Evidence Based Library and Information Practice

The Potential of Generic Social Outcomes in Promoting the Positive Impact of the Public Library: Evidence from the National Year of Reading in Yorkshire

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Abstract

Objective – To present the development, planning and implementation of a qualitative research project on the impact of National Year of Reading in Yorkshire.

Methods – Generic Social Outcomes (GSO) were used to develop a theoretical framework. Data were gathered via in-depth interviews and focus groups with National Year of Reading (NYR) steering group partners in Calderdale and North Lincolnshire, selected as the two case study authorities. The use of MAXQDA computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) enabled data and coding structures to be stored and facilitated comparison in this longitudinal study.

Results – The findings using the GSO framework show considerable evidence of NYR related activities in supporting the three first-tier social outcomes: 'Stronger and Safer Communities', 'Health and Well-Being' and 'Strengthening Public Life.'

Conclusion – The GSO framework can be used by practitioners to help provide evidence for how public libraries contribute to diverse agendas and demonstrate their value to the community. Public library authorities can use this evidence for planning and for advocacy with a range of audiences including local and central government.

Introduction to the National Year of Reading Evaluation Project

The 2008 National Year of Reading (NYR) campaign in the UK was about celebrating and encouraging reading in all its forms. Its aim was to promote reading in the family and beyond, and to help to build a nation of readers. The NYR campaign ran from January to December with organizations and local authorities asked to pledge and plan their support between January and March. The Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) commissioned the National Literacy Trust (NLT), with lead partner The Reading Agency, to run the NYR campaign. Delivery of the NYR was launched in April 2008 to support ongoing work to achieve national literacy targets, engage parents and families in reading with their children, and develop adult literacy. The key values identified for the year-long social marketing campaign were:

- Impact - both personal and social
- Celebration - positive, enjoyable experiences
- Diversity - of reading experiences and communities
- Participation - co-production of the year with communities and partners
- Creativity in development and delivery
- Legacy - to create a lasting change in lives and systems

The strategy was to create a network of partnerships to provide engagement with the NYR campaign, particularly with education and libraries. The campaign intended to stimulate community-based reading activities and to help publicize and reinforce projects already underway. Public libraries were seen as central to the NYR campaign and there was a 100% sign up from the 149 public library authorities (Thomson, 2009). The campaign needed to focus on ways of attracting people to start reading or develop their existing skills. A national headline target driven media campaign promoted the year based on several key messages:

- Everything begins with reading

- Join your library – everything you could wish to read, for free
- Reading anything, anytime, anywhere is good

A partnership of Museums, Libraries & Archives (MLA) Yorkshire, Renaissance Yorkshire, and Arts Council England (Yorkshire region), jointly commissioned a longitudinal evaluation of the social impact of the NYR in Yorkshire. Researchers at Leeds Metropolitan University were appointed by MLA Yorkshire in August 2008 to undertake evaluation research for the clients. This paper outlines the development, planning and implementation of this qualitative research project, and discusses the impact of NYR on the organizations that delivered the campaign and their work with target groups.

Literature Review

This select review of the literature will consider the role of the public library as a key partner in the NYR campaign in 2008, and will discuss the importance of literacy in contemporary society. The final section will consider the challenges of measuring the value and impact of public library services and will focus on the MLA Generic Social Outcomes (GSO) framework used in this evaluation project.

The Public Library and the Power of Partnerships

There is growing interest in the perceived social impact of the public library in contributing to the social cohesion and development of the community served. It is suggested in the literature that public libraries have the potential to act as generators of social capital since they are open to all and provide community meeting spaces and a safe place for people to meet (Johnson, 2010; Varheim, 2009; Bourke, 2005).

