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Public libraries as developers of social capital: Changing roles, values and missions

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ABSTRACT

Social capital is the processes between people which establish relationships and social trust facilitating mutual cooperation and collaboration. It is the social fabric or glue that holds a community together. Since the mid 1990s, the concept of social capital has emerged as a key strategic driver underpinning many areas of government and public policy. This trend parallels concerns expressed by politicians, policy makers, academics and social theorists that levels of civic engagement are diminishing and communities are breaking down due to social disconnection, loss of trust and low levels of resilience. Emphasising the capacity of communities to build social capital, therefore, is envisaged as the way towards a social policy climate that prioritises community building and values of social cohesion and social inclusion.

Recent studies suggest that public libraries, in particular, with their commitment to social justice, equity and inclusiveness, have a crucial role in building communities and connecting people. By providing communities with a free and safe public place, libraries are in a unique position to facilitate the building of trust and relationships within their communities, thereby increasing social capital. However, the reality is that the broader social and community role of the public library is often neglected within general social capital debates, as well as within the library sector.

Against this background, this thesis sets out to articulate and demonstrate the role of public libraries in developing social capital. The contribution of public libraries to building social capital is illustrated through the undertaking and reporting of a social capital audit study of one public library. Through its demonstration of a social capital audit in practice, this thesis offers frameworks and guidelines to other libraries interested in conducting similar research. It therefore opens the way for others to build upon, and refine, the social capital audit tool as a means to measure and evaluate social capital performance in public libraries.

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university and that to the best of my knowledge it does not contain any materials previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Candy Hillenbrand

Date

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the research

1.1 Introduction

A substantial portion of the contemporary debates, literature and discourse devoted to public libraries and the profession of librarianship as a whole abounds with references to a "paradigm shift" which has been brought about by recent changes in the fundamental nature of information itself (Berring, 1993). The information revolution, catalysed primarily by the advent of the internet, has irrevocably changed the face of the public library. Public access computers are now a key component of a public library's resources and some sections of the community, particularly youth, are more likely to visit a public library to access the internet than to borrow a book.

Library professionals have responded to the widespread technological and attendant social and cultural changes of the last decade in a number of ways. Some lament their dwindling status as primary intermediary between the client and the information they seek, fearing their traditional roles are becoming increasingly redundant in a world where the library user becomes her/his own librarian in a digital domain of unlimited information (Hillenbrand, 2004). There is much talk of challenging traditional stereotypes and focussing on shifting the image of the librarian from the stern bespectacled cardigan-clad shushing organiser of books to a more hip, funky and techno-savvy "information professional".[1]

Others advocate "repositioning" the public library so it can best meet the needs of a changing world (Bundy, 2000). Bundy argues that the profession and its advocates need to sell the vision of the public library as a "community connector" in order to guarantee continued, if not increased, investment from local government authorities and to ensure relevance in the 21st century:

"The major challenge for public libraries is to establish their work as contributing to, and leading in, building communities and social capital. Realistically they cannot do so alone. They need their Friends to help persuade local, state and the national government to recognize social capital and of their responsibility to invest in its development" (Bundy, 2003c).

[1] There are numerous websites dedicated to challenging the traditional stereotype of the librarian, including: "New Breed Librarian", "Anarchist Librarian", "The Shifted Librarian", "Progressive Librarian", "Underground Librarian", "Street Librarian", "Belly Dancing Librarian", "Naked Librarian", and "Modified Librarian".

It is against this backdrop that the current study is situated. The primary motivation for the study, therefore, is to explore and extend the territory beyond the traditional role of the public library as a collection of books and other resources to incorporate more social and community roles. The notion of "social capital" and its relationship to the public library is a fitting place to start.

In this context, the research sought to develop a practical tool to evaluate the social capital development potential of a public library. This involved conducting a social capital audit of one public library with the aim of formulating general guidelines that might be useful to other libraries pursuing similar projects. The library chosen is a joint-use library between the community and Technical and Further Education College (TAFE) situated in one of the fastest growing regional areas in South Australia – the District Council of Mount Barker. Mount Barker Community Library serves a membership of 20,600 people and has an annual budget of $1.37 million. The Council district covers an area of 595 square kilometres and services a population of 22,780 which is steadily increasing by 2% per annum.[2]

1.2 Background to the research

Since the mid 1990s, there has been a growing body of discourse detailing the collapse of community and the loss of trust between people, particularly in developed countries (Putnam, 1993; 1995; 2000). The concept of "social capital" has emerged as a key strategic direction in government policy while values of trust, resilience, networking and social cohesion are increasingly discussed by politicians, policy makers and social theorists alike alongside bottom-line economic considerations. The World Bank, for example, has defined social capital as:

"the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions. Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable. Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society – it is the glue that holds them together" (World Bank, 2002).

Two recent studies suggest that public libraries, in particular, with their commitment to the ethics of social justice, equity and inclusiveness, have a key role to play in building communities and connecting people. It has been argued that, by providing communities with a free and "safe place to go", libraries are in a unique position to facilitate the

[2] Information from *Mount Barker Community Library Fact Sheet*, 2004, and Horizon Library Management Software statistics.

building of trust and relationships between members of the communities they serve, thereby ensuring their own economic futures (UTS, 2000; Library Board Victoria, 2003). These studies infer that the role of libraries in the 21st century is set to expand beyond the traditional core function of supplying books, information and other resources to its user communities, to encompass a broader social role that locates the public library at the heart of its community. However, the reality at present is that this broader role is poorly understood both within and without the library sector, and usually neglected in studies of the impact of social capital on communities (Putnam, 2000). Further, the available Australian studies offer only very general guidelines for conducting a social capital audit in a public library or branch, while the few overseas studies focus primarily on the social impact of public libraries (Linley and Usherwood, 1998; Bryson and Usherwood, 2002).

This research thus aims to build upon the existing research and to broaden understandings of the social role of libraries to incorporate the concept of social capital.

1.3 Focus of the research

The broad aims of the research are to:

- explore the concept of social capital and its emerging place in government policy through a review and analysis of current debates in the literature.
- investigate, in broad terms, the role of the public library in contributing to the development of social capital.
- develop a model based on the community-building and social role of the public library that includes new core values for the profession of librarianship and new visions for the management of libraries.
- develop a practical tool to evaluate the social capital development potential of a public library which could be used to formulate guidelines that may be useful to other libraries. This involved conducting a social capital audit of a regional public library.

1.4 Research questions

The research questions are:

- What roles can the public library play in developing the social capital of its community?

- What are some of the ways in which libraries can and do contribute to community-building, social cohesion and social inclusion?
- What are the implications for the public library of a social capital building role?
- What issues are raised by the application of a social capital model to a public library?
- Do the research findings suggest new roles and missions for public libraries of the future and new core values for the profession of librarianship?

1.5 Structure of the thesis

Chapter One has introduced the research, outlined the background to the study and presented the broad aims of the research, including the research questions.

Chapter Two presents the review of the literature in two sections. The first part looks at the growing body of literature as it deals generally with the concept of social capital. It covers the history and definition of the concept; outlines key themes and looks at the positive and negative impacts of social capital. Further, it looks at the literature on the empirical research and measurement of social capital; criticisms of the concept; and its applications to public policy, an aspect of crucial relevance to the current research. Finally, this section closes with a detailed overview of the implications of the literature for the current research. The second part focuses on the literature connecting the phenomenon of social capital and its related concepts (such as social inclusion and community building) with public libraries. It also closes with an overview of the implications of this literature for the current research.

Chapter Three presents the methodologies and the theoretical framework underpinning the study. It explains the rationale for adopting both quantitative and qualitative methodologies in the research. In particular, it looks at the ethnographic approach used in the study and discusses the issues facing the researcher who is embedded in the object of the research. The chapter outlines the range of methods used in collecting the data for the study with emphasis on the user survey, including its structure, distribution, collection and collation.

Chapter Four presents the findings and discussion of the research in the form of a self-contained social capital audit report of Mount Barker Community Library. The audit evaluates the role of the library in contributing to the social capital of the community it serves. It concludes with recommendations for the library's management.

Chapter Five concludes the study. It looks at the implications of the social capital audit report for public libraries as a whole and suggests guidelines for public libraries to use in their own social capital research. It reflects on the research process and its limitations and offers suggestions for further research. Finally, it summarises the findings concerning the role of public libraries as developers of social capital and discusses the emergence of new core values for libraries and the library profession.

1.6 Summary

The primary purpose of the research was to develop a practical tool to evaluate the social capital development potential of a public library which could be used as an instrument by other libraries to measure their own social capital potential. The outcome of the research was a social capital audit of a public library which sought to identify and measure the extent to which that library contributes to the social capital of its community.

This introductory chapter has established the background and motivation for the study, and outlined the structure of the thesis. *Chapter Two* presents the review of the literature.

CHAPTER TWO
Review of the literature

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section reviews the literature on social capital in general, beginning with the origins and definitions of the term, exploring key themes and various aspects of social capital, and concluding with applications of social capital to the current research. The second section reviews the literature on social capital as it relates specifically to public libraries. It concludes with a look at the implications of this literature for the current research.

2.2 Social capital

2.2.1 History of social capital

Social capital has a long history. Its roots may be traced back to the political economy theorists of the Scottish Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, who recognised the connection between social norms and economic activity (Woolcock, 1998). Additional sources can be found in the classical sociological tradition of the nineteenth century, embodied in the works of Durkheim, Weber and Marx (Woolcock, 1998; Portes, 1998). According to Portes, the idea of social capital – that the social dimension matters – is not new to sociologists and "simply recaptures an insight present since the very beginnings of the discipline" (Portes, 1998).

The first documented use of the term itself can be traced to a 1916 article by L.J. Hanifan, a US school reformer, who referred to social capital as:

"those tangible substances [that] count for most in the daily lives of people: namely good will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up a social unit...The individual is helpless socially, if left to himself...If he comes into contact with his neighbor, and they with other neighbors, there will be an accumulation of *social capital*, which may immediately satisfy his social needs and which may bear a social potentiality sufficient to the substantial improvement of living conditions in the whole community" (Hanifan, cited in Putnam, 2000, p. 19).

Hanifan's early account of social capital "anticipated virtually all the crucial elements in later interpretations" (Putnam, 2000), yet the term disappeared into obscurity for a number of decades. It re-emerged briefly in the 1960s (Jacobs) and 1970s (Loury) but

it was in the 1980s that the concept firmly took hold due to the pioneering work of sociologists Pierre Bourdieu (1986) and James Coleman (1988). In the 1990s the concept of social capital was taken up by economist, Francis Fukuyama (1995) and subsequently widely popularised through the writing of political scientist, Robert Putnam (1993, 1995, 2000). The title of Putnam's best-selling book, *Bowling Alone*, is now used as a metaphor to describe the decline of social relationships and engagement in civic life – where once Americans bowled in groups, they now bowl alone (Putnam, 2000).

In recent years, the concept of social capital has burst forth into numerous academic, government, public policy and popular arenas. Cox and Caldwell (2000) have attributed the extraordinary popularity of social capital and the "reappearance of the social" to the waning of the model of economism or 'economic rationalism':

"Like some of the spin-off concepts from quantum mechanics, social capital seems to explain gaps in our theories even before it has been definitively described. It meets an intuitively felt need for seeing people as social beings after a long period in which the dominant discourse defined us primarily as economic agents" (Cox and Caldwell, 2000, pp. 44-45).

The literature on social capital has expanded exponentially while debates about its meanings, application and measurement have transcended its traditional bases in the academic disciplines of sociology, economics and political science to be embraced by a wide range of policy fields, including family and community studies, education, work and organizations, health and governance (Woolcock, 1998). Governments at the local and national level have adopted social capital as a key policy component, while at an international level, the concept has been incorporated into the work of the OECD (2001) and the World Bank (2002).

2.2.2 Definitions of social capital

According to the Commonwealth Government's Productivity Commission, social capital is a contentious subject whose conceptual literature is still evolving:

"Views differ about what constitutes social capital, how it operates, to whom and what the concept applies, and how to delineate between its sources, manifestations and effects; whether social capital is always beneficial; and even whether the matters referred to under the social capital label can sensibly be thought of as 'capital'" (Productivity Commission, 2003, p. 5).

The above quote highlights some of the debates and controversies which surround social capital and point to inherent difficulties in precisely defining the term. Indeed, the

primary theorists in the field have presented a range of definitions. The task for researchers is to attempt to identify the differences as well as to tease out the commonalities.

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu defines social capital as:

"the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership of a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital" (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 248-249).

Bourdieu's emphasis is on how participation in social networks or "networks of relationships" can enable individuals to tap into the economic resources of the group. According to Bourdieu, "economic capital is at the root of all the other types of capital" and social capital, which is made up of social obligations or "connections" is ultimately reducible to economic capital. Social capital is therefore a "disguised form of economic capital"; it is a commodity and its accumulation requires a deliberate and "unceasing effort of sociability" with its economic benefits accruing to individuals rather than to the collective (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 249-252).

American sociologist James Coleman has provided the foundation for much of the current conceptual debates on social capital (Winter, 2000b). He uses the term as a conceptual tool to synthesise the two intellectual streams of sociology and economics which he applies to the field of education (Coleman, 1998). Coleman defines social capital by its function:

"It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors – within the structure....The function identified by the concept of "social capital" is the value of these aspects of social structure to actors as resources that they can use to achieve their interests" (Coleman, 1998, ps. S98, S101).

He distinguishes between the three types of capital: physical, human and social. Social capital shares functions in common with both physical and human capital – it is productive and it may be specific to certain activities – i.e. "a given form of social capital that is valuable in facilitating certain actions may be useless or even harmful for others". Social capital differs from the other forms of capital in that it "inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors. It is not lodged in the actors themselves or in physical implements of production" (Coleman, 1998, p. S98).

Of importance to later conceptual developments, Coleman identifies the mechanisms by which social capital is generated – obligations, expectations and trustworthiness of structures; information channels; and norms and effective sanctions (Coleman, 1998). In their respective definitions of social capital Coleman and Bourdieu are basically in agreement. Yet while Bourdieu focuses on how social capital can be converted into economic capital, Coleman's interest is in how social capital is employed in the creation of human capital and as a basis for human action within the family and in the community. For Coleman, social capital "exists in the relations among persons". Like Bourdieu, he perceives social capital as primarily a "resource for individuals" (Coleman, 1998, pp. S98-S100, p. S118).

The work of Francis Fukuyama, an American political economist, has in part been influenced by Coleman. Fukuyama is concerned with the "American problem" and identifies the "decline of sociability" as having important implications for American democracy (Fukuyama, 1995, pp. 10-11). In so doing, he has broadened the concept of social capital to include nations. The notion of 'trust' lies at the core of Fukuyama's approach to social capital which he defines as:

"a capability that arises from the prevalence of trust in a society or in certain parts of it. It can be embodied in the smallest and most basic social group, the family, as well as the largest of all groups, the nation, and in all the other groups in between. Social capital differs from other forms of human capital insofar as it is usually created and transmitted through cultural mechanisms like religion, tradition, or historical habit" (Fukuyama, 1995, p. 26).

Fukuyama defines trust as:

"the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and cooperative behaviour, based on commonly shared norms, on the part of other members of that community. These norms can be about deep "value" questions like the nature of God or justice, but they also encompass secular norms like professional standards and codes of behaviour" (Fukuyama, 1995, p. 26).

Both Coleman and Fukuyama have identified trust and shared norms as key themes of social capital. These themes have been integrated into the work of American political scientist, Robert Putnam. His work on social capital (Putnam, 1993, 1995, 2000) draws heavily on the theoretical foundations established by Coleman. In his 1993 study of the regions of Italy, Putnam argues that social capital "refers to features of social organisation, such as trust, norms and networks" (Putnam, 1993, p. 167). In a later definition of social capital, Putnam further distinguishes between the three types of capital first delineated by Coleman:

"whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals – social

networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called "civic virtue". The difference is that "social capital" calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations. A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital" (Putnam, 2000, p. 19).

While the above definitions of social capital closely follow that of Coleman, emphasising the same key features, Putnam applies the concept more broadly to encompass regions and nation states as opposed to Coleman's focus on the individual. Both Coleman and Bourdieu view social capital as a resource for individuals; Putnam, however, views social capital as a community resource. It is this focus on social capital as an attribute of communities that has formed the central theme of the current research.

2.2.3 Key themes identified in the literature

Following on from the theoretical foundations laid down by Bourdieu, Coleman, Fukuyama and Putnam, various academics have further refined the concept of social capital. Four key themes have been identified in the literature which are described as the "conceptual elements of social capital" (Onyx and Bullen, 2000, p. 105). The major themes are:

Trust – "the extent to which individuals believe that others mean what they say and will follow through on their commitments" (Sander and Lowney, 2003, p. 24). Trust can also relate to groups and institutions including governments (Productivity Commission, 2003).

Social norms – "are shared understandings, informal rules and conventions that prescribe, proscribe or modulate certain behaviours in various circumstances. Generalised social norms can include honesty, law abidingness, the work ethic, respect for elders, tolerance and acceptance of diversity, and helping people in need" (Productivity Commission, 2003, p. 9).

Networks – "a network is an interconnected group of people who usually have an attribute in common" (Productivity Commission, 2003, p. 10). The result is "interlocking networks of relationships" (Onyx and Bullen, 2000, p. 106).

Reciprocity – "the individual provides a service to others, or acts for the benefit of others at a personal cost, but in the general expectation that this kindness will be returned at some undefined time in the future in case of need" (Onyx and Bullen, 2000, p. 106).

While some theorists view trust, social norms, networks and reciprocity as core elements which constitute social capital (Productivity Commission, 2003; Onyx and Bullen, 2000), others caution against confusing the outcomes of social capital with the features of social capital itself (Woolcock, 2001). For example, Michael Woolcock, a social scientist with the World Bank, defines social capital as "the norms and networks that facilitate collective action". He argues that it is important that any definition of social capital "focus on its sources rather than its consequences, i.e. on what social capital *is* rather than what it *does*", thereby eliminating from the definition entities such as trust. Trust, writes Woolcock, is more accurately understood as an outcome or consequence of social capital, and is not to be confused with social capital itself (Woolcock, 1998, p. 185; 2001, p. 13).

Alejandro Portes, another American sociologist, points to the growing consensus in the literature that "social capital stands for the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures" (Portes, 1998, p. 6). The key component of social capital which has been identified throughout the entire body of literature is therefore *relationships*. Portes sums it up thus:

"Whereas economic capital is in people's bank accounts and human capital is inside their heads, social capital inheres in the structure of their relationships. To possess social capital, a person must be related to others, and it is those others, not himself, who are the actual source of his or her advantage" (Portes, 1998, p. 7).

Finally, Eva Cox and Peter Caldwell, two Australian academics, summarise the commonalities that inform all definitions and perspectives of social capital:

- All link economic, social, and political spheres and implicitly recognise that social relationships influence how markets and states operate.
- All focus on relationships and the ways in which reliable, stable relationships among actors enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of both collective and individual action and interaction.
- All presuppose that social capital can be strengthened, and that the process requires resources (Cox and Caldwell, 2000).

2.2.4 Forms of social capital

Throughout the more recent literature, reference is made to different forms of social capital which have been characterised as *bonding*, *bridging* and *linking* social capital (Putnam, 2000; Woolcock, 2001; Stone, 2003; Sander and Lowney, 2003). Distinguishing between these three forms of social capital is crucial since each plays a different role and may be useful for different purposes. Moreover, as Woolcock argues, different *combinations* of bonding, bridging and linking social capital are responsible for the range of outcomes evident in the literature (Woolcock, 2001).

According to Putnam, bonding (or exclusive) social capital is good for "getting by" and bridging (or inclusive) social capital is good for "getting ahead" – "Bonding social capital constitutes a kind of sociological superglue, whereas bridging social capital provides a sociological WD-40" (Putnam, 2000, pp. 22-23). Putnam further qualifies the distinctions between the three forms of social capital with this reminder that:

"bonding and bridging are not "either-or" categories into which social networks can be neatly divided, but "more or less" dimensions along which we can compare different forms of social capital" (Putnam, 2000, p. 23).

The three forms of social capital can be summarised as:

Bonding social capital – refers to social relations among family members, close friends and neighbours. People are linked together by strong ties with others like them. Examples: families, book group (Woolcock, 2001; Sander and Lowney, 2003).

Bridging social capital – refers to social relations with more distant friends, associates and colleagues. The social ties cut across differences such as race, class or ethnicity. Such relationships are described in the literature as "horizontal" relationships. Examples: community associations, civil rights movements (Putnam, 2000; Woolcock, 2001; Sander and Lowney, 2003).

