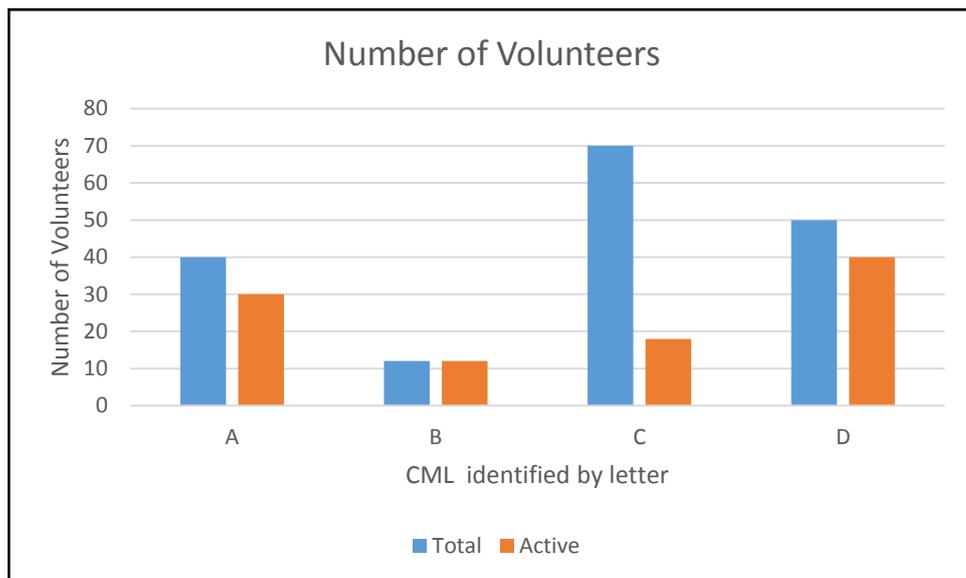
Fig. 3 Chart showing the numbers of volunteers in each of the four CMLs.

One interviewee found the arrangement of rotas and duties to be one of the significant issues when dealing with volunteers rather than paid staff:

> *'Generally, volunteers have quite a fixed idea, a definite idea of how many hours they want to do and they don't really want to do more and they don't really want to be cajoled to'.*

41

None of the respondents reported any unscheduled closures as a result of a shortage of volunteers. Also, the opening hours had remained constant or had improved since takeover (see 4.5.1).

4.4.6 Management of CMLs

In each of the four CMLs in this study there were two distinct categories of volunteer: management volunteers and 'staff' volunteers.

The 'management' volunteers are members of the core committee/steering group or trustees (depending on the structure of the CML). These volunteers worked a considerable number of hours, often with an irregular pattern and on a call out basis. One respondent said they worked twenty hours a week. Another would do the longest counter shift available (five hours) plus did all the cataloguing at home.

> *'I do an awful lot of the stuff that you can't write down but needs doing, certainly without us two the library would be in trouble'.*

There were a wide range of duties cited as being undertaken by the management level volunteers, many requiring a high level of skill and experience:

> *We had somebody who had been the director of [company]. His knowledge of business, business plans and accounting and company registering was absolutely invaluable*

'Librarian duties'	Publicity	Finance	Building maintenance	Interest Groups
Bookings	Fundraising	Health & Safety	Social Media	Gardening
Business plans	Accounting	Applying for grants	Storytime	Management skills
Cataloguing	Recruitment	Interviewing	Legal	Rotas

Table 2 Tasks cited as regularly undertaken by respondents

Resolving conflict was raised as an issue and was cited as a necessary skill when managing a CML, especially when the 'managers' have no official authority:

> *'There have been times that it has taken diplomacy to control warring factions… I think that's just the nature of volunteers because you can't tell anybody what to do, you have to persuade them'.*

The three retired librarians were advocates for the need for professional skills:

> '*if you're going to set up a library then you need to know how to do it don't you? You need to know how to use a library management system, how to catalogue, how to organise the library. The alternative is what they do in [local village] which is a book drop'.*

Whereas the non-librarian felt otherwise:

> '*I think we have done very well on our own and probably better than having a librarian. We've thought outside the box, which I think has been important'.*

One respondent commented that it was not unusual for people to feel that way about library skills but do change their opinion:

> *'I've had to be diplomatic but I still feel that the librarian's skills are absolutely what is needed and sometimes when people are dismissive of those skills it can be quite difficult to deal with but I think when people see how things actually work out they do modify their views'.*

These management volunteers were responsible for the traditional librarian duties and also matters that would generally be dealt with other departments within a local authority (facilities; legal; human resources).