Communities give purpose to libraries and good library services will put the community at the heart of developing and delivering targeted services, engaging with people and responding to their needs. In a guide to

providing multicultural services the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) notes that in reflecting the needs of the population they serve, libraries impact greatly upon people's lives as learning centres, cultural centres and as information centres (IFLA, 2009). This has implications for the role of libraries in supporting family learning, and Pateman and Vincent (2010) provide a well-argued justification for extending the social justice role of the public library and the provision of needs-based services. Koontz and Gubbin (2010) note that the public library is the prime community access point designed to respond to a multitude of ever-changing information needs. The challenge for librarians is to implement policies in libraries and work with partner organizations to achieve effective delivery of services.

Public libraries in the UK have been at the centre of their local communities since the 19th century, providing services to reflect the diversity of the population they serve (Brophy, 2007; Goulding, 2006; McMenemy, 2008). The *Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964* came into force in April 1965 and since then the provision of a public library service is a statutory duty for local councils. In order to meet key legal requirements, a local library service must serve both adults and children and provide value for money, working in partnership with other authorities and agencies. The CILIP guidelines, *What Makes a Good Library Service?,* say that good library service should provide a positive experience for local people, and that it will meet key policy objectives by providing a positive future for children and young people; strong safe and sustainable communities; equality, community cohesion and social justice; health improvements, and well-being (CILIP, 2010).

Public libraries were identified as essential partners in the NYR campaign strategy and all 149 library authorities signed up for active involvement within a very short period of notice. The inclusion of public libraries as key partners built on three themes identified as priorities in the 1998 campaign a decade earlier: changing attitudes to reading among

different audiences, the role of libraries in developing readers, and working in partnership (National Literacy Trust, 1999).

Dolan and Ayub (2011) note the NYR campaign involved many partners and "it gave libraries a bigger stage on which to perform" (p. 85). The inclusion of public libraries as key partners acknowledged that public libraries make a measurable and substantial contribution to local economies and help to bridge social divides. They support well-being; encourage reading; spread knowledge; contribute to learning and skills; and help to foster identity, community and a sense of place for people of all ages, backgrounds and cultures (MLA, 2008). The public library is also seen as a trusted community resource providing a universal entitlement to the skills and joy of reading, essential information, learning and knowledge at all stages of life and involvement in the social, learning and creative life of the community (Dolan, 2007; MLA, 2008; MLA, 2010).

Why the NYR 2008 Campaign?

The overall aim of the NYR campaign was to promote reading in the family and beyond, and to help to build a nation of readers. This involved encouraging reading both for pleasure and as a means of improving learning, achievement and individual prospects. The campaign focused on ways of attracting people to start reading or develop existing skills.

Competence in literacy is essential for life in contemporary society. Moreover, it dramatically contributes to people's emotional wellbeing, mental health, and economic success. The case for reading for pleasure has been set out in research by bodies such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2002), which showed that reading for pleasure is more important for children's educational success than their family's socio-economic status, and that improvements in literacy, at any point in life, can have a profound effect on an individual.

Literacy Changes Lives

The National Literacy Trust (NLT) has addressed the national literacy challenge as a priority and was the lead organization for delivering the NYR in 2008. The NYR campaign strategy was to create a network of partnerships that would provide engagement and stimulate community-based reading activities. Low literacy levels are a barrier to social justice, producing social, economic and cultural exclusion that scars communities and undermines social cohesion. In 2007 a U.S. perspective on the wider benefits of literacy was reported in *To Read or Not to Read.* The NLT compiled an equivalent document for England and the *Literacy Changes Lives* report (Dugdale and Clark, 2008) draws on a number of sources that have used longitudinal studies that track subjects from birth. This research presents evidence that literacy has a significant impact on person's happiness and success, and gives a clear indication of the dangers of illiteracy as well as the benefits of improving literacy for the individual, the community, the workforce and the nation (2008). *Literacy Changes Lives* brings together evidence of the wider benefits of literacy by looking at five key personal areas: economic well-being; aspirations; family life; health; and civic and cultural engagement. In every one of these areas, those with poor literacy had significantly worse outcomes. Literacy is not just about reading ability but is a skill central to many facets of life.