Linking social capital – refers to social relations with those in authority, which might be used to garner resources or power. Such relationships are described in the literature as "vertical" relationships (Woolcock, 2001; Stone, 2003).

An understanding of the distinctions and relationships between the three forms of social capital is particularly valuable in formulating policies aimed at strengthening social capital. Sander and Lowney argue: "Any community attempting to build more

social capital needs to pay attention not only to *whether* they build more social connectedness but *what* types of ties these are" (Sander and Lowney, 2003, p. 5). The authors use the example of a community initiative to build social capital aimed at reducing teen unemployment. They suggest that in this case it would be more useful to build bridging social capital which would create ties between unemployed teenagers and employed members of the community; schools; local businesses, etc, rather than bonding social capital, which would simply strengthen and reinforce the ties between the already unemployed teenagers (Sander and Lowney, 2003).

The above insight is especially relevant to the current research conducted in the context of a public library. For example, in attempting to address issues of social exclusion, particularly the identified exclusion of youth, and in developing successful strategies to encourage youth participation in the case study library, what is needed is the building of bridging social capital networks between youth, the library and other sectors of the community (Weddell, 2004).

2.2.5 Benefits of social capital

The recent literature abounds with references to the benefits of social capital and its capacity to contribute to individual and collective well-being. Coleman, for example, claims that social capital affects the ability of individuals to act and enhances their quality of life (Coleman, 1988). Putnam declares that social capital allows citizens to more easily resolve collective problems and offers a solution to the dilemmas of collective action (Putnam, 2000).

The World Bank has conducted a number of studies which have demonstrated that social capital has beneficial effects in many areas of economic and social development, including reduction in crime and violence; improved educational outcomes; better health; lower poverty; financial growth; sustainable solutions for environmental problems; and improved government efficiency (World Bank 2002a). These positive outcomes are achieved in a number of ways, primarily through the relationships between people and the generation of trust therefrom. According to the World Bank:

"Social capital offers many benefits to communities. Relationships with kin, neighbors and friends are an important safety net, and are crucial to survival when formal safety nets are absent or inadequate. Trust among community members and their ability to work together for the public good can reduce problems, such as violence...by enforcing shared values and norms of behavior; increase business opportunities by providing informal access to credit and reducing transaction costs; and improve the quality of education and the accessibility of health services" (World Bank 2002b).

2.2.6 Negative impacts of social capital

There are various criticisms of social capital which stem from the perception that in some quarters it has been proffered as a panacea for all the social and economic woes of both developed and developing nations. Yet most theorists and researchers in the field have pointed to the negative outcomes or what has been referred to as the 'downside' or 'dark side' of social capital (Portes and Landolt, 1996; Putzel, 1997; Portes, 1998; Fukuyama, 1999; Putnam, 2000; Woolcock, 2001).

Portes and Landolt soundly criticise Coleman and the early (1993) work of Putnam for treating social capital as an "unmixed blessing" and for painting a "celebratory" and one-sided picture of social capital. On the contrary, they argue, the same social ties that help members of a group often enable it to exclude outsiders. Similarly, social capital can result in restrictions on individual freedom and business initiative since "membership of a community also brings demands for conformity". Further, there may be considerable social capital in ghetto areas, "but the assets obtainable through it seldom allow participants to rise above their poverty". On the other side of the coin, "the same kinds of ties that sometimes yield public goods also produce 'public bads'", and here the authors cite the examples of mafia families, prostitution rings, and youth gangs (Portes and Landolt, 1996, pp. 2-5).

Two theorists who refute the notion of a 'dark side' to social capital are Australia's Cox and Caldwell who maintain that 'bad social capital' is "self-contradictory", as well as "radically incoherent", and that the concept should be linked definitionally to the notion of "public good":

"The outcomes of social capital, whatever occasional 'downside' there may be, must be regarded as predominantly socially beneficial or it becomes illogical to recognise social capital in general as of any value at all. Many apparent disputes about what does and does not count as social capital could simply evaporate if a public-good definition was accepted" (Cox and Caldwell, pp. 51-54).

2.2.7 Decline and development of social capital

Underlying much of the theoretical literature on social capital is the assumption that social capital stocks need to be increased or developed in the face of a widespread decline in social capital. Putnam asserts that social capital in the United States is declining, having "eroded steadily and sometimes dramatically over the past two generations" (Putnam, 2000, p. 287). His conclusions about the decline in social capital

(or 'de-capitalization' as he terms it) are drawn from his findings that civic engagement and social connectedness have diminished as evidenced by indicators such as lower voter turnout, lower newspaper readership and lower membership in voluntary associations. According to Putnam, Americans are less trusting, not only of governments, but also of their neighbours. Moreover, he points to the "loosening of the bonds" within the family, the most fundamental form of social capital, as further reinforcing the trend of declining social capital. He offers several explanations for this trend, including the movement of women into the labour force; the loss of residential stability; demographic transformations such as higher divorce rates, fewer children, lower real wages; and the technological transformation of leisure, of which television is a primary culprit (Putnam, 1995, pp. 65-74).

It was Eva Cox's 1995 series of Boyer Lectures, *A Truly Civil Society*, which first sparked debate about social capital in Australia. Cox's work is heavily influenced by Putnam and she echoes his concerns about the decline in civil society and therefore of social capital, linking this decline directly to loss of trust:

"Social capital is [therefore] increased by use. It can be depleted by widespread lack of trust or by our own failure to trust others. Without trust we avoid contact with others because we fear betrayal. This is the core component of social connections" (Cox, Lecture 2, 1995, p. 3).

2.2.8 Measuring social capital

Despite the debates and controversies surrounding the somewhat elusive notion of social capital and the difficulties in defining precisely what it is, there is a growing body of literature dedicated to empirically quantifying it as well as attempting to measure its effects (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993; 2000; World Bank, 2000; Onyx and Bullen, 1997; Stone, 2001; Stone and Hughes; 2002; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002). Researchers in this area tend to preface their studies with an acknowledgment of the lack of consensus on how to define social capital and the correlative problems with any empirical analysis of the concept. After all, "measurement presupposes that one can define fairly well what needs to be measured" (Grootaert, 1998, p. 9).

In the absence of a uniform definition of social capital, empirical researchers have addressed the task of measurement in a number of ways. As the World Bank explains, "how we measure social capital depends on how we define it" (World Bank, 2002c). A further problem with empirical studies of social capital is that they endeavour to

measure such ambiguous concepts as "community", "networks", "norms" "trust", "values", and so on. Consequently, the World Bank and others warn that for these reasons, it is not possible to obtain a single "pure" measure of social capital and that any results can only be "suggestive", rather than "definitive" (World Bank, 2002c; Productivity Commission, 2003, p. 25).

Most of the empirical research is centred on developing a range of "indicators" of social capital which can be measured, thereby enabling the researcher to arrive at a social capital assessment. Fukuyama has identified two broad approaches: "to conduct a census of groups and group memberships in a given society, and...to use survey data on levels of trust and civic engagement" (Fukuyama, 1999, p. 6). The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is currently developing an experimental statistical framework to measure social capital with a view to future inclusion in its survey program (ABS, 2000). The Australian government agency, the Institute of Family Studies, is also leading the way in social capital research with its primary focus on measuring social capital within the family (Winter, 2000; Stone, 2001; Stone and Hughes, 2002).

Although empirical research in this area is still in its infancy, a wide variety of studies have been undertaken utilising a range of variables from single 'stand-alone' to multiple variables (Productivity Commission, 2003); and using different types and combinations of qualitative, quantitative and comparative methodologies (World Bank 2000c).

Studies have been conducted at a regional level and across nations. An example of the former is Onyx and Bullen's 1997 study which measured social capital in five communities in New South Wales (Onyx and Bullen, 1997). Using a survey with 68 questions, they set out to determine whether social capital could be measured empirically. Six "conceptual elements" of social capital were isolated and incorporated into the survey design: networks of relationships; reciprocity; trust; social norms; the commons (sense of community) and personal and collective efficacy (Onyx and Bullen, 2000, pp. 105-109). Analysis of the responses to the questionnaires led Onyx and Bullen to conclude that social capital does have validity as an empirical concept since they found that there was a "common underlying theme" running through people's responses. They subsequently identified eight broad elements or factors of social capital: participation in local community; neighbourhood connections; family and friend connections; work connections; proactivity in a social context; feelings of trust and safety; tolerance of diversity; and value of life (Onyx and Bullen, 2000, pp. 111-112).

An example of a national study is Putnam's (2000) study of social capital in the United States in which he constructed a composite indicator using 14 variables grouped to measure five separate dimensions of social capital: community or organisational life; engagement in public affairs; community volunteerism; informal sociability; social trust (Putnam, 2000; Productivity Commission, 2003). Putnam's finding from this study was that social capital had declined in the United States (see section 2.2.7).

Not everyone agrees with Putnam and Cox (see section 2.2.7) that social capital is declining. A British study utilised a range of indicators to measure five areas of social capital: membership of voluntary organizations; volunteer work; charitable endeavours; informal sociability; and levels of social trust. The study aggregated the results across all five areas and found that levels of social capital "have not declined to an appreciable extent in Britain over the post war years" although the same study found that the level of social trust had declined over this period (Hall, 1999; cited in Productivity Commission, 2002, p. 29). It is notable that many of the studies have used "social trust" as a proxy or substitute for social capital, highlighting how different studies based on a different conceptualisation of social capital may arrive at quite different conclusions. This points to just some of the conceptual and methodological issues and problems underlying empirical studies of social capital.

The empirical measurement of social capital is still evolving and much research needs to be undertaken. Given its recency, it is hardly surprising that the existing research has been subjected to a degree of justified criticism. For example, while there is now general agreement that social capital is a community or group characteristic rather than an individual phenomenon, most measures of social capital are calculated by aggregating the responses of individuals (Productivity Commission, 2003). Finally, the OECD sums up the problems surrounding the measuring of social capital:

"The difficulties involved in measuring social capital need to be recognized. Sources, functions and outcomes may be confused in the desire to measure. Much of what is relevant to social capital is tacit and relational, defying easy measurement or codification. Individual attitudes (e.g. trust) or behaviour (e.g. joining organizations or voting) provide proxy measures of social capital, but these measures should not be confused with the underlying concept" (OECD, 2001, p. 43).

2.2.9 Criticisms of social capital

A number of criticisms have emerged in the ever-expanding body of literature on social capital. Some are directed towards the definition of the concept and the uses to which it is put (referred to throughout this chapter); others are directed specifically towards

perceived flaws in the work of Putnam in particular (Putzel, 1997); others focus on the methodological inconsistencies and problems associated with empirical measurement (see previous section 2.2.8); while still others concentrate on the 'downside' of social capital (referred to in section 2.2.6). This section will look at those criticisms which have not yet been addressed in the review of the literature, as well as some responses to these criticisms.

Putzel's criticisms have been levelled principally at Putnam yet apply to other theorists and researchers whose work he has influenced, for example, Cox. Putzel accuses Putnam of "conceptual stretching" as well as a tendency to "pander to a nostalgia for a ....democratic golden age" which idealises and romanticises the past, the family and the community (Putzel, 1997, pp. 940-941, p. 946). Social capital, contends Putzel, has become:

"the latest elixir within discussions about development, becoming 'all things to all people' in a fashion not dissimilar to the fate of 'human development' and 'sustainable development' in recent years" (Putzel, 1997, p. 940).

More recently, Australian academic Christopher Scanlon, has launched a scathing and yet thought-provoking attack on the advocates of social capital which merits some attention in this review (Scanlon, 2003; 2004). According to Scanlon, "social capital costs nothing and promises the world". While acknowledging that social capital "appears to offer a timely reassertion of the importance of intimate social bonds outside the arguments of economic rationalists", he also argues that the reason "social capitalists" focus on such relationships is in order that they "might be more effectively harnessed towards the achievement of specific policy outcomes" (Scanlon, 2003).

One of the effects of this "instrumentalising" of communal life, writes Scanlon, "is that social capitalists tend to subsume the intimate and informal non-economic bonds of community into the cost-benefit calculations of the market" (Scanlon, 2003). For Scanlon, this emphasis serves to subvert the "ethical relationships" suggested by social capital and he is deeply suspicious that a genuine concern with the well-being of communities may not be the underlying motivation behind the interest in social capital:

"The concern with social capital promises a filleted vision of community, in which the complexity and depth that comes with abiding bonds with others is colonized for its economic utility" (Scanlon, 2003).

Scanlon is highly cynical of the "economic" terminology which has been co-opted by social capital theorists, preferring instead to abandon the phrase 'social capital'

altogether (Scanlon, 2004). His criticisms are therefore largely aimed at the ideological foundations of social capital:

"social capital separates social relations from the background social and cultural conditions through which such relations are constituted. In other words, social capital abstracts trust, cooperation and reciprocity from the particular contexts within which such relationships emerge, as if social connectedness were somehow detachable from specific contexts, not to mention broader factors such as class, gender, ethnicity and race which impact on and help to structure such relations" (Scanlon, 2004, p. 9).

Some of Scanlon's criticisms have been partially addressed in an earlier (2001) article by Woolcock. Woolcock maintains that to refer to social relations as "capital" is neither "sociological heresy" nor a "sell-out to economics". Instead, social capital's greatest asset is that it helps "transcend the imperialism wars" (of sociological imperialism or economic imperialism) and provides "a common discourse across disciplinary, sectoral and methodological divides" (Woolcock, 2001, p. 14). As for the argument that social capital neglects considerations of power, especially for those who are powerless, Woolcock argues that, on the contrary:

"a social capital perspective can be used not only to help explain the emergence and persistence of power relations, but – perhaps more important – to provide a constructive basis for doing something about it" (Woolcock, 2001, p. 14).

2.2.10 Applications of social capital to public policy

As discussed throughout this review, social capital initiatives have been adopted across a range of policy areas at a local, state and national government level (Cox and Caldwell, 2000; Productivity Commission, 2003). Politicians from both sides of the Australian political divide, notably the Australian Labor Party leader Mark Latham and the Federal Treasurer, Peter Costello, have extolled the virtues of social capital and stressed the need to incorporate its core values of trust, tolerance, civic engagement and social relationships into public policy (Latham, 2000; Costello, 2003).

Characteristically, debates are ensuing about the extent to which governments could, or even should, be involved in building or supporting social capital (Productivity Commission, 2003, pp. 54-60). Nonetheless, in the context of the current study, there is fundamental agreement with Cox and Caldwell that in recent years "the social aspects of policy have become subordinated to the economic" and there is therefore a pressing need to "make policy social". Social capital, suggest the authors:

"as processes enhancing the public good, can offer policy makers and program managers new ways of assessing the effectiveness of policies. Indicators of social

capital can show whether processes, both within groups and between groups, facilitate or inhibit social cohesion" (Cox and Caldwell, 2000, pp. 43-44).

The relevance of this appraisal of the importance of social capital to policy development and its implications for the current study will be analysed in the following section.

2.2.11 Implications of social capital for the current research

The theoretical and empirical research literature on social capital reveals a number of implications for this research which seeks to apply social capital theory to a public library setting. The most significant implications derived from the review of the literature, which are relevant to this study, have been applied in the development of the research methodology and underscore the conclusions derived from the social capital audit assessment of the library studied.

Under the *Libraries Act 1982,* the Libraries Board of South Australia is empowered to "achieve and maintain a co-ordinated system of libraries and library services that adequately meet the needs of the whole community; and to promote and facilitate the establishment and maintenance of libraries and library services by councils and other appropriate bodies" (*Libraries Act 1982*, Part 2, Division 1, Objective 7. (1) a. and b.).

Issues of public policy are therefore crucial to public libraries, since their funding is dependent in part on the provision of public monies via the State Government to local governments. Public libraries do not exist in a vacuum and their development clearly rests on ongoing support from governments at both the state and local levels. It is therefore paramount that libraries continue to promote their value and worth to their key stakeholders. As Bundy puts it: "a major challenge for public libraries is to establish their work as contributing to, and leading in, building communities and social capital". Furthermore, he argues that "local government, in particular, must increase its low investment in what is by far its most heavily used and valued provision if the public library is to achieve its full societal potential" (Bundy, 2003c).

It is apparent that the core values of the library profession are echoed in the literature on social capital. These core values are: service to the community; democracy; freedom of access to information; equity of access to information; intellectual freedom;

respect for diversity; commitment to information literacy and lifelong learning; and partnerships and co-operation for the public and private good.[3]

In light of the fundamental compatibility between the tenets of social capital theory and the core values underpinning the library profession, the current study draws strength from a range of social capital sources, all of which have helped to inform its content, methodologies and direction. One of the most significant in this respect is the following: "the marker for policy-making that is informed by social capital theory must be inclusiveness" (Cox and Caldwell, 2000, p. 70). Social inclusion is at the heart of what libraries do, and therefore any assessment of a public library's social capital must look at the degree to which its policies and procedures encourage inclusiveness. To aid this process, Cox and Caldwell recommend asking the following questions when assessing policies. They could equally be asked of library policies aimed at increasing social capital:

- Does the policy increase people's skills to engage in social activities with people they do not know – their sociability?
- Does the policy target some groups at the expense of others, or create feelings of scapegoating or exclusion?
- Do the proposed forms of service delivery allow the building of informal relationships and trust with all stakeholders?
- Does the project help extend networks, confidence and optimism among participants?
- Do participants increase their capacity to deal with conflict and diversity?
- Does the program evaluation include the social as well as financial and individual aspects of outputs and outcomes?
- Does the auspice [the body or mechanism delivering the program] itself affect the way people see the programs? e.g. do they feel it is their right or an act of charity for which they should be grateful?
- What message does the program offer to people about their own values and roles?
- What impact does the program have on attitudes to formal institutions of governance? (Cox and Caldwell, 2000, p. 70).

[3] The core values are extracted and summarised from: *ALIA Core Values Statement, 2002.* [Online, accessed 13 October, 2004]. URL: http://www.alia.org.au/policies/core.values.html

Stone (2003) articulates the principles underlying the delivery of a 'social capital friendly' service:

"this means providing services in a way which not only meets immediate client and family needs, but is also participatory, respectful, inclusive, and which might facilitate bonds, bridges and linkages between clients and other members of the community, which are sustainable beyond the bounds of the service itself" (Stone, 2003, p. 6).

The idea of a social capital 'audit' has been drawn from several sources. While acknowledging Scanlon's criticism of the 'audit approach' to social life as "biased towards concerns of economic efficiency and productivity" (Scanlon, 2004, p. 11), the reality of the public library is that its managers need to frame any assessment of their library services in terms that are not only socially but economically viable. The Productivity Commission refers to social capital impact assessment frameworks:

"which could be used as a stand-alone procedure or be incorporated into existing policy assessment procedures. As with environmental impact assessments, the aim would be to ensure that relevant social capital considerations were taken into account as far as practicable in policy analysis and design" (Productivity Commission, 2003, pp. 63-65).

Cox and Caldwell argue that "social impact statements", which look at the social justice impacts of policies, should become "the driving force of policy formation" and propose:

"the concept of social and ethical auditing, which takes account of social capital, must be developed to assess adequately the effectiveness of programs and the capacities of organisations to deliver them" (Cox and Caldwell, 2000, p. 68).

The literature offers valuable suggestions about methodological approaches to carrying out social capital studies. Woolcock, for example, stresses the importance of qualitative approaches to measuring social capital (Woolcock, 2001, p. 15). Cox and Caldwell note that given its conceptual complexity, social capital is "not likely to be represented by any single measure or figure". Good studies, they argue,

"need a range of measures, including correlation of activities, expressed values, economic performance, health outcomes and other available statistics...Collection of data from diverse sources and in different modes is necessary if the functioning levels of social capital are to be reliably inferred" (Cox and Caldwell, 2000, p. 58).

Not all of the above measures are relevant to the library setting but the principle of a range of measures gathered from diverse sources is an important one. Furthermore, obstacles or barriers to participation need to be identified (Cox and Caldwell, 2000; Sander and Lowney, 2003). Cox and Caldwell offer the clearest and most detailed guidelines for conducting a social capital evaluation study:

"Measures must take account of both the objectively identifiable indicators of material wellbeing, inequality and barriers to participation, and the ways in which these may be 'read' through personal attitudes, expectations and feelings of connection and isolation. Surveys, observations, existing records and other forms of data are all useful individual

and group measures of these. Minutes of meetings, attendance records, and observations at meetings, together with self-reported behaviour and attitudes, may give interesting alternative viewpoints from which to assess capacities and capabilities in groups...We need a set of indicators which recognise that social capital can be expressed through attitudes and expectations; through reported, recorded and observed actions and activities; and by comparing people's interpretations of how things happened or are expected to happen....They may be derived by gaining perceptions of the official processes of governance, reading media, interpreting experiences of daily life and assessing the quality of interpersonal relationships in families, community, workplaces and markets" (Cox and Caldwell, 2000, pp. 58-60).

