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Report

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Multilingualism in Manchester Libraries

Kelly Wilby

Benjamin Fearn

Xiaoqing Wang

Amandine Gaiguant

1. Recap of the central research question

We chose libraries in Manchester because libraries are an easily accessible public service and are always staffed and so information about the libraries should be readily available. Libraries are also a medium for cultural exchange and transmission of knowledge even to second generation speakers. Public libraries are an important asset to the community, they help integrate members of our society and educate the masses (Edwards, Robinson & Unger 2013).

For the second part of our fieldwork report, we aim to analyse the data that we have collected to answer our central question from Part 1 of the report:

“What services do libraries in Manchester provide for the multilingual Manchester community, and are these services adequate?”

To answer this question in a comprehensive, informed manner we needed data that was representative of the libraries we were investigating. We collected data in the following ways.

1. We handed out questionnaires to give us a relevant overview of the general opinion of the language services which are offered to them and whether they consider the provisions and services adequate.
2. We interviewed librarians for information about the decision making process concerning the languages each library will provide, what mediums they will provide each language in and their opinions on the services they provide.
3. We sat and observed the number of people who used the multilingual section in comparison to how many used the section which only contained books written in English. It is expected that considerably different results may occur, as Edwards (1994) supports by claiming that different social and geographical factors amongst other factors will be responsible for shaping the society and its public services.
4. We consulted the Manchester City council’s website for information.
5. We looked at the 2010 census results for the Manchester area to discover which languages and in what proportion these languages form a bilingual community.

2. Changes to the original plan

Our research encountered some setbacks as several of the libraries declined to take part in our research project, namely the Fallowfield, Chorlton and Burnage libraries (this lack of cooperation was suggested as a potential difficulty in Part 1 of our coursework). Despite these negative replies, we were quick to choose new libraries to analyse and collect data from, without deviating from our central research question. Including the new libraries we chose to undertake, the libraries we will be investigating in this report are Hulme Library, Longsight Library and Learning Centre, Withington Library, City Library and Levenshulme Library.

We decided due to the unfortunately high number of negative responses that we would ask for information from the libraries and largely take their advice on how best to do this as we didn’t want to impose our methods of data collection too much on each library for fear of further rejections.

This of course led to slightly different methods of data collection being carried out in each library. For example in some of the libraries we handed out questionnaires and people filled them out there and then, in other libraries we stood outside the library and handed out questionnaires. Questionnaires were also given to some acquaintances we already know to be long –term residents in Manchester. All these methods have had varying degrees of success, however overall produced a relatively adequate amount of data.

We had a similar approach to interviewing librarians, originally we asked to interview them in person but many refused, some suggested instead that we simply email questions to them instead of having a face to face interview; again we had varying degrees of success with this method. Another key difficulty with libraries is that they are public institutions, therefore requiring many forms before being able to do anything.

We also made adjustments and modifications to our questionnaire as suggested by adding several more questions in order to make any information yielded from the questionnaire more easily comparable.

3. Presentation and discussion of data collection

3.1. The languages and services that each library provides

It is of key importance before moving onto a full analysis of the data to first state that it is Manchester City Council who makes all the policies regarding library procedures concerning the day-to day running of libraries such as borrowing and renewing books and the charges for particular services. These procedures will be the same for each library. Due to this, some of the evidence we have gathered concerning a particular library may be applicable to all the libraries we are studying and we will write with this assumption in mind, but only as and where appropriate.

The City and Levenshulme libraries split foreign language resources into two distinct sections:

1. Languages that people want to learn and so grammar texts and dictionaries etc. may be found in this section. This section of the library provides materials for many highly desirable to know languages including languages learned in school such as Spanish, French, German and Italian and any common languages for travels or holidays abroad. It would also be of use perhaps to second or third generation immigrants wishing to gain more knowledge of the eldest members of the family's mother-tongue etc. such as Urdu and Punjabi
2. Languages that people may want to read in a foreign language. The council monitor closely the make-up of Manchester's population and where it has a sizeable community of speakers who speak language(s) other than English they will accommodate their needs by providing materials in these language(s).

The smaller libraries Hulme, Levenshulme and Withington do not separate their language sections as they have less stock and so it is not as necessary to do so.

The libraries we investigated all stocked a variety of languages. Some of the languages were only available for use within the library. The table below shows the books for loan which are available in different languages.

Table 1: The books available for loan in different languages in Manchester libraries.