A Unique Combination of Benefits – Measuring the Value of the Public Library Service

Although there is much in the library and information studies (LIS) literature about what the public library service provides to the user community, it is more difficult to present this in terms of perceived value. In the UK there is still a paucity of convincing published evidence that is persuasive and likely to be used at a political level. A commissioned report undertaken by Burns Owens Partnership (BOP) identifies a lack of qualitative in-depth research that analyses the specific nature of interactions that take place in libraries (DCMS/BOP Consulting, 2009).

A recent publication from The Paul Hamlyn Foundation reports on what has been learned from the Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund. In the introduction to this review of 60 grants made over several years (an investment of £3.7 million), Helen Carpenter writes,

> Public libraries have tended to be slow to react to this changing environment. This may be in part because their operating culture is not used to expressing their role in terms of policy objectives emerging in other sectors, such as children's and youth services. It may also be that libraries have not sufficiently entered the consciousness or collective imaginations of policy makers in other domains, as a resource that can help them achieve their objectives. (Carpenter, 2010, p. 3-4)

Using the Generic Social Outcomes (GSO) framework, the National Year of Reading research project looked for evidence of the public library offering in two contrasting public library authorities. Powell (2006), in providing an overview of evaluation research, says that it should enhance knowledge and decision making and lead to practical applications. One way of exploring the challenging question of how libraries contribute to the cohesion and development of their communities is to use the concept of social capital. Measuring impact evaluation is more difficult than collating statistics. Markless and Streatfield (2006) remind us of the problems of getting sidetracked and looking at activities and processes when trying to evaluate impact, rather than concentrating on what difference a public library offering makes.

Marshall (2007), writing about the future of value and impact studies, identifies two major strands of research on the value of libraries. The first is composed of economic studies that focus on return on investment, cost benefit analysis and other monetary measures. This can demonstrate efficiency of libraries in

comparison with other government or industry sectors but the measures can appear to be distant from actual services provided to users. She identifies a second strand that focuses on the use of information by particular groups, e.g. library user studies. This is seen as particularly relevant in the health environment where outcome measures for particular populations and evidence based practice are gaining prominence, but there are also messages for public library practitioners. Evidence based practice is a concept that originated within healthcare but is migrating to other fields. It involves applying the results from rigorous research studies to professional practice in order to improve the quality of services to clients (Booth and Brice, 2004)

Rooney-Browne (2011) undertook a literature review of existing qualitative and quantitative evaluation methodologies for demonstrating the value of public libraries in the UK. This report, commissioned by the CILIP Library and Information Group, provides an overview of current methods for measuring performance. Rooney-Browne found that in the UK considerable emphasis is placed on the importance of measuring the performance of public libraries using traditional statistical methods, with the more complex direct and indirect benefits often being overlooked.

So what is the value of the public library service and how might this be measured? How can we "measure" that service in a way that is meaningful to stakeholders? The particular challenge is that value is a psychological construct and there are implications for the reflective practitioner in professional practice. The next section will discuss the GSO framework developed as a tool to help demonstrate how public libraries contribute to diverse agendas and demonstrate their value to the community. Public library authorities can use this evidence for planning and for advocacy with a range of audiences including local and central government.

Generic Social Outcomes as an Evidence Framework

Public libraries are recognised as being good at

reaching "hard-to-reach" groups and good at building partnerships based on reading and family learning. However, there are critical challenges ahead in finding the resources to continue delivering publicly funded library services in times of economic strictures. Public libraries may be effective and reliable partners in providing services that the public appreciate, but they are rarely recognized as the lead agency and as such do not yet have the same political voice in promoting their professional worth. This presents a particular dilemma, as Rooney-Browne (2011) notes: "our ability to produce social value is considered by some to be one of our greatest commodities" (p. 29).

MLA funded research led to the development of Generic Social Outcomes (GSOs) – a national framework developed and piloted by the Burns Owen Partnership (BOP) in 2005. This national GSO framework was developed as a combination of a bottom up process of developing the framework with practitioners and a top down process of aligning the sector's potential social contribution with key drivers of government policy through consultation with external bodies. The result was the creation of three GSOs: Stronger and Safer Communities, Strengthening Public Life, and Health and Well-Being. Each of the Tier 1 GSOs is further subdivided into a set of social outcome themes (Tier 2) as shown in Table 1.