Finally, as the Productivity Commission has observed, despite the broad ranging meanings attributed to social capital in public debate, none of the treatments in the more authoritative literature go so far as to equate social capital with concepts such as 'community facilities' which include libraries (Productivity Commission, 2003). It is this deficiency which this study seeks to address. The next section will look at the literature as it deals specifically with public libraries and social capital.

2.3 Public libraries and social capital

2.3.1 Introduction

The first part of the literature review concluded with a detailed overview of the implications of the literature for the current research (section 2.2.11). It established the relevance of the social capital literature to this study and delineated key aspects of the literature which have informed the research.

This second part of the review focuses on the literature connecting social capital and its related concepts (such as social impact, social inclusion and community building) with public libraries. The literature on the role of the public library in developing social capital is still in its infancy. This section therefore begins with a look at the literature on the wider social impact of public libraries before discussing the specific application of social capital theory to public libraries. The literature on social capital and its interrelated concepts of social impact, social inclusion and community building overlaps in many respects. However, for the purposes of this review, each concept will be treated separately. This section concludes with an overview of the implications of this literature for the current research.

2.3.2 The social impact of public libraries

The notion that public libraries have a social impact is an old one. Historically, the purpose of public libraries was to "safeguard democracy" (Suaiden, 2003, p. 382) and to "divert behaviour from socially destructive activities and expose the populace to literature and acceptable recreation" (Debono, 2002, p. 80). Jesse Shera noted that "the objectives of the public library are directly dependent upon the objectives of society itself" (cited in McCabe, 2001, p. xiii). McCabe, in his book by the same name, refers to "civic librarianship" – which seeks to strengthen communities and develop library services to meet social as well as individual needs – as "based on both an older tradition of public library service that is no longer understood and a new approach to the public library service as a community resource that is not yet fully understood". Civic librarianship explores "both a lost world and a new continent" (McCabe, 2001, ps. 77, 79, 143).

Definitions of the concept of "social impact" vary. The terms 'social impact', 'social benefit', 'social cohesion', 'social inclusion' and 'social capital' are at times used interchangeably or not defined at all (Matarasso, 1998; DeBono, 2002; Bryson and Usherwood, 2002). For example, Bryson and Usherwood's (2002) *Social Impact Audit for the Southwest Museums Libraries and Archives Council,* does not clearly define what is meant by 'social impact', although one can assume that the definition is implicit in the stated aim of the study: "to assess the collaborative impact of archives, libraries and museums in terms of promoting social cohesion, fostering social inclusion and encouraging lifelong learning". Moreover, additional light is shed on the concept via two of the stated outcomes of this study: "[to provide] service managers with a clearer picture of how their service impacts on individuals and local communities; and [to provide] ideas on how to develop services more effectively to engage with target groups and meet social objectives" (Bryson and Usherwood, 2002, p. 5).

Debono (2002), in her review of the literature on the social impact of public libraries, includes the research addressing 'social benefit', 'social impact' and 'social capital' under the one umbrella, although she notes that 'social impact' is the broader term of the three. She identifies two approaches to identifying social impact in the literature. In the first what is investigated is 'effects', 'experience', or 'difference' with the emphasis on a neutral outcome. The second approach focuses solely on positive impacts or benefits (Debono, 2002, p. 82).

Underlying the focus on the social impact of libraries is a fundamental belief that libraries need to go 'beyond books' and 'beyond the stereotype':

"it is no longer enough, if it ever was, for library services to gather and make available a collection of books...there is another way of thinking about the library and interpreting its original developmental mission for contemporary society... library practice is being renewed at its source by imaginative library professionals and authorities, ranging far beyond the stereotype to embrace all sorts of new services and partnerships...the library can work as a tool for active development, with life-enhancing consequences for individuals and community groups" (Matarasso, 1998, p. 6).

Matarasso advocates a "developmental role" for libraries which seeks to renew its social mission. He urges libraries to claim a central position in developing public policy through active involvement in both personal and community development. This means providing services and forming partnerships not only in the traditional areas of literacy, education and lifelong learning, but also in the areas of information technology, employment, families, poverty, health, community development and promoting partnerships, democracy and local culture (Matarasso, 2001). According to Matarasso, "there is a growing understanding of the broader value of library services in alleviating social problems and, more positively, in laying the foundations of successful, sustainable communities" (Matarasso, 2001, p. 40).

McCabe argues that developing library services in a social context must necessarily include working with groups. He notes that while "the public library has a long tradition of serving groups in a community context", the prevailing "libertarian" ideology of individualism is actually biased against serving groups. Human beings are "social animals" and library services must therefore meet social as well as individual needs. To this end, he recommends collaborating with other agencies on social service projects; offering educational projects in a social setting; and utilising the library as a place for formal and informal social interaction (McCabe, 2001, p. 82; pp.121-123).

2.3.3 Social impact studies and audits of public libraries

Several 'social impact' studies and 'social audits' of public libraries exist and these have supplied fuel for the current research. The importance of these for this research will be considered in more depth in section 2.3.7. The argument for the assessing of social impact is based on the perceived need to *demonstrate* rather than assume the value and significance of the public library: "Library services need more effective and meaningful methods of monitoring, assessing and reporting on their wider value to society" (Matarasso, 1998, p. 45).

Black and Crann (2002) conducted a "mass observation of the public library" using qualitative methodologies. Their aim was to "reveal what the public library does well, what it does badly and what it means to both its users and non-users". Interestingly, the results of this study found that public libraries are "replete with ambiguities", for example, "pledged to customer care and frequently viewed as user-friendly, yet staffed by personnel often seen as distant and unhelpful". The authors concluded that the public library is "sociologically complex" (Black and Crann, 2002, p. 156).

Linley and Usherwood (1998) undertook a "social audit of public libraries". Their research had three objectives:

- To develop a tool for measuring the social impact of library activities in relation to objectives
- To investigate the social and economic impact of libraries
- To investigate how far a library's activities, in practice, contribute toward the achievement of its social objectives (Linley and Usherwood, 1998, p. 6).

The data gathered from the two libraries studied indicated that "the library is of social value to the individual and the wider community". According to the researchers, the social impact of the library comprises a number of elements which have been grouped under five broad themes: personal development; social cohesion; community empowerment and self-determination; local image and identity; and health and well-being. The essential finding of this study was that "libraries enrich the lives of many people", and the social audit technique, claim the researchers, "makes that enriching process visible" (Linley and Usherwood, 1998, ps. 10, 84).

Developing upon the methodology used in the above 1998 study, Bryson and Usherwood (2002) conducted a 'social impact audit' to assess the "collaborative impact of archives, libraries and museums in terms of promoting social cohesion, fostering social inclusion and encouraging lifelong learning". The overall finding was that museums, archives and libraries do have a social impact. The researchers concluded that "the social impact audit methodology is a useful one, and placed in concert with other tools for outcome evaluation can provide a rich system for public participation and improving service efficiency and effectiveness" (Bryson and Underwood, 2002, ps. 5, 11).

One of the few Australian studies looks at the social role and economic benefit of Lane Cove Library in NSW (Briggs, Guldberg, Sivaciyan, 1996). Using qualitative methodologies, this study focused on the "social value" of the library. It found that "the library contributes to several of the key values of society, including some of those that today are becoming accepted as critical to the very basis of modern society". Some of the main social values identified in the study were: equity and social justice; a contribution to quality of life and a symbol and institution of the community (Briggs, Guldberg, Sivaciyan, 1996, p. 5).

Although not a social audit or social impact study as such, a valuable contribution to the literature is a resource manual for libraries to document their social and economic contribution, *The Library's Contribution to your Community* (1998), compiled by the Southern Ontario Library Service. This manual adopts a 'benefits approach' to planning and managing library services and offers a framework for libraries to conduct their own studies by assessing social/personal and economic impacts which are indicated by a range of 'benefit measures':

"Measures of the social and economic benefits of the library are most useful as part of a larger strategy that includes sound management practices and ongoing demonstrations of community support for the library" (Southern Ontario Library Service, 1998, p. 3).

2.3.4 Public libraries and social inclusion

As we have seen in section 2.2.11, social inclusion lies at the heart of many efforts to develop social capital. It is now a key strategic driver underpinning public and social policy at both the State and Federal Government levels. For example, the South Australian State Government has established a "Social Inclusion Board" and the Premier's introduction to the *State Strategic Plan for South Australia* articulates his desire for a state that is not only "pro-growth and pro-business", but also "environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive".[4] The UK-based *Library and Information Commission* (LIC), now superceded, defined the 'sociology of inclusion' thus:

"Groups celebrate diversity through 'delighting in difference'. They develop respect and appreciation for others' differences; have access to equality of opportunity and enhanced opportunity; and display and enjoy trust and sharing within and between communities" (LIC, 2003, p. 2).

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[4] Government of South Australia, *South Australia Strategic Plan*: "Creating Opportunity", Volume 1, 2004. [Online, accessed 13 April 2004]. URL: http://www.stateplan.sa.gov.au/pub/SA_Strategic_Plan_volume_1_-_Wd95.doc

While a philosophical commitment to inclusiveness – particularly as reflected in the principle of equity of access for all – has been identified as one of the core values underpinning the library profession, it is ironic that a growing number of libraries are today addressing issues of "social exclusion" (Muddiman et al, 2001). Idealised notions of the socially inclusive role of the library can be found in the literature:

"Libraries provide a route for individuals, including those who experience deep isolation, to enter and engage with the community and wider society. They provide space for people of different backgrounds to meet and explore concerns and identities. They have the potential to open the state and its services to ethnic minority communities" (Matarasso, 1998, p. 27).

According to the LIC, public libraries are the "essence of inclusion" for, by their very nature, their services "already embody the values necessary to contribute to a socially inclusive society" (LIC, 2003, p.3). While libraries certainly provide the "infrastructure for inclusion", their capacity to enhance social inclusion, according to some authors, is limited.

The Black and Crann study, for example, found that "some citizens are excluded from using the public library due to their social circumstances, including their class position". The problem, it seems, lies more with who is *not* using the library rather than who is, with the public library's incapacity to reach out to those who do not already use their facilities but may need them the most:

"People least likely to use libraries were seen as the inarticulate and poorly educated, those 'nervous of forms to fill'. Individuals without fixed address were also seen as lying outside the 'official' orbit of the pubic library" (Black and Crann, 2002, p. 152).

An extensive UK study of the public library and social exclusion called for a reassessment of the record of public library provision for "disadvantaged" or excluded" individuals and argued that: "the core rationale of the public library movement continues to be based on the idea of developing universal access to a service which essentially reflects mainstream middle-class, white and UK values". This study, published in three volumes, found that libraries have adopted "weak, voluntary, 'take it or leave it' approaches to social inclusion...and have been inclusive institutions in the limited sense only". Public libraries, the authors conclude, "have the potential to play a key role in tackling social exclusion, but in order to make a real difference they will need to undergo rapid transformation and change" (Muddiman et al, 2001, p. 155-157).

2.3.5 Public libraries and community building

Like social inclusion, community building has emerged as a central theme in government policy. The 2004 South Australian Strategic Plan consists of six key strategic objectives, of which community building is one. One of the plan's stated priorities is to "develop South Australia as a place in which people care for each other and contribute to their communities. This will enhance our peace, pride and prosperity and build 'social capital'" (Government of South Australia, 2004, p. 6).

Community building has been defined by the Victorian State Government as "a process whereby communities, government, business and philanthropy work together to achieve agreed social, economic and environmental outcomes. It works by government listening to what local people believe could improve their community and sharing ideas about how these changes can be achieved".[5] Against this backdrop of a national and international movement to build community, a few lone voices have begun to emerge from within the library profession claiming a place for the public library in this endeavour (McCook, 2000; McCabe, 2001). The idea seems to have particularly gained momentum since 1999 when Sarah Ann Long, as president of the *American Library Association,* chose the theme "Libraries Build Communities" (Long, 1999a). Public libraries, declares Long, as civic spaces which "already serve as places of community identity, community dialogue and community collaboration" are well positioned to make a substantial contribution towards meeting community needs (Long, 1999).

McCook expresses concern that libraries have been neglected in the literature on community building: "it is as if librarians operate in a parallel universe apart from community development groups, planners or government agencies" (McCook, 2000, p. 5). The lament of the neglected librarian is a common thread throughout the literature in this area, and may offer a rationale or motivation for some of the interest in community building. McCook fears that *not* choosing community building as part of a library's vision might render the library irrelevant (McCook, 2000). This is especially so in a political climate where community building has become an integral part of governments' visions and strategic planning.

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[5] State Government of Victoria (2002). "About community building", *The community building initiative.* [Online, accessed 2 March, 2004]. URL: http://www.communitybuilding.vic.gov.au/cb_initiatives/about.asp

The potential role for libraries in 'building community' is interpreted in a number of ways. Some advocate that the library become more involved in the community by supporting local community development initiatives; developing partnerships with community groups; having a say on local issues; being a part of the decision-making process in communities; and collaborating to solve social problems (Matarasso, 1998; Long, 1999; McCook, 2000; McCabe, 2001). McCook's emphasis is on taking "a place at the table" which assumes a quasi-political role for librarians by becoming "active participants in producing public goods" (McCook, 2000, p. 69). McCabe's notion of "civic librarianship" which is based on communitarian ideals "seeks to strengthen communities through developmental strategies that renew the library's mission of education for a democratic society" (McCabe, 2001, p 77). Conversely, others recommend inviting the community to become more involved in libraries, noting that while libraries are based in the community, they are not community-based and overall lack a sense of community ownership, management and accountability (Matarasso, 1998). Still others point to the "deterioration of local community life" as providing the impetus for libraries to build and strengthen communities (McCabe, 2001, p. 81).

In Australia, the Library Board of Victoria in conjunction with the Victorian Public Library Network has recently embarked on an ambitious research and development project, '*Libraries Building Communities*'. In 2004, all 43 of Victoria's public libraries collected the views of about 10,000 people on the "contribution to and impact of their own libraries on their local communities" through online and telephone surveys, focus groups and interviews (Libraries Board Victoria - LBV, 2003, p. 2; Rosenfeldt, 2004, p. 2). This project promises the publication of seven reports, which at the time of writing have yet to be released. To date, a *Project Information Guide* and several conference papers are the only sources of information currently available on the project (LBV, 2003; Manolis, 2003; Rosenfeldt, 2004).

The aim of the Victorian project is to "identify and document the various ways in which libraries contribute to community building". It has taken as its starting point "the premise that libraries do contribute to and develop the social infrastructure of their communities" (LBV, 2003, p. 1). The LBV's Background Report defines the fundamental premise of community building:

"to engage local people in a shared vision for revitalising their communities. This can be done by developing a range of community initiatives and projects to achieve long-term positive change, by building local skills and knowledge to increase participation in government programs, by increasing opportunities for positive social interaction within

communities or by encouraging and celebrating social and cultural diversity" (LBV, 2001, p. 5).

The LBV report is informed and influenced by a 2000 collaborative project between the University of Technology, Sydney, and the Public Libraries Branch of the State Library of New South Wales, *'A safe place to go': Libraries and social capital* (UTS, 2000). It draws substantially from this groundbreaking study and establishes a clear link between community building and social capital: "community building places particular emphasis on the role of social capital as a mechanism through which to build communities" (LBV, 2002, p. 9). The LBV report further concurs with other authors that the community building potential of libraries stems from their 'natural advantages' which include, but are not restricted to, their provision of an open learning environment and a safe, non-discriminating, free and accessible place; their partnerships with other community organisations; and their encouragement of self-reliance or "helping people to do things for themselves" (LBV, 2003, p. 6). The latter is referred to in the literature and at a social policy level as 'community capacity building', which is defined as "the networks, organization, attitudes, leadership and skills that allow communities to manage change and sustain community-led development" (Cavaye, 2000, p. iii).

Community capacity building has been identified as a means to address social exclusion (Cavaye, 2000; Weddell, 2004). A recent report by Weddell which seeks to encourage youth participation in the Mount Barker Community Library, distinguishes between the 'service delivery' approach common to the library sector and the need for a 'capacity building' approach to enhance social inclusion of youth (Weddell, 2004). Quoting Cavaye: "a 'technical assistance' approach where services are 'delivered' into communities can potentially limit local capacity" (Cavaye, 2000, p. iii).

The LBV report summarises the contribution of public libraries to their communities under the following four key themes. The first of these themes will be reviewed in more detail in the next section (2.3.6).

- Developing social capital
- Developing capacity building
- Promoting wellbeing
- Economic and community revitalisation (LBV, 2003, p. 6)

2.3.6 Public libraries and social capital

The first part of the literature review surveyed the broad field of social capital, and as we have seen, its literature is both complex and flourishing. Yet, the literature on the role of public libraries in building social capital remains scant. Putnam's popularisation of the concept of social capital in his book, *Bowling Alone,* has brought social capital to the forefront, particularly in the United States (Putnam, 2000). Nonetheless, despite their positioning often within the heart of local communities, public libraries have once again been forgotten as a potential source of social capital (Preer, 2001; Kranich, 2001).

This was nowhere more apparent than at the 2001 American Library Association (ALA) Conference during which Putnam spoke to a full house of librarians about *Bowling Alone* and the decline of civil society. During this speech, it became clear that Putnam had "missed the extent to which public libraries embody the concept of social capital while at the same time acknowledging the link between libraries and an engaged citizenry" (Preer, 2001). According to Kranich, the ALA President at that time, Putnam's "picture of America left out the public library as a key community institution, one whose history paralleled the findings of his research" (Kranich, 2001a). In response to such neglect, American librarians in particular, advocate that members of the library profession:

"must demonstrate and articulate to officials and the public just how libraries make a difference. They need to prove how libraries contribute to the social capital required to engage citizens in the life of their communities" (Kranich, 2001a, p. 3).

Consensus exists across all the literature that libraries already create social capital in a number of ways through:

- Encouraging civic engagement by delivering programs that bring citizens together regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, economic status, culture and beliefs, i.e. they break down barriers and foster tolerance (Kranich, 2001; Preer, 2001).
- Upholding democratic ideals by making information freely available to all citizens and promoting information literacy, i.e. they create an informed citizenry (Kranich, 2001; Preer, 2001; LBV, 2003).
- Engaging in partnerships with other community organisations, i.e. they build bridging social capital (Preer, 2001).

- Encouraging trust through social inclusion and cohesion by providing a neighbourhood resource and meeting place that is accessible to everyone; i.e. they create communities (LBV, 2003).
- Facilitating local dialogue and disseminating local data; i.e. they build bonding social capital (Kranich, 2001; Preer, 2001).
- Providing a public space where citizens can work together on personal and community problems, i.e. they foster community participation (Kranich, 2001a; Goulding, 2004).

There is widespread agreement across the literature that the *primary* way libraries build social capital is by providing a shared, public space for a variety of different groups within the community, accommodating diverse needs and enhancing social interaction and trust (Goulding, 2004). The US literature refers to this idea of a public space that brings together people from diverse backgrounds to interact, share concerns and work together as the 'commons' (Kranich 2001a). In a similar vein, Australia's Hugh Mackay has described the library as the new 'village green':

"where people meet not only to borrow or read books, but to discuss issues, to participate in 'book clubs' and similar events, to hear authors speak and to connect to the world of ideas. If communities thrive on conversation and contact, then libraries will be failing in their responsibility to their communities if they don't provide facilities for this contact to happen" (Mackay, 2002).

Kranich cites a poignant example of how libraries created social capital in the wake of the events of September 11, 2001:

"Libraries in New York and around the country provided comfort, fellowship, news and resources during this difficult period. School, public, and academic libraries stayed open to provide shelter for displaced and lonely residents needing help and the solace of others. Internet and phone banks were set up to connect with family and friends and to view news updates. Library web sites linked citizens to disaster and recovery information, charitable organizations, and helpful resources to calm children and adults alike" (Kranich, 2001a).

In Australia, the only literature devoted to libraries and social capital, apart from the Libraries Board of Victoria project, *Libraries Building Communities* (LBV, 2003), consists of the University of Technology Sydney study *'A safe place to go': Libraries and social capital* (UTS, 2000) and several articles by Alan Bundy.