'With the laws changing all the time it's a lot of responsibility to keep up, especially for something you're not paid for'
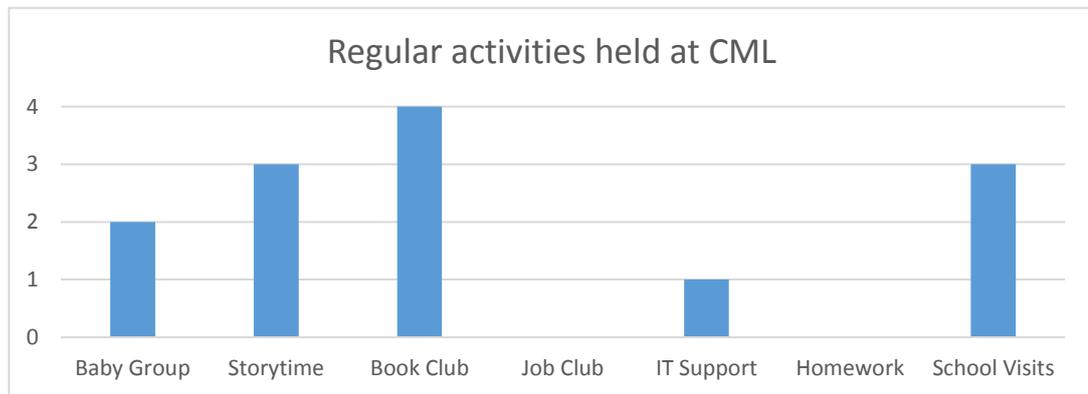
4.5 Quality, strengths and weaknesses of the CML

4.5.1 Opening hours
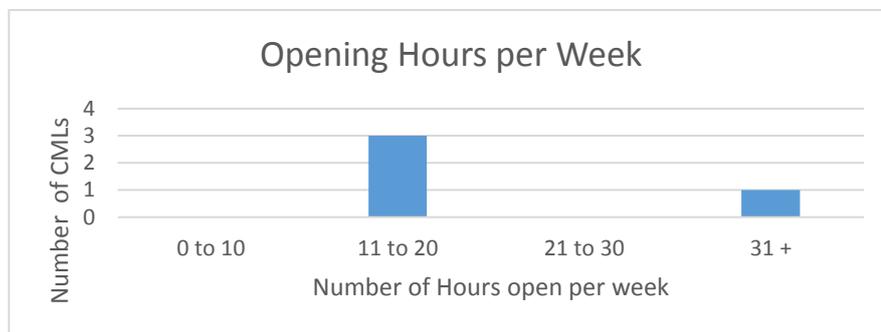
Fig 4 Number of hours per week each CML is open

The CMLs had regular opening hours with no reported unscheduled closures. All operate for over 10 hours per week with the lowest being 10.5 hours. All open on a Saturday and three open evenings but only one remains open past 18:00.

4.5.2 Activities offered

Fig 5 Regular activities held by CMLs

The CMLs each had a range of activities particular to their library including:

Baby massage

Tai Chi

Lego Club

Bible Book Group

Chair Exercise

Language Classes

Talks

Gardening

Yoga

Relaxation class

English conversational class

Family history

The CMLs all hold activities for pre-school children and adult book clubs. There were no activities aimed at older school children, teenagers or young adults. One of the CMLs did not have enough room to physically hold the activities in the library but instead held them in another part of

45

the shared community building. No specific study space for students was offered.

When it came to national initiatives, such as the Summer Reading Challenge, only one CML got involved. The other respondents said they left those activities to the local authority libraries or were too busy with their own activities:

> 'It was National Library Week and we didn't do anything. We've got so much of our own going on that we don't feel that we need to'

One respondent showed concern regarding the lack of diversity and inclusion:

> 'We're not very good at reaching out to people and being more diverse. If I was a stranger coming in I might think it was a bit cliquey. It's not just age but poorer unemployed people'.

4.5.3 Book stock

All four CMLs rely upon donations for their book stock. The libraries in affluent areas all commented that they receive a good number of donations.

> 'we live in a prosperous area, we get a lot of good quality donations'

Two of the CMLs had additional funding to purchase books and had a stock selection policy. They used this money to fill their perceived gaps in stock and bought items that would not be commonly donated such as board books, audio books and large print materials. One respondent (a former professional librarian) commented that they felt that the rest of the committee were a bit conservative when it came to book selection

and this person felt that they should attempt to appeal to a wider range of the community.

> *'I like to get a bit more challenging stuff like Grayson Perry and the Afghan boy one [the other volunteers] tend to be a bit conservative'*

There was also some resistance to having a selection policy with regards to the donations:

> *'I wanted to say that we welcome donations of good quality, good condition, up to date stock, not specialised, not academic, of general interest and this seemed to cause a lot of controversy so I had to row back a bit and just let people see that you couldn't possibly accept everything'*

4.5.4 Mission Drift

The respondents were asked what they considered to be their main function. One was certain that a library was core to their service.

