

Libraries.

Disrupting the

Disrupters.

A visual report  
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MDes 05. Strategic Design  
Ravensbourne University London



The Danish Royal Library, Copenhagen, Denmark.  
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# Libraries.

# Introduction

The recent outbreak of the new coronavirus changed the way we work, live, and hopefully, even the way we think about what is important in life and what is not. Communities seemed to be one of the few pillars of our societies that people relied on for what previously provided by the big industries – workspaces (our offices, coworking companies such as WeWork), entertainment (Netflix, Amazon), food (McDonalds, Nando's, Tesco), health, communication (Facebook, Skype), companionship and psychological support, etc.

Taking the asset-based community development approach, we – the Flotilla group – developed an interest in communal spaces (public parks, offices, churches, theaters, markets, shops, libraries and community centres) that, due to Covid-19, went through tremendous changes, implementing safety measure from limiting the number of people that can use them at the same time to shutting all the way down. Echoing many of the conversation that our friends and family and society were having, we asked ourselves, as citizen and as designers, what is the future for these spaces? How can we help them withstand such health and financial crises like the coronavirus pandemic? How can their shape and role fit the new reality?

# The Library - irrelevant for the new reality?

As we were discussing this, we realized what a great service one particular institution – the library – provides an incredible array of services to our societies – from lending books to reskilling vulnerable populations to find employment, without asking for anything in return from its customers. In the UK, it is the local authorities' duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 «to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons' for all those who live, work or study in the area» (Libraries as a statutory service, <https://www.gov.uk/>). Therefore, libraries function because the local government must fund its activity, otherwise the local government is failing to provide a service to the public. However, we know that funding for libraries is constantly decreasing, and libraries start to generate revenue by themselves [1]. Let us first look in more detail at some of the functions of the library and how it competes by providing these services with many other (big) service providers.

[1] In the year running 2013/14, libraries had 85.1 million British pounds of self-generated income, a figure which excludes parent authority and institutional funding. In the fiscal year running 2012/13, spending reached 963.3 million British pounds, down from over a billion British pounds in 2010/11. <https://www.statista.com/topics/1838/libraries-in-the-uk/>

## Library functions

Borrowing books, e-books, magazines, etc

Borrowing DVDs, CDs with film & music

Working/studying quietly/outside ones house

Attending/delivering workshops

Attending/organising book clubs

Subscribing to public services

Reskilling & looking for employment

Using computers & Internet

Meeting (new) people

Buying secondhand books and vinyl

Accessing study materials

Accessing computer literacy classes

Accessing information about the local community

Accessing information about local businesses

Accessing photocopiers & printers

Getting a cup of tea/coffee & snacks

## Industry competitors

Bookstores  
(Amazon, Waterstones, etc.)

Record shops, cinemas & streaming platforms

Coworking spaces. (WeWork, Regis, etc.)

Local authorities, employment agencies

Universities, local authorities, e-learning

Home broadband providers

Parks & public spaces

Secondhand book & record shops, platforms

Academic libraries

Digital literacy classes  
(Happy Inc., etc)

Local authorities

Business incubators & accelerators

Printshops

Local cafes

Figure 1. Functions of the library and its place amongst other/big industry players

# The Brief.

The Brief for this project is asking us to apply 'the combined skills and perspectives of service designers and social innovators' in order to make small (maybe existing) businesses to successfully compete with industry (Internet) giants that are described as "disruptive", but which, in reality, provide ordinary services (transportation, accommodation, shopping) but in a slightly different way, and by doing so concentrated a great deal of economic power and 'brought with it a whole host of negative side effects, from a lack of consumer choice to the marginalising of producers, artists and suppliers' (MDes 05, The Brief).

Traditionally, libraries were about providing access to books, magazines, journals, newspapers, some even local/state archives and more recently they started to include electronic sources and even e-readers. The library always was an alternative to buying books and could be regarded as a disruptor for the bookstores. Except, often, local libraries fail to keep up with the latest publications and have a limited supply for niche subjects such as, for instance, design. This is one reason why bookshops win over libraries. Another is, of course, convenience and user-friendliness of the services provided by giants like Amazon, Waterstones, and Spotify.

“I used to borrow CDs with Christmas music so I can play them at Christmas. That was before Spotify”.

(Helen White,  
2020, interview)

“I don't particularly want to go to this unattractive place at a time that doesn't fit me, and then have to remember to bring the bloody book back and read it within 30 days”.

(Dann Jessen, 2020,  
online interview)

Today, some people visit UK public libraries mostly to gain access to computers, printers and the Internet [2]. For many freelancers and other professionals, public libraries became an alternative to coworking spaces. For instance, it is reported that about 15% of library visitors in Australia already use libraries as coworking spaces, which is why State Library Victoria is undergoing a major programme, part of which will be offering business training for startup companies (<https://www.thefifthestate.com.au>).

As we can see, the library of today offers a variety of services normally attributed to different industries – the bookstore, the record shop, the print shop, the hardware store, the café, collaborative workspaces, education and reskilling, innovation centres, child development, place to meet new people, and benefit from government services, and even entertainment. How can a place with so many much to offer lose in this race for distributed capitalism? Why does Amazon take all and leave nothing to libraries?

Borrowing or leasing a product service is not old-fashioned. Although the number of visits to the public libraries and borrowing numbers decrease, the world slowly realizes what is the true (hidden) cost of the things one own and the subsequent impact of owning everything at once – starting with houses and cars and finishing with such things like tents, children’s toys, and garden tools. Hence, such places as the Library of Things (<https://www.libraryofthings.co.uk/>). The library always was a light product-service system – a system that provides a customer with access to the products, tools, opportunities and capabilities

[2] Despite the ubiquity and relative affordability of electronic devices and of the Internet, 34% of people admit using libraries for Internet access, while 24% admit to not having an alternative for accessing a PC (<https://www.statista.com/topics/1838/libraries-in-the-uk/>). The 4,145 public libraries in the UK account for 10 workstations and 29,672 amount of web visits per library (in the year 2013).



one needs to get a job done and service design is about making that connection (Thackara, 2006, p. 19). So how can design help?

The modern library faces many challenges – from limited human resources to limited funding. The perception of libraries as book-borrowing places has shifted towards regarding libraries as important community information centres. Thus, some libraries change their titles to Idea Stores (<https://www.ideastore.co.uk/>). Libraries around the world look like modern galleries – spacious, colourful and multi-purposeful (The Danish Royal Library, The Walker Library of the History of Human Imagination, The Library @ the Lightbox, etc.). Architects and designers give the space, the atmosphere and the experience of going the library just as much thought as librarians give to the book collections. Much work has been done in this area by Designing Libraries [3] .

All this points out to the fact that the role of the librarian has changed. The librarian is not just taking care of the book collections and helps readers find, borrow, and return a book. Their role expands with every new service a library provides: 'All four speakers were erudite, visionary, energetic, confident, eloquent, humorous and inventive, not a single librarian stereotype in sight. They were scholars, publishers, leaders, managers, public speakers, collaborators, event and PR managers, project managers, and IT, design and marketing savvy' (<https://www.libfocus.com>). The library in Surrey even renamed their staff's roles from librarians into Library Advocates (<http://www.designinglibraries.org.uk>).

[3] Designing libraries is a 2004 initiative that aimed at 'provid[ing] a web-based database of recent public library building projects in the UK, [...] relating to library building and library planning and design.' The project started with an interest in architecture, but their work included service design, too. Read more at <http://www.designinglibraries.org.uk/index.asp?PageID=81>



The Walker Library of the History of Human Imagination, Ridgefield, Connecticut, USA.  
© Dorothy Hong for The Wall Street Journal

# Libraries as places that transform information into knowledge

After having discussed the role of libraries and librarians changed over time, we realized that librarians and library staff represent an asset of the library just as much as a library book collection. The research we undertook suggested that librarians need a great deal of support to respond to the needs of today library's users. We once again applied the asset-based community approach and took a closer look at the assets within the library. What parts of the library are underused and undervalued? How can we as designers support librarians in providing better services?