Bundy is a principal advocate within the library profession for libraries to assert their role as "community connector and contributor to social capital" (Bundy, 2003c, p. 9). His pragmatic approach argues that the public library is the "best investment" a

community can make and that if public libraries are to "achieve their full potential and build social capital...[they] need better buildings, better hours, more professional staffing and better funding" (Bundy, 2003c). Bundy, alongside others, stresses the vital importance of libraries forming *partnerships* in the quest to contribute to social capital (Kranich, 2001a; Bundy, 2003a):

"A major challenge for public libraries is to establish their work as contributing to building communities and social capital. Realistically they cannot do so alone. Although they can provide a lead, they cannot do it unless local, state and the national government themselves recognise social capital and their responsibility to lead in investing in it. ...There is certainly no way it can occur unless public libraries form partnerships and alliances, and are part of the decision making process in communities, where typically at present they are not" (Bundy, 2003a, p. 13).

The UTS study is unique as it is the first and only attempt to measure social capital in a public library or libraries. The study surveyed ten public libraries from the Sydney suburban and New South Wales rural areas. The aim was "to investigate how municipal libraries can, and do, contribute to the production of social capital in the communities in which they are located". Like the LBV project which followed it, this study began with the assumption that libraries *do* contribute to social capital. While acknowledging the many and varied debates about the definition, nature and modes of production of social capital, its purpose was "to examine how the library, as an institution and a building, provides spaces for people to share experiences which engender trust of the library itself, the staff, and the broader society" (UTS, 2000, pp. 7-12). Unlike the Lane Cove study, the UTS study utilised non-user as well as user surveys.

The UTS study found that most libraries are felt to be "safe places where high levels of trust operate". The overall findings demonstrated that "libraries function to enhance social interaction and trust, and that they foster equal access and a sense of equity within the community in which they are placed, which in turn contributes to social capital". Concurring with Kranich (2001a) and others, one of the four key recommendations arising from this report was that "libraries themselves consciously advocate and articulate the recognition of their social role within a community as an important site which has value, including by its physical presence" (UTS, 2000, pp. 8-10).

It is clear from the body of literature surveyed to date that the community, governing bodies and academics alike are blissfully unaware of the public library's role in contributing to social capital. The onus is therefore on librarians themselves to educate,

promote and advocate this role to members of the community and beyond (Kranich, 2001; Bundy, 2003). As Goulding states, "there is a real opportunity for librarians to stake a claim for the library in civic renewal and community building and emphasise their role in building social capital" (Goulding, 2004, p. 5). Therefore, it is not enough for libraries simply to *do* the work of boosting civic engagement and developing social capital, they must also ensure that people *know* about their work (Kranich, 2001a).

2.3.7 Implications of the literature for the current research

Of particular interest and relevance to the current research is the 'social audit' process. Several 'social impact' studies or 'social audits' of public libraries have provided inspiration for the current research. Black and Crann (2002) conducted a "mass observation of the public library". Their aim was to "reveal what the public library does well, what it does badly and what it means to both its users and non-users". The authors recommend the use of qualitative methods "to address highly textured issues like the social and economic impact of public libraries", and this, as well as their emphasis on the "user perspective" and on discovering what the library "means" to its users have particularly informed the current research. One of the questions used in their survey: "jot down ten words that you associate with public libraries" was adapted for the user survey in the current study (Black and Crann, 2002, pp. 145-148).

Linley and Usherwood (1998) used what they termed a 'social process audit' to evaluate the social impact of libraries, defining 'social auditing' as a "means of assessing the social impact of an organisation in relation to its aims and those of its stakeholders". They stressed that the identification and inclusion of stakeholders (defined as all individuals and groups who are affected by, or who can affect, the organization) is integral to the process of the social audit (Linley and Usherwood, 1998, p. 10). Bearing this in mind, the current study attempted to include the views and/or documentation of as many stakeholders as practicable. Furthermore, the authors believe that their research methods are applicable to other libraries:

"A social audit can help library managers monitor and guide the service, improve the way the value of the service is reported to policy makers, enable stakeholders to make a judgment on the service, and affect organisational behaviour. In short it can help improve the social performance of the public library" (Linley and Usherwood, 1998, p. 86).

Bryson and Usherwood (2000) also utilised a social audit process to assess the social impact of archives, libraries and museums. Their assessment of the effectiveness of

the social audit technique and its use of qualitative data proved particularly valuable to the current research. They came to the conclusion that "the social audit process offers a tool for listening to stakeholders and informing policy makers". Moreover, their observation that the social audit process takes people seriously by "taking into account issues that are either too complex to be represented by a statistic or too sensitive to be treated by a number" confirmed that the audit technique would be the most useful methodology to assess social capital in a public library (Bryson and Usherwood, 2002, ps. 8, 40).

Bryson and Usherwood noted that quantitative data is inadequate in understanding how our social institutions influence us, and cannot measure the quality of the relationship between a library and its users. Instead, they recommend the use of "soft" or qualitative data since it tells a richer story. In addition, qualitative data obtained via social audits "are valid evidence and should be used by professionals and policy makers to inform and improve the management of cultural organizations". In devising the qualitative questions for the user survey, Bryson and Usherwood's "sample audit questions" offered a helpful guide. Their emphasis on wording questions in an open-ended and neutral manner; and the focus on asking questions which aimed to elicit perceptions of the 'role' and the 'value' of the service (library) was particularly instructive (Bryson and Usherwood, 2002, pp. 8-9, p. 60).

Debono distinguishes between 'social impact' and 'social benefit' (Debono, 2002). The former is more neutral, and can include positive or negative impacts, while the latter is clearly positive. The Lane Cove study, for example, asked directly for benefits and "prompted for positive contributions by the library" (Debono, 2002, p. 83). The current research considered these implications and opted for a combination of neutral and positive outcome questions in the qualitative part of the user survey. Three of the questions prompted for benefits and value, while one adopted a neutral position through inviting free association.

Debono also comments on the narrowness of the Australian research: "one study is concerned with a single library only [Lane Cove library] and the other has a narrow conceptual basis [social capital - *A safe place to go*]" (Debono, 2002, p. 92). Bearing this in mind, the current research synthesises the two approaches combining a study of a single library with an in depth conceptual application of social capital.

Social interaction is an important component of social capital and one that is difficult to measure. *The Library's Contribution to your Community* offers valuable advice about collecting evidence of social interaction in the library:

"It is unlikely that information describing the direct benefits of social interaction opportunities, whether informal or as part of library programs, will be available...Consequently, the most compelling evidence of the library's role as a focus for social interaction will likely come from users, program participants and key informants" (Southern Ontario Library Service, 1998, p. 38).

Finally, the two Australian projects: *A safe place to go* (UTS, 2000) and *Libraries Building Communities* (LBV, 2003) were especially influential in informing the direction and scope of the current research. The former, with its emphasis on investigating how public libraries contribute to the production of social capital, sparked the initial idea for this study. The latter, with its focus on identifying how public libraries contribute to community building was similarly inspiring. Both were tantalising in what they promised but did not offer. In particular, the Victorian *Libraries Building Communities* document was simply a background report, and offered no findings as such, but promised a series of seven reports which are yet to be published.

Both reports refer to a 'social capital audit' although neither demonstrates the technique in practice. The LBV report states that it is undertaking "an audit or a stock-take of social capital producing resources in public libraries across Victoria" and that a report titled *'Conducting Your Own Social Capital Audit: A Guide For Libraries'* will be published using a similar methodology to that used in the study. It promises a 'checklist' of questions to ask, material to gather and observations and activities to record to assist library managers and staff to conduct their own social capital audits (LBV, 2003, p. 15). Frustratingly, one can only guess at what this report might contain. The UTS study includes a brief section in its Appendices on how to conduct your own social capital audit in a local library branch. The guidelines offered are presented in the context that this work is ongoing and "not intended to be prescriptive recipes". The researchers selected three areas considered "integral to the social functioning of libraries":

1. Relationships and trust building
2. Inclusion and diversity
3. Social use of space

The authors recommend asking a series of questions and undertaking a range of activities related to each of the three key areas which will set appropriate benchmarks, and then measuring what is happening and comparing this with the established benchmarks (UTS, 2000, pp. 33-35). These guidelines provided a practical framework upon which to begin to conceptualise and finally to actualise the current research.

2.4 Conclusion

The first part of the literature review presented an overview of the extensive theoretical background underlying the concept of social capital and placed the focus of the current research in context. The second part of the literature review helped to clarify the motivation for conducting a social capital audit of a public library. Aside from the appealing quality of a "new mission" for the public library in "rekindling civil society" (Kranich, 2001a), this study was also motivated by a sense of its wider or political value – a point made by the LBV project:

> "Public libraries are not guaranteed survival in the future and there is a need to attract more or different funding to the public library sector...There is a need then to demonstrate how library services and activity contribute to the achievement of Government goals and wider policy objectives" (LBV, 2000, p. 13).

Chapter Three develops upon the implications expounded in section 2.3.5. It outlines the methodologies applied in the research, the methods used and the data collection measures employed for the user survey and interviews.

CHAPTER THREE
Methodology

3.1 Methodologies employed in the research

3.1.1 Background

The principal aim of the research was to develop a practical tool to evaluate the social capital development potential of a public library. The outcome of the research was a social capital audit of a joint-use library, Mount Barker Community Library, located in one of the fastest growing regional areas in South Australia.

The philosophy underlying the strategic direction of Mount Barker Community Library, as stated in its 2004/2005 Business Plan, includes a commitment to developing social inclusion and building community partnerships, both central themes of the social capital model. The audit therefore attempts to identify and measure the extent to which the library is currently contributing to the social capital of its community and to determine how well it fits into the community-building model of a public library.

3.1.2 Theoretical perspective

The theoretical paradigm underlying the research methodology, particularly the qualitative approaches, is primarily interpretive in nature. The critical assumption of the interpretive paradigm is that reality is subjective, constructed or created according to its social context, i.e. socially constructed, and experienced internally in the minds of people. Furthermore, the purpose of interpretive research is to interpret and understand social life, as well as to discover people's meanings (Sarantakos, 1998).

The research sought in part to understand the inner world of the library user, i.e. what they value most about the library, how they perceive the benefits of the library on both a personal and community level, what they feel about the library, and how they experience the library – all important components of the interpretive perspective.

3.1.3 Nature of and reasons for the methodological approach

Most theorists and researchers agree that social capital is a complex and elusive concept. Debate abounds on how to define social capital as well as how to measure it. Cox and Caldwell emphasise that social capital is an ongoing process rather than a statically present element and that therefore good studies need a range of measures and "collection of data from diverse sources and in different modes is necessary if the functioning levels of social capital are to be reliably inferred" (Cox and Caldwell, 2000, p. 58)

Given the social nature of the research, the methodology included qualitative as well as quantitative approaches. It was anticipated that this mixed approach would also yield a richer body of data which in turn might reveal some unexpected results. Since qualitative research looks at how others see and experience the world (Darlington and Scott, 2002), this approach seemed ideal to apply to a social capital audit of a library. The researcher was particularly interested in exploring the experience of the library user and to elicit a detailed, rich description of this experience. This required the inclusion of qualitative questions in the library users' survey.

The quantitative methods included several questions in the user survey which sought to enquire about the existing situation. The qualitative methods included in depth interviews, participant observation, and several open-ended questions in the survey inviting the respondents to write words or sentences, thus allowing more scope for freedom in responses.

Under the qualitative methodology umbrella, an ethnographic approach was used since the researcher was employed in the library where the audit was conducted and was therefore deeply embedded in the object of the research. Ethnography has been defined as a type of interactive research in which "the researcher studies an intact cultural group in a natural setting during a prolonged period of time by collecting, primarily, observational data" (Creswell, 1994, quoted in Leedy, 1997, p 159). This methodological approach has been widely employed by anthropologists who have entered a cultural or social group for an extended period of time in order to observe that group in its natural setting. In other words, in ethnographic studies, the researcher is a participant observer who is immersed in the social and cultural context which is being studied. The researcher or observer is therefore an integral part of the situation

being observed and as such has the potential to influence or affect that which is being observed.

In the case of the workplace research which studied both staff and clientele, the researcher was not an outsider who had entered the cultural or social group but was at the outset a participant in the research setting. While the researcher's immersion in the organisation facilitated the ability to observe the environment, and its events and interactions, as well as to engage in numerous informal discussions with management, staff and members of the community, it is acknowledged that this may have skewed or influenced the research findings. All attempts were made to minimise any inherent bias through maintaining a detached and self-aware perspective as well as a professional relationship with work colleagues.

Certainly, the location of the researcher as an 'insider' attempting to assume an 'outsider' perspective has raised ethical and philosophical problems which are expressed in the following:

"A problem exists if you wish to examine your own cultural group because to do this successfully means becoming a 'cultural stranger'. This is difficult as it entails questioning the assumptions of a culture that is already familiar to you, and whose rules and norms you have internalised" (Daymon and Holloway, 2002, p.139).

Throughout the lengthy period of data collection, the researcher was acutely aware of ethical issues surrounding confidentiality and the potential impact of the research on those involved. It was for this reason that formal interviews were only conducted with four key management stakeholders, and other discussions and interviews with staff were conducted on an informal and anonymous basis.

3.2 Methods

Several methods were used to gather data for the social capital audit report. These included:

a. User survey

- A mixed-method (quantitative and qualitative) survey of library users using anonymous semi-structured questionnaires (Appendix 1).

b. Ethnographic methods

- Participant observation (including field notes).
- Informal discussions with library members and staff.

- Formal interviews with four key management stakeholders: Library Manager; TAFE Manager; Children's Services Librarian and Volunteer Coordinator; and Council's Manager of Policy and Governance.
- Document analysis of strategic and business plans, budgets, policy reports, minutes of meetings, internal and external communications, newspaper articles and other relevant organisational documents.
- Analysis of demographic information by comparison of in-house library management statistics with ABS census data.

The following sections will focus on the data collection measures relating to the survey of library users and the formal interviews with key stakeholders.

3.3 Data collection measures – the user survey

A survey consisting of quantitative and qualitative questions (Appendix 1) was distributed randomly to library users at the same time as the Library's annual baseline survey, over a week in June 2004.

3.3.1 Structure of the survey

In structuring the survey, consideration was given to questions that act as indicators of social capital, i.e. relating to trust, reciprocity, belonging, informal networks, relationships, and so on (LBV, 2003, p. 20). Reference was made to three studies in particular – the University of Technology Sydney project *A safe place to go* (UTS, 2000); a study of the Lane Cove Library (Briggs, Guldberg, and Sivaciyan, 1996); and the Library Board Victoria (2003) project *Libraries Building Communities*. Each study emphasised various key themes which formed the framework of their specific research. The UTS study identified four themes: relationships and trust building; inclusion and diversity; and social use of space. The Lane Cove study identified seven themes: purpose; benefits; options; quality of life; a fair go; symbol of the community; and the future. The Victorian project highlighted six themes: trust; reciprocity; informal networks; mutual exchange; collective benefit; and hubs for facilitating community interaction.

The survey consisted of ten questions – the first six were quantitative questions while the last four were open-ended questions designed to elicit rich qualitative answers. The

first three questions were demographic questions to determine the gender, age and residence of participants. Questions 4 and 6 were drawn from the UTS study and designed to gain information about the social nature of the library visit, i.e. whether people visited the library alone or with a significant other or others, and whether they talked to others while at the library. Question 5 asked the main reason for visiting the library and included both core library functions such as borrowing items as well as social reasons. Participants were invited to circle one or more answers for questions 4-6 and many did so.

Questions 7 and 8 were designed to gauge the benefits of the library service to the individual participant and to the local community. Question 9 asked what the person most valued about the library, while question 10 invited the participant to jot down ten words that they associate with the library or that describe their experience of the library. The idea for this question was drawn from a 2002 report of a mass study of user behaviour in a public library (Black and Crann, 2002).

3.3.2 Distribution of the survey

The survey was handed out randomly to library users as they entered the library or approached the circulation desk by registered library volunteers and a few staff members. They explained that the study was being conducted by a university student who was also a staff member. This information was included on the survey form itself. The volunteer coordinator noted that there was a particularly positive response from a number of members of the public who appreciated that they were contributing to a student research project.

The consistency with which the surveys were distributed varied considerably throughout the duration of the survey period and this is reflected in the sample sizes for each day. (See Appendix 2 for the schedule of data collection days).

A high proportion of staff members were reluctant to hand out surveys. The periods when no volunteers were available (Monday evening, Thursday evening and Saturday) resulted in very few responses. In reflecting on the type of person who might visit the library at certain times of the day, it is likely that many who visit in the evenings and on Saturdays may be working during the hours the library is mostly open. The survey may have therefore failed to adequately reflect the responses of working people. This suggests the need for future studies to take this factor into account.

3.3.3 Collection of the surveys

The initial response produced 252 returned surveys. Of these, two were returned blank and were therefore discarded, leaving a sample of 250. This represents a sample size of 1.2% of the total membership, or 2.5% of active members. The membership figures are derived from library management statistics (see Chapter Four – section 4.2.2). Of the 250 responses received, not all questions were completed. This may have been due to the way the survey was laid out, on two back-to-back pages. Furthermore, many of these respondents had been approached to fill in the library's baseline survey at the same time. While it was convenient to hand out both surveys together, it is likely that the quantity of questions proved too much for some.

Given these constraints, the size of the sample obtained was nonetheless substantial. All 250 participants completed at least the first page of the survey, i.e. questions 1-5. 222 respondents (89% of the sample) answered question 6 (the last of the quantitative questions on page 2). Only 28 respondents (11% of the sample) failed to answer the second page of the survey, i.e. questions 6-10. 212 respondents (85% of the sample) answered the first three of the qualitative questions 7, 8 and 9, while 175 respondents (70% of the sample) answered all of the qualitative questions, including question 10.

3.3.4 Collation of the survey data

The completed surveys were gathered together at the end of each day and counted. A code was used for each day, e.g. *Th* for Thursday; *Fr* for Friday, and so on. Each of the 250 completed surveys was also allocated a number from 1 to 250. Each unit of data from the six quantitative questions was inputted to a number of spreadsheets alongside the number of the response. This resulted in an overall profile of library use. Data was then extracted from the overall survey results to construct individual spreadsheets of age group breakdowns and gender breakdowns. This data was further condensed to form a gender profile and an age profile.

The 212 responses from the qualitative questions number 7, 8 and 9 were transcribed in tables alongside the number of the response. Significant quotes were highlighted in bold for later use and the gender and age of the person noted. A content analysis was then performed on this raw data in order to reduce the bulk of the material to a smaller number of key themes. 32 themes were identified and the number of times the theme occurred in the data was counted and noted. This data was transferred to a

spreadsheet and sorted in ascending order. The 32 key themes could then be reduced to an even smaller number of significant themes.

The data from the last of the qualitative questions, number 10, was tabulated in a table of words and phrases. As each new word or phrase was discovered, it was entered into the table and counted. Upon completion of the 175 responses, the table was then transferred to a spreadsheet and sorted in ascending order. The most significant themes could then be clearly identified.

3.4 Data collection measures – interviews with stakeholders

Formal interviews were conducted throughout June 2004 with four management stakeholders – the Library Manager; TAFE Manager; Council's Manager of Policy and Governance; and the Children's Services Librarian and Volunteer Coordinator. The questionnaires are included in the Appendices (Appendix 4, 5, 6, 7). Each interviewee was asked a different set of questions that was adapted to their unique role in the organisation. The purpose was not to compare responses so much as to gain the perspective from each of the partners involved – Library, Council and TAFE – and to elicit an understanding of the nature of the relationship between them.

As in the user survey, questions were included that act as indicators of social capital – pertaining to relationships, partnerships, networks, social values, perceptions of the library's role and mission, social inclusion and exclusion of groups, the role of the library in the wider community, and so on. While the questions are numerous, they acted more as a guide for discussion than a framework for structured responses.

3.5 Conclusion

The research utilised both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to gather data for the audit study. Since the researcher was employed in the library studied, an ethnographic approach was also used. The research employed a range of methods and sought the views of management stakeholders as well as library users. This comprehensive methodology, encompassing a range of measures gathered from diverse sources, has been identified within the literature as the most appropriate approach to empirical studies of social capital (Cox and Caldwell, 2000).

Chapter Four presents the findings of the research in the form of a social capital audit report of Mount Barker Community Library. Discussion of the findings is incorporated throughout the audit report.

CHAPTER FOUR

Research findings and discussion:

Social capital audit of Mount Barker Community Library

4.1 Introduction

This social capital audit report presents the findings of a study of Mount Barker Community Library conducted from April-November 2004. The results of the audit are discussed throughout the body of the report. The Library is a joint-use facility between the community and TAFE and is located in one of the fastest growing regional areas of South Australia, the District Council of Mount Barker. It currently boasts a membership of 20,600 people and an annual budget of $1.37 million.[6]

The research used quantitative and qualitative methodologies to gather data for the report. The methods utilised included a questionnaire survey of library users; formal interviews with four key stakeholders; informal discussions with library members and staff; and document analysis of strategic and business plans, policy reports, previous user surveys, census data, and other internal and external communications.