	Withington	Hulme	Levenshulme	Longsight	City
Arabic	✓			✓	✓
Bengali				✓	
Chinese					✓
French	✓				✓
German					✓
Irish					✓
Italian					✓
Japanese					✓
Kurdish		✓			
Persian (Farsi)	✓	✓		✓	✓
Polish	✓				✓
Portuguese					✓
Pashto		✓			
Russian					✓
Somali		✓			
Spanish					✓
Turkish		✓			
Urdu	✓		✓	✓	✓

All the libraries studied offered services and materials in different languages, including a variety of newspapers such as the Daily Jang (Urdu) which is stocked at Withington. All the libraries offer language courses which can be found in book form for both adults and children along with CDs or cassettes. For example The City Library provides books, a number of multinational newspapers including the Daily Jang (Urdu), Angora (Polish) and numerous Chinese and European newspapers and magazines which are regularly replaced so up to date copies can be found and may not be taken from the library. The library also has a selection of multicultural CDs and DVDs, many particularly aimed at Asian cultures and in Asian languages. The library also stocks material that teaches English as a second language such as IELTS (International English Language Testing System) and a multitude of other courses to learn English as well as foreign language courses. Some of these services if they wish to be borrowed from the library have to be paid for such as the CD's and cassettes, they are however free to use within the library.

Should a reader desire a book which is not available at their local library, they are able to request it from other libraries in Manchester (assuming it is in a Manchester library) as all the Manchester libraries belong to the same network and so can share resources. This is important as even if a speaker is bilingual they will often prefer one language to another depending on the intended purpose. (Edwards 1994) If a book is not available in the nearest library, a customer may ask the librarian to order the book from another library; this can take up to 5 working days. If the library users have requested a book that is not within the Manchester Library network, they are able to place an order from libraries around the country or from the library's suppliers but must pay £4 for this service. If a book is not in stock, suppliers can supply it from their stock and the item will usually be available to the reader within 2 weeks. If the suppliers do not have it, the library may then order the item directly from suppliers in the country of publication. The reader can expect to have the book within 3 to 4 weeks after ordering it.

This is in all probability one of the most important services that the libraries provide as it hugely expands the range of books available to a reader and so makes the library a much more satisfactory public service as readers are more likely to be able to acquire exactly what they want from the library, even if in some cases they may have to wait up to five working days and pay four pounds.

The libraries also provide numerous online services. For example 'Go Citizen', an on-line service which allows people to prepare for British citizenship and is backed up with book stock. They also allow library users to access the Driving theory test in various languages via the library website. Health and other basic information leaflets and sets of electronic instructions are readily available in several languages and are often kept by the doors. Similarly, Longsight Library has a *Help with English* centre which aims to help those for whom English is a second language acquire English and so integrate themselves successfully into the community. The language learning course is informal with people forming small groups and practising making conversation with each other. Code-switching is always acceptable during these conversations. These efforts on the part of the council suggest a desire for a highly integrated and socially close society, one in which everyone can feel they are a part of and belong to.

One service which Manchester libraries do not provide is interpreters, should any individual enter a library and wish to request information from a librarian this would not be possible and is a problem that has occurred on a few occasions according to the librarian interviewed at Withington. On the other hand, this problem is partially solved by most libraries in the Manchester area installing self-service machines, unfortunately their use is limited as according to the librarian at City Library the

only languages available on these machines are English, French and Urdu. There is also a 24/7 online service called *Newsbank Online* which helps to compensate for the lack of interpretation services, it covers news stories from around the world via news websites such as *Times India* and *South China News* in a number of different languages.

3.2. Analysis of data collected via questionnaires

Our questionnaire data was primarily qualitative so that the data would be comparable and we would be able to accurately calculate percentages which we would be able to present. Opinions were scaled on a gage of 1 to 10. Answers of 1-2 were classified as “Not useful at all”, 3-4 were classified as “Not very useful”, 5-6 were considered neutral responses, 7-8 were classified as “useful” and 9-10 were classified as “very useful” The small amount of qualitative data obtained by this questionnaire was useful to give some insight into the answers given. We attained 27 responses in total across the 5 libraries.

Of all the respondents 7% gave a neutral response when asked if they considered the services provided by Manchester Libraries to be useful, 73% said that they were useful and 20% said that they considered the library to be very useful.