We quickly arrived at the idea that libraries hold valuable information and knowledge not only on their bookshelves or computer memory disks. We realized that the librarians and the library visitors are themselves holders of knowledge. And that valuable information is daily created within the library when library customers interact with librarians, with the building and physical objects within the library, and amongst other library visitors. Some of this data is tangible – numbers of books borrowed, sometimes harnessed even digitally, but some of the data is intangible – people's moods and tacit interests.

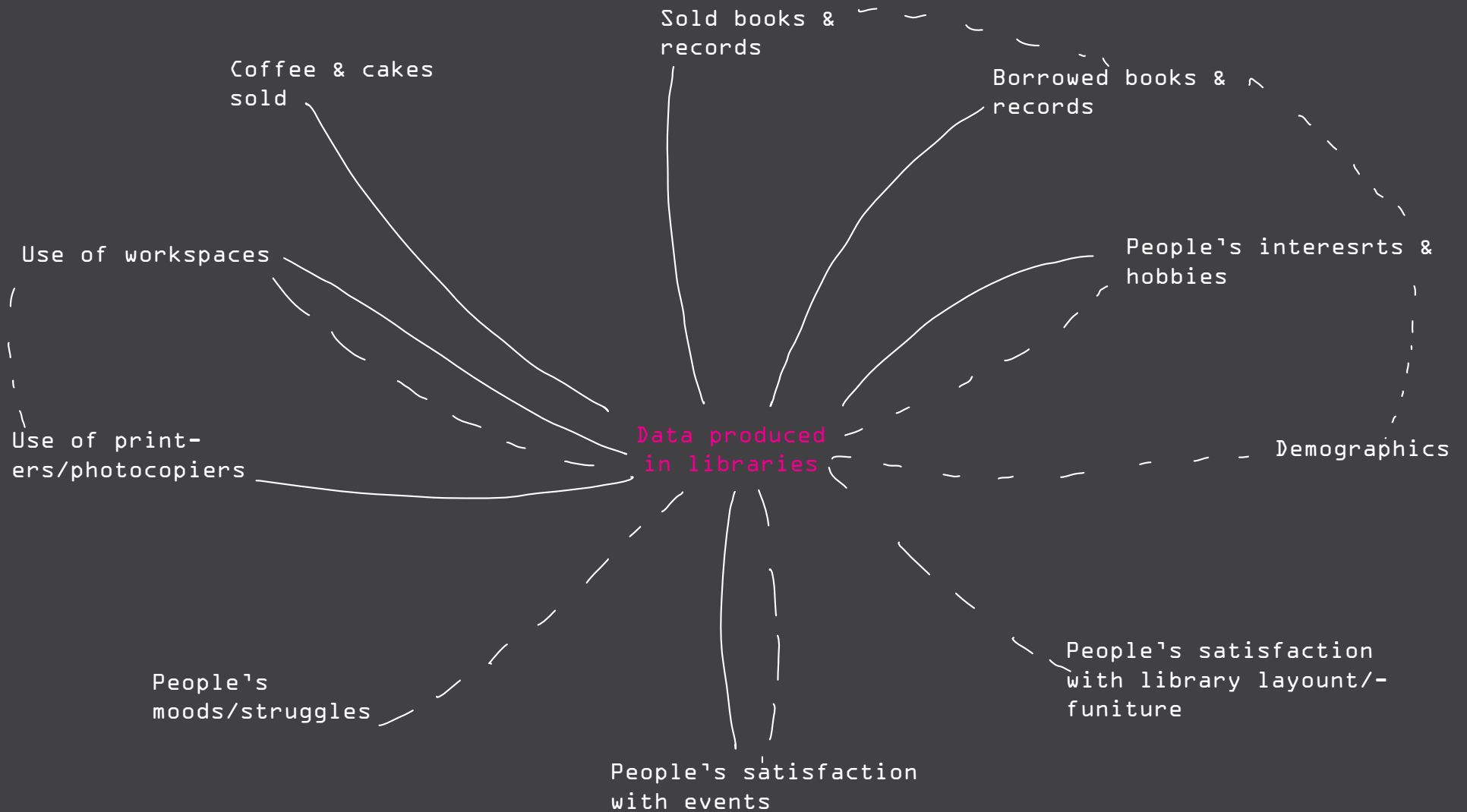


Figure 2. Mapping out information flows in libraries. Hard line means informaion is tangible. The dotted line means the information exists, but is intangible.

"We lack good data on how libraries are used and the changes they've been undergoing".

(CIPFA statistics and the future of England's libraries)

"Ways of regularly assessing what our users need".

(What librarians need/want. DotEveryone)

"...gaining more information about the people who use the library can only be useful having something to backup figures, to backup any kind of funding application, also incredibly useful".

(Simon Higgs, 2020, online interview)

From the research that we subsequently undertook – literature review, autoethnography (Annexes 1-3) and interviews with library staff or library users (Annexes 4-8), we learned that there is a great appetite for information about library users to be captured and put to use.

## Key insights

From this research, we developed a list of insights (see full list in Annex 9). We selected several key insights that had to do with data and information. See below.

Key insights from research:

- libraries are currently losing out because they are not collecting information on visitors
- library visitors data is a resource generated within the library ready to harness
- digital technology is essential to the future of libraries

We asked ourselves – how can this information and knowledge be captured and capitalized? How can data be transformed into information and then, knowledge? How can librarians make use of this data for the library? Can this information be made available for the community? And how can we as designers make this all happen?

# Thinking by doing

We developed low fidelity prototypes of a possible service that would collect information about library visitors, their interests and needs. The early prototypes included a voice-recognition and collection device (similar to Amazon's Alexa) that would record, with the visitor's permission, the conversations between librarians and library visitors (Figure 3), a customized feedback booth that would be dedicated to collecting (digitally and analogue) visitor's feedback about library's services (Figure 4), and a blueprint of a librarian's toolkit that will teach librarians how to extract, collect and interpret data in order to improve library's services (Figure 5).

Figure 3. Prototype of a voice recording device.  
 © Loren Hansi Gordon

- Private data
- less expensive than iPad
- Open source
- Inclusive AI voice AI
- decentralised storage
- open to 'locals'

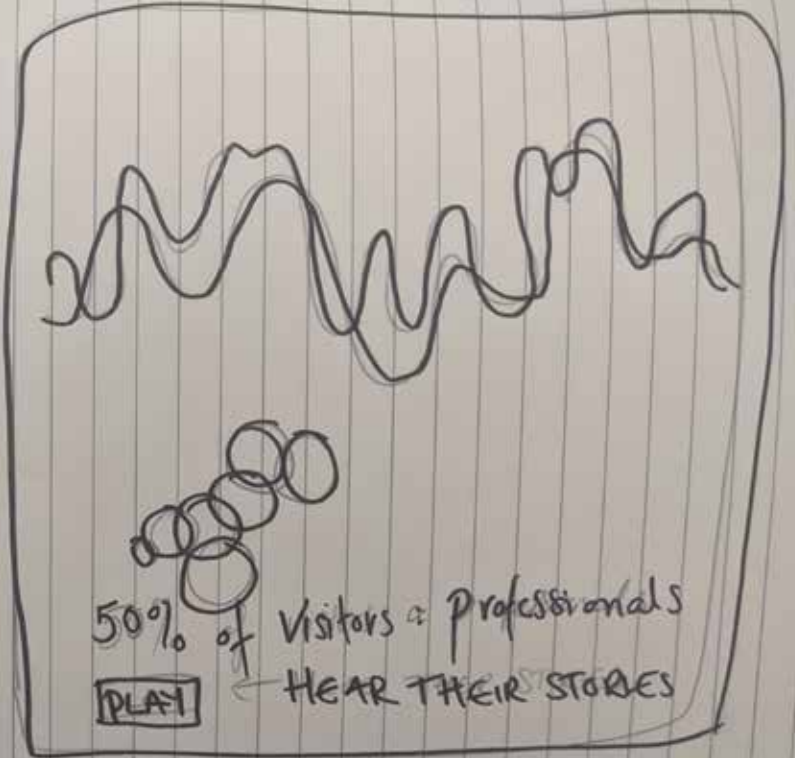
Tell me about your visit today

I'm a new mum, I came for a deb



I understand women!!  
 I understand accents!!