Social capital is defined as "the processes between people which establish networks, norms, social trust and facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit". It is the social fabric or "glue" that holds a community together (Cox, 1995). The stated philosophy underlying the strategic direction of Mount Barker Community Library[7] includes a commitment to developing social inclusion and building community partnerships, both key themes of the social capital model. It is in this context that the audit set out to identify and measure the extent to which the library is currently contributing to the social capital of the community it serves.

4.2 Background context

4.2.1 Demographics of the community

The Mount Barker Council district covers an area of 597 square kilometres and is located 35 kilometres east of metropolitan Adelaide. It consists of farming areas as well

[6] Information from *Mount Barker Community Library Fact Sheet*, 2004, and Horizon Library Management Software statistics.
[7] Mount Barker Community Library (2004). "Library Business Plan 2004/2005".

as 15 mostly historic townships located within the Mount Lofty Ranges. The population of the district has increased from 20,255 in 1996 to 22,780 in 2001[8] and is steadily increasing by 2% per annum. It is estimated that by the year 2011, the population will reach 32,704.[9]

An analysis of the data from the 2001 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing revealed that:

- There was significant growth in both young and more mature family age groups, with 66.9% of the population aged 0-17 and 25-49.
- Income levels relative to the Adelaide statistical division showed a greater proportion of high income households and a lesser share at the low income end.
- The educational qualifications of the population represented a relatively skilled and educated workforce. About 36% noted some form of educational qualification.
- The unemployment rate of 5.5% was lower than that of the Adelaide statistical division at 7.9%.
- In comparison to the Adelaide statistical division, the country of birth data revealed less diversity in the range of countries of birth and a relatively smaller percentage of the population born overseas. There were also small numbers of recently arrived migrants with 76.2% of the overseas born population arriving before 1986. The share of people speaking English only was considerably higher than that of the Adelaide statistical division. The top five religions were all forms of Christianity. There was a larger proportion of people with no religion compared with the Adelaide statistical division.
- The industry data revealed that the population was heavily concentrated in services employment, with the largest industries including wholesale and retail trade; education, health and community services; and finance, insurance and business services. Compared with the Adelaide statistical division, there was a considerably higher proportion of people employed in agriculture, forestry, fishing and mining.
- The occupation data revealed that the largest occupations included clerical, sales and services workers; professionals; and tradespersons. Compared with

[8] I.d. Consulting (2004), *The Mount Barker District Council Community Profile*, 2001 and 1996 census information for Mount Barker District Council, 2004, p. 3.
[9] District Council of Mount Barker website, "Population growth". [Accessed online, 25 February 2004]. URL: http://www.dcmtbarker.sa.gov.au/internet/SERVICES/demographics_growth.htm

the Adelaide statistical division, there was a higher share of managers and administrators.

- The proportion of computer users was higher than in the Adelaide statistical division.
- There was a substantially higher share of households owning motor vehicles compared to the Adelaide statistical division.
- The household data revealed that there was a greater share of 'couple with children' families.[10]

The data for household income, educational qualifications and employment status of the population are important indicators of the socio-economic status of an area and reveal a relatively high socio-economic status in the district. The country of birth, language spoken at home and ancestry and religion data are important indicators of cultural diversity. This data suggests a relative lack of cultural and ethnic diversity in the Mount Barker Council district.

4.2.2 Demographics of the library

The library service which caters for this population is housed in a modern, attractive state-of the-art architect-designed building which opened in 1997 and is located on the TAFE campus. It boasts much light and space and a well-equipped toy library, local history centre and an independent learning centre stocked with a number of public access computers.

An analysis of library management statistics revealed that:

- The library membership in May 2004 was 20,612. Of these, 16,800 or 81% resided in the Mount Barker Council district. Only 10,508 (51%) of the total 20,612 members are regarded as 'active'. Those classed as 'inactive' have not borrowed any items for at least three years. Therefore, 74% of the population of the district is a member of the library. This is a substantial figure.
- 23% of all library members are aged 0-17 and 38% are aged between 25-49, totalling 61% of the entire library membership. This statistic compares favourably to the above ABS statistic of 66% suggesting that the library membership is fairly representative of the general population of the district.

[10] *The Mount Barker District Council Community Profile*, 2001 and 1996 census information for Mount Barker District Council, 2004.

- 5.6% of library members are TAFE staff or students.
- A surprising statistic was the small percentage (10%) of library members aged 60 and over. In contrast, the UTS study (2000) found that 27.8% of library users surveyed were aged 60 and over.[11] This may be due to its non-central locality which affects the accessibility of the library to the community.

4.3 Key themes identified from the quantitative survey data

4.3.1 Introduction to the user survey

A survey consisting of quantitative and qualitative questions (Appendix 1) was distributed randomly to library users at the same time as the library's annual baseline survey over a week long period in June 2004. The quantitative part of the survey included demographic questions regarding gender, age and residence of participants; questions designed to gain information about the main reasons for visiting the library as well as any social aspects of the library visit, i.e. whether people visited the library alone or with a significant other or others, whether they talked to others while at the library, whether they came to meet people, and so on. The qualitative questions were worded in an open-ended manner and the focus was on asking questions which aimed to elicit user perceptions of the 'role', 'benefits', 'experience' and 'value' of the library service. The data from 250 surveys was tabulated and analysed for the purpose of this audit. The 250 responses represent a sample size of 1.2% of the total membership, or 2.5% of active members (see section 4.2.2 for membership figures). The basic quantitative survey data is included in Appendix 3 although this does not include data cross-tabulations.

4.3.2 Demographic profile of library users

Residence

76% of the total survey sample reside in the Mount Barker Council district with 24% living in adjoining Council districts, the Adelaide metropolitan area, and more distant regional areas. 41% of the total sample reside in Mount Barker. The library therefore caters for a diverse population which lives in areas well beyond its immediate community reach. Well over half (59%) of the respondents live outside the town in

[11] From Horizon Library Management Software statistics, May 2004.

which the library is situated reflecting the fact that the 'community' served by the library is not centred in one area, but dispersed over a very wide area.

Gender

68% of the total sample were female and 32% were male, i.e. twice as many women as men answered the survey. There are no figures available for numbers of males and females in the library management statistics, but this figure certainly does not reflect the gender balance in the Mount Barker Council district. The census figures for the district indicate the breakdown is 48.7% males and 51.3% females. Therefore, a disproportionate number of women responded to the survey. This could reflect either a higher proportion of female membership or the likelihood that men do not frequent the library as often as women, whether they are members or not. Since the library is open for 52 hours of the week, and of these hours, only 12 (23%) fall outside the normal working hours of 9am – 5pm, this too may offer a reason why fewer males responded to the survey, assuming that men may be occupied in the paid workforce. It is possible also that males may be less inclined to take the time to fill in a survey. However, female users are clearly in the majority suggesting that a socially inclusive policy needs to take into account ways of attracting more men to the library. This could include opening the library on Sundays and the remaining five evenings.

Age groups

- The smallest group of users fell in the 25-34 age group (9%) with the largest in the 35-49 age group (28%).
- The very young and the very old were well represented in the survey results. 25% of those surveyed were 24 years and under (11% of users surveyed were 17 and under), while 21% of those surveyed were over 60.
- The age groups were structured in line with the ABS census age structure so that comparisons could be made. Some of the age groups within the Mount Barker District population were consistent with the survey results. For example, 9.6% of the population of the district is aged 12-17, while 10% of the library users surveyed fall into this age group. Similarly, the highest percentage of people residing in the district fall into the 35-49 age group (24.4%) which is matched by the highest percentage of survey respondents falling into the same

age group (28%). 6% of the district's population are aged 70-84 and 6% of the survey respondents were aged 70-84.

- Discrepancies were found in the following age groups – while 7.7% of the population is aged 18-24, 14% of the users surveyed fall into this age group. This reflects a very good usage of the library by young people. 13.5% of the population is aged 25-34 yet only 9% of users surveyed fall into this group. This is a group that may need to be targeted in library policy and strategy.
- 12.2% of the population is aged 50-59 and 15% of respondents fall into this group. 6.2% of the population is aged 60-69 and 14% of the respondents fall into this group. This reflects a very high usage of the library by older users.

4.3.3 Library visiting patterns

- Respondents answered more than one of the categories concerning whom they visited the library with, i.e. they may have sometimes visited the library alone but at other times they may have visited with a partner, friend or family member.
- A greater percentage of people visited the library with another person (80% came with a partner, family member, friend or fellow student) than came alone (73%).
- A greater percentage of males (25%) than females (19%) come to the library with a spouse or partner, and a greater percentage of males (13%) than females (11%) also came to the library with friends. These results suggest that men may be more inclined to come to the library if accompanied by a partner or friend.
- A far greater percentage of women (46%) come to the library with a family member (including children) than men (24%). A greater percentage of women (11%) than men (5%) also visit the library with fellow students. From these results, almost twice as many women as men visit the library with family members. This is probably due to the fact that women are often the primary care givers for their children and 77% of the opening hours of the library fall during normal working hours when many men may be unavailable to attend the library with children. The lack of Sunday opening, now common in public libraries, could be a factor in this.
- A greater percentage in the 50-59 age group (84%) come to the library alone, while a greater percentage in the 60-69 age group (38%) and the 70-85% (41%) age group visited the library with a partner.

- A greater percentage in the 12-17 age group (65%) and the 25-34 age group visit the library with a family member. The former visited with parents and siblings, and the latter with children.
- Young people aged 12-17 are the most likely to come to the library with friends (58%) and fellow students (35%).
- The above results indicate that many people come to the library as part of a social group or relationship. Since social capital is increased through relationships and interactions with others, this is an indicator that the library is functioning well as a builder of social capital.

4.3.4 Library use patterns

Core library roles

- By far the greatest percentage of users surveyed visited the library to borrow items from the collection (89%). These results suggest that the majority of library users still see the role of the library in the traditional sense as a place to come to borrow books and other items.
- The second highest percentage of users came to the library to find information (49%). 24% came to read, 24% to study, and 29% to browse.
- 45% of users surveyed (including those who attended the weekly seniors computer group) came to use the computers which suggests that the library's core business has now extended to include information technology, a factor which should be taken into account in any collection development program.

Non-core library roles

- 13% of those surveyed came to the library because it was "somewhere to go". This suggests that for a number of people the library fulfils a social role as well as providing a community meeting place.
- 32% of respondents came to the library for the peace and quiet and to sit and relax. 8% identified it as a "safe place to go".
- Given that a large percentage of users sometimes or always visit the library alone (73%), a surprisingly small percentage of those surveyed did not talk to anyone during their visit (19%). 60% talked to staff; 48% talked to people they know, and 23% talked to people they did not know. 32% stayed longer than

expected. All of these results emphasise the social role of the library as a place to meet people, to make connections with others, to communicate with others, and generally to 'hang out'.

Comparison of male and female library use patterns

- A greater percentage of men (38%) than women (25%) came to the library to browse and/or to read. Moreover, a greater percentage of men (24%) than women (14%) did not talk to anyone when they visited the library.
- A greater percentage of women than men came for the peace and quiet and to sit and relax, and also engaged in talking to people they know, did not know, and to staff. A greater percentage of women (41%) than men (27%) stayed longer than expected.
- Overall, the survey results found that women tend to talk more, stay longer, and seek more peace and relaxation than men. Men tend to talk less and to seek solitary activities like browsing and reading.

Association of age groups with library use patterns

Young People (12-17 years and 18-24 years)

- While the percentage of people per age group who visit the library to borrow books and other items was very high (above 80%) amongst all age groups, the borrowing rate was higher for those aged 35 years and over. This suggests that young people may be visiting the library for other reasons.
- The lowest percentage of those who come to the library to read was found in the 12-17 group. However, young people 12-17 (42%) and 18-24 (47%) were more likely to come to the library to study than older people. Young people are also more likely to come to the library to use the computers: 12-17 (58%) and 18-24 (59%).
- Young people are more likely than other age groups to come to the library to see people they know: 12-17 (15%); 18-24 (18%), or to meet new people.
- 35% of young people aged 12-17 came to the library because it is "somewhere to go" and 23% because it is a "safe place".
- The 12-17 group were also the most likely to stay longer than expected (54%), followed by the 18-24 group (44%).

- A greater percentage of 18-24 year olds (29%) come to the library to sit and relax.

Generation X-ers (25-34 years)

- The 25-34 age group represents the smallest group of library users (9%).
- This group were the most likely to visit the library for children's activities (35%) or to use the toy library (30%).

Mature people (35-49 and 50-59 years)

- The highest percentage (32%) of those who come to the library to read was found in the 50-59 year age group.
- A greater percentage of those aged 50-59 (63%) visit the library to find information.
- A high percentage of 35-49 year olds (24%) come to the library to sit and relax.

Older people (60-69 and 70-85)

- The 70-85 group was the second most sociable group after the 12-17 year olds, with 59% talking to someone they know during their library visit.
- Those most inclined to talk to people they do not know were the 70-85 group (29%).

4.3.5 Social capital indicators – trust and relationships

The library as a safe and peaceful place

Young people in particular identified the library as a "safe place" and 23% listed this as one of their main reasons for visiting the library. Those aged under 49 are more likely to come to the library for the peace and quiet: 12-17 (15%); 18-24 (21%); 25-34 (22%) and 35-49 (21%). Few people over 50 identified this as a priority.

The library as a meeting place and somewhere to go

Young people are more likely than other age groups to come to the library to see people they know or to meet new people. 35% of young people aged 12-17 visit the library because it is "somewhere to go". This group is also more likely to stay longer than expected during their library visit (54%), followed by the 18-24 group (44%).

Talking to each other

Many people talked to people they know while visiting the library. The 12-17 year olds are the most sociable group and more likely to talk to someone they know (73%), followed by the oldest group, the 70-85 year olds (59%). Those least likely to talk to people they know are the 18-24 group (26%) and the 60-69 group (26%).

Talking to strangers

Those most inclined to talk to people they do not know are the 70-85 group suggesting that the elderly come to the library for a social outlet and to meet new people. This also suggests a high level of trust in others.

Talking to staff

Many people talked to staff – the 60-69 group are the most likely to talk to staff (76%), followed by 50-59 (68%), 25-34 (61%) and 35-49 (54%). Those least likely to talk to staff are the 18-24 year olds (29%).

Not talking to anyone

The highest percentage of those who did not talk to anyone came from the 18-24 group (38%).

4.3.6 Summary

The findings from the quantitative data reveal that for many library users, the library fulfills a social role in addition to the traditional function of lending books and other items.

In particular, the study has highlighted that young people aged 12-17 and older people aged over 60 years are excellent builders of social capital within the library. Young people are the most sociable of all the groups who visit the library. Many not only regard the library as a safe place; they use it as 'somewhere to go', to 'hang out' and to meet friends as well as make new friends. Older people are also a very sociable group, with many talking to people they know as well as talking to people they do not know. Older people are also the most inclined to talk to library staff.

4.4 Key themes identified from the qualitative survey data

4.4.1 Introduction

The first three of the qualitative questions asked the respondents to write about the benefits they gain from the library; how the library benefits the local community; and what they most value about the library service. Apart from the content and wording of the questions, there were no prompts, and space was left on the questionnaire for respondents to write what they pleased. Most wrote sentences. Five prominent themes were identified from these responses with each theme embracing a number of elements. They are listed in their order of importance as rated by the respondents:

1. Traditional core library role and functions
2. Equity of access for all
3. The library as place
4. Social interaction
5. The community role of the library

The last of the qualitative questions invited the respondent to free associate by jotting down ten words that describe their experience of the library. The responses to this question demonstrated a degree of creative freedom and the findings varied considerably from those of the other qualitative questions. They will therefore be dealt with in a separate section.

Each of the five abovementioned themes will now be explored and illustrated through the narratives of the respondents.

4.4.2 Traditional core library roles and functions

The theme of traditional core library roles and functions consists of the following elements: books, information, reading, learning, study, borrowing, resources, computer and internet. This was the most important theme identified from the responses. Books, information, reading and computer/internet (in that order) were mentioned far more than any other factor as the major benefit gained from the library service. 'Information' was listed as the most important benefit to the community, and 'books' as that which was most valued. As well as providing books, audio-visual materials, information and

computer/internet access, the role of the library in developing literacy, fostering a love of learning and self-education were highly valued by many respondents.

> Benefits gained: *Being able to read good books.* (Female, 12)
>
> Benefits gained: *A choice of good literature to broaden my views and understanding of the world.* (Male, 67)
>
> Benefit to community: *It's a resource centre for people from birth to death.* (Female, 62)
>
> Benefit to community: *The information hub.* (Male, 42)
>
> Benefit to community: *It is a repository of recorded human endeavour, available to all people, whether they are a part of the formal "education" system or not. In short, it gives people the material with which they may educate themselves, in a manner of their choosing.* (Male, 48)
>
> Most value: *Being able to borrow materials which help my children to develop new skills, understanding of the world and literacy development.* (Female, 45)
>
> Most value: *It is really helping us to develop in our children a love of reading and learning. Our children love coming here and I'm hoping as I get older I will be able to find some time for myself to come and enjoy the library as well.* (Female, 34)

4.4.3 Equity of access for all

After the core library functions, equity of access for all was the second most important theme identified in the survey responses. Many people valued the fact that the library services are free; that they can access materials they could normally not afford; and that the library and its resources are accessible and available to everyone. Some commented that this is the one free service that Council provides. There appears to be a perception on the part of some that the library is a direct benefit gained from paying Council rates.

Benefits gained: *A sense that there still remain some things available to citizens which don't have as their primary motivation for existence, profit.* (Male, 48)

Benefits gained: *It's my second home – provides so many extra services to enrich my life that I couldn't afford or have access to otherwise.* (Female, 61)

Benefits gained: *I get to use the computers because I can't afford to have one of my own.* (Female, 19)

Benefits gained: *As I am on a low income I cannot afford to buy the latest books or magazines so the library offers me the chance to read many of the new releases in books and keeps me up to date with the newspapers and magazines.* (Female, 47)

Benefits gained: *I'm on a carer's pension – the library is really the only form of entertainment available to me.* (Female, 47)

Benefit to community: *Provides excellent resources at no cost (except of course in our rates). Most people could not afford to buy for their own use the large variety on offer.* (Female, 60)

Benefit to community: *Because it provides resources for everyone and benefits people mostly who usually wouldn't afford to otherwise.* (Female, 20)

Benefit to community: *Somewhere central that everyone can go and it's free.* (Female, 28)

Benefit to community: *It brings us together. It is not just for one particular group; it's for everyone.* (Female, 16)

4.4.4 The library as place

A central theme running throughout many of the responses is a sense of the library as a 'good place to be'. Many appreciate the library as a peaceful and relaxing place to spend time. Some refer to the fact that it simply "is there" as important. Others value the physical environment, the pleasant atmosphere, the spaciousness and the warmth, while still others describe the library as a meeting place, and a safe haven which is

welcoming and open to all. Teenagers, in particular, frequently referred to the safety of the environment. The value placed on the library as a place of peace and quiet in a hectic world is also reiterated throughout many responses.

> Benefits gained: *It's a great place to be.* (Male, 16)
>
> Benefits gained: *Nice place to go on 'yuk' days.* (Female, 28)
>
> Benefits gained*: A feeling of awe from the fantastic architecture.* (Female, 23)
>
> Benefit to community: *I just think it's a great place to spend time.* (Female, 44)
>
> Benefit to community: *It is a safe environment to sit and read – a safe haven.* (Female, 43)
>
> Benefit to community: *Provides a warm, safe, secure environment people of all ages can enjoy as well as find peace for study.* (Female, 17)
>
> Benefit to community*: It is there and available.* (Male, 75)
>
> Most value: *That it is there.* (Female, 56)
>
> Most value: *The large space that is made available to patrons. It is also an inviting place; the reading area encourages patrons within the community to stay and spend time in the library.* (Female, 22)
>
> Most value*: I can come and read a book in a warm, quiet, safe environment.* (Male, 19)

4.4.5 Social interaction

This theme focuses on the human element, particularly the social interaction between people in the library and with members of staff. A very strong theme running throughout the survey responses is the high value placed on the staff and the perception that as a whole they are friendly and helpful to library users. Indeed, the staff and the 'service' are the second most valued aspect of the library after books. The role of the library in

providing people with company and the possibility for developing friendships was mentioned by a number of respondents.