> *'It's a library. I'd say it's half and half but it's important to have a professional library'*
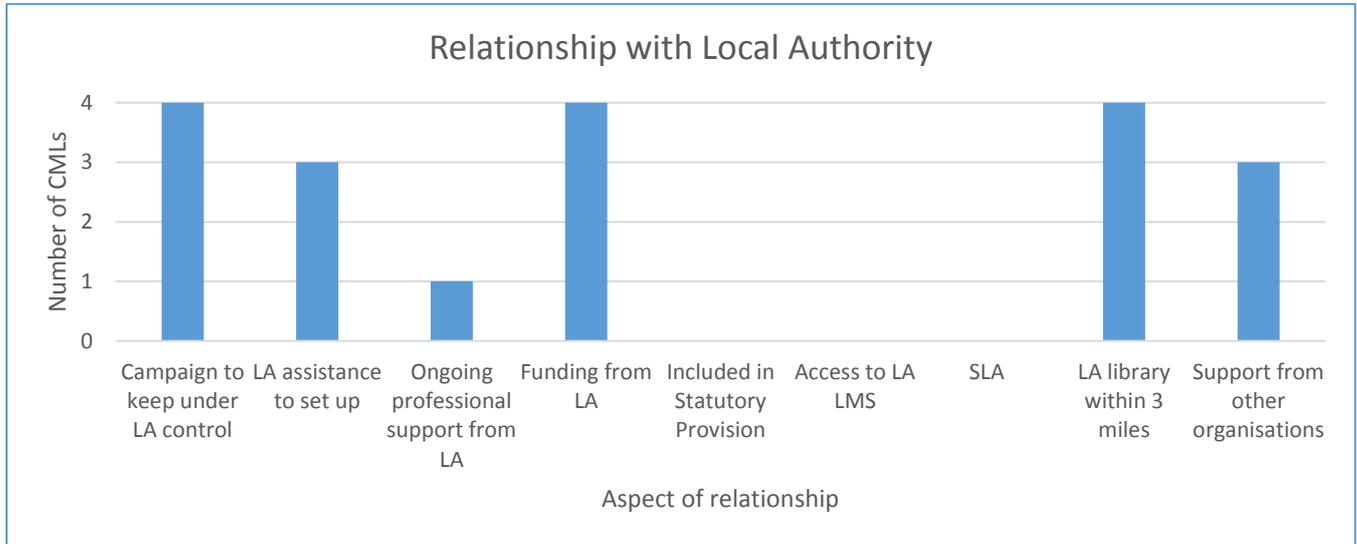
The other valued the library but could see how it may end up a general community resource in the future:

> *'I would say I see it as half and half. Other people may see it as a community centre. I mean I think in the future it might go that way'*

With one seeing that as much the case now:

> *'I think that the facilities of a L.A library are far superior. But I think that the fact that the building is being used by the community is a big thing too. I don't think that the public library used it in that way. I think in that sense it has enriched the community'.*

4.6. Relationship with Local Authority

Relationship with Local Authority

Number of CMLs

4 — Campaign to keep under LA control, Funding from LA, LA library within 3 miles
3 — LA assistance to set up, Support from other organisations
1 — Ongoing professional support from LA

Aspect of relationship

Categories: Campaign to keep under LA control | LA assistance to set up | Ongoing professional support from LA | Funding from LA | Included in Statutory Provision | Access to LA LMS | SLA | LA library within 3 miles | Support from other organisations

Fig 6 Ways in which CMLs have a relationship with their Local Authority

4.6.1 Setting up the CML

All four CMLs had been involved in unsuccessful campaigns to remain under local authority control. The communities only decided to manage the libraries once the final decision for closure had been made.

Three received assistance setting up as a CML. This varied in quantity and quality with only one receiving some initial training.

> 'the local authority] just, in effect, gave us the keys, gifted us the books, gifted us the furniture and said 'there you are, it's yours, goodbye'.

4.6.2 Ongoing Support

Only one of the CMLs had official access to ongoing support but this was irregular as staff cuts in the LA library service had left little resources for offering support. The others had good links with the local library staff on a personal basis. One of the CMLs had approached the LA about

48

receiving training for volunteers interested in library careers but this was not agreed to. Also, the LA would only allowed joint events to be advertised on its website.

None of the respondents were currently included in their LA's statutory provision. However, it is being considered as a possibility for one. Another CML experienced a period of transition where it was run jointly with the LA and remained part of the LA's statutory provision during this period.

None of the four CMLs had been allowed to continue using the LA's LMS but one was able to reserve items from LA stock.

None of the CMLs had a SLA in place. One was waiting for the LA to finish drafting one. Another CML had one drafted with the local HA but this was never ratified because of a change of circumstances for the HA.

There were mixed views on the importance of LA involvement:

> *'In some ways you are liberated because you are your own bosses (so to speak) but we haven't got any sort of library organisational structure around us, it would be nice to be involved in wider activities'.*

All of the CMLs viewed themselves as supplementary to their local authority provision rather than a way to replace it.

> *'I'm not saying that we are contributing that much and maybe we are working not so much as a library but as a community resource which happens to include a collection of books and an intention to be a library'*

4.6.3 Financial support

All four CMLs are recipients of financial support from their local authorities; either directly or indirectly. One is still fully funded by their local authority grant but it is not guaranteed. Another received direct financial help for the first two years and then the CML continued to apply for local authority grants. The other two also apply for local authority grants.