### HUMANSTORY



### Feedback hub

- Anonymous
- Engage users
- Mobile
- Survey can change often
- All ages can get involved

- iPad - flexible surveys can change
- As little or as often as they want
- Could also capture video + voice
- Link to an external feedback digital notice board?

Who are you?

Gender	Age
--------	-----

How often do you visit?

1	2-5	1 mo	4+
---	-----	------	----

Which survey did you use?

Self	Very	New	Old
------	------	-----	-----

What else do you think?

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Any other feedback?

.....



Figure 4. Prototype of a Feedback Hub.  
 © Zarida Zaman



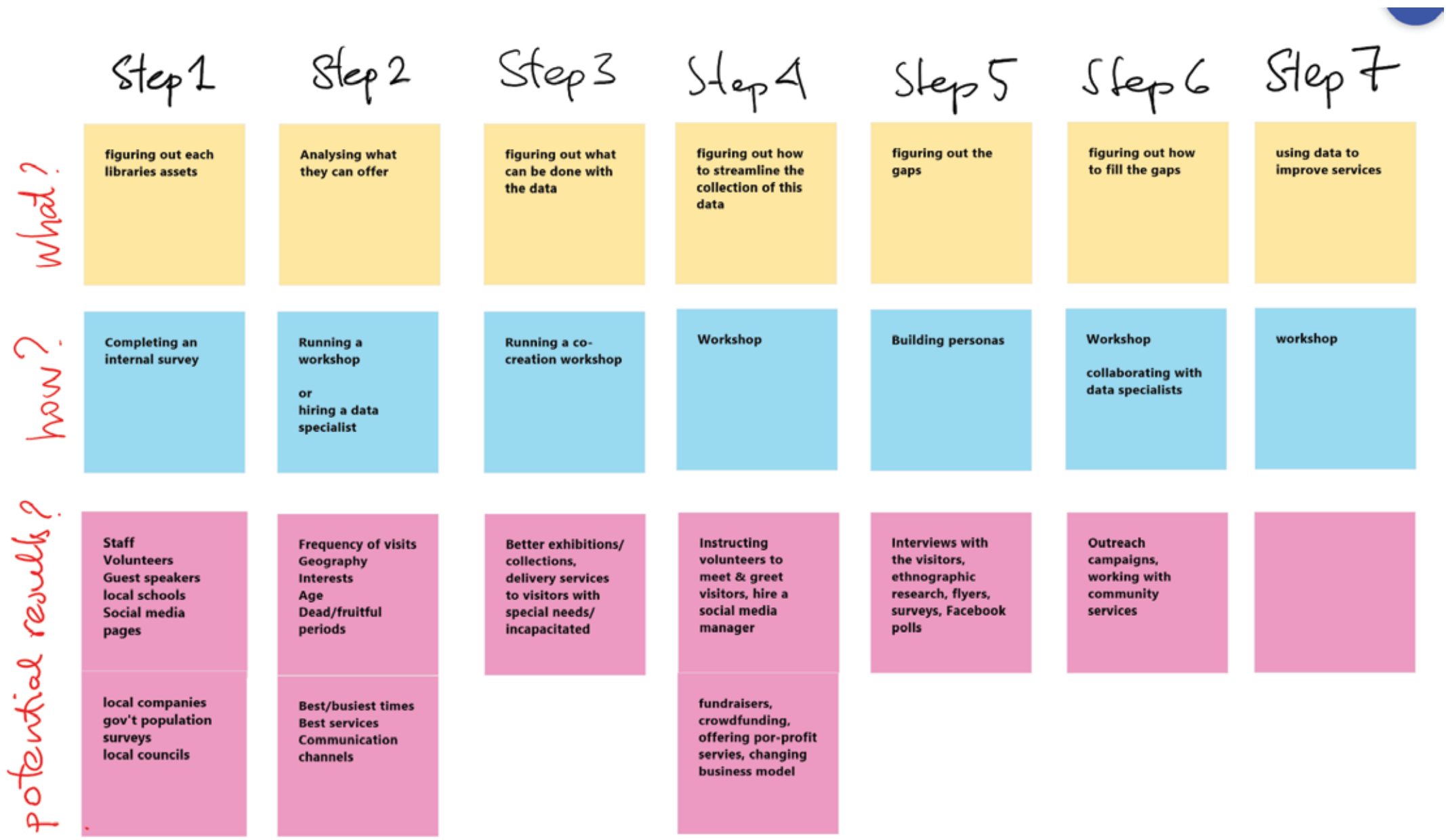


Figure 5. Prototype of a toolkit for transforming data into knowledge. © Iulia Tvigun

From this exercise, it became clear to us that we wanted to develop a service that would enable librarians and library staff to perform some sort of activity through which they would collect valuable information about their customers such as their satisfaction with library services, their interests and wants. The prototypes were describing how this information would be collected, but not how it will be transformed into knowledge – or practical recommendations for internal use.

As a team, we discussed the advantages of all the prototypes and decided that there is no reason why all these ideas cannot be unified into one service. We decided that the most suitable form for such a comprehensive service could be the toolkit. And so, we decided to further develop this idea, drawing from the multiple insights we gathered in our research.

“I do understand about mailchimp, [...] but I don't have a really detailed understanding”.

(Silvana Altamore, 2020, online interview)

“I do understand about mailchimp, but you understand about this and that, but I don't have a really detailed understanding”.

(Silvana, 2020,  
online interview)

“I would be very happy to share that, of course, in whatever format, really [...] the question for me is really how do you ask these questions [...] I'm well aware that it's all just going to be registered somewhere in some pie chart. [...] And so I'm not too excited by that. [...] it needs to be based around something that makes sense to people, and that way you know if you feel like there's a mutual benefit in sharing the information”.

(Dann Jessen, 2020,  
online interview)

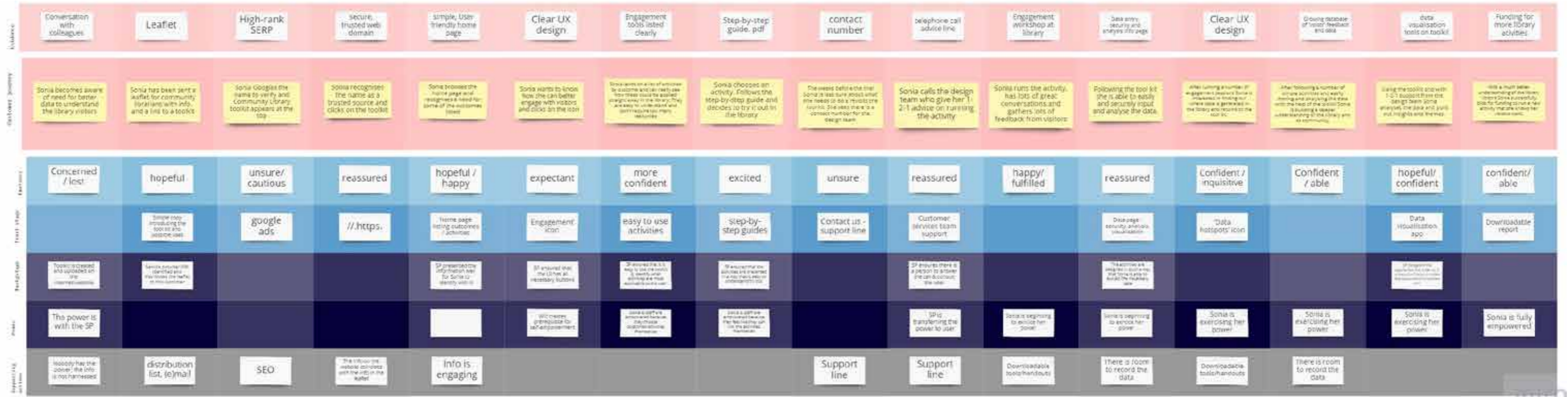


Figure 6. Service blueprint of the librarian's toolkit @ Flotilla

Figure 7. A leaflet of the Get-to-know toolkit.