> Benefit to community: *I find company through the day.* (Male, 70s)
>
> Benefit to community: *Something here for all ages. Someone to talk to. Something to do.* (Female, 52)
>
> Benefit to community: *Offers friendship and knowledge to users.* (Female, 75)
>
> Most value: *The staff are helpful and nice.* (Female, 14)
>
> Most value: *Specific staff members with whom I have close relationships.* (Male, 24)
>
> Most value: *The seniors computer help afternoon and the excellent staff who are all both friendly and helpful as well as knowledgeable.* (Female, 69)
>
> Most value: *Great customer service.* (Female, 17)

4.4.6 The community role of the library

This theme embraces a number of elements that have been broadly classed under the umbrella of 'community'. It includes broader social relationships than one-on-one interactions, particularly the role of the library in bringing families together, in creating a sense of community, and in providing a local focal point or 'hub'. A number of people describe the library as a community meeting place and a centre for community information and entertainment.

> Benefits gained: *Keeping in touch with family members near and far.* (Male, 26, comes to use the internet)
>
> Benefits gained: *Keeps me in touch with what is going on around the district.* (Female, 44)
>
> Benefit to community: *We'd be lost without it.* (Female, 48)

Benefit to community: *Good place for families to come.* (Female, 26)

Benefit to community: *Provides an educational, informative and social resource for the community.* (Female, 45)

Benefit to community: *A place where all the family can enjoy themselves. Kids can play while mums and dads can read or study.* (Female, 14)

Benefit to community: *Not only does the library have books to read but they hold interesting talks, displays and now they have music as well. You can stay in the library for hours and keep entertained.* (Female, 47)

Benefit to community: *A service used by the whole community. Brings the community together.* (Female, 49)

Benefit to community: *It brings all the families together in one place. I catch up and chat with familiar people.* (Female, 35)

Benefit to community: *It aids community spirit.* (Male, 73)

Most value: *Something else for youth to do in an otherwise small town.* (Female, 16)

4.4.7 The experience of the library

The last of the qualitative questions invited respondents to "jot down ten words that you associate with this library or that describe your experience of this library". Unlike the other qualitative questions which enquired about benefits and value, and therefore incorporated an assumption that the responses to the questions would be positive, the above question allowed scope for a range of possible answers. Most people responded to the question literally and answered in words. Some wrote sentence answers and within these sentence responses were some criticisms. The most common criticism was centred around problems with noise and competition between community and student users for quiet versus noisy space, a factor attributed to the joint-use nature of the library:

One small criticism – sometimes when student groups are in here I find them chatty, noisy and even at times disrespectful of others who are looking for somewhere quiet. (Male, 47)

Noisy children and talkative adults are a problem when studying. (Female, 27)

Sometimes there is a lot of competition in that there is teaching going on aloud as in a classroom or students speaking loudly and this is distracting. (Female)

This competition for space and competing demands for quiet individual activity versus noisy group interactions probably stems from the fact that the library is not simply a library for the community alone but is also a library for TAFE students and Adelaide Hills Vocational College (secondary) students. While the management of the library supports allowing more noise in the library, it may need to more fully address this issue in the future and design spaces within the library building that can comfortably accommodate both individuals and groups with different needs. However, some respondents welcome the trend towards more noise:

A wonderful meeting place for young and old and you don't have to be as quiet as we all had to years ago. (Female, 52)

A number of responses from older people reveal just how important the library is to them:

It is something to help me maintain an interest in life. (Male, 86)

The District would be much worse off without it. (Male, 75)

Makes each day better and helps keep me sane. (Female, 60)

For some, their experience of the library is one of increased well-being:

I always leave with a great sense of relaxation. (Female, 52)

And for others, the library experience reminds them of its community role:

A sense of ownership by the community over a community asset – its ours. (Male, 67)

Another commented on the access problems with the location of the front door at a lengthy and uphill walking distance from the car park, a design outcome of its joint-use nature:

It's a long walk to the entrance. (Female, 71)

As a reflection of the high value placed on books, a number of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the recent 'weeding' of the collection.

Where have all the books gone? (Male, 24)

In excess of 200 different words were used to describe the experience of the library. These were tabulated and ranked in order of their importance. This time, books and core library functions were not at the top of the list. Instead, 'friendly', 'helpful' and 'quiet' were the three most cited words. The overwhelming response to this question revealed that members of the library experienced library staff as friendly and helpful and that staff approachability was one of the most important aspects of the library experience for them. The responses to this question also reinforce the value and importance to library members of peace, quiet and relaxation. Comfort and warmth were similarly significant. Overall, the top ten themes were:

1. Friendly
2. Helpful
3. Quiet
4. Books
5. Staff
6. Relaxing
7. Comfort
8. Peace
9. Information
10. Warmth

These ten themes can be grouped as follows:

Staff – friendly, helpful
Core library functions – books, information
Library as place – quiet, relaxing, comfort, peace, warmth

The experience of the library for the majority of respondents can therefore be summarised as consisting of the staff, the core business and the building. The overwhelming majority were more than satisfied with each of these three elements of the library.

4.4.8 Summary

The findings from the qualitative data echo those received from the quantitative data. They demonstrate that for the majority of people, the traditional core library functions of borrowing books, accessing information, reading and computer/internet access are still perceived as the major benefit gained from the library service. While the library management is keen to extend its reach "beyond books" and "beyond the stereotype", the majority of library users still perceive the role, benefit and value of the library in the traditional sense as a place to come to borrow books and other items. The majority also highly valued the library as a quiet and peaceful place and this was reflected in many comments to this effect as well as a number of criticisms concerning dissatisfaction with increasing noise levels.

Other significant themes which emerged from the qualitative data were the value placed on the helpfulness of staff, the perceived high quality of the service, the aesthetics and comfort of the physical environment of the building, the fact that the service is free and available to everyone, and the library's role as a community meeting place and information centre.

It would appear from these results, therefore, that the key purpose of the library is still to provide the services it has always provided, with an additional emphasis on audio-visual materials and access to information technology. The social and community aspects of the library, which were frequently cited as of immense value, benefit and importance to users, are perceived by library users more as essential by-products or secondary outputs of what is basically the core service of dispensing information.

4.5 Key themes identified from formal interviews with management stakeholders

4.5.1 Introduction

The first section looked at key themes derived from the survey of library users, i.e. it presented what is important from the library user's perspective and experience. This section identifies prominent themes derived from formal interviews with managers, as well as analysis of relevant policy documents. It looks at what is important from the perspective of the Library, Council and TAFE management. Since social capital inheres in relationships, this section will also look at the relationships between the library, Council and TAFE, the three direct partnerships involved in the joint venture of the library.

4.5.2 Library management perspective

During the last two years, the library's management has undergone a significant shift from a more traditional "books" and collections focused service to a focus on the library as a social agency. This transition occurred under the leadership of the former manager who combined the role of Community Services Manager with Library Services Manager. In a move which departed from conventional library practice, this manager was not a librarian, and consequently brought to the position a freshness and vibrancy which was able to challenge the perceived traditional role of the library as a mere repository of books.

During her 18 months in the position, this manager raised the profile of the library in the community, fostered numerous social, cultural and community partnership initiatives, and generally promoted the library as an extension of community services. For the first time, the library was publicly envisioned as a community centre and issues of the social exclusion of particular groups from the library and the community development role of the library were placed firmly on the agenda. One of the innovative initiatives of this manager was to develop a new position within the library for a Youth and Information Officer. Following the community services model, the person selected for the position is a social worker who now brings an additional dynamic community development focus to traditional library services.

With the sudden departure of this manager, the Senior Librarian subsequently stepped into the role of Acting Manager, and has endeavoured to continue and build upon the

social and community mission initiated by his predecessor. Such is the background to the interview conducted with the current (Acting) Library Manager (Appendix 4).

The current manager seeks a balance between the dual roles of the library as a "warehouse" of books on the one hand and the library as a community centre on the other. While acknowledging that the library still needs to focus on development of its collections and that the majority of people still see the role of the library in a fairly traditional sense, the manager is nonetheless keen to focus more on the community development role of the library. To this end, the library's 2004-2005 Business Plan identifies four strategic drivers,

"which seek to recast the role of the library to encompass a more socially responsive and educative approach as well as changing the image and identity of the library to link it more closely with the cultures of the District of Mount Barker community".[12]

The four strategic drivers are:

- Information literacy
- Social inclusion
- Staff development
- Community partnerships

All of this is good news from a social capital point of view, particularly the second and fourth strategic drivers which are both important indicators of social capital. Promoting and fostering *information literacy* is a core value of the library profession and underpins what libraries are all about. This driver emphasises the empowering nature of access to, and effective use of, information and its role in providing people with "a pathway to personal growth and fulfillment". It also recognises the library's joint-use nature and its vital role in complementing the formal education of TAFE and the Adelaide Hills Vocational College.

Social inclusion, as seen throughout the review of the literature, is a central facet of social capital. With this strategic driver, the library's management aims to create an environment and services which cater for people who normally do not use the library, particularly those who are marginalised and socially excluded, such as youth, the homeless and the unemployed.

[12] Mount Barker Community Library (2004). "Library Business Plan 2004/2005".

The third strategic driver is *staff development*. The manager believes that not all staff are embracing the new direction of the library as articulated in the Business Plan, that there are "pockets of resistance" to adopting positive measures for social inclusion. To this end, the driver aims to bring about cultural change amongst the staff in order to change "attitudes and behaviours, values and beliefs". The primary strategy to achieve this to date has been the implementation of a customer service philosophy called Fish! based on the four elements of: play; choose your attitude; make their day; and be there.

The fourth strategic driver aims *to develop partnerships* with local groups and organisations. This is also envisaged as a means to address social exclusion, particularly through enabling excluded groups to be involved in the planning, introduction and monitoring of services so that the services reflect what the community needs rather than what the library thinks they need. This is closely connected to the idea of "community capacity building" in which communities build their own capacity as opposed to having services 'delivered' to them (Cavaye, 2000; Weddell, 2004).

Overall, the manager has a vision of the library as a stimulating meeting place, a place "where people want to stay and do things". He advocates an "in-your-face" style of librarianship which involves being seen in the community – by going out into shopping centres, into classrooms, attending Council meetings, and making connections with community agencies such as CentreLink. Concerning the library's relationship with Council, the manager believes that Councils in general tend to view their library service as predominantly a "cost centre", i.e. a service which costs Council money without any economic return. He sees the need, therefore, to take on a stronger advocacy role in order to "impart a philosophy of libraries to Council".

In order to place itself more at the heart of the community, the manager believes the library needs to be more welcoming and tolerant, especially towards young people. He advocates that the library needs to change its "shush" mentality not simply through what the library does and the activities it offers, but through staff attitudes. At the same time, he cautions that there is a need for balance, that the library should be neither a playground, nor a morgue.

The Library Manager is consciously working towards a social capital model for the library, and defines social capital as "the fabric that holds the community together – the difference between the community as a group of individuals who care only about

themselves, and that of a group of people relating to each other and caring for the community".

In conclusion, the Library Manager has articulated his vision, mission and philosophy for the library throughout the 2004-2005 Business Plan and the course of the interview. This vision suggests that the manager is actively contributing towards the development of social capital both within the library and within the wider community served by the library. The challenge will be to convert the vision into reality. As will be shown in section 4.6, some of these ideas have already found concrete expression through a range of initiatives and policy changes.

4.5.3 Council management perspective

The Council perspective outlined here has been gathered from a combination of analysis of policy documents, informal communications with Council managers and a formal interview with the former Manager of Policy and Governance (P&G) (Appendix 5).

Council perceives the role of the library service in a highly pragmatic sense. Under the *Libraries Act 1982,* funding is made available to Councils to provide a library service, although there is no requirement that Councils must provide that service. In the words of the P&G Manager, "it is historical that we have one and that Councils should provide one". In describing the relationship between Council and the Library, the Manager confirmed the point made by the Library Manager that Council perceives the library as a "cost centre". Library expenditure accounts for only 6% of Council's annual operating expenditure. However, Council management is also aware of the important role played by the library in the following areas – literacy, recreation, social interaction, access to technology and services that cater for the disabled, e.g. large print books, and outreach services, e.g. home library.

Interestingly, the P&G Manager spoke of the negative feelings and "high expectations" that members of the community have towards Council and the positive feelings they have towards the library. She believes that many do not realise that the library is a Council service and suspects that the library is valued *because* it is not associated with Council, but, she adds, "people might value Council *more* if they were aware that it provides the library service".

The results of Council's "Community Survey 2004"[13] which collected data from 500 telephone interviews, found that 25% of respondents were aware that Council provides the library service, whereas 68% were aware of its role in the provision of roads and footpaths. The survey found that 7 out of 10 households in the Mount Barker Council area reportedly had at least one member who had visited the library at least once in the previous 12 months, an outcome which the P&G Manager described as a "pat on the back" for the library service.

On the relationship between Council and TAFE, co-partners in providing the library service, the P&G Manager described it as a "good relationship at a local level". She explained how at a local level, there is good faith and cooperation between the parties.

It appears that in many respects Council takes the library for granted or at least perceives it as a "given". As the P&G Manager noted, Council is well aware of the implications for the community if there was no library and suggested that in this regard it is actually a "moral issue" for Council that the library exists.

From a social capital perspective, Council appears to be fostering both social inclusion and community partnerships. Indeed, Council's previous Strategic Plan (2001-2004) highlighted ten values or core beliefs, one of which included a "commitment to social inclusion".[14] Moreover, the new Strategic Plan for 2004-2007[15] was prepared after extensive consultation with the community. This consultation took the form of the distribution of a discussion paper which invited comments from members of the community, a series of community workshops held in three townships, and a community survey. The discussion paper clearly states Council's position on community consultation and "creating successful communities", a vital aspect of developing social capital in communities: "The distribution of this paper forms part of a significant effort on behalf of the District Council of Mount Barker to engage with its community to work in partnership to address and plan for its future".[16]

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[13] District Council of Mt Barker, "Community Survey 2004", Research Report prepared by Social Survey Consulting Group.
[14] District Council of Mount Barker, *Strategic Plan 2001-2004*, Adopted 19 February 2001.
[15] District Council of Mount Barker, *Mount Barker District's Community Strategic Plan 2004-2007 – Heading towards the year 2020,* August 2004.
[16] District Council of Mount Barker, *Community Strategic Plan & Three Year Budget Review 2003-2006*, "Creating Successful Communities – Heading towards the Year 2020", Discussion Paper for Consultation.

4.5.4 TAFE management perspective

An interview was conducted with the TAFE Manager in order to gain the perspective of TAFE, a key partner with Council in the provision of the library service (Appendix 6). Historically, TAFE and Council agreed twenty years ago to be joint partners in offering a library service to the Mount Barker community and to TAFE students.

The TAFE manager enjoys a good working relationship with Library and Council management although the impression of this researcher is of some degree of remoteness in the relationship between TAFE and Council. Certainly the TAFE Manager is well in touch with the library situated as it is on the TAFE campus. She believes that the library provides a good service to students although there are some areas in which she sees the potential for a shift in the future direction of the library service for students. In particular, with the increasing emphasis on e-learning options, the Manager sees the library's place in the future as becoming more supportive of students' needs in this area. She suggests the likelihood of a growing role for the library in assisting students to access e-learning technologies and training them in internet searching skills.

The Manager supports the social and community mission of the library. In particular, she endorses the emerging role of the library as a meeting place which has become more socially interactive. She cites the example of the games events (mah jong evenings, chess tournaments, etc) and the Saturday music afternoons as excellent examples of ways in which people who are lonely or traumatised in some way can come to the library and find enjoyment and peace, opportunities to socialise, or just to be alone in a non-threatening environment. One thing the Manager would not like to see is the conversion of the library into a service point for Council where people would come to pay their rates and dog licences. This has been a trend in new libraries elsewhere and has been mooted by Council for some years.

4.5.5 Overview

The library's ongoing existence is ensured through funding received from the Council via general revenue from rates (69%), the State Government via Library Grants (13%) and TAFE (18%).[17] The joint funding of the library by Council and TAFE was formalised

[17] Email communication with Council's Senior Finance Officer, November 9, 2004.

by a joint-use agreement which was drawn up in 1997. It outlines financial contributions from each of the parties, the use of the building and other management issues.

A sticking point in the relationship between the three partners has been the failure of TAFE to sign this agreement. Negotiations have been long and protracted despite the former Library Manager's attempts to publicise the issue in the local newspaper. While both parties have been operating under the conditions set out in the agreement for over five years, both Council and library management feel that the long term financial future of the library cannot be fully secured while the agreement remains unsigned.

From the TAFE perspective, there is a lack of balance between the community versus student library usage and the Council versus TAFE expenditure ratio on the library. Only 5.6% of library members are TAFE staff or students, while 18% of the library's budget is supplied by TAFE. Furthermore, TAFE expenditure on the library far exceeds this amount, since it is required to finance the upkeep of the building and other facilities, maintenance of the grounds, security, cleaning, and more. TAFE therefore feels that any signed legal document needs to accurately reflect, rather than exceed, TAFE services. It seems likely therefore, judging from the interview with the TAFE manager, that TAFE sees a potential solution in the reduction of some of its current funding and instead purchasing a "discrete service" for its students. In other words, TAFE would prefer to pay Council for the service it uses. This of course means that Council would need to increase its current investment in the library.

From a social capital point of view, this unresolved issue could be viewed not simply as hampering "future planning for the library"[18], but the relationships of trust between all parties involved. Notwithstanding, the TAFE position is that the unsigned agreement does not affect the fact that business still carries on as usual. While the relationship between Council and TAFE appears to be strong, it could be further strengthened if the Joint-Use Agreement was signed.

[18] *Mount Barker Courier*, 1st April, 2003, "Council moves to secure library future".

4.6 Key themes identified from participant observation

4.6.1 Introduction

This section identifies key themes related to social capital development drawn from the researcher's observation and participation in the library as both a member of staff as well as a researcher. Data has been gathered from field notes, analysis of internal documents and statistics, formal interviews with management and informal discussions with staff and library users. The structure for this section utilises in part the audit framework proposed in the UTS (2000) study. The five areas below are considered reliable indicators and measures of the social capital potential of the public library (UTS, 2000, pp. 33-35).

4.6.2 Relationships and trust building

The previous section looked at the relationships between the library and its two funding and management bodies – Council and TAFE. This section considers the relationships within library staff and between library staff and library users.

Historically, there have been a number of deep-seated issues which have affected the morale and trust levels of library staff as a whole, a situation not unusual in workplaces. Over time, problems have become entrenched and attitudes ingrained. The library management has responded proactively by introducing the FISH! strategy as a means to address these issues within the workplace. Through encouraging a greater sense of play and fun; supporting staff to "be there" for each other and "making their day"; as well as urging staff to be more conscious of "choosing the attitude" they bring to work, it is felt that this will change the internal culture of the workplace, increasing trust levels, and thereby significantly impacting on relationships between staff and the public. In the Manager's words:

"I see FISH! as also being instrumental in delivering social justice and social inclusion outcomes. By changing our internal culture and customer service attitudes and philosophies we will, I believe, begin to see things more clearly from a customer perspective and will go out of our way to "make their day" as well as collectively and creatively come up with solutions to problems and ways to enjoy our work and deliver quality service and services to our customers and stakeholders".[19]

Informal discussions with staff reveal that there is a degree of uneasiness and uncertainty about some of the changes that have occurred within the library in the last

[19] Email communication with Library Manager, November 9, 2004.

twelve months. These include the 'weeding' of the collection which was perceived by some as too drastic; the loosening of policies relating to library members which has left some staff uncertain about where the boundaries lie; and the increasing move towards introducing social and popular culture initiatives, which rests uneasily with those staff who still perceive the library as a quiet place for reading. Staff expressed concerns that an increased emphasis on the library as a community centre could compromise its provision of core services. Such uncertainty is natural and understandable in a climate of rapid change. The Manager believes that the Fish! cultural change strategy will also help to address these problems, although he acknowledges that positive results will not occur overnight and that morale and trust levels are likely to decline before they improve.

4.6.3 Partnerships and networks

Numerous partnerships and informal networks have been formed between the library and groups and organisations within the local community. Many of these partnerships have been established under the current management, particularly as a result of the work of the Youth and Information Officer who is a professional social worker. The input of this staff member into the organisation has greatly increased the social capital development potential of the library, and the vision behind conceiving this position is to be applauded.