When asked if they could always find literature available in their local library in the primary language they spoke at home 95% of the respondents answered “yes”. The only respondent who answered “no” stated that she spoke a mix of English, Swedish and Greek at home. In this case, it is important to remember despite the library not catering for all the languages she spoke at home, the respondent was still fluent in English and so the library was still providing a service that was adequate enough to meet her requirements. If she really wanted materials in Greek or Swedish (neither language was stocked at her local library Withington, either as loanable materials or materials she could use in the library) she still had the option to order from another library. It is also possible that the respondent did not respond appropriately as although she uses a mix of languages, it is highly likely that one will be used more frequently than the others and this will be her primary language.

This data would overall suggest that the library does provide a useful service and for the majority of people satisfies all their potential language needs.

3.3. Analysis of data collected via interviews

Much of the data collected via the interviews relates either to how the decisions are made concerning which languages are provided in each library (this is something that we will cover in section 4) the services and number of languages each library had to offer and the materials that language will be provided in which has already been discussed in section 3.1 and the librarians opinions about the adequacy of the services they provide. This will be discussed here.

All the feedback from librarians was positive. A small selection of comments which were particularly interesting have been included here. The librarian at Withington said

“Many of the comments we get are quite positive. ‘It feels like home to have some good Urdu fiction around here’. They (the public) say”

This would suggest that to many people their language is a large part of their identity and the services and materials provided by the library allows them to feel in touch with their heritage and culture.

The librarian at City Library claimed

“We don’t try to state which community comes the most, everybody is free and welcome to come. Moreover it is really random.”

This is important that it tells us that librarians think that the library is central to members of all communities and is useful to the community at large.

The librarian at Hulme Library said

“We provide an important service, many people wouldn’t be able to afford a range of books like this and having them here free to browse means that they’re available to everyone.”

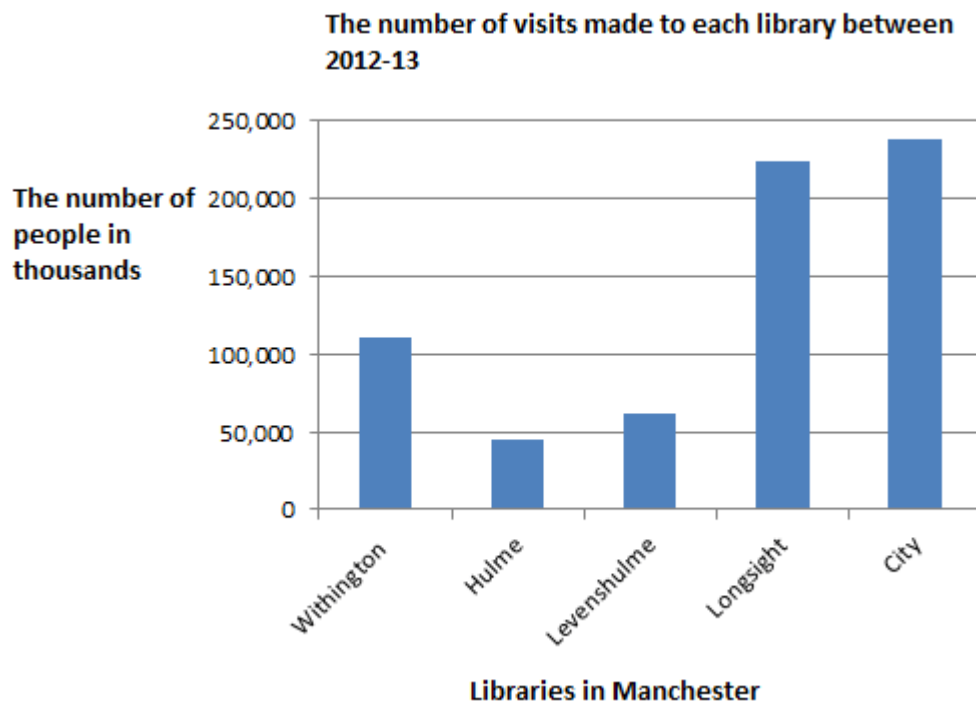
Clearly for this librarian she sees the library as being central to bringing equality to the community as it provides a good, free service.