**This service includes:**

- Step-by-step guide to support library managers to learn more about their visitors
- Downloadable handouts & curated resources
- An ethical approach to data and information gathering and storage
- A free-phone helpline for ongoing support

**Email**  
get-to-know@library.uk

**Website**  
www.get-to-know@library.uk

**Community Support Line**  
020 75694 999

Designed by Flotilla.  
Funded by UFI Voc Tech Trust.  
Approved by Public Services UK.

The research suggested that librarians are interested in collecting information about their customers and that library visitors are willing to give information to librarians if they know that this information is truly useful to the library (and the community) and if it is collected in a friendly way. The question to us, the designers, is how can we enable that? How will the toolkit work? How will the toolkit transform information about library users into insights and recommendations for better library services?

To answer these questions, we collectively developed a blueprint of the service. The blueprinting revealed that we needed to think about how the librarian will become aware of the service and that the librarian might need more support than the toolkit can offer by itself. To solve these two additional needs, we decided that the service should include an outreach activity such as sending out leaflets (Figure 7, see on previous page) to libraries and a support line that would offer one-to-one advice to librarians that don't feel confident that they know how to implement the activities.

After developing the overall logic of the service, we designed the core of the toolkit (Figure 8). We proposed three main activities that will: help librarians engage with the customers through storytelling, help librarians work with digital data produced in the library, and help librarians observe library visitors' experience in the library.

# The Toolkit

## The Digital Guru

Learn how to use digital tools such as email, social media pages and data visualisation tools to better understand and communicate with your library visitors. After applying some of these techniques and learning new tips you will be able to engage with your visitors more than before.

## The Ethnographer

Learn how to turn observations into insights and get to know your library visitors better. At the end of this activity you will have generated information about how people interact within your library, how goals are achieved, and how the building is navigated.

## The Wise One

The librarian takes ownership of engaging library users in conversations through storytelling and explains why feedback is needed, what it will be used for, and how it can be used to improve library services. The librarian also has an opportunity to understand if members do not wish to engage and why.

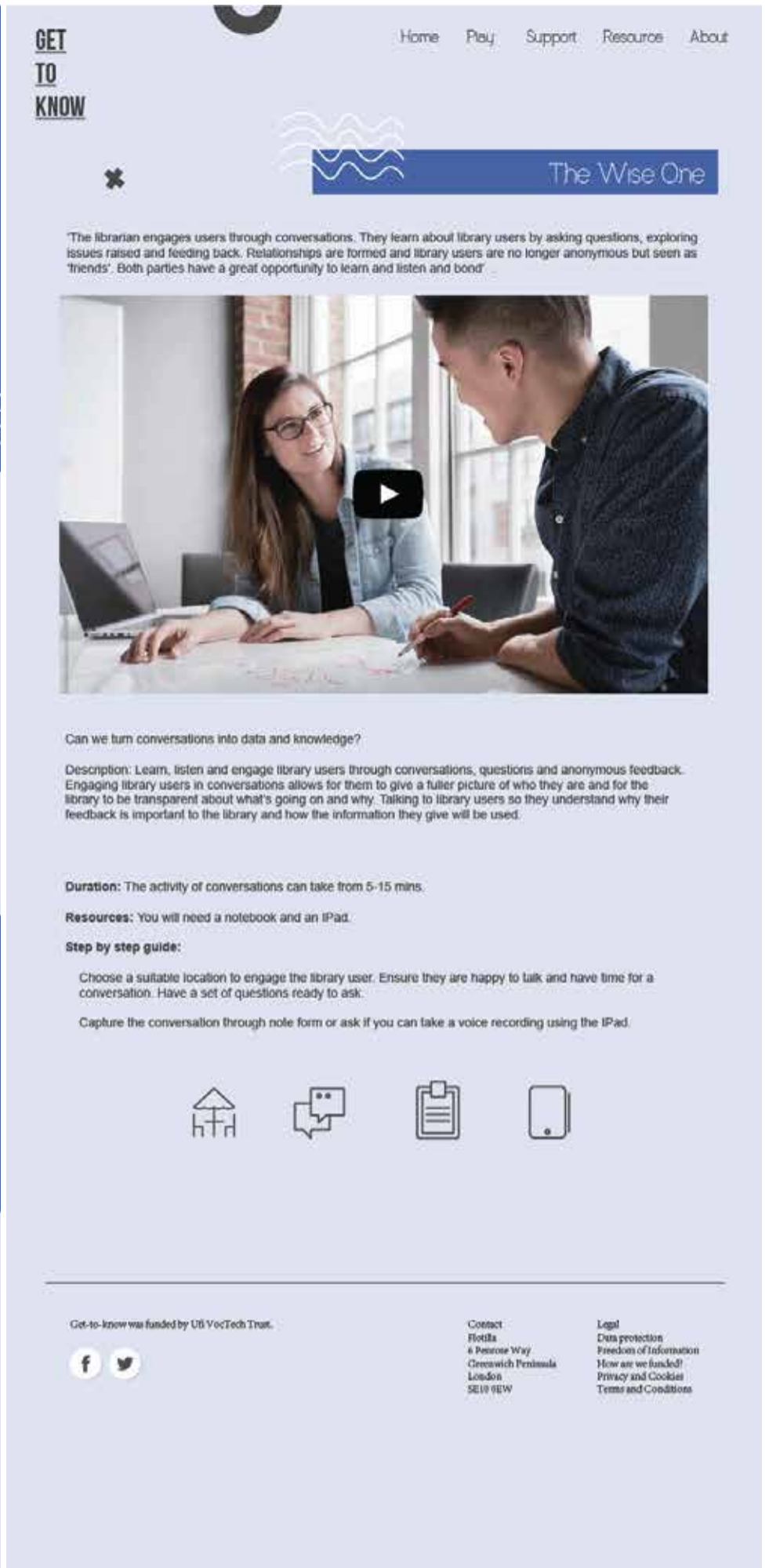
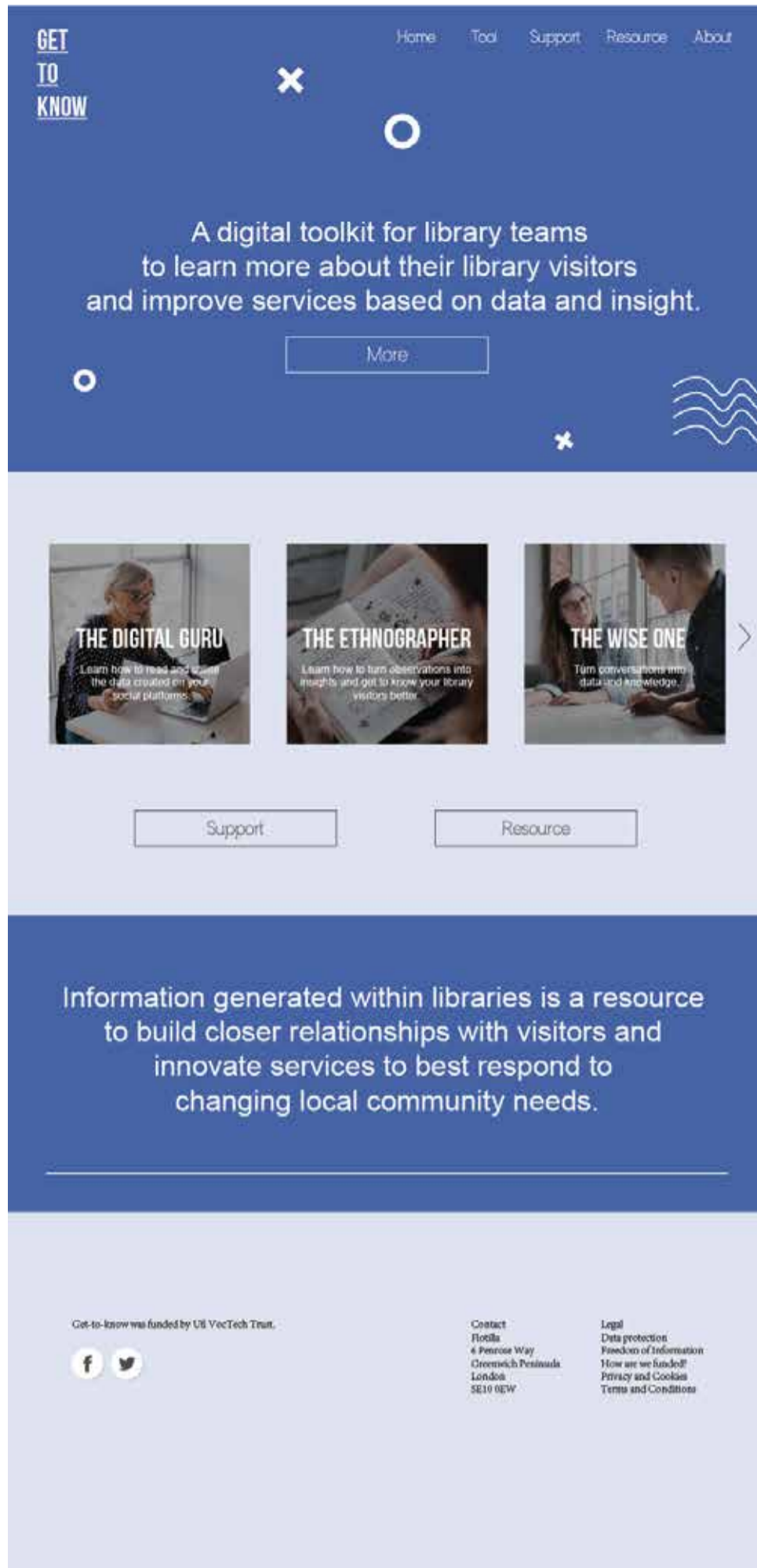