4.6.4 Support from other organisations

Three of the CMLs specifically mentioned support from other organisations: Community Council; Housing Association; Cooperative arrangement with another CML.

This support took the form of grants, publicity and advice but one CML stressed the importance of having moral support.

4.7 Strategy for the future

4.7.1 Planning for the future

Three of the respondents were positive about the future of their respective CMLs. One library had a business plan in place that was reviewed each year. Another CML had just started talking seriously about a strategy:

> *'We did talk about it to the Friends at the last AGM and at the last board meeting; it was agreed that a mail would go out to all the Friends and all the library members regarding more people on the board'.*

Two of the CMLs were concerned about their sustainability.

4.7.2 Succession

All four identified continuity and succession as the main threat to the sustainability of CMLs. All relied upon a small number of key people in the running of the CML and recognised that it would not be easy to find replacements to take on this responsibility.

> '*Our main vulnerability, if you like, is our management is actually down to myself and another trustee*'

Only one CML had been thinking of the problem for some time and taking measures to ensure a smooth succession:

> '*I think we've all got succession in our minds. There's succession in there and there's people coming in. We're dead confident that people can fill those places*'

The other three admitted a reliance upon key members with no strategy in place if these people chose to leave:

> '*I think that the steering group is more problematic-I can see people who want to leave*

4.7.3 Funding

Funding was considered by all four respondents to be a considerable factor in sustaining a CML. When specifically asked all representatives how confident they were about funding for the next three years, there were two who were totally reliant on grants from the local authority and/or housing association:

> '*Enough money to continue for the moment whether we would have enough resources from a manpower point of view to run the library and to fundraise I would question*'

Both CMLs believed that they would not have the resources to conduct their own fundraising:

'Grants…this is where we really fall down badly because we are so busy running the library we haven't got time to look for and apply.

The other two libraries had a good reserve and a diverse range of funding streams.

4.8 Summary of findings

4.8.1.Profile of CMLs and volunteers

- Most were in a well-defined, middle-class, affluent area and saw this as key to their success.
- Within the CMLs, two categories of volunteers have emerged: management level volunteers and 'staff' volunteers
- Staff level volunteers vary depending on the community but many are young people looking for work experience.
- Only one CML had a problem maintaining staff level volunteers.
- Importance of the motivation of volunteers and providing opportunities
- The management level roles require a wide range of experience and expertise and carry a high level of responsibility.
- These management volunteers are generally retired professionals.

4.8.2 Quality, strengths and weaknesses of CML

- Maintaining opening hours
- One did not have internet or public PCs; this is a likely threat to sustainability.
- Wide range of activities available
- Stock selection largely reliant on donations
- Concerns about lack of diversity
- Three being run by retired professional librarians

- Only one had a strong belief that they would continue with the library as the primary function. The others felt it likely that it would become a community resource with some form of book provision.

4.8.3 Relationship with the Local Authority

- All of the CMLs had been set up after the failure of a campaign to keep them under local authority control.
- Although all independent; all still had some form of relationship with their local authority.
- All received grants from the local authority, either directly or by applying.
- None received ongoing professional support.
- None formed part of the statutory provision or were subject to a SLA.
- The respondents did not see CMLs as a replacement for LA libraries. All were situated within two miles of a LA library.
- All had links and support from other organisations

4.8.4 Strategy

- Most CMLs only just starting to think about strategy
- Only one had an established business plan in place and regularly reviewed
- Lack of diversity in their finance and securing succession in the roles of responsibility were all felt to be the main potential weaknesses.
- Only one of the CMLs felt sure that it had a strategy in place to overcome both of these threats.

Chapter 5   Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter detailed the results obtained from the four case studies. The main aim of this research was to ascertain the issues surrounding the sustainability of CMLs.

After researching the available literature, four main objectives emerged in an attempt to achieve the research aim:

- to establish a profile of the volunteers and CMLs
- to evaluate the quality, strengths and weakness of the CMLs
- to examine the relationship between CMLs and their local authority
- to ascertain the strategies in place for the future.

This chapter will discuss the findings detailed in chapter four and reflect upon their significance in relation to the aim and objectives. It will also highlight areas in need of further study.

5.2 Reflections on research process

The lack of reliable information on CMLs had been identified as a problem by previous researchers into CMLs (Cavanagh, 2014; Roberts, 2015) and continued to be when identifying participants for this research.

As discussed in the methods chapter, it was problematic attempting to identity of CMLs that had been (and continued to be) operational for the required number of years for this study.

It was originally intended that there would be CMLs representing the different models as previous research had concluded that only co-produced CMLs were sustainable (Roberts, 2015; Blake Stevenson Ltd, 2015). Ultimately only independent CMLs were willing and/or able to

participate. However, there was such variety even amongst four CMLs following the same model that it would not have been possible within the realms of this study to conduct research of any depth whilst covering all the models.

The results are not an overall accurate reflection because successful respondents are more likely to be identified and have the resources to participate in the research. Therefore, this study has got a small evidence base. Also, all the respondents to this study had been involved in previous studies which leads to the conclusion that the research conducted so far is even less diverse than previously believed.