3.4. Analysis of data collected via observation and third party sources

For a period of one hour we sat in each library and observed the number of people browsing the foreign languages section. It was difficult to count the actual number of people browsing the foreign languages section due to people who were merely walking through the section, or people who simply perhaps did not see the sign and read a few titles before realising they were not in the relevant section and moving on etc. It would also not have been accurate to have based numbers on loans either, as not everyone browsing the section would borrow something. However it was possible to say that a higher proportion of people went to other sections as opposed to the foreign language section. Many who browsed the foreign language sections also browsed the sections which only contained English books. This would suggest that a high proportion of those who use the foreign language section and their contents are probably bilingual and perhaps are browsing the section so they can find literature in a language they prefer reading rather than because it is a necessity that it be in a language other than English.

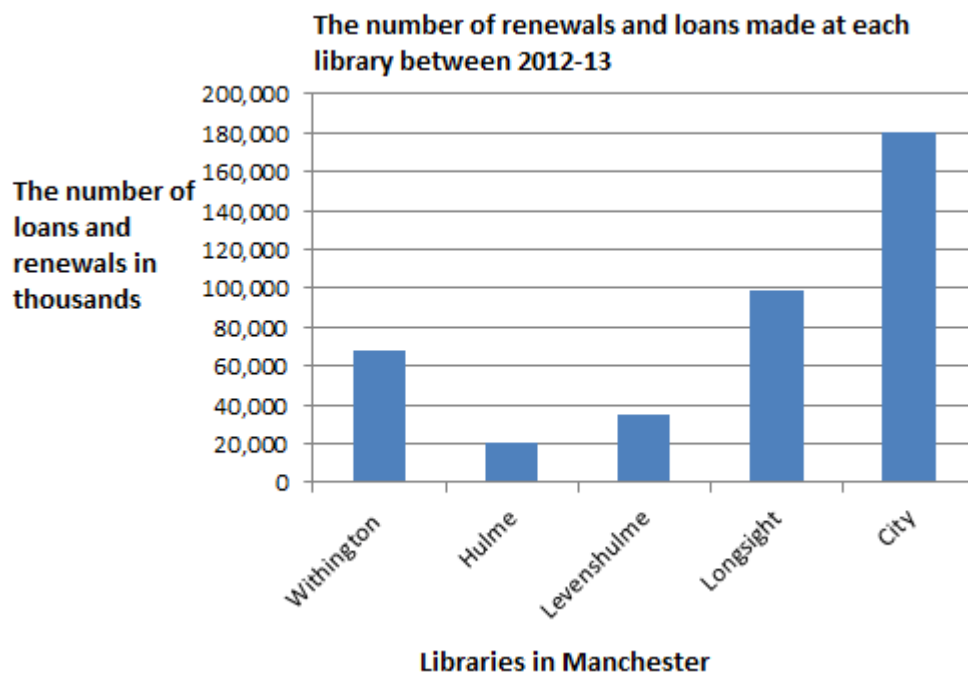
A large proportion of our statistics were taken from pages on the Manchester City Councils website or information that was obtained by a Freedom of Information Act. The bar graph below shows the number of visits made to each library between the years 2012 and 2013.

Chart 1. The number of visits made to each library between 2012-13



This shows a direct correlation with the chart below which shows the total number of loans and renewals each library processed during 2012-13.

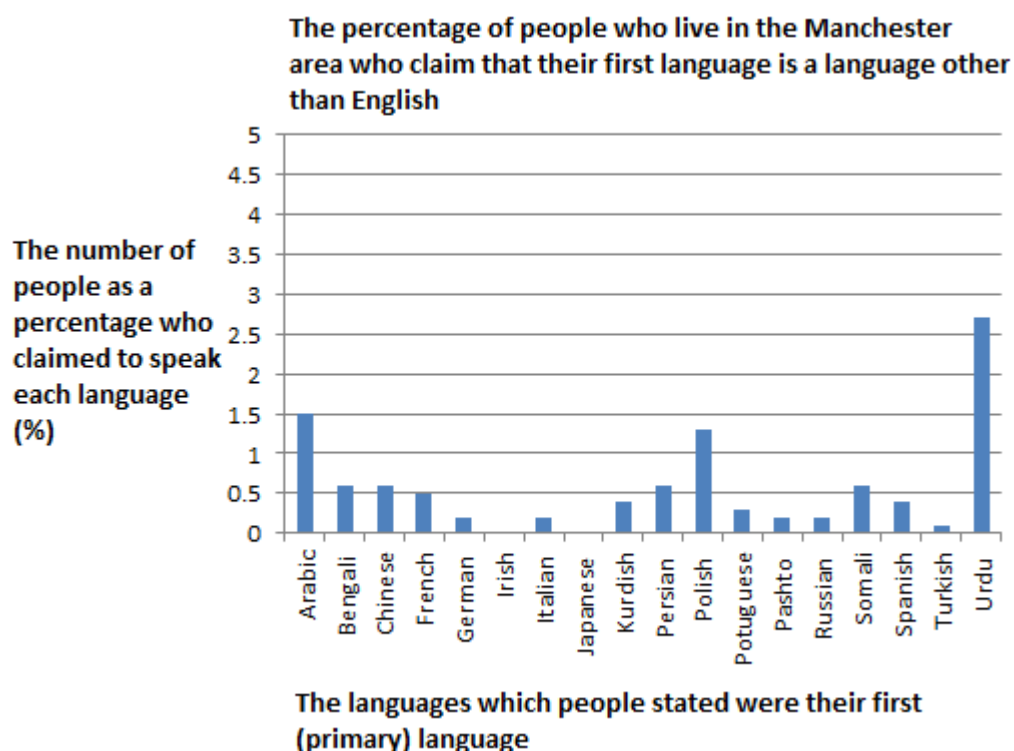
Chart 2: The number of renewals and loans made at each library between 2012-13