Figure 8. Mockups of Get-to-know, the digital toolkit. Home page and the Wise One page (in detail).

"[...] it would be amazing to have an email list through MailChimp, and have people clicking and telling me what kind of activities they want to see in the library. And I can send them targeted advertising for what we are doing and be sure that people can come. But I don't have it. Yeah, I have to create it".

(Silvana Altamore, 2020, online interview)

"I prefer to just go around the room and talk to people and ask them if they enjoy the event. [...] collecting this kind of information in a natural way like having a conversation".

(Silvana Altamore, 2020, online interview)



“Yeah, that’s useful. But if you’re not an anthropologist, you know, looking at what people do, it’s not easy. It’s easy if you have some prompts [...]”.

(Silvana Altamore, 2020,  
online interview)

“[...] it’s a lot about signposting in the right direction and it’s a lot about trying to help people more than it ever was. You know, 30 years ago, that wasn’t what it was about. It was about disseminating information”.

(Simon Higgs, 2020,  
online interview)

“I feel like somebody is giving value to my experience to my being there”.

(Dann Jessen, 2020,  
online interview)

After having developed the prototypes (the service blueprint and mockups) we tested them with one library manager (Silvana Altamore, Crofton Park Community Library) and one community library director (Simon Higgs, Director V22 Libraries). The general feedback from them was that the toolkit is a good idea and that it serves the needs of the librarians. However, we needed to make a series of adjustments to the toolkit, and specifically to the three core activities of the toolkit – all of them had to do with simplifying.

## Key insights from testing the prototypes

- the service must be accessible and user-friendly to suit fulltime and volunteer staff.
- community support line would enable library teams fully embrace the new tools and build confidence.
- data needs to be simple and digestible to be useful.

The simplification of all activities has mainly to do with how little time the library staff have in order to understand and implement an activity. We saw earlier in this report how complex is the role of the librarian today. Moreover, libraries are severely understaffed institutions, employing 19.3 thousand librarians as of 2014, which accounts to between 4 to 5 librarians per institution – a number that is trending down (<https://www.statista.com>). This is why, the proposed toolkit should be accessible even to library volunteers who have limited time and training but who should be able to use the toolkit just as much as any permanent member of the library staff.

“[...] basically without the volunteers, the library would be shocked because I am the only person tied in there [...]”.

(Silvana Altamore, 2020,  
online interview)

“Yes, as volunteers come in, they get to learn the basics, [...]. We're just currently developing the system because it's all a little bit been a little bit ad hoc”.

(Simon Higgs, 2020,  
online interview)

“Time definitely would be an issue. [...] if I have to input all the data myself or ask other volunteers, or train my volunteers, you know, to do that, [...] so you have to train them”.

(Silvana Altamore, 2020,  
online interview)

Another set of insights that we were able to get from testing the toolkit with the two library managers regards the support line and the visualization part of the toolkit. One of the two main purposes/elements of the toolkit is the toolkit's ability to provide the necessary means to librarians to transform the collected data about library visitors/visits into knowledge or recommendations as to how improve the library services.

We were first thinking whether the service should have had an embedded AI element to it that would be customized to do all the work of turning data into insights and that the librarians will only have to input data and learn how to read the output. However, because we believed that our toolkit had to be a tool that would empower librarians to make this judgement themselves. After all, librarians are more than capable to do it and should be practicing what they are preaching – critical thinking and knowledge and skills acquisition.

Therefore, our team envisaged that this should be done through existing resources (Flourish, Google Sheets, Infogram, etc.) and should be not very fragmented and digestible. Moreover, the toolkit will include a list of different digital tools for the creation of online surveys (Google Forms, Typeform, Doodle Poll, etc.) and recording conversations (Otter.ai) and concrete tailored tips on how to use those to reach the goals that toolkit users will set for themselves.

Lastly, during testing, one of the library managers expressed concern with the ability of the community support line to provide useful information to the librarians. Initially, we envisaged that the support line should offer information about the activities presented in the toolkit – explain how to implement them if they were unclear, which could have been done by anybody who understands the activities rather than understand the library as an organism. However, after discussing it with the library managers, it became clear that the support line should be run by someone within the library community, someone who know what libraries struggle with like librarians themselves or the someone withing such institutions like the Libraries Taskforce [4].

[4] The Libraries Taskforce is UK Governmental taskforce reporting to Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Local Government Association (LGA). Its role is to 'enable the delivery of the recommendations from the Independent Library Report for England and to build upon and add value to existing good practice, partnerships and other activities that are already supporting public libraries. It also promotes libraries to national and local government and to potential funders and creates a strong and coherent narrative around the contribution public libraries make to society and to local communities. Read more at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/libraries-taskforce>.

“How much the support line might know about you? And maybe then if you download the toolkit at the same time, you should upload some information about your library?”

(Silvana, 2020, online interview)

Avondale Heights Library, Melbourne, Australia.  
© Trevor Mein



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Annex 11. Mockups of Get-to-know, the digital toolkit.

Home page and the Wise One page (in detail).