This situation is unlikely to improve unless there is there is some form of accreditation or even just a registration system to facilitate an accurate starting figure for research.

The participants in this study welcomed new research. One respondent felt that the reports commissioned so far had been 'vague' and not particularly helpful. Another reflected that there was no way to measure their performance and know if they need to improve.

5.3 Profile of CMLs and volunteers

5.3.1 The profile of the CML and its volunteers

The CMLs in this study had two tiers of volunteer: the 'management' level volunteers who formed the core group of trustees/management committee or steering group (the CMLs had different terms for their management group but in all cases they performed the same duties).

The personnel of these management groups mostly conformed to the traditional profile of library volunteers as described in the CPI research (2000). However, the 'staff' volunteers come from a wider demographic

and it interesting that two of the CMLs had noted a change in the profile of their volunteers over time. They had experienced a shift towards younger volunteers and those coming from a wider geographical area. These volunteers tend to be seeking experience as a step towards paid employment. This is valuable to the individuals and the local community by providing such opportunities but does not provide stability in the provision of a library service. All of the respondents reflected that the CML was meeting the needs of the volunteers as much, if not more, than providing a library service to the community.

In the Cavanagh (2014) study both the professionals and the volunteers recognised the importance of training. The libraries were fortunate that there were the retired professionals in place to train the volunteers because very little or no help was offered by the local authorities or any other organisations.

Only one CML foresaw a problem with retaining general volunteers and that was because of the lack of resources, especially the internet, which limited the tasks that volunteers could do. Again, this shows that volunteering must offer satisfaction to be sustainable.

The managerial volunteer roles offer the personal development that Williams et al (2010) felt would appeal to the retiring baby boomers. However, there is little flexibility as these roles carry a great deal of responsibility and commitment.

5.4 The quality, strengths and weaknesses of the CMLs

The examining of statistics such as footfall and issues was not particularly conclusive, especially as there is no comparison with when the CML was under LA control or any contemporary comparison with the

nearest LA library. The availability and quality of statistics varied so that there was not sufficient comparable data across the four case studies.

Since establishment, the CMLs in this study were sustaining or improving upon the number of hours they are open. They were also offering a good range of hours and were open weekends (but no late evenings which would impact upon the availability to students and those in employment).

Sieghart (DCMS, 2015) and Blake Stephenson Ltd (2015) both stressed the importance of the quality and neutrality of provision. All the CMLs held regular activities for children and book groups for adults as would be expected in a public library. In fact, libraries of a comparable size under local authorities may well not have the resources to hold these activities. Each CML reveals its individual character and that of its community by the wide range of activities held, many of which would not be seen as traditional library activities. It is not clear if these reflect the needs of the community or the particular interests of the committees running the CMLs.

One of the respondents echoed the concerns of Blake Stephenson Ltd (2015) that the ideals of the middle-class will dominate (Blake Stephenson Ltd, 2015). One of the CMLs hosted a Bible study group which could be viewed as a threat to the ideal of political and religious neutrality that libraries represent (Roberts, 2015; NFWI, 2013). Some volunteers had not been keen to offer CV sessions for the unemployed and the respondent for that CML felt that the library was not reflecting the needs of that community. So far, the emphasis of research has been on the experience of the volunteers and professionals; there is a need to research the change from LA library to CML has impacted on the users and non-users.

There was only one of the CMLs whose lack of resources was a threat to their sustainability. This CML had no internet access, public computers or space within the library to hold activities; Roberts (2015) identifies the importance of digital literacy for sustainability.

With the reliance on donations for book stock there is no selection policy. The CMLs with grants towards book purchases could fill the gaps in the stock. The ones without the money were having to neglect areas which did not receive appropriate donations such as non-fiction. This method of providing stock is only successful in affluent areas and is not a suitable way to meet the needs of the whole community.

The overall community resource was very important to the communities involved. The continuation of the library aspect of these facilities was import to all participants but the functions were at least split 50/50 with other community resources and one foresaw that ultimately they might lose the library facilities.

5.5. The relationship between CMLs and their local authority

The CMLs had only been taken over by the community following unsuccessful campaigns to keep their local library under local authority control. This would contradict the assertion by Locality (2013) and LGA (2012) that communities welcomed the chance to manage their local library. In fact, it demonstrates that the communities were largely ignored when it came to deciding the future of their libraries

Previous studies by Roberts (2015) and Blake Stevenson Ltd (2015) had concluded that only co-produced CMLs were sustainable. The respondents in this research did not view their CMLs as an option to

replace LA provision. Indeed, they saw them as supplementary to the LA libraries and all these CMLs were within two miles of a LA library.

This study agrees with the Locality (2013) findings that even independent CMLs have a level of support with their respective local authorities. All four of the CMLs receive funding from local authority grants, with three of the CMLs being dependent on them. Despite this, the local authority has no direct involvement in the running of the CMLs. Therefore, it appears that in many areas, public money is being used to fund two tiers of library service; these findings echo the concerns about inequality raised by NFWI (2013).