The correlation here is clearly causal, the higher the number of visits each library procures, the higher the number of loans and renewals it will have.

We need to take a closer look at the diversity of the languages in the Manchester community to see if there are any patterns between an especially high number of speakers in the community and the provisions that are made for that given language and in turn whether this will affect the funding a particular language receives. The 2010 census results are the most recent and accurate figures accessible for this purpose.

Chart 3: The number of people who speak each language that has one or more loanable materials provided in the five libraries under investigation.



If we look closely at both Chart 3 and Table 1 we can see that there are numerous reasons why Manchester city council chose to make provisions for the languages they did. Primarily the decision is based upon the languages spoken in a population. For example Urdu is the primary language of 2.7% of the population and has significantly more speakers than any of the other minority languages spoken in Manchester. As expected four out of the five libraries have materials available for loan in Urdu. On the other hand Turkish, Pashto, Russian, Italian and Greek all have the smallest number of speakers, only 0.1% of the population speak Pashto and 0.2% of the population speak each of the other languages. This is reflected by the provisions that the libraries make. There is only one library which provides any loanable resources in Turkish, Pashto and Russian. Hulme library provides resources in Turkish, Hulme library provides resources in Pashto, City Library provides resources in Russian and Italian and none of the five libraries provide Greek. This helps to explain the number of visits to each library, the library with the most visits will get the most funding and so will have better resources, the better the resources, the more likely library customers will choose, if possible, to attend that particular library. However, not all the languages follow this exact pattern.

We can see that City Library provides resources in Irish even though according to the 2010 census 0% of the population speak Irish as their first language; it is also not a language which is on the curriculum in England and is spoken by less than 10% of the population in Ireland as their first language at home. Hence it cannot possibly be stocked by the library due to a necessity to learn it. The only probable cause for Irish being provided in this library is that this is a purely political move on the part of the council. Irish Gaelic is an official language in Ireland which is part of the UK and so it is most likely considered politically correct to have Irish Gaelic in the library. It is also a language which is part of the United Kingdom's national heritage and so for some people may create a sense of identity and belonging.

Other languages such as French, German, Spanish and Italian are all languages which are on the curriculum and so it is somewhat expected that they will be available in libraries. However, the provisions that have been made in these languages are still only proportionate to the population of speakers for whom these languages are their primary home language. The population of the Manchester community for whom French is the primary language spoken at home is 0.5%, German speakers make up 0.2%, Spanish 0.4% and Italian 0.2% of the community. City Library has materials in all four of the languages and only Hulme Library provides any further materials in any of these languages and that language is French. The reason that there seems to be relatively few resources provided in these languages is most likely due to the fact that there are such a relatively small number of speakers of these languages as so there is little demand. It is also seemingly in part due to the fact that these languages are taught as second languages in many schools. Schools in the UK tend to be well equipped and so many students would not feel it necessary to seek resources elsewhere. As these languages tend to be on the curriculum, not just in England but around the world, there are also many resources that can be easily found online in these languages, therefore rendering a heavy stock of materials in these languages redundant.