Annex 12. Presentation of the Get-to-know toolkit.

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## ANNEXES

### Annex 1. Iulia's reflections on Ravensbourne Library

1. The library's doors are wide open, which makes me feel always welcome. It can also give me a peek inside from afar if I want to know if the library is busy or not so I can manage my expectations.
2. It usually is very busy and noisy there. I hate it but I understand that it's an ok thing. Maybe it's my preconceived and old-fashioned ideas about what a library should be like. Although, I notice that usually there are many young students that just don't know how to use their indoor voices. I almost wish there was a sign saying 'USE YOUR INDOOR VOICES'.
3. I pass by the detector, on my left there is an interesting machine. When I saw it first I assumed it was a self-checkout of sorts, but I thought to myself that there is no way only one machine can perform this service for the entire university. Now I know it can do that job easily. I did not receive a formal training/orientation from library staff on how to use the library so I am really experiencing everything as unbiased as I can be.
4. Next to the machine, there is a display of books. It does not really say why this books in particular are there. So I am left guessing if there is a thematic exhibition or if these are the latest acquisitions.
5. The library staff is at their desk and is very noisy, they are speaking about something passionately. Almost always. They resemble shop assistants that like chatting when there are no customers, and sometimes when there are customers. I feel like it's a bit rude, unorthodox in a way for librarians to talk loudly. But I recognize that this is my preconceived perception of librarians. I remind myself that I am now in a different society.
6. I look at the tables in the library that are filled with students. I understand that the furniture, like throughout the university, is like lego. You can assemble your workstation as you like. The tables are a bit dirty and sometimes even cluttered. I don't know how I feel about it. I would probably hesitate to sit there.
7. I look at the bookshelves. I like how colourful they look. Rave is a design university! I try to navigate the shelves, look for books I might need for my courses. I can't find them. I don't understand why the shelves are numbered the way they are. So I conclude that I need help. Also, I thought to myself that this can hardly be the entire collection and that they must have many items in storage somewhere.
8. I approach the desk to ask for help. I feel a bit uneasy that I have to stop their conversation..but I do. I feel a bit annoyed as well. I explained my situation. One of the librarians is very kind and nice and offers to explain how things work here. She tells me I can then go to the shelves and look for the books in the specific sections, which are referenced rather as numbers, and sometimes as subject areas as well. She doesn't really explain what other services the library offers or what are the other parts of the library for - there clearly are some other areas, the purpose of which I have to yet uncover. The librarian spoke a bit too fast and a bit too unclear for my understanding so I did not get anything really. I nodded thinking to myself that I still don't get how this works. That time I did not find what I was looking for. I remember waking away frustrated. Just as I did with most of my time at Ravensbourne at first.
9. I returned to the library with Dale one night after class. He kindly offered to show me around and explain how that works. He explained that I have to find a reference number first, write it on this piece of paper very thoughtfully prepared by the librarians. It was my first time using

the digital catalogue (in life). It took me a minute to figure it out. I went to the shelves which were hard to navigate. All these weird combinations of numbers and letters. Why isn't there a postgraduate area here? It might be much easier - I think to myself. I found what I needed and I successfully checked out a few books. The machine worked alright. But it was a hustle to put all the books in my bag. There is no space to place your bags or books if you are checking out multiple books at the same time.

10. After having done this multiple times, I must admit that I am pleased with the process. It's really easy compared to other experiences of libraries in my life. The librarians I encountered in my life were rather always rude like I was invading their private home and stealing books from their great-grandparents collections. This, however, can be so smooth and I don't have to talk to anyone while doing it! Brilliant!
11. I returned to the library once to use the computers there to continue writing my essay. My laptop had issues and I came to uni to concentrate and use the books in the library for the essay so the best I can do at this point is actually work in the library. I selected a computer out of the four (I think) that were available. This section of the library is close to the library entrance, the librarians desk, the materials' library and, sadly, the not so quiet working area where the students are pretty loud. I did not even start to work and they are already bothering me! I try to make myself comfortable. I sit down, take my tiny laptop out and open it to see where (in my essay) I stopped. I put my hot chocolate down, thinking I must find a place for it so I don't knock it over and ruin the keyboard or my own laptop, or my other belongings for that matter. I try to find a place for my backpack but I struggle. There isn't enough room under the desk so I must leave it by my chair, which takes up a bit of space from the next seat. Luckily there is no one there. Now I have a different problem - I must somehow transfer the document I started on my own laptop to this computer. Also I need to adjust to this bigger screen and chunkier keyboard and mouse. I try to send it to myself via Gmail but I quickly realise that I don't know my password. I leave that idea. I remember that I had a USB with me (for once! how convenient!). I try to find a USB port but I can't seem to locate one. Now I have to get up. I get up and walk around the workstations that are arranged in a row. I think the computers were back to back so I can hardly access the port that is at the back of the desktop. I struggle with this idea and just start a new document. I work for a while. I am trying to be productive but I feel a bit uncomfortable in the environment. It's different from the solitude I have at home when I am writing. But beggars can't be choosers so I must concentrate and work. I hear all the noise around me - the people behind me chatting in the not-so-quiet area, the noise from the printer to my right. On top of this a few students decide to treat that printer like a cooler space - let's talk about everything in this goddamn world now! And loudly! It's very annoying, I can hardly keep from asking them to take it somewhere else. Do they really have zero awareness of the fact that I am trying to work here?? The person that sat at the workstation next to me is tall. They try to make themselves comfortable and while doing so the workstation moves. This disturbs me. The printer keeps printing stuff and moves as well. I had to move my chocolate and my bag to make room for them. I work a little bit like this but then I decide that it's rather enough for today and leave the workspace. I got the books, right! I managed to write a little bit so I think I am fine for the day. I don't remember exactly how I saved the new text document. Did I use the USB? Or did I use my Gmail account? I don't remember but I took it and left the library. Would I want to work there again? No.
12. I am back browsing for books. It's March 17, the last day I am here physically so I must take as many books as I can. I go through my list, having already looked for the reference numbers.

Some books are here. Some/many aren't. I look at all the titles on the shelves and start picking the ones I think are relevant though not on my reading list. I go to this shelf I never use - the first on the left. I have so many books in my arms already that I can barely hold so I must leave them. I know behind are some tables so I leave them there. I look at the tables and then I slowly realize that this is a quiet area. It says so on the floor(?). A quiet area to work at! Ha! Only now? Well, better later than never. There is one person only sitting there. Only one. How interesting?! I look back at my list. I need to go to the opposite side of the shelves. Hmm.. but what do I do with all these books I already phished out from the shelves? I can't take them; they're too heavy. To leave them would be...weird. What if someone takes them or puts them back onto the shelves? Hmm. I think for a few more seconds and take the risk of leaving them on the table. I walk fast to the other shelf, scan quickly for my titles, found one, found two, oh..this one's good too. And this one. OK. Gotta take them all and quickly go back to the ones I left in the quiet area. Phew! They're there. All I need now is to check all of the out of the library. I take this incredible pile and walk proudly to the machine. Again! I need to put my backpack down and the pile of books on this thing to the left of the machine; that's the box where you put your returned items. I put my books on the corner of this box, thinking that if I am not careful some of them could accidentally end up in the box (through the hole that's in the middle of the box). I check the first book out and then I realize I have no space to put the books I scanned separately from the ones I did not scan yet. Like in supermarkets self-checkout services. So I resort to putting one by one in my backpack. It's uncomfortable because I have to bend down everytime I check a book and because I am rushing and not arranging the books properly given the limited space in my backpack. I repeat this procedure many times, doing the best I can at shoving all the books in my backpack. Phew! Done. I put all my clothes on and walk away. Ring! Ring! Goes the detector thing by the doors. I don't know what that means and I have to go to the librarians' desk. They tell me I have to give them all the books I have in my backpack. How annoying! I just put all of them in. I do that and the librarian is slowly checking every single one of them. She is not really explaining what is the matter so I stand there guessing, a bit embarrassed. There is someone else being serviced next to me by a different librarian. Feels a bit crowded.