The national GSO framework was developed by the MLA to help museums, libraries and archives show evidence of the benefit of their services, and is a way of aligning the sector's potential social contribution with key government policy drivers. The ability to demonstrate achievement of outcomes alongside local priorities will give the sector strategic influence and help advocate for resources (MLA, 2007). Linley and Herman (2008), in a report for MLA Yorkshire, argue that the GSO framework is useful for advocacy with potential partners and for funding applications.

The GSO framework can also be seen as a tool enabling policy makers and practitioners to speak the same language. Practitioners can

Table 1
Tier 1 Social Outcomes Framework and Tier 2 Social Outcomes Themes

Tier 1	1 Stronger & Safer Communities	2 Strengthening Public Life	3 Health & Well-Being
Tier 2	1.1 Improving group and inter-group dialogue and understanding	2.1 Encouraging and supporting awareness and participation in local decision-making and wider civic and political engagement	3.1 Encouraging healthy lifestyles and contributing to mental and physical well-being
	1.2 Supporting cultural diversity and identity	2.2 Building the capacity of community and voluntary groups	3.2 Supporting care and recovery
	1.3 Encouraging familial ties and relationships	2.3 Providing safe, inclusive and trusted public spaces	3.3 Supporting older people to live independent lives
	1.4 Tackling the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour	2.4 Enabling community empowerment through the awareness of rights, benefits and external services	3.4 Helping children and young people to enjoy life and make a positive contribution
	1.5 Contributing to crime prevention and reduction	2.5 Improving the responsiveness of services to the needs of the local community, including other stakeholders	

(MLA North East)

then make the case for impact using terminology that is meaningful to local and national government. The MLA suggests that the GSOs can also support service improvement by helping practitioners to:

- Plan projects, set objectives and assess delivery against them
- Develop best practice
- Fit with the focus on shared outcomes for local people measured by comprehensive area assessments
- Develop reflective practitioners
- Encourage partnership working through shared priorities

Aim and Objectives of the NYR Evaluation Project in Yorkshire

The aim of this longitudinal research was to investigate the efficacy of the National Year of Reading campaign in Yorkshire as it relates to the place shaping and social inclusion targets of the NYR. The development of the Project

Brief and specification for the consultancy project was coordinated by MLA Yorkshire and required that qualitative research should incorporate use of the MLA's GSOs. The overall objectives were to investigate the impact of the NYR in two contrasting local authorities in relation to: 1) target beneficiaries, and; 2) partnership and cross departmental working.

Methods

The NYR campaign was delivered in 15 local authorities in Yorkshire and the Humber region. In consultation with the Leeds Metropolitan University research team, the Yorkshire steering group decided to sample two contrasting authorities, one predominantly rural, and the other urban; there was no intention to undertake a comparison of the two case study authorities. Calderdale Libraries and North Lincolnshire Libraries were invited to participate, along

with the departments and organizations involved in the NYR steering groups of those two authorities.

Project Planning and Timescale

The research was designed as a longitudinal project in two phases. Contact with the key senior library personnel in Calderdale and North Lincolnshire was initiated by the Regional Participation and Inclusion Advisor for MLA Yorkshire. For the researchers, this direct route to participants was of particular advantage due to the short timescale for Phase One. A project initiation meeting was held in September 2008 to communicate key messages about the project objectives, agree on timescales, and facilitate a partnership approach to undertaking a detailed and intensive analysis of NYR activities. In Phase Two the researchers re-established contact with the respondents. A variety of research methods were used to collect qualitative data from key stakeholders in North Lincolnshire and Calderdale and the project budget included funding for a research assistant to assist with the transcription and analysis of the data sets.