5.5   Strategic planning and sustainability

The CMLs had been operational for a minimum of two years and were now starting to think seriously about sustainability. It is apparent that the two main threats to the sustainability of CMLs are succession and diversity of funding.

To achieve a diverse and sustainable stream of funding is essential but also requires skill and a great deal of time and resources. One respondent also noted the increasing competition within communities for grants and donations. There were mixed feelings about the financial future. Again, the affluent areas are favoured and more likely to have to resources to sustain an independent library.

Overall, the recruitment of volunteers is not a significant problem but there is a threat to CMLs from the lack of people willing and sufficiently skilled to take on the responsibility and commitment of managing the library. The NFWI (2013) expressed concerns about the lack of support and training for people taking on the legal and administrative duties involved in running a CML. This study demonstrates that the situation

has not changed and a major threat to the future of CMLs is the recruitment of people for key roles. The research from the Big Lottery Fund (2014) recognised this vulnerability in their funded projects.

A reliance on retired professionals is not a strategy for the long term. The next generation are likely to have to work for longer so there will be a shortage of the active retired. Three of these CMLs were being professionally run by retired librarians; the future of this is dependent on there being enough future professional librarians.

5.6 Recommendations and conclusion

There continues to be a lack of cohesion in the approach to CMLs. This makes research difficult and not as effective as it could be. More research is needed into how the CMLs are meeting the needs of their communities. Also, investigation is needed into how cost efficient is it for the LA to be indirectly funding parallel services within communities and the inequality of provision that this is leading to. The CMLs themselves do not see themselves as potential replacements to a professional run LA library service.

This disjointed approach also limits the mutual and professional support available to CMLs. If CMLs were registered and accredited by an organisation (preferably with the involvement of CILIP) then

The main threats to sustainability are succession and the need to diversify funding streams. These independent libraries are reliant upon volunteers to take on roles requiring professional skills and a great degree of responsibility and commitment. Only some communities are equipped for this and although one CML was confident they could overcome these challenges; the others were uncertain.

Chapter 6   Conclusion

6.1 Introduction: were the aims met?

The aim of the research is to ascertain the sustainability of CMLs as a service delivery model.

The research has four main objectives based upon the issues revealed in the literature:

1.   To establish a profile of the CMLs and their volunteers
2.   To evaluate the quality, strengths and weaknesses of the CMLs
3.   To examine the relationship between CMLs and their local authority
4.   To ascertain any strategic plans for future

6.2 Main findings

6.2.1 Profile of CMLs and volunteers

The CMLs studied were predominantly in affluent, well-defined areas. The volunteers fell into two categories: the 'general' or 'staff' volunteers came from a range of backgrounds and age ranges whereas the 'management' volunteers were, by necessity, retired professionals with the skills and experience.

6.2.2 Quality, strengths and weaknesses

A wide range of activities were offered to supplement those offered by the local authority and national initiatives. There is a lack of research

into the needs of these communities and how users have viewed the changes to library provision and if the needs of the whole community are being met.

The training and support was being provided by the retired professionals managing the libraries and there was little assistance offered to them. Retired librarians were playing key roles.

6.2.3 Relationship with the local authority

These communities established CMLs once there was no alternative. Although officially independent, all had some form of relationship with their LA even if in the form of grants.

The respondents saw the service they were providing as supplementary to LA provision and not as a potential replacement and all were within two miles of a LA library.

6.2.4 Strategy

Now established, these CMLs all thinking about the future. Lack of diversity of funding and the problem of securing managerial succession were identified as threats. Only one CML was confident on both counts that they had the resources to overcome these problems.

6.3 Conclusions on the research process

CMLs remain difficult to identify and there is still only a small evidence base upon which to base research. This situation is unlikely to improve unless there is there is some form of accreditation or even just a registration system to facilitate an accurate starting figure for research.

The participants in this study welcomed new research. One respondent felt that the reports commissioned so far had been 'vague' and not particularly helpful. Another reflected that there was no way to measure their performance and know if they need to improve.

6.4 Recommendations

Until there is some official registration and/or accreditation system then there will not be an accurate starting point for research. An association or form of governing organisation would improve research, transparency and offer support thereby improving sustainability.

None of the respondents saw their CMLs as an alternative to the LA run public libraries and further research is necessary into if CMLs are meeting the needs of their community either on their own or with the combined offer of CML and LA library.

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Appendix 1:   Initial email to potential participants

My name is Nicola Davies and I am a postgraduate student at Aberystwyth University. I am currently writing a dissertation on community managed libraries as part of my MSc in library and information studies.

I am looking for community managed libraries that have been operational for more than 2 years to participate in the study. Participation would involve providing some statistics and documents followed by a short interview with a representative of the library. Individual libraries and participants will remain anonymous.

I hope that this study will be a valuable contribution to research on community managed libraries and help to better inform policymakers and stakeholders when making decisions about library service delivery.

I would very much appreciate your participation and if you are able to do so then I will send a formal letter with more information. If you are unable to do so then please let me know and I will remove you from my contact list.