My librarian is done and turns out I checked one too many books. She is very understanding and says I am allowed to take as many books as I can because of Rave shutting down the premises. She also says she renewed all my current items. How nice! She anticipated this need and did this for me. Now I am not that pissed that I have to put all my books back into the backpack although it's really difficult to do that gracefully and efficiently at the librarians' desk because there is no place for me to put my backpack. I finish with that business, I chat to them about something else and leave the library, not knowing when I will come here next time.

## Reflections on previous visits

### Vist I – a new mother looking for activities to do with her twins.

- I've heard from a friend at another baby sing-along group that there is a group on at the library. As I have twins, who are still on a busy sleep/feed routine I need to plan my visit ahead.
- I google Crofton Park Library activities. I land on the home page and it take some time to figure out where to go next to. I find a calendar and click to view events. It's an embedded google calendar and its difficult to understand what is happening when. The information is not displayed clearly. I find an entry called 'Baby Bounce', Fridays, 11am- 11.30. The timing fits well with the twins routine, and I feel I can just about make it out of the house by then so I decide to attend the following week.
- Before setting out I have to wake up early to ensure the bags are packed with milk and nappies etc. I also need to think about where to park the pram so arrive early.
- When I arrive the staff are look up briefly to point me in the right direction, they are friendly, but not that forthcoming.
- I see some buggies parked among the book shelves, park up and unload the twins. I find a place to sit on the floor at the back of the children's room. The room fills up quickly and it is comforting to see the other mums (there are rarely any dads) and babies in my local area.
- We sing songs together, smile and clap for half an hour.
- When the time is up, I meet some other local mums and we all sit in the cafe area to feed our babies and welcome the access to tea and cake ( new mum staples).
- Although the books and chairs are tightly packed in there is enough room for me to navigate with the double buggy, which is very important to me at this point!
- I need to change the babies and look for the toilet. It's occupied, and as I wait a elderly man, seated in the cafe, looks up from his paper and asks if they are twins. I nod and wait. When it's our turn I am pleased to find the toilet clean, and even offering a supply of spare nappies and wipes, in the changing unit. This reinforces that babies and children are welcome here.
- As I start to go regularly I recognise some of the other mums and occasionally have a little chat.

### Vist I.a a mum of toddlers twins

- Once the twins become mobile I take them to the stay and play group. They have a really brilliant set up run by volunteers. They read a story and do a planned craft activity with creative materials. All for free. They occasionally ask for a donation, and I always give, but it's not forced - their priority seems to be supporting and welcoming families.
- The 'clientele' have changed for this group and it tends to be mainly childminders, some bringing a group of children every week.
- At this group I have experienced, and witnessed toddlers running off! As the room is open, my two would try to wander into the rest of the library. One week I attended and two children (from one of the childminder groups) made it out of the library and on to the street. As the doors are kept open to invite people in, it means it is not that secure for toddlers.

## Vist 2. A freelancer looking for quiet space to work

- When I first started working again after the twins I needed a quiet place outside of the house to work. I tried my local cafes first. They tend to be noisy, and expensive as you feel obliged to continuously order food and drinks. My first day out I spent around £10 on lunch and drinks. I rationalised this as 'payment' for use of the wifi.
- As a regular library visitor throughout my adult life, it occurred to me to try the library.
- Forest Hill Library is a beautiful victorian building next to the swimming pool. There is street parking round the corner, so after dropping the twins at my mum's in Forest Hill, I could park up and do some work.
- The library space is quiet. There are a number of workstations where people can access the internet, and a study area used by those with laptops. There is also a room out the back for community activities. And a toilet - with a community access sign - which people can be used by the public.
- I set up next to a plug and a radiator, on a single table between some rows of books.
- The internet is fast and the atmosphere is peaceful so I manage to get some writing work done.
- I look around and see what looks like a mixture of students (18+), I guess - unemployed looking for work, freelancers, and elderly spending time.
- A man comes in speaking loudly. After overhearing his conversation with the staff he appears to have mental health issues. He is looking for support to sign on for universal credit. Some of his language is erratic, racially abusive and I feel a bit threatened. I get the impression the staff are not trained to support these kinds of complex needs, let alone safeguard other library users.
- It's time for lunch, you can't eat in the library, and you're not supposed to have drinks, so after secretly sipping my water I go out for lunch.
- When I get back my table has been taken by another freelancer, and there are no free tables. I sit on the sofas for a while waiting for a spot to become free. Luckily I charged my laptop earlier, so this time I can go somewhere that doesn't have plug access, as not all tables do.
- As I get settled back in to work mums with prams start arriving for a group activity. It's a bit irritating having this distraction, but I try to block it out. Luckily the event room is separate, so once they make their way through the library, the sound of '*Wind the Bobbin Up*' is just a muffled melody.
- The opening hours suit my working pattern well and I manage to finish what I needed to do and leave for the day.
- The chairs and tables are fine for occasional use, but imagine they would get uncomfortable if you used them for work everyday.
- Overall I'm very satisfied with my experience of working in the library, use this location regularly and encourage others to do the same. There is no charge or ask for donations.

### My local library - a 'visit' during lock down.

- I google Crofton Park Library.
- Top 2 SERP are:

- 1. [Lewisham.gov.uk](http://Lewisham.gov.uk) - Lewisham Council list of library services
- 2. [Lewisham.gov.uk](http://Lewisham.gov.uk) - lewisham council list of community services
- 3. [Croftonparlibrary.tumblr.com](http://Croftonparlibrary.tumblr.com) - 'Eco Communities' run library page.

## Showing results for **crofton park library**

Search instead for [crofton park library](#)

[lewisham.gov.uk](http://lewisham.gov.uk) › [myservices](#) › [libraries](#) › [branches](#) ▼

### Crofton Park community library service - Lewisham Council

Find out the opening times and contact details for the **Crofton Park** community **library** service, and see what events are ...

[lewisham.gov.uk](http://lewisham.gov.uk) › [organizations](#) › [crofton-park-comm...](#) ▼

### Crofton Park community library service - Lewisham Council

Crofton Park community library service. Local library and information services. Address. **Crofton Park Library**, ...

[croftonparklibrary.tumblr.com](http://croftonparklibrary.tumblr.com) › [information](#) ▼

### Crofton Park Community Library — Information About Us

**Crofton Park Library** is a community (as opposed to council) and volunteers run **library** hosted by Eco Communities and part of Lewisham Council **Libraries**. Within the building you will find a second hand bookshop **Crofton Books**. ... The stock is carefully selected and updated weekly from donations made to the **library**.

- Crofton Park Library is run by Eco Communities
  - About
 

Eco Communities is a social enterprise with a wide range of projects that support each other and as such all gains flow back into the community.

Eco Communities works towards a better world by focusing every step of each branch in uplifting members of its community.

When you choose an Eco Spaces venue, you are also choosing to support community libraries, training centres, re-use centres, and many local individuals and businesses.

Check out more Eco Communities Organisations: Eco Learn, Eco Cafe, Eco Bookshop, Eco Perks
- Eco Communities is a social enterprise group which aims to further local community, education and preserving the environment.