Phase One (October-November 2008)
- Semi-structured interviews with key library staff
- Focus group interviews with NYR steering group partners through written responses to key questions
- Information gathered from documentation and publicity materials provided by each case study authority

Phase Two (May-June 2010)
- Semi-structured interviews with key library staff
- Information gathered from documentation and publicity materials provided by each case study authority

The Theoretical Framework for the NYR Evaluation Project in Yorkshire

Three levels of analysis were used to evaluate the NYR impact issues in the two case study authorities. The MLA Generic Social Outcome framework (GSOs) and the National Indicators (NI) from The New Performance Framework for Local Authorities & Local Authority Partnerships (Department for Communities & Local Government, 2007) were specified in the project brief. A third level, issues raised by the respondents, was added by the research team, as the "voice of the practitioner" was considered an important aspect of this evaluation project. Issues raised by respondents during interviews were coded to enable the capture of data about individual concerns, interests, experiences and reflections. This paper will focus on the use of the GSO framework.

The Generic Social Outcomes Framework

A requirement of the research brief was to use the Generic Social Outcomes (GSOs). As discussed in the literature review section the GSO framework has been developed by the MLA to help museums, libraries and archives to deliver against key agendas and maximise their contribution to communities. The framework is built around three key stands – "Stronger and safer communities," "Health and well-being," and "Strengthening public life" – providing a means by which museums, libraries and archives can evidence their contribution to outcomes (Burns Owens Partnership, n.d.). The GSOs are seen as a key tool that practitioners can use because of the increased emphasis on outcomes as well as outputs.

An Overview of the Data Collection Strategies

The study was primarily qualitative, involving the gathering, analysis, interpretation and presentation of narrative information. An account of the project methodology has previously been published by Rankin, Brock and Matthews (2009). A variety of research methods were used to gather the data. In order to gain depth and rigour of analysis, both the method and the process of analysis were triangulated. Bryman (2008) defines triangulation as the use of more than one method or source of data in the study of social phenomena so that findings may be

crosschecked. This was undertaken through combinations and comparisons of multiple data sources, data collection and analysis procedures. The researchers gained different perspectives on outcomes by gathering the views of staff, partners and users, as well as evidence from other sources using desk research. Data was collected through focus group interviews with NYR steering group partners, focus group written responses to key questions, and individual interviews. A range of supporting material in printed, digital and visual format was provided by the case study authorities (this material was readily available and not created specifically for the purposes of the evaluation research), and by using a variety of documentation and publicity materials from each authority.

Interviewing

Interviews are a powerful data collection technique because they use one-to-one interaction between researchers and interviewees (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). It was decided that semi-structured interviews would be the most appropriate method to gather data in support of the research questions (Denscombe, 2003; Pickard, 2007) and in-depth, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with key senior library staff in the two case study authorities. An interview schedule was devised covering key questions about the target beneficiaries and partnership and cross-departmental working (see Appendix 1 for the Phase One schedule). Each local authority library setting was visited so that respondents were interviewed in their own work environments. The interviews were digitally recorded with the permission of the interviewees and this facilitated transcription of the data.

Focus Group Interviews with NYR Steering Group Members

In Phase One, members of the NYR Steering Groups in Calderdale and North Lincolnshire were invited to take part in a group discussion. In social research, the focus group methodology is used extensively; there is an emphasis in the questioning on a particular

fairly tightly defined topic, and on interaction within the group and the joint construction of meaning. This is an effective and efficient way of gaining qualitative data through engaging a small number of people in an informal group discussion (Krueger and Casey, 2009; Bryman, 2008; Flick, 2009). The group discussions focussed on a number of key questions designed to encourage discussion about partnership working and NYR legacy issues and the representatives of the partner organizations were invited to record their personal views, experiences and opinions on the NYR activities. Data gathered during the group interview discussions were digitally recorded for transcription, analysis and coding, as were written responses to key questions generated during the session by group members working in pairs. As noted by Bryman (2008) the group interaction was seen as an important component of the discussion.