Most crucially, one factor that cannot possibly be underestimated here is that language for many people is a large part of identity Llamas (2010) and hence may influence demand. For example if we look at Kurdish, Persian and Polish we can see that although Polish has a significantly higher number of first language speakers as 1.3% of Manchester's population claim it to be their first language, only two libraries provide any kind of lendable resources in Polish, a further 0.4% of the population claim Kurdish to be their primary language and only 0.6% claim Persian to be their primary language. Kurdish is provided for in Hulme Library and Persian in all libraries but Levenshulme. This proves that is not merely census data which influences a council decision but demand as well as, if there is no demand for a particular type of book, it is unlikely to be stocked at so many libraries. Polish is a European language and is typically associated with a more Western culture whereas Persian and Kurdish are not. It could be posited that perhaps there is more demand for Kurdish and Persian resources because people see those languages as being more central to their sense of identity and to not read in their language would be to disassociate themselves with their culture and so lose part of their identity as they are currently living in westernised culture. This could influence the choice of language they will read in and therefore influence demand, potentially explaining the difference between the census results and the language provisions made by the library.

4. The official decision making process

We have already outlined in section 3.4 above some of the factors that are taken into consideration when councils make decisions about libraries.

One thing that has not yet been mentioned however and this is questionnaires; Manchester City Council have left questionnaires regarding public libraries in public facilities such as the Town Hall, The leisure centres and libraries to ask for the public's opinion as to what they would prefer to have done with the funding for the libraries, this shows that the Council takes the opinion of the public into consideration when making decisions and public spending and public services.

The librarian at Withington explained the process which all proposals had to go through before becoming that it is the North West Region that decides on regional scales how the services should be spread regarding the different languages in the libraries.

Funding is handed out by the government proportionally based on the population of each region; this is then split equally between the councils in that region. Funding is allocated by the council to each area, such as Young people, public services etc. Within these categories funding is based on decisions the council make each year. These decisions are made by a council committee.

5. Language policies within libraries across the country and how decisions are made concerning the languages a library will make provisions for in various councils.

The government has policies and laws about the provisions each library should make as outlined in Matras (2009) However, many of the laws contain words such as "try" and so do not by law actually enforce the regulation of language policies in libraries and it would be difficult should a library refuse to cater for a specific language to force them to do so by law if they could prove that they had already made a previous attempt. This would suggest that perhaps the government needs to have a clearer policy outlined so that libraries would by law have to provide languages.

Funding and decisions based upon libraries and the languages that they are prepared to make provisions for and what formats these provisions will be in are largely due down to the individual councils. The law only lays out guidelines of what you should expect from your library service and there are no laws controlling the proportion of English to foreign language books. For example Withington has a English:Non-English book ratio of 10:1, but without any standard regulations they could either increase or decrease.

6. Distribution of funding

The data returned by the librarians gave us direct information about the organisation of libraries, how they manage to maximise their budget and services for the community.

The allocation of the budget is based largely on the needs within a neighbourhood library. For example, the Urdu collection at Longsight library is much larger than anywhere else, but the budget is not infinite and so decisions have to be made based on storage capacity, and the usage made on the stock. All residents can place free reservations for stock that is situated in another library, and

they also have a stock suggestion service where residents can place suggestions for specific titles and/or subject areas of stock that they would like to see.

In the City Library, the stock budget needs to cover all areas of stock throughout the library and is shared proportionally subject to demand, the necessary maintenance of stock and the requirements of the local community. The foreign language Adult bookfund ratio is 1:5 Foreign to English, for 2013-2014, but this does not include the online, periodical, Children's stock, CDs and DVD services.

The member of staff in Longsight Library told us that it is the Community Services Manager that is in charge of the funding budget. All library managers submit a budget draft in which materials for community language has been included. The community services manager will consider the draft with real needs.

7. Discussion

Despite initial setbacks in our study regarding declines from certain libraries, the above findings have provided numerous significant points of interest. The statement from the librarian at Withington that North-West libraries decide on regional scales regarding multilingual services, not only offers potential for a broader investigation into multilingual libraries, but it highlights the multilingualism of Lancashire as a whole. This would appear to adhere to what Edwards (1994) calls "cultural relativism", which is basically the idea that the needs of a community are fluid and ever-changing and that the requirements of one society or community may not necessarily be the same as another.