Thank you for your time.

Best wishes,

Nicola

Appendix 2: Information letter and consent form

December 2015

Are community managed libraries sustainable?

Research project for Master's Dissertation (MSc Econ Information and Library Studies, Department of Information Studies, Aberystwyth University).

You are being invited to take part in the above research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, please take time to read this information sheet carefully.

Introduction to the study

I am a postgraduate student at the Department of Information Studies, Aberystwyth University. I will be conducting this study which will explore the different models of community managed public libraries and their sustainability. The study will involve five case studies, and, over the next two months, I would like to:

- Review statistical data and documents available for your library;

- Conduct a short interview (either via Skype or in-person) with a representative of the library;

- Use the data gathered as a result of the study in my Master's dissertation research.

Purpose of the study

One of the most significant developments in public libraries in recent years is the dramatic increase in community managed libraries. This study aims to investigate the experience of some of these libraries and add to the research available for decision makers and stakeholders when deciding upon how to deliver public library services.

Your involvement in the study

The criteria for subjects of this case study are:

- Libraries managed or co-managed by volunteers/volunteer organisation
- operational as a volunteer/community run library for at least 2 years

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. To help me record that you are willing to take part in this study, please complete the attached consent form. Please note that if you consent to take part in the study you are still free to withdraw from the study at any time and without giving a reason.

The first part of the study involves providing statistics and documents for the last 2 or 3 years (depending on how long the library has been operational). I understand that, depending on the type of community library involved, not all statistics/documents will be available for your library. Please provide what you are able to and you can redact any documents that cannot be disclosed in full. If there are any documents that you are unable to send via email or fax then please let me know and I will send a pre-paid envelope for you to post them.

Please could you provide the following information:

User statistics for the years 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 (depending on what is available)

1. Book Issues
2. Footfall/ no. of visitors
3. Library members/ borrowers (total or new –whichever record is kept)
4. Total hours open per week
5. Any unscheduled closures

Staffing data for the years 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 (depending on what is available)

1. Number of active volunteers
2. Total number of volunteered hours worked per annum

3. Number of paid staff hours (if any)

4. Number of people in management committee (or equivalent)

Documents

1. Constitution (or equivalent document)

2. Service level agreement with local authority

3. Volunteer role description

4. Induction/training manual or policy.

The interview element of the study should last between 30 and 45 minutes. This will take place on site (or via Skype) and at a date and time which are convenient for you. With your permission, I would like to record the interview using a digital recorder. Please note that you have the right to ask for the recorder to be switched off at any time during the interview.

Confidentiality, anonymity and data protection

This study has been approved by my Dissertation Supervisor Dr Anoush Simon. It has been designed in accordance with the Aberystwyth University Department of Information Studies' *Ethics Policy for Research* and the *Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association*.

Any personal data or identifying information will be removed at the transcription stage and will remain confidential. **No individuals or individual libraries will be identified in the results from the statistical and document analysis or the interview transcripts.** Any direct quotes from the interviews included in the report will be used selectively and anonymously.

The data will be stored securely and for only as long as necessary to: a) analyse the research data and b) report on the research and its findings. If you wish, you can request a copy of the transcript of your interview.

Contact for further information

Thank you for your interest in this study; your time and cooperation is much appreciated.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me: █████████████

Kind regards,

Nicola

Consent form

Title of project: Are community managed libraries sustainable?

Name of student/researcher: Nicola Davies

Project authority: This research project is being undertaken as part of an MSc Econ in Library and Information Studies from Aberystwyth University.

	Please tick
1. I/We confirm that I/we have read and understand the information letter for the above study.	☐
2. I/we have had the opportunity to consider this information and ask questions about it and have had these answered satisfactorily.	☐
3. I/we understand that my participation is voluntary and that I/we am/are free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without my/our legal rights being affected.	☐
4. I/we agree to take part in the above study.	☐
5. I/we agree that the data I/we provide may be used by Nicola Davies within the conditions outlines in the information letter.	☐
6. I/we agree to the use of any anonymized direct quotes in the report.	☐

Name of participant(s) on behalf of ………………………….Library:	**Signature(s):** ………………………………………..	**Date** 23/12/15
Name of researcher Nicola Davies	**Signature**	**Date** 23/12/2015

Appendix 3: Interview schedule

What's your role within the library?

How long have you been involved?

What is your employment status?

Age range?   Under 30   31-50   51-64   65+

1. Performance of CML so far?

Thank you for figures you provided.

What is your collection method for the statistics? What data do you usually gather?

Why were the figures incomplete?

How far away is the nearest local authority run library? Would you say that you have any impact on them or vice versa?