Analysing the Data – The Value of Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS)

Qualitative data from interview transcripts can be difficult to manage and needs to be well organised and structured to allow for coding and theory building. Analysing data involves segmenting text and isolating items into categories to look for patterns. The computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) MAXQDA 2007 was used to facilitate the organization of the data for coding, sorting and retrieving as well as for theory building. The advantage of CAQDAS is that it can be effective in handling large volumes of coded data, enabling the researcher to track, retrieve, map, chart, and redefine it quickly and accurately (Silverman, 2010). Appropriate coding of the qualitative data is an important part of the interpretative process and MAXQDA 2007 enabled the researchers to code and validate the data as required by MLA (Yorkshire) clients by using the GSO framework and the PSA National Outcome and Indicator Set. A third level of coding was developed to identify issues raised by the interviewees. It is the researcher who must determine the main areas for the analysis of the research and interpret the data – not the

software package. MAXQDA 2007 proved to be a very effective tool that enabled the NYR data to be readily accessible and continually re-interrogated.

Results – The NYR Evaluation

The Project Brief and specification for the evaluation project required the researchers to investigate the impact of the NYR in two sample local authorities focusing on target beneficiaries and partnerships, and cross departmental working. This paper does not identify specific locations but rather presents generic findings and selected comments from the Phase One and Phase Two data as evidence. One of the key issues highlighted by the analysis of the qualitative data is that using the GSOs is an important way in which the local public library can not only demonstrate their value in the community, but also show how they contribute to other agendas not immediately apparent such as in the areas of health, well-being, equality, and improving cohesion. In terms of NYR related activity the analysis of data from the first phase suggested 6 key themes:

- Improving services and sharpening the focus of what is on offer
- Working in partnership and strengthening partnerships
- Dealing with challenges
- The importance of activities and events
- Stronger communities – with a particular emphasis on improving group and inter-group dialogue and understanding and supporting cultural diversity and identity
- Legacy of the NYR – what could be sustained and embedded

These six themes were still in evidence some eighteen months later in Phase Two but the emphasis had rather shifted to:

- The differences in rural/urban experiences and the squeeze on resources
- Initiating and consolidating partnerships
- The importance of reading for social engagement

The findings using the GSO framework show considerable evidence of NYR related activities in supporting the three first tier social outcomes of "Stronger and Safer Communities," "Health and Well-Being," and "Strengthening Public Life." The next section provides an overview of the findings with commentary on the related second tier themes. As it is interesting to hear the practitioner voice, sample quotes from the both phases of the project are used to help present the evidence. See Table 1 for the structure of the Tier 1 social outcomes framework and Tier 2 social outcomes themes.

GSO Stronger and Safer Communities

For the project objectives "Target beneficiaries" and "Partnership and cross departmental working" there is significant evidence for the Stronger and Safer Communities second tier social outcome themes. There is very strong evidence for "improving group and inter-group dialogue and understanding" that came from all layers of analysis and from all participating groups. The coding and analysis demonstrated that this was the strongest outcome overall from the NYR activities. "Supporting cultural diversity and identity" was also identified as being a strong theme throughout the data collection. A range of different groups were identified as key target groups and there was varied cultural diversity within the target groups in both case study authorities.

> *The Manga event brought all sorts of people in to the library who have never been before. I want to go one step further and consult those people about using our service.* (Phase One)

> *One of our big successes is the manga. We'd had one before we last saw you now we've had three – we get a group of about 150 supposedly hard to reach people… some of those people come back, I see some of the men twice a week sitting on our sofa reading manga and I know they are from that event.* (Phase Two)

"Encouraging familial ties and relationships" was also strongly demonstrated as there was interest in supporting family groups. Some projects focused on activities that were aimed at hard to reach groups, some added value to regular users, while others were new ideas inspired by the opportunities of the NYR partnerships.