Examples of partnerships with the library include:

- *Adelaide Hills Vocational College* – this is a strong partnership since the College is situated on the TAFE campus which is co-located with the library. The College is also linked in partnership with Lutheran Community Care. The library's Youth Officer offers literacy support to young people, in a general sense, and via specific projects such as a Youth magazine. She supports young people in accessing literacy tools for their magazine articles and also assists them in writing assignments for their studies. More informally, she offers individual support for emotional and social issues, although her position within the library does not allow much time or scope for the latter.
- Through the role of the Youth Officer, the library is represented in the community via collaborative work with various organisations including *Adelaide Hills Community Health Service*; *The Hut* (a Community Information centre in Aldgate); *Toad's Hall* (a drop in centre for youth in Mount Barker); *Lutheran Community Care* (an agency providing social and personal support to young

people); *Adelaide Hills Council*; and the *Adelaide Hills Division of General Practice*. The collaboration takes various forms, from supporting initiatives of the organisations, to promoting youth activities in the library, as well as hosting community presentations.

- The Saturday music in the library program, *Unplugged,* is another example of inviting community participation. Collaborative relationships have been formed with local schools to encourage senior music students to perform at these events, thereby facilitating performance opportunities and the building of confidence.[20]

A number of the above groups have formed informal networks with each other. For example, Lutheran Community Care is based on the TAFE campus, within metres of the library, and its social worker, in collaboration with the library's Youth Officer, work in collaboration to support young people from the Adelaide Hills Vocational College, which is also located on the TAFE campus. Informal networks of this sort play an important role in building the social capital not only of the library but the TAFE campus and wider community of which both are a part.

Since the Council does not have a Youth Development Officer, the library's Youth Officer is currently in the process of forming a library *Youth Advisory Committee (YAC),* or a group of young people who can keep her informed of youth views on the use of the library. She envisages that this group will have a say about internal or outreach library developments such as the proposed youth space, the selection of materials and general support for students. In addition, the vision for the library YAC is that it can act as an advisory group to the Library Manager who could then funnel youth concerns to the Library Management Committee: "in this way, young people would have some influence in decision making regarding issues facing youth in the community, in direct relation to the library".[21]

Each of the above partnerships in the area of youth create bridging social capital since they build social capital between youth and the library, as well as between young people and other individuals, organisations, and groups within the community. It could also be said that these partnerships are building bonding social capital between the young people themselves in helping them to feel more connected with each other.

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[20] Email communication with Youth and Information Officer, November 9, 2004.
[21] Email communication with Youth and Information Officer, November 10, 2004

The Children's Services Librarian has likewise been instrumental in forming partnerships with various organisations and informal networks including:

- Schools – participate in 'community service' activities and work experience opportunities; attend the library for excursions, orientations and tours
- Vacation Care Centres – attend the library for excursions
- Homeschooling families – attend the weekly Writers' group
- Child and Youth Health – visits, talks, support

An important facet of social capital development in the library is supporting families. An example is the Parenting Group which encourages the development of family literacy through reading stories to babies and providing talks on parenting and other opportunities for parents to share their experiences as new mothers and fathers. The well-stocked Toy Library, which has been praised as one of the best in South Australia,[22] is also a hub of social activity and offers opportunities for parents (especially mothers) to socialise and network with other parents and share stories about their children and related experiences.

Similarly, the home library delivery service builds social capital in the community through its outreach to those who are elderly, frail, lacking in mobility and otherwise isolated. It delivers books monthly to residents of nursing homes and others in need who are living independently in the Mount Barker community and outlying townships. Apart from the leisure and recreational value of the books provided, the social contact of the visit is very important to those who receive this service.

Finally, the Local History Officer has facilitated a fruitful partnership with the National Trust. Much of the Trust's historical collection, which was formerly stored in members' homes, is now housed in the Local History Centre at the library. The Centre, with its extensive collection of historical materials relating to the local area and environs, contributes significantly to the social capital of the entire community, providing as it does a valuable focus for local family history and genealogical research.

Each of the above partnerships contributes to the social capital of the library and the community served by the library.

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[22] Personal communication with Dr Alan Bundy, May 2004.

4.6.4 Social inclusion

The *Library Business Plan 2004-2005* identifies a number of social groups as neglected and therefore "excluded" in past library strategy, service delivery and staffing. These groups, "who commonly face stigma and discrimination", include homeless people, travellers, youth, and the economically disadvantaged. The Business Plan states that the library will seek to address social exclusion by "becoming a much more proactive, interventionist and educative institution by mainstreaming the provision of services for socially excluded groups and adopting staffing and resourcing strategies which prioritise the needs of excluded people in the community".

The Library Manager has commented that while the library does not have policies that exclude, it also does not have policies that include. The point is that a conscious effort needs to be made to develop policies that deliberately emphasise social inclusion. The Manager has articulated a strong commitment towards addressing social exclusion. He sees the appointment of the Youth Officer as a strategy aimed directly at addressing the issue of the social exclusion of youth from the library. Planned initiatives include the creation of a youth space and the involvement of young people in the selection of materials for the collection. For example, the Youth Officer is planning a Comic Book excursion with a group of young people who will participate in purchasing resources that appeal directly to them. This is an example of community capacity building in which young people have direct input to selecting their own library resources as opposed to the library deciding what resources they need. By actively including young people in the selection process, library management believes that this will ensure that the collection is not only relevant to young people but that they will then be empowered to feel a sense of ownership in the library and its collections. Similarly, the library has significantly increased its purchases in the area of "popular culture" as a means to address social inclusion issues. This includes DVDs, CDs and graphic novels, all of which are proving extremely popular with library users.

In the Manager's view, one of the most significant barriers to social inclusion within the library is its "rule-based" culture in which overdue fees, fines, rules and restrictive and often punitive policies prevail. The current management is committed to "loosening up" such rules and policies. In the last twelve months, a number of changes have been made in this area which include:

- Softening membership rules to enable young people to join the library who previously were unable to without the presence of a parent or carer. For

example, those under 16 can now join independently as temporary members until a parent is able to sign them up. Those 16 and over are now recognised as adults (the norm in most libraries is 18) and can join without parental consent and have independent internet access.

- Changes to the Temporary Residents Policy which required that those without a fixed or permanent residential address (and therefore possibly the most economically disadvantaged in the community) must pay a $50 refundable deposit. Membership criteria has been broadened and the requirement to pay the deposit removed.
- The reduction in the maximum overdue fee from $3 to $2 combined with an increase in the grace period before fines begin to accrue from 6 to 12 days, aims to minimise the punitive and discriminating impact of the overdue fines system.

4.6.5 Community capacity building

Community capacity building is intimately linked with the development of social capital in communities. Capacity building has been defined as "the developing or acquiring of skills, competencies, tools, processes and resources that are needed to strengthen a neighbourhood or community's processes and systems so that individuals, families, and local groups may take control of their own lives" (LBV, 2000, p. 7).

In addition to the capacity building initiatives designed to address social exclusion of youth, another capacity building initiative is the weekly Cyberseniors computer group which offers "computer help" for anyone aged over 50. The environment is relaxed and non-threatening and a staff member and several volunteers offer one-on-one assistance at whatever level the person requires. Seniors are also welcome to use the computers at this time even if they do not require specific help. Once confidence is gained, many go on to help each other. A number of people visit weekly to keep in contact with family members overseas. Others find it a safe place to become familiar with computers; while still others make social connections through the group. This is an example of the library not simply providing a service, but empowering a group (in this case seniors who often feel socially excluded in terms of knowledge of information technology) to develop their own skills. The library offers the space, facilities and support for seniors to develop the capacity to develop computer literacy for themselves. The social outcomes are increased self-esteem and self-confidence and the social

spin-offs include meeting others at a similar level of knowledge. This demonstrates capacity building at its best.

4.6.6 Social use of space

Observation of the social use of the space in the library reveals that many different individuals and groups use different areas for different purposes. The way the space is organised affects the way it is used. The small tables located in the newspaper reading area are mostly used by solitary people (usually men) who like to sit quietly, reading newspapers and magazines. Men tend to sit one per table while women are more likely to gather to talk. On Saturday afternoons, the musicians play here and this has created some competition between the differing needs of library users which has resulted in several complaints. Overall, however, the reaction to music in the library has been very positive. A solution to this problem could be to relocate the music to another part of the library.

The small tables located in the centre of the library with children's board games permanently spread out, and several chairs grouped around them, frequently attract family groups who play happily together, or children who play while their parents browse. Other tables contain chess sets and these are used by young teenage boys after school as well as parents with their children. Women play mah jong in the corner by the window and groups of primary school children use the carrels and the large group study area in the afternoons. This area is also used by the weekly children's Writer's Group and a weekly Book Group. Secondary students from the Vocational College who are based on the TAFE campus also use this study area throughout the day, sometimes with a teacher who offers tuition and support. TAFE students gather in one area of the computer room (Independent Learning Centre) while the other half is used by community members including school children and university students.

From a social capital point of view, there is a pressing need for a meeting room to be made available which would enable community groups to gather, hold talks and forums, and exchange views. At present, a room is available within the TAFE complex for this purpose, but is infrequently used and does not facilitate the type of community feeling and activity that could be generated if a meeting room was located within the library.

In short, the space in the library caters for a diverse range of user groups with an equally diverse range of interests and needs, all of which contributes to the social capital of the library. The way the space is arranged encourages social interaction in some areas and not in others, and in some cases both in the same place at the same time. Not surprisingly, there are sometimes clashes of needs between those who prefer or need quiet for study or leisure purposes and those who seek to socialise or study primarily in groups. All are in agreement that the space within the library is comfortable, aesthetic, welcoming, light, spacious and airy. The open building design facilitates a degree of flexibility in how the space is arranged. Therefore, judicious planning and re-organising of the spaces so that quiet areas and noisy areas have more space between them may serve to alleviate some of these problems.

4.7 Conclusions

The social capital audit of Mount Barker Community Library has taken into account the views of library members, library staff and key management stakeholders from the TAFE and Council. It reports on observations, as well as quantitative and qualitative data, as to how the library is used, how staff feel about the library and how the community experience the library.

While the management of the library is committed to extending its reach "beyond books" to embrace a social and community development model for the library, the findings from the user survey reveal that the majority of library members still perceive the role, benefit and value of the library as a place to come to borrow books, to find information, to browse and read, and increasingly, to use the computers. Many also highly value the library as a quiet and peaceful place. Clearly, the traditional role of the library still has, and will probably always have, an enduring relevance for its users.

At the same time, new roles for the library have been identified through this study. Additional themes have emerged from the user survey which demonstrate that the library fulfills a social role over and above the traditional function of lending books and other resources. The data presented in this audit report indeed highlights the enormous social and community benefits derived from the library experience.

Many regard the library as a community meeting place and information centre, and a place where they can come to be entertained, to meet people, to socialise with friends and family, and to make new connections. Library members also value highly the

helpfulness of staff, the quality of the service they receive and the aesthetics and comfort of the library building itself. The fact that the library service is free and available to everyone is an important factor for many. For quite a number of people, particularly the lonely, the isolated and the elderly, the library contributes significantly to their sense of health and well-being and enriches their lives in profound ways, as revealed through comments such as it "helps me maintain an interest in life" and it "makes each day better and helps keep me sane".

The library not only fosters social interactions between individuals and groups within it, but through its established and evolving partnerships with numerous outside groups, informal networks and organisations, it serves to foster relationships within the wider community, promoting social cohesion, increasing community confidence and ultimately, building social capital.

Library management and staff have become key players in this emerging trend towards building social capital. The strategic direction of the library has shifted significantly in the last two years to embrace a firm commitment to developing social inclusion and building community partnerships, both central themes of the social capital model. A wide range of initiatives which address social exclusion and involve community capacity building have been identified which all contribute to the social capital not only of the library but of the community in which the library is located. The social capital audit study of Mount Barker Community Library, therefore, has found that the library contributes significantly to the social capital of the community it serves.

To a degree, all libraries, by virtue of their core values of equity of access for all, inclusiveness, and the provision of a free service, contribute to the building of social capital in their communities, just by their existence. However, there is always room for improvement. To further develop the social capital of Mount Barker Library, the answer lies not simply in increasing opportunities for social interaction within the library or by staging one-off social events, but in truly fostering the development of networks and partnerships within the community, as well as improving the accessibility of the library to the local community. The entrance to a library is crucial and at present, the inaccessibility of the current entrance leaves much to be desired, disadvantaging the frail, the sick, the elderly and parents with young children. Its distance from the car park also poses a security risk at night. In addition, consideration needs to be given to increasing the accessibility of the library to the nearby town centre, which is where typically public libraries are best located. At present the two are not connected and a

busy road separates them – mooted plans for an overpass or walkway would significantly address this problem. Stronger links could be established with local businesses and employment services in the town. There is also a pressing need for a community information and referral service to be based at the library.

The importance of "socially inclusive" and sustainable communities, the need to build "social capital", and the stated priority to develop the State as "a place in which people care for each other and contribute to their communities", are all emphasised in the State Government's Strategic Plan. Further, one of the targets the State Government has set to achieve its strategic objectives is to align State and Local Strategic Plans within the next twelve months and to agree on joint initiatives from them.[23] Similarly, Mount Barker Council has articulated its vision to "create successful communities". In this context, it is evident that on the whole, the Mount Barker Community Library is not only contributing to the social capital of the local community but moreover actively contributing to the achievement of the strategic goals and policy objectives of both the State Government and the District Council of Mount Barker.

4.7 Recommendations

Based on the findings from the social capital audit of Mount Barker Community Library, this report recommends:

1. That the library undertakes regular social capital audits to measure the ongoing social value and impact of library services; and to monitor directions and changes in the social and community role of the library.
   Suggested strategies: Library Studies students could be encouraged to undertake placements at the library, via arrangements through Library Studies Schools, which involve data collection and preliminary analysis for audit studies.

2. That the library more actively advocates, articulates, publicises and advertises its social and community mission to the wider public.
   Suggested strategies: Through regular media releases, articles and pictures in the local newspaper, the library can inform the community about its social and community building role. This task could be incorporated into the job description of at least one staff member.

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[23] Government of South Australia, *South Australia Strategic Plan*: "Creating Opportunity", Volume 1, 2004. [Online, accessed 13 April 2004]. URL: http://www.stateplan.sa.gov.au/pub/SA_Strategic_Plan_volume_1_-_Wd95.doc

3. That the library addresses the issue of competing needs for space within the library.
   Suggested strategies: Regular appointed noisy days or times can be set aside which are advertised in advance. Resources could be allocated to planning and reorganising the existing space to better accommodate different user groups with different needs.

4. That the Library investigates the possibility of establishing a community meeting room within the library building.
   Suggested strategies: The Independent Learning Centre (computer room) could be made available outside of normal library hours for use as a community meeting room.

5. That the library creates a collection development policy which recognises and articulates the need for balance in the provision of core and non-core services, and that this is made available to the public via Council's website.

6. That the library management provides ongoing and increased support towards establishing and implementing initiatives designed to address socially excluded groups both within and without the library.
   Suggested strategies: The role of the Youth Information Officer could be expanded to allow more time for building community networks and to take full advantage of her professional skills in the community development area.

7. That the library establishes a voice for socially excluded groups on the Library Management Committee.

8. That the library establishes partnerships and links with local businesses and employment agencies to assist in fostering employment opportunities in the district.

9. That an accessible community information and referral service is established within the library.

10. That Council expedites the relocation of the library entrance to the front of the building.

11. That Council constructs a walkway which connects the library to the town centre.

12. That the library extends its hours of opening to include Sundays.

13. That Council and the library management recognises that a projected increase in the social and community role of the library will require an additional input of human and financial resources to fulfil its social and community mission.

14. That the impasse around the signing of the Joint Use Agreement between Council and TAFE be fully resolved in an expeditious manner using a conciliator if necessary.

Chapter Five presents the conclusion to the study. It reviews the implications of the audit report for public libraries as a whole and proposes a framework for public libraries to use in conducting their own social capital audit studies. It reflects on the research process and its limitations and offers suggestions for further research. It summarises the findings concerning the role of public libraries as developers of social capital, as well as discussing the emergence of new core values for public libraries and the library profession.

CHAPTER FIVE
Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This final chapter presents an overview of the thesis. It generalises from the specific findings of the social capital audit of one public library and suggests guidelines for applying the audit tool to any public library seeking to evaluate its social capital development potential. It reflects on the research process and its limitations which in turn suggest avenues for further research. Finally, it summarises the findings about the public library as a developer of social capital and discusses the emergence of new core values for public libraries and the library profession as a whole.

5.2 Overview of the study

The primary purpose of the research was to investigate the role of public libraries in developing social capital. Against the backdrop of the extensive literature on social capital and its emerging place in public policy debates, the aim was to develop a practical tool to evaluate the social capital development potential of a public library which could be used by other libraries to measure their own social capital potential. The outcome of the research was a social capital audit of a public library which demonstrated how that library contributes to the community of which it is a part.

The study was motivated by a perceived gap in the existing research which revealed few specific applications of the concept of social capital to public libraries. Public, political and academic interest in social capital has burgeoned in recent years, with all manner of community facilities and organisations credited with contributing to the development of social capital. Yet there is a dearth of literature on the social capital potential of public libraries. What studies do exist focus primarily on the social role and impact of public libraries (Briggs et al, 1996; Linley and Usherwood, 1998; Bryson and Usherwood, 2002). Two Australian studies, which do look at libraries and social capital, offer only very general guidelines with no practical example of how to conduct a social capital audit study (UTS, 2000; LBV, 2003).

The study aimed to develop upon the findings of the limited existing research. It sought to go beyond documenting the social benefits of the public library to capture a picture

of the public library as a significant player in efforts to build social capital in communities.

5.3 The social capital audit as a practical tool for public libraries

Chapter Four presented a social capital audit study of Mount Barker Community Library. The study collected a large amount of data from numerous sources; presented that data in a format designed to feature social capital indicators; analysed the data in the light of the extensive literature on social capital; concluded with an evaluation of the nature of and extent to which the library is currently contributing to the social capital of the community; and finally made a series of recommendations to the management of the library and the local governing council.

The research has implications for other libraries and library professionals. It contributes an example of a social capital audit in action and offers a practical and workable tool for other libraries that may wish to undertake similar research.

5.4 Framework for conducting a social capital audit of a public library

The following suggests a framework and guidelines suitable for any public library seeking to evaluate its social capital development potential.

Aim of the research – to evaluate the social capital potential of your public library, identifying both strengths and weaknesses.

Output of the research – a social capital audit presented in the form of a report which is made available to the library management board or committee.

Research methodologies – include qualitative as well as quantitative approaches in order to capture the inner experience of participants.

Research methods – include a range of methods which canvas the views of a wide cross-section of stakeholders. Examples: surveys; interviews; observation; document analysis (of strategic plans, business plans, budget reports, minutes of meetings, internals memos, etc); analysis of in-house library statistics; analysis of local census data. Include questions that act as indicators of social capital in interviews and questionnaires.

Identification of stakeholders – include library users; non-users if possible; Library Manager; library staff; Council Manager(s); TAFE Manager or School Principal (if a joint-use library); any other important partners.

Data analysis – collate quantitative data using spreadsheets or statistical software packages; undertake content analysis of qualitative data; cross-tabulate data where required and reduce data to user-friendly tables.

Structure of the audit report

- Demographics of the community – derived from ABS census data
- Demographics of the library – derived from library management statistics
- Presentation and analysis of quantitative data from user survey:
    - Demographic profile of library users, e.g. residence; gender; occupation; age groups; comparisons between these factors.
    - Library visiting pattern – with whom do they visit the library?
    - Reasons for visiting the library (library use pattern) – options include core and non-core library roles and activities, as well as social uses of the library.
    - Social interaction – with whom do they talk; do they stay longer than expected?
    - Look at comparisons between the above factors, e.g. core versus non-core library use; male versus female use patterns; association of age groups with library use patterns.
    - Social capital indicators – isolate and treat separately the questions or options relating to trust, relationships, social interaction and networks, e.g. library as a safe place; library as a meeting place; talking to others.
- Presentation and analysis of qualitative data from user survey:
    - Identify key themes from the qualitative data, e.g. core library functions; equity of access, library as place; social interaction; community role of the library, etc.
    - Include narrative descriptions from survey responses to illustrate each key theme.
- Presentation and analysis of data from interviews with stakeholders:
    - Present the library management perspective
    - Present the Council management perspective
    - Present the perspective of other management stakeholders

- Presentation and analysis of data from participant observation (or similar method):
    - Identify indicators of social capital, e.g. relationships and trust building; partnerships and networks; social inclusion; community capacity building; social use of space.
    - Describe and analyse aspects of the library service which relate to each of these social capital indicators.
- Conclusions:
    - Present the conclusions derived from the audit study.
    - Summarise the strengths and weaknesses of the library service as revealed through the data analysis.
    - Evaluate the overall social capital development potential of the library.
- Recommendations:
    - Present a series of recommendations for Library and Council management, or where applicable, the Library Management Committee.
    - Include suggested strategies for implementing the recommendations, where applicable.