The number of books available in different languages has consistently grown over years. The needs of the community have changed as the number of immigrants and other bilingual speakers have increased. If the world is experiencing globalization, then cultural pluralism is an inevitably likely outcome; "migration is not a new phenomenon, but recently the speed and scale of change has quickened. This is resulting in an increasing number of people with trans-national identities" (see references for online resource). Cities have to respond to these local changes. Libraries as a public service are an ideal place to bring everybody together, but when asked what they are for, the general public but may not always directly think about libraries as a place of multicultural exchange, which is potentially due to a lack of communication.

This could therefore suggest that the provision of multilingual services is a pragmatic move which will need to steadily increase, assuming that the community's relatively recent increase in multilingualism continues to increase further.

On the other hand, Ager (2003) suggested that in the UK the motivation of language policy is more oriented towards mainstream Britain as we referred to in Part 1 of the coursework, however the wide range of multilingual services that libraries now offer could perhaps arguably contest this. The positive feedback from librarians further suggests that perhaps Ager was not entirely correct and the community is becoming increasingly more comfortable with identifying itself as being multicultural.

The provision of 'Go Citizen' for library users to have an opportunity to gain British citizenship shows a prominent awareness of a highly multicultural community and a careful planning on the part of the council to use funding and resources to the best of their ability in an effort to bridge the gap between cultures and erode language barriers. For immigrants, or even long-term residents to

sustain contact with the language(s) and culture from their place of origin is an important thing, as it is a part of their identity and is something they will be able to share through the generations.

With regards to Longsight library, the mixed nature of their provision appears to agree with what Matras (2009) in Part 1 of our coursework noted is a lack of a clear procedure from the government regarding how each language should be accommodated and in what mediums. For example, whereas the provision for 6 languages at Longsight would suggest a strong orientation towards significant multilingualism, only two languages (English and Urdu) are provided for in newspaper form and no language translation service provided. The large collection of loanable Urdu material at Longsight with funds allocated according to individual library needs on a regional level shows at least an awareness of the multilingual requirements of this community.

Despite not having the support of all of the libraries which we would like to have investigated, the feedback which we did receive may allow us to make predictions for other Manchester libraries. General multicultural trends within the city of Manchester (Part 1 of the coursework counted over 100 languages) would suggest at least some provision of multilingual services within libraries such as Fallowfield which were not available for investigation. Furthermore, with differing ethnic trends within individual library communities, the allocation of resources according to certain library needs (as noted in our findings) means that the languages most prominent in the other library communities are the more likely to have larger provision and funding. Indeed, the findings highlight the question of what responsibility public libraries have with regard to providing for different communities and languages, with the positive outcome of significant provision, such as that found within many of the Manchester libraries. It does also seem fair that there are no interpreters, interpreters are incredibly expensive and it is likely that they are the least useful resource and much of the time having so many materials available in various languages is seemingly sufficient to meet the requirements of most of the community anyway.

8. The future for these libraries

Manchester libraries are planning the removal of funding from some libraries such as Burnage and Chorlton and the re-direction of this funding for such things as refurbishment of City Library. The refurbishment means that the library currently has to stock some of its Polish, Chinese, Urdu and European language collections elsewhere to other libraries due to lack of space. The City Library aims to house stock collections in communities where the stock will be of most benefit. Re-directed funds will also go towards creating a mobile outreach programme. This, the council claim will mean that 95% of all residents in the Manchester area will live within a two mile radius of a somewhere from where they can borrow books and this will make all services much more accessible to the public. Manchester City Council obviously want to make their services and materials as accessible to everyone as they possibly can and this means attempting overcome language barriers and geographical problems. Clearly the future for these libraries is uncertain, but one thing we can assert with relative assuredness is that it is very likely that multilingual services in Manchester, and indeed in the North West as a whole, will need to be significantly enhanced and expanded to meet the increasing needs of an ever-growing multilingual and multicultural society.

9. Summary

Overall, it is likely fair to say that libraries in Manchester do provide an adequate service to the public. They provide a variety of multilingual services, mainly dependent on the discretionary need of each library and their subsequent ethnic populations. When asking others opinion about whether they consider these services useful, the response is overall quite positive and most people are happy with the services provided. Certain non-English to English book ratios still contain a large disparity, whilst some libraries notionally provide multilingual services without a comprehensive outlook. However, we can say that the libraries under investigation do show at least a conscious awareness of their multilingual surroundings, and do provide some multilingual services. It is obvious that not everyone will always be satisfied with the services and the materials the council provide, but ultimately they appear to provide an overall good service, experience and provisions to the public.

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