> *We are doing a lot of great stuff, including breakthrough initiatives for some groups e.g. making materials for homeless people. We have never done that before. (Phase One)*

> *We are now thinking about legacy. We don't just want to run events and then stop it at the end of NYR. We are also thinking about community engagement so I want to use some of the people we have made contact with to improve our community engagement in future. (Phase One)*

GSO Strengthening Public Life

A very strong second tier theme was improving services. This featured in both phases of the project, and this is perhaps to be expected given the focus public libraries have on designing services to meet the needs of their communities.

> *We have various targets and agendas that drive us. The leading agenda is the Equalities Impact Assessment, which in library terms means identifying new communities and providing a service for them. The NYR has pushed towards a service located outside the library. Were it not for the NYR we would have contented ourselves with providing stock within the library and the outreach might not have happened. The actuality is that the NYR gave us the steering group that provided us with the contacts that we needed to do that. (Phase One)*

> *From now people who want to rent council houses will have to bid for them online … so we are doing open planned sessions so people who don't have computer skills or access to the internet at home can come to the library… and we can show them how to do it. (Phase Two)*

There was also evidence that partnership projects were being used to reach target beneficiaries.

> *It has been through the partnerships we have been working with – housing benefits, sheltered housing, and the hospital library – we find it hard to reach those target groups. Those kinds of people don't tend to come into libraries. We need to make contact with the people who work with them on a regular basis. (Phase One)*

Other second tier themes that generated an evidence base were "Safe, inclusive and trusted public spaces" and "Building the capacity of community and voluntary groups."

> *We are taking out of this year a commitment to changing the pattern of city and local libraries, where most things happen. We will hopefully soon have two more places and hopefully we will have more. In terms of redevelopment, a place becomes a hub if it becomes a place where the community gets used to expecting exciting and valuable reading events, workshops, festivals on a regular basis. I hope that will emerge from the NYR. (Phase One)*

> *There is space in the library for events and activities. One of our milestones is to make contact with community based organizations that will put on community events in collaboration with us using the library space. (Phase Two)*

GSO Health and Well-Being

Within the Health and Well-Being GSO the strongest second tier theme was "Helping children and young people to enjoy life and make a positive contribution." "Encouraging healthy life styles and contributing to mental and physical well-being" also provided strong evidence. The analysis of the findings show the contribution libraries can make to healthy

lifestyles and mental and physical welfare. A number of projects and partnerships have lasted beyond the year of NYR; they have become embedded into the organizational planning and are no longer dependent on individuals.

> *We are reaching the homeless, new immigrants, people with mental health problems – the potential is much more than we are doing. I hope that we will maintain the commitment to be creative.* (Phase One)

> *We have staged a Third poetry competition aimed at adult learners across the region. There were lots of entries. People, who had never been in a library read out poems in front of a whole audience.* (Phase One)

> *The other ongoing success is the literary festival as that started win the NYR… and we run workshops for people who want to improve their writing skills, these are hugely popular and developed out of the NYR... And the whole reader profile – we have 40 readers groups now.* (Phase Two)

> *…the health theme might not be an obvious theme for a library but there is an attempt to work with the local PCTs … another initiative is called NHS Choices… if someone who comes in wants to look up a health condition we actually log them on and show them how to use it.* (Phase Two)

Discussion

The NYR has certainly had an impact on the visibility of reading in communities and the analysis of the evidence from the Yorkshire case study authorities gives an indication of the enthusiasm and professionalism involved in delivering the campaign. Public libraries played a key role in delivering NYR campaign outcomes. Stronger and safer communities and the improvement of group and inter-group dialogue and understanding proved to be some of the most significant issues resulting from the NYR in Yorkshire evaluation. The interviewees spoke about provisions that

targeted adults, young people and children; diverse ethnic communities; migrant workers; specific workforce groups; hard to reach groups such as the homeless; and those with mental health needs. The case study data showcases a wide range of activities and events offered under the banner head of the NYR campaign.