5.5 Reflecting on the research process

In reflecting on the research process, several weaknesses and limitations came to light which suggest additional research methods for inclusion in future studies. For example, it seems likely that the wording of the user survey affected the nature of the responses. Three of the four qualitative questions (7, 8 and 9) asked the respondent how they benefit from and what they value most about the library service. In other words, these questions prompted for positive contributions only. On the other hand, the neutrality of question 10 enabled some respondents to express dissatisfaction with various aspects of the library service, although these were few.

The overall 'tone' of the user survey was therefore skewed towards the positive. This is referred to as the 'benefit approach' to assessing social impacts (Debono, 2002). Not surprisingly, the responses to the survey were overwhelmingly positive and this may have been more a result of the way the questions were worded than an accurate reflection of how people perceived the library service. It is suggested that future surveys be more neutral in the wording of the questions.

In retrospect, the survey could also have benefited from the inclusion of questions enquiring about occupation and TAFE student or community user status. This would have added more information to the demographic profile of users. In designing the survey, it was decided to instead opt for simplicity and minimise the number of questions and the size of the survey to two pages. This was due in large part to the fact that the library's annual baseline survey was distributed at the same time and the researcher was aware that respondents may be less inclined to answer the research survey if it was lengthy and complicated.

Another limitation of the study was that it was not able to take into account the views of non-users of the library and the survey was conducted within the library rather than within the community. In large part, this was due to constraints of time and the limitations of a Masters by coursework thesis. The use of statistics from the Council's own Community Survey in part helped to address the bias of the study for it surveyed the community outside the library about its use of library services. It is suggested that future social capital audit studies survey the views of those who do not normally use the library in order to gain a more complete picture of the relationship between all sections of the community and the library.

A further limitation of the audit study is that it did not survey the views of staff nor formally interview them but instead relied on informal discussions to gain a picture of the social capital in the workplace. Cox acknowledges that social capital can be diminished through workplace competition and a workplace culture that is "redolent with distrust and suspicion" (Cox, 1995). Measuring the levels of trust and consequently social capital in the library workplace is a fruitful endeavour for further research, particularly in gauging how library workplace social capital may impact on the wider social capital of the library and the community beyond. However, given the researcher's position as a member of staff, it was neither appropriate nor ethical to undertake this research task, for it could have compromised relationships with colleagues, personal professionalism and the research itself.

In short, attempting to measure the social capital of a workplace in which the researcher is embedded may have had the effect of reducing the social capital of that workplace. Ultimately, a conscious decision was made to avoid this aspect of the research out of a concern to minimise the potential impact on the staff and a desire to preserve confidentiality wherever possible. Obviously, an independent researcher who is not connected with a workplace would not face these same difficulties.

5.6 The role of the public library in developing social capital

The research found that the public library plays a valuable although neglected role in contributing to the social capital of the community it serves, a role which needs to be advocated more widely by the library profession as a whole. This potential for the public library to play a key role in developing social capital was illustrated through the audit report of the case study library.

5.6.1 Implications

The research has confirmed that the public library contributes to social capital development in numerous forms, which include but are not limited to:

- Providing a welcoming public space and facilities that are free and open to all members of the community regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, economic status, etc.
- Promoting information literacy and making information freely available to all, thereby upholding democratic ideals (Kranich, 2001; Preer, 2001; LBV, 2003).
- Encouraging social interaction through provision of shared spaces, community programs, social events, talks, music afternoons, etc.
- Emphasising values of equity of access for all, thereby addressing issues of social exclusion and developing community trust.
- Providing a community meeting place for individuals, families and social groups.
- Providing a focal point for local community and historical information resources.
- Building community capacity through offering programs that empower individuals and groups in the community.
- Providing outreach services to the community, such as a home library delivery service, which caters for those with special needs, especially the homebound, isolated, frail and elderly members of the community.
- Engaging in partnerships and networks with other organisations and groups within the community.

The implications of these roles for the public library, framed in social capital terms, are that libraries are really not doing anything new here. The above examples of ways in which the public library contributes to social capital reflects activities, functions and roles that the public library has always performed, by its very nature. The implications lie perhaps in recognising that what libraries already do is contribute to social capital,

whether they are doing so consciously or not. Clearly, the more consciously library managers commit to and undertake this task, the more they can add to the social capital of both their libraries and communities.

5.6.2 Issues raised

The primary issue raised by the application of the social capital model to the public library, reflected both in the literature and through discussions with library staff, is that of the potential for a fundamental clash between the traditional core functions and roles of the library and the emergence of the new roles and functions connected with the social and community mission of the library.

There are concerns expressed within some sections of the library profession that an excessive focus on the social capital development role of libraries may be to the detriment of the provision of core library services. Amidst all the talk of moving the profession of librarianship "beyond books" and "beyond the stereotype"[24], the findings of this study confirmed that the majority of people still visit their public library to borrow books and other collection items. The Library Board of Victoria project has cautioned library services not to focus on the broader social objectives to the exclusion of delivering a good core service (LBV, 2003). Clearly, there is a need to balance the ongoing provision of core library services with the development of social and community oriented missions and values for the public library.

In similar fashion, throughout the 1990s, many library professionals agonised over the clash between core library services and what was then perceived as the 'new' threat – that of information technology. Libraries have since adapted to, and capitalised on, the challenges of this new era of the information revolution by *integrating* information technologies into core library service provision. One predicts that this will also be the case with the emerging emphasis on the social and community mission of the library – that the potential for integration far outweighs the potential for competition.

Moreover, to reiterate the point made earlier, it can be argued that focusing on the social capital role of the public library is not introducing anything new so much as consciously articulating and developing upon the social and community value of what already exists.

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[24] The theme for the 2nd ALIA New Librarians' Symposium on December 3-4, 2004, is "Beyond the Stereotype".

5.6.3 New roles and missions for public libraries and the profession of librarianship

The previous section puts forth the view that there is nothing inherently new in a social capital model for the public library, that libraries have always contributed to the social capital of their communities, but this role has simply not been recognised or articulated as such. What the research findings suggest is the need for a more conscious articulation of the role of libraries as developers of social capital. This is particularly crucial in a climate where social capital has assumed a firm place on the social policy agenda and is capturing the interest of politicians, policy makers and social planners alike.

In more vocally articulating the role of public libraries as contributors to social capital, library professionals need to become stronger advocates. This advocacy role encompasses a spectrum of possibilities: from changing perceptions of the role of the library through educating those within the profession, the community and governing bodies; to assuming an active role as an agent for social and political change within communities.

The findings from the audit study suggest that public libraries can and do help governments achieve their strategic goals – in this they are already undertaking a political role. Moreover, the new roles which need advocating have been stated and restated throughout this thesis: strengthening partnerships in the community; developing the library as a centre of the community; developing policies which address issues of social exclusion; developing strategies which help build community capacities; and providing library services in a social context (McCabe, 2001). As Matarasso declares, the real challenge for libraries and the profession of librarianship is to change our ideas and perceptions about the role of public libraries:

"We have to change our limited idea of what public libraries are for, and what contribution they can make. The social and developmental scope of the service will not be fulfilled until we learn to accept that, while the public library remains a community building offering free access to books, it is also a major mechanism for personal and community development" (Matarasso, 1998, p. 46).

5.7 Conclusion

The value of this research lies both in its articulation of the role of public libraries in developing social capital and its presentation of a practical tool for evaluating social capital in any public library. Through its demonstration of a social capital audit in

practice, it offers other libraries frameworks and guidelines to conduct similar research. In this respect, it leaves the way open for others to build upon and refine the social capital audit tool as a means to measure and evaluate social capital performance in public libraries.

This thesis emphasises throughout the social and community roles and missions of the public library. It is informed by the fundamental belief expounded by all social capital theorists that "the social matters" (Portes, 1998; Cox and Caldwell, 2000) and that the concept of social capital meets a deeply felt need to reclaim the social at a time when economic rationalism has for too long dominated the public discourse (Cox and Caldwell, 2000). Against this background, this thesis contributes to further the social capital debate by widening its applications to encompass the sphere of public libraries.

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APPENDIX 1



THE SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY ROLE OF MOUNT BARKER LIBRARY

This survey is part of a research project undertaken by a staff member of Mount Barker Community Library for the M.A. (Information Studies) degree at the University of South Australia. The purpose of the study is to look at ways in which the Library contributes to the local community. Your feedback and comments are appreciated.

1. Gender Female / Male

2. Age.....

3. Suburb / Township.....Postcode.....

4. When you visit the library, do you come: *(Circle one or more)*
   a. Alone
   b. With spouse / partner
   c. With family (including children, parents, extended family)
   d. With friends
   e. With fellow students
   f. Other.....

5. What are your main reasons for visiting the library? *(Circle one or more)*
   a. To borrow books / magazines / videos / DVDs / CDs / CD-ROMs
   b. To browse
   c. To read newspapers or magazines
   d. To study
   e. To find information
   f. To use the computers
   g. To play games
   h. Children's activities
   i. Toy Library
   j. Seniors' computer group
   k. Local History Centre
   l. Special events / talks / programmes
   m. To do voluntary work
   n. To see people you know
   o. To meet new people
   p. Just to be around other people
   q. Somewhere to go
   r. To sit and relax
   s. For the peace and quiet

t. A safe place
u. Just for a change
v. Any other reasons.....

6. When you are at the library, do you:
   a. Talk to people you know
   b. Talk to people you don't know
   c. Talk to staff
   d. Don't talk to anyone
   e. Stay longer than expected

7. What benefits do you gain from the Mount Barker Library service?

8. How does Mount Barker Library benefit your local community?

9. What do you most value about the Mount Barker Library?

10. Jot down ten words that you associate with this library or that describe your experience of this library?

Thank you for completing this survey

APPENDIX 2

Schedule of data collection days

User survey

Date	*Day*	*Time*	*Number surveys returned*
24th June 2004	Thursday	9-5	58
24th June 2004	Thursday evening	5-8	7
25th June 2004	Friday	9-5	38
26th June 2004	Saturday	9-4	13
28th June 2004	Monday	9-5	44
29th June 2004	Tuesday	9-5	39
30th June 2004	Wednesday	9-5	53
TOTAL			252 (2 invalid)

Interviews

Interviewee	*Date*
Children's Services Librarian	4th June 2004
Library Manager	7th June 2004
Council Manager, Policy and Governance	23rd June & 30th June 2004
TAFE Manager	10th November 2004

APPENDIX 3

User survey data

Gender balance

Gender	*Number*	*Percentage*
Female	169	68%
Male	79	32%

Age breakdown

Age range	*Number*	*Percentage*
0-11	3	1%
12-17	26	10%
18-24	34	14%
25-34	23	9%
35-49	71	28%
50-59	38	15%
60-69	34	14%
70-84	15	6%
85+	2	1%

Library visiting pattern

When you visit the library, do you come: (Circle one or more)

Nature of visit	*Number*	*Percentage*
Alone	183	73%
Spouse/partner	53	21%
Family	96	38%
Friends	29	12%
Fellow students	22	9%

Library use pattern

What are your main reasons for visiting the library? (Circle one or more)

Reason for visit	*Number*	*Percentage*
Borrow items	222	89%
Browse	72	29%
Read newspapers / magazines	59	24%
Study	59	24%
Find information	122	49%
Use computers	97	39%
Play games	12	5%
Children's activities	17	7%
Toy Library	22	9%
Seniors' computer group	15	6%
Local History Centre	17	7%
Special events / talks / programs	11	4%
Voluntary work	15	6%
See people you know	18	7%
Meet new people	9	4%
Just to be around other people	13	5%
Somewhere to go	33	13%
To sit and relax	40	16%
For the peace and quiet	40	16%
A safe place	19	8%
Just for a change	12	5%

Social interaction

When you are at the library, do you: (respondents circled one or more)

Type of interaction	*Number*	*Percentage*
Talk to people you know	106	48%
Talk to people you don't know	51	23%
Talk to staff	134	60%
Don't talk to anyone	43	19%
Stay longer than expected	72	32%

APPENDIX 4

Interview questions for Library Manager

1. It appears that there has been a transition in recent years from a library focused on its collections (under the previous manager) to one of the library as a social place (under the recently departed manager). How do you see your role as Acting Manager and where do you think it fits between these two approaches?
2. How would you describe the management's priorities for the library service?
3. Has the direction of the library service, or its priorities, changed recently? If yes, in what ways?
4. Would you say that library management priorities are reflected in council policy?
5. Would you say that library management priorities are reflected in TAFE policy?
6. How would you describe the relationship of the library to Council (staff and elected members)?
7. How would you describe the relationship of the library to TAFE (staff and students)?
8. How would you describe the relationship of the library to the local community?
9. What is your understanding of the mission of the library? Do you have a personal vision for the library?
10. How would you describe the role of the public library in general terms?
11. What groups has the Council, TAFE and management identified as being a priority?
    a. women
    b. men
    c. children
    d. teenagers
    e. students
    f. sole parents
    g. indigenous peoples
    h. ethnic minorities and cultural groups
    i. seniors
    j. people with disabilities
    k. unemployed
    l. other
12. In what ways do you think the library can benefit these groups?

13. Have you identified any groups or individuals in the community who are currently not using, or are under using the library service?
14. Are you aware of any individuals or groups who may be dissatisfied with the library service?
15. Can you think of any ways which the library service could help groups and individuals in the community? Are there any constraints (financial or otherwise), which would prevent this?
16. Do you believe the library service contributes to the wider community? If so, how?
17. Can you outline any formal or informal partnerships or networks that the library has formed with other local community organizations?
18. What is your understanding of the social and community development objectives of the library service which were established under the recently departed manager? Do you see this focus continuing?
19. One of the 10 values outlined in Council's Strategic Plan is a commitment to social inclusion? How do you think this commitment can be met through library business and activities?
20. Do you believe you have the support of the staff in fulfilling the social mission of the library as outlined in the 2004/2005 Business Plan?
21. Do you believe library users support the social mission of the library?
22. What do you think the community in general would lose if this library no longer existed?
23. What are some of the obstacles that need to be overcome in order to assist members of the community to become more aware of the library?
24. Can you outline or describe how different individuals and groups use the space in the library?
25. Would you say that some groups are excluded from using the library? If so, why? What can be done about this?
26. What does Mount Barker Library need to do to place itself more at the heart of the community?
27. What is your understanding of the concept of social capital? How do you define it?
28. How do you think the library can contribute to developing social capital in this community and beyond?
29. Are there any other points or issues about the impact of the library service in your community that you would like to raise?

APPENDIX 5

Interview questions for Council Manager, Policy & Governance

1. What does your role as Manager of Policy and Governance entail?
2. I am seeking to understand the development, nature and structure of Council policy particularly as it relates to the delivery of Library Services. Do you know if there is a document (or documents) which outlines Council's expectations for the provision of core library services; and/or any other strategic objectives for the library service; and/or which describes the relationship of the library service to Council?
3. How does Council perceive the role of the library service?
4. How would you describe the relationship of Council to the library service?
5. Do you think there are aspects of this relationship which need improvement?
6. In Council's first Strategic Plan (2001-2004), only two out of 66 Principal Activities relate directly to the library while the responsibility for each of these was given to a Manager other than the Library Manager. Do you think this says anything about Council's priorities for the library service?
7. To your knowledge, were any areas of responsibility within the current Strategic Plan delegated to the Library Manager?
8. Is it likely that the Library Manager will be allocated any areas of responsibility in future Strategic Plans?
9. How does Council perceive the role of the Library Manager within the management structure?
10. How does Council perceive the relationship between the departments of Community Services and Library Services?
11. With the recent departure of the Library Manager who oversaw and hence bridged these two departments, does Council see the need to further this partnership in some form?
12. The South Australian Government has, in its State Strategic Plan, identified "community building" as one of its six key strategic objectives. The importance of "socially inclusive" and sustainable communities, the need to build "social capital", and the stated priority to develop the State as "a place in which people care for each other and contribute to their communities", are all emphasised in the State Government's Strategic Plan. Further, one of the targets the State Government has set in order to achieve this strategic objective is to align State and Local Strategic Plans within the next twelve months and to agree on joint

initiatives from them. Given this, can you envisage how Council will go about incorporating this objective of "community building" into its own Strategic Plan?

13. Does Council see a role for the library service in implementing this State Government strategic direction?
14. The discussion paper, "Community Strategic Plan & Three Year Budget Review 2003-2006: Creating Successful Communities – Heading towards the Year 2020" which sought extensive community consultation, refers to a Review of the Strategic Plan which was undertaken in 2003. This document also includes an outline of Draft Principal Activities and Key Result Areas for the next 3 years. There are no changes from the existing Strategic Plan in the Principal Activities which relate to the library. Has there been any input from Library Management into this review process?
15. Council has outlined a vision for the community – do you know if Council has a similar vision for the library service?
16. The Library Business Plan 2004/2005 seeks to expand the role of the library to incorporate more socially responsive and community-based values which are in line with the strategic objectives of the State Government's Strategic Plan. Do you think there will be an alignment between Council's future strategic direction and the strategic direction of the library as reflected in its new Business Plan?
17. Council's current Strategic Plan (2001-2004) highlights ten values or core beliefs, one of which includes a "commitment to social inclusion". Given that libraries are, by their very nature, committed at a core level to ethics of equity, social justice, and inclusiveness, does Council see a key role for its library service in contributing to the actualisation of its commitment to social inclusion?
18. One of the Key Result Areas in the 2001-2004 Strategic Plan (under 5.4) is to have the library joint use venture signed. Do you know why this has not been signed to date?
19. Can you tell me what impact the absence of a signed Joint Use agreement has on the future of the library?

APPENDIX 6

Interview questions for TAFE Manager

1. How would you describe your relationship with the library service?
2. How would you describe the relationship of TAFE staff and students to the library?
3. How do you see the current direction of the library service?
4. How would you describe your relationship with Council staff and elected members?
5. Do you know what the mission of the library is?
6. How would you describe the role of the library?
7. Do you believe the library service is catering adequately for students?
8. How do you see the library service contributes to the wider community?
9. Are you aware of any individuals or groups who are dissatisfied with the library service?
10. Do you support the social mission of the library?
11. Can you explain what has held up the process of the signing of the joint use agreement?
12. Can you tell me what impact the absence of a signed Joint Use agreement has on the future of the library?

APPENDIX 7

Interview questions for Children's Services Librarian

1. What do you think are the Management's priorities for the library service?
2. Has the direction of the library service, or its priorities, changed recently? If yes, in what ways?
3. How would you describe your relationship with Council staff and elected members?
4. How would you describe your relationship with TAFE staff and students?
5. How would you describe your relationship with the general community?
6. What is your understanding of the mission of the library?
7. How would you describe the role of the public library in general terms?
8. Do you know if Management has identified any of the following as being a priority?
    a. women
    b. men
    c. children
    d. teenagers
    e. students
    f. sole parents
    g. indigenous peoples
    h. ethnic minorities
    i. seniors
    j. people with disabilities
    k. unemployed
    l. other
9. In what ways, if any, do you think the library can benefit these groups?
10. Can you identify any groups or individuals in the community who are currently not using, or are underusing the library service?
11. Do you believe the library service contributes to the wider community? If so, how?
12. Are you aware of any individuals or groups who may be dissatisfied with the library service?
13. Can you think of any ways which the library service could help groups and individuals in the community?

14. Do you support the social mission of the library as outlined in the latest Business Plan? Do you believe library users support the social mission of the library as outlined in the latest Business Plan?
15. Do you believe other staff support the social mission of the library?
16. What is your understanding of the social and community development objectives of the library service?
17. Can you outline the Children's services programs which are run at the library?
18. What are the social objectives of Children's services?
19. How would you describe the value of the Children's Services program to the local community?
20. What do you think the community in general would lose if Children's Services no longer existed?
21. What are some of the obstacles that need to be overcome in order to make members of the community more aware of Children's Services?
22. Can you outline any formal or informal partnerships that you have formed with other local community organizations or individuals in your role as Children's Services librarian?
23. How do these partnerships benefit the library? The community?
24. As the Volunteer Coordinator, how many volunteers work in the library?
25. How would you describe the contribution of the volunteers to the library?
26. In what ways does volunteering at the library contribute to the volunteers' quality of life?
27. In what ways do the volunteers contribute to the community?
28. Are there any other points or issues about the impact of the library service in your community that you would like to raise?
29. How would you describe the social use of space in the library?
30. Can you outline the use of the library space by different groups?
31. Do these groups interact with each other?
32. Would you say that some groups are excluded from using the library? If so, why?
33. Are there any other points or issues about the impact of the library service in the local community that you would like to raise?