2. Staffing

    [Any missing answers from the initial data provided]

    a. How are volunteers recruited? (Is the role advertised?)
    b. Any problems recruiting?
    c. How many of the founding volunteers are still regular volunteers?
    d. Is there a 'core' band of volunteers? Tell me more about them?
    e. How would you describe your 'typical' volunteer? Age? Status?
    f. Are there any ex-library staff/professional librarians amongst your volunteers?
    g. How many hours p.w does the average volunteer do? Said 3500 for all of them for a year.

    h. How many hours a week do you do?
    i. What sort of work do you do?
    j. Are volunteers matched to specific roles? Noticed that YP activities- asked for teaching/nursery experience— not librarian?
    k. Training provided? By whom?
    l. Any problems with retention?
    m. Any other comments re volunteers?
    n. Most important skills required?

3. Relationship with local authority
    a. Do you form part of the statutory provision?

    b. Did your L.A provide assistance in setting up the CML?

    c. What level of support have they provided?
    d. LMS, any technical support?
    e. Who picks the stock?   Says that it is committee. YP? What experience/ quals would you say are necessary for that?
    f. Do you feel the L.A have been supportive?
    g. Level of support given?
    h. Is professional support important? Some libraries pay for a professional member of staff…would you consider that?

4. Strategy and planning for the future

    a. Is there a secure avenue of funding for the next 3 years? 5 years? (How long for?) Does it have to be reapplied for?
    b. Able to meet he costs of running the CML?
    c. What are the priorities for the next 3 years?
    d. Is time spent on planning for the future?
    e. As a user and/or volunteer- how would you like to see the CML run? L.A or community? What is the ideal?
    f. If the L.A wanted to take it back and guaranteed it's future, what would you think?
    g. Ability to survive/sustainability of your CML?
    h. Meeting the needs of the whole community?
    i. Asset owning? Building / Stock
    j. What happens if the community no longer what to run the library?/ Unable to…

    k. Lessons learned?

5. Anything else feel is important?

Thank you for your time. Explain what happens next and opportunity for feedback.

Appendix 4:   Extract of interview transcript

P: We'll use any skills if they've got them but we don't actually ask for any.

I: No. Well, I know you've got your seven trustees, would you say they're the 'core' group of volunteers? Have you got a group that are 'the main body'?

P: Yeah, yeah. Well this is probably where our main risk is if you like. The seven trustees, one is totally non-executive, he's an ████ and comes and sits on the board and that's it. Two of us are very, very involved.   Another two are volunteers, one is quite involved and the other not so much. The chairman mainly does legal stuff, in fact he's never spent more than half an hour in the library in his life!   Our main vulnerability, if you like, is our management is actually down to myself and another trustee and I do an awful lot of the stuff that you can't write down but needs doing and the other trustee does all the book buying, with a committee, but she does all the book buying and an awful lot of other things as well. And certainly without us two the library would be in trouble.

I: Yeah, yeah.

P: I mean we do try and delegate as much as possible so we don't do other activities unless we find someone who will run them. So children's' activities, book club, that kind of thing, we don't try and do it all ourselves.

I: Yeah.

P: But there's still a lot of general stuff that just needs doing and both myself and the other trustee just do it basically.

I: Yeah. You mentioned 'one person does the legal stuff', within that group of trustees are there particular professions?

P: Yeah, absolutely. So we've got two solicitors, we've got two accountants, we've got a statistician, we've got…I can't remember what she did…she's certainly got a degree so…I'm just trying to think…we've got an author…we've actually got three accounts because he was in the City or something. So we're all professionals.

I: Any librarians?

P: No. Interestingly enough, we've had one or two librarians as volunteers but interestingly enough, they haven't really worked out successfully and we were very scared when we took this over and thinking 'will we have enough expertise?' but I think we have done very well on our own and probably better than having a librarian. We've thought outside the box, which I think has been important. If we've had problems then we've gone back to the [local authority] and asked 'can we do this, can we do that?' and most times they've just gone 'yes, deal with it'. No, we've had very little advice from librarians.

I: So you don't feel that's been a problem?

P: No, I don't feel it's been a problem at all. One helped us learn how to cover books and things like that but I think we had a very short time to get the library going. When they said we can have the library we had something like 6-8 weeks to recruit volunteers, get Eclipse, train up and do the lot and so we had a very steep learning curve and we adopted a lot of the [local authority] procedures and fines and opening hours and everything else and I think we've just managed.

I: Did the [local authority] provide training?

P: No. Absolutely not. They didn't provide anything at all.

I: Right, okay.

P: In the sense of manpower and training. The only thing we had was we have access to the Libraries Department so we can always go back to them and say 'what do you think about this?, what should we do? etc.'. We don't do it an awful lot, we have done it in the past but no one ever came down and formally trained us or anything like that.

I: So you just got on with it basically?

Key to coding:

Grey: Points of interest on initial read though   Blue: Quality

Yellow: Local authority   Red: Future Strategy Green: Profile

Appendix 5:   Sample of results matrix

Matrix of results				
Relationship with LA	a	b	c	d
Campaign	y	y	y	y
Assistance setting up	y	y	y	y
LMS	n	n	n	n
Ongoing support	y*	n	n	n
Direct funding	y*	n	n	n
Grant	y	y	y	y
Training	y	n*	n	n
Statutory Provision	n*	n*	n	n