The voice of the practitioner was considered an important aspect of the qualitative research in this evaluation project as issues raised by respondents during interview were coded to enable the capture of data about individual concerns, interests and experiences. Across all the data there were noteworthy issues that are not addressed by the GSOs. For any evaluation of library services to be effective it is important to elicit the voices of those engaged in the management and delivery of the services and the development of new initiatives. The voice of the practitioner needs to be heard and taken into account by those who are involved in policy making. The interviewees felt strongly that partnerships were a key aspect of the NYR activities. The steering groups in both case study local authorities had worked successfully in different ways. These were a very positive outcome in the two locations, driven by highly motivated practitioners who were using the NYR as a focal point for drawing together their work, showcasing new projects and partnerships and refreshing ideas about existing provision.

But what about the value of the evidence? In this project the GSOs provided a framework that enabled the research team to map the evidence about the NYR campaign to show how public libraries contribute to diverse agendas and demonstrate their value to the community. This helps to reinforce the case for an evidence base that is not just regarded as anecdotal. The university-based research team used computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software to store the narrative data and coding, but it is not essential to use this complex software with the GSO framework. To help encourage public library practitioners to use such tools, the MLA have provided an online GSO Indicator Bank resource which

includes templates for evidence gathering and access to guidance and case studies.

In light of today's economic climate there is a need for public libraries to be more strategically aware and to be seen to take credit in partnerships so that they are recognized for their impact. GSOs can provide a framework for enabling public libraries to show social return on investment and how they can contribute to diverse agendas and demonstrate their value to the community. However, there are issues of translation and interpretation that need to be addressed by practitioners in order to communicate effectively with political stakeholders and in partnership with other organizations and agencies to help achieve strategic objectives. There is a critical need for practitioners to publish and disseminate information about the impact of sustainable projects that benefit their communities (Rankin, 2010). Public libraries can use GSO evidence for advocacy with a range of audiences including local and central government. Reflective practitioners must consider that setting outcomes should be at the heart of service planning and improvement. Use of an evidence based approach such as the GSO framework may contribute to decision making in professional practice in these challenging times.

The NYR in 2008 provided an opportunity for public libraries to be in the political limelight for a time as key partners in achieving success for the government sponsored campaign. Durcan sees this current time of imminent new austerity as "a good time to reinforce our traditional role and to drive and exploit our potential as the *free* street-corner, village, town and city-centre access points to positive activity, recreation, skills support, information and knowledge" (Durcan, 2011, p. 328).

Conclusion

This paper discussed an evaluation of the National Year of Reading in Yorkshire conducted by Leeds Metropolitan University in response to a brief from Museums, Libraries and Archives, Yorkshire. The National Year of Reading in 2008 provided an opportunity for

public libraries to be in the political limelight for a time, as key partners in achieving success for the government sponsored campaign. Libraries need to become more strategically aware and need to be seen to take the lead so that they are recognized for their impact in delivering community based projects, particularly in light of today's economic climate. This research project has shown how the Generic Social Outcomes framework can be used to help demonstrate how public libraries contribute to diverse agendas and show their value to the community. The challenge is for librarians to drive forward an agenda of demonstrating impact through value-added projects.

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Wikireadia is a searchable and editable encyclopaedia of good practice in reading, writing, listening and speaking. It was originally created as part of the 2008 National Year of Reading and is now managed by the National Literacy Trust. http://www.wikireadia.org.uk/index.php?title=2008_National_Year_of_Reading

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Appendix 1

National Year of Reading Evaluation Project
Phase 1 Interview Schedule for Library Staff in the Calderdale and North Lincolnshire Case Study Authorities

Section 1: Target beneficiaries

Please can you tell me about what are you doing to promote the NYR in [your authority] with the target groups.

What opportunities has the NYR offered for developing new projects and initiatives?

In what way has the NYR changed the way you are supporting the target groups.

What do you think are the likely legacy benefits for the NYR in your authority?

Section 2: Partnership and cross departmental working

How are partnerships with other organisations being used to promote the NYR in [your authority]?

What NYR partnerships activities do you feel are working well in [your authority]?

What are the challenges for your staff in working in NYR partnership activities?

How has the NYR effected what you are doing in your everyday work?