- Eco Communities implements this aim concretely by managing and providing community services in Eco Spaces venues located in South East London Lewisham and Bexley. Eco Spaces venues are buildings which are and have been used for community purposes that would otherwise have been closed down.
- Eco Spaces as an Eco Organisation focuses on rental of all Eco Spaces venues for commercial, private, and especially community regular and one off events.
- Most of these Eco Spaces venues include libraries. This part of the Eco Spaces venues is Eco Library, which focuses on library services provided by volunteers but whose stock and lending system is managed and provided by the local library services of Lewisham and Bexley.
- The Eco Spaces venues which are *not* libraries are still community spaces in some capacity and fall under the general Eco Spaces umbrella, often used for Eco Learning training courses and soon to include Eco Services, both of which also often take place in Eco Library venues.
- Eco Learning is a charity which provides training for people of low income backgrounds, especially those trying to get (back) into the job market and is registered separate from Eco Communities, hence the dotted line within the diagram. However, it is intrinsically interlinked with the rest of the Eco Communities organisations.
- Within the Eco Spaces venues which include Eco Library you can also find Eco Cafe and Eco Bookshop, the latter includes Eco Computers.
- Eco Perks is a reward system which encourages community members to re-use and get involved by giving points for donations that can be spent on in Eco Spaces (community rental), Eco Cafe (on site prepared beverages), Eco Bookshop, and Eco Computers.
- All proceeds made through Eco Spaces, Eco Learning, Eco Cafe, Eco Bookshop, Eco Computers, and Eco Services go towards keeping Eco Library services available for the local communities.
- I visit the Facebook page. There are two pages lists. One hasn't been updated since 2018. The other [@Crofton.Park.Community.Library](#) is active and posting until 1 May 2020. Lively sense of community, I follow the page and enjoy getting updates about what is happening the local community. Feel as sense of pride that there is such a range of activities and interest groups at home there.

## Forest Hill community library - Run by V22

- ABOUT V22

V22 is an art organisation, with a shared ownership structure, which specialises in the collection of contemporary art, the production of exhibitions, events and educational



initiatives, the provision of artists' studios and artisans' workshops and the running of community libraries.

Broadly, there are three main career needs of artists: a place to work, a way to show their art, and collectors to buy and look after their art.

Artists will always be at the forefront of contemporary thought and V22 believes that artists need more direct input into the wider art ecology. We aim to enable this through our shared ownership structure.

- V22 currently runs three community libraries. Many libraries have been closed or depleted across the country amid devastating cuts in previous years. V22, in partnership with Lewisham Library Services and local residents and groups, have returned Forest Hill Library, Manor House Library and Sydenham Library to a full service, and have built on many of the services previously offered. These include events for children, facilities for jobseekers and activities for pensioners, as well as renewing the IT infrastructure. We are looking forward to building a specialist art library in Forest Hill in the near future.

The community projects and education programmes which we continue to initiate are ways to learn about the areas in which we operate – both geographic and intellectual.

### Annex 3. Ethnography Visit: Hackney Central library

Zarida Zaman

Nov 29<sup>th</sup> 2019

2.02pm

I walk in through the large revolving doors. The entrance is spacious. There are two people standing at the main reception. They acknowledge me as I enter. I notice there are lots of posters for council services all around, almost too many. The area is cluttering. The entrance to The Hackney Museum is located on the left.

The library is located on the first floor. I have a choice of the stairs or I can take a lift. I choose the stairs. There are more posters and signage as I walk into the library. As I walk around I notice there are desks where people are studying. I continue to walk around the library and towards the back of the library there is access to computer terminals

2.30pm

There is a 'story corner', which is located near the children's section of the library. I locate myself to observe what happens as a group of school children arrive. I note there are 15 children and a teacher who arrive. They know where to sit and they demonstrate behaviour that suggests they had been in the library before. They sit and listen to a story being read by one of the librarians. The school group remain in the reading corner for around 30 mins. Towards the end of the visit the librarian instructs the children to choose books for them selves which they do, with efficiency. As I continue my walk around the library I notice desks with access to computers. This area is busy with adults working on the computers. The area has a reception and I can see there is someone who is supervising.

3.14pm

I find a seat between rows of books and I locate myself there. The seat is roughly in the centre of the library and I can see most of what is happening in the library from this vantage point. I notice the calm atmosphere and care people around me are taking not to make noise. I also notice people using the library are very much in their own 'thought bubbles' and there is very little interaction between the library users.

3.26pm

I take a final walk around the library. It remains calm and busy.

3.32pm

I leave the library. The reception area is busy with a mum and two children needing instructions of how to access the library. They have a pushchair. The reception staff point them towards the lift.

3.33pm

Leave the library

#### Annex 4. Interview #1 with Helen White

Date: 24 May 2020

Name of the interviewee: Helen White

Occupation: TFL Procurement Associate

Name of interviewer: Iulia Tvigun

Duration of interview: 20 min

**Do you go to libraries and if you do what for? What services do you use?**

I go to the library to borrow books. I don't like buying books if I can. I'd rather save the money.

**What library do you go to?**

I go to the Woolwich library. It's a local library so it's easy to access. Other times I go to Blackheath library.

**Why do you say it's easy to access?**

The location - it's very close to me. I can also access its lists on the internet, order a book, it will tell me when it's available and in the next seven days I can come to pick it up. It's also easy to renew books.

**What other services do you use at the library? Do you use PC/computers? Do you check anything else other than books?**

Yeah, I used to borrow CDs with Christmas music so I can play them at Christmas. That was before Spotify. I also borrow books on vacation locations, for instance I took a book about Lisbon. I don't want to buy this type of books because I will not need them afterwards.

I also buy books and films. They are sold for 20p. And it's books I otherwise wouldn't normally read.

**Why would you buy a book or a film at a library instead of just borrowing it for a while?**

Well, I buy them so I don't miss out on them. I might not need them now but I might need them later and later they might not be available. So I buy them... Also, I know I am giving back to the council.

**What kind of books do you buy?**

I buy books when going on holiday so I can leave them there so I don't have to carry them back. I usually buy books about the holiday places I go to or any that are recommended by friends.

**What do you think about the atmosphere in the library? Is there something you particularly like or dislike about them?**

I do not like when kids are running around, but I understand that the library needs to encourage children to come to the library too.

**What do you think about the opening hours? When do you usually go to the library?**

I usually go to Woolwich library after work. It's near the train station so I just pop in.

**What about on a day off?**

On my days off I go to Blackheath standard one. I can park for free so that's convenient. It's actually quieter there, in Blackheath and I can go to M&S, which is right next to it.

What do you think about the library staff? Do they approach you a lot when you are there? Do you talk to them?

The library staff is always friendly. I don't talk to them much and it would annoy me if they approached me. It's just nice to browse on my own.

Now you are forced to work from home. Would you consider going to work on your laptop in your local library?

No, I would not consider that. I like working at home; it's quiet and I have everything I need.

What about borrowing other kinds of things from a library? I think I told you about the Library of Things, right?

Yeah, when my children were little I used to borrow toys at Charlton Toy Library. I would borrow DIY tools if I needed them. But it seems like I have everything I need really. Although, I borrow garden tools from friends. But if they didn't have them, I would borrow them from a library.

And what would you think about the Human Library?

I am not sure why would one need that when you have the Internet? I'm sure you can find anything on the Internet or via one's personal networks...

What about having a cafe in a library? How would you feel about that?

I think that is unnecessary. It would probably be noisy and not what libraries are for.

## Annex 5. Interview #2 with Silvana Altamore

Date: 29 May 2020

Name of the interviewee: Silvana Altamore

Occupation: Crofton Park Community Library

Name of interviewer: Loren Hansi Gordon

Duration of interview: 39 min 20 s

Okay, so I thought the first thing to ask is if you could just tell me a bit about your role at the library and what you do there.

Well, I'm the library manager. So my job is to organise and develop volunteers so that they can work for the library in a way that is, you know, good for them. And of course I take care of the tenant relationships upstairs because we have a second data shop, the library called cross, and, of course, organise the activities of the libraries of the library.

And of course, I should try to generate income for the library to get new activities online that's why because of the content, we had the cafe starting, because we have an area that is basically a cafe. So we have everything, the coffee machine and everything. And I did find the person that was interested in restarting the cafe operation. And she was supposed to start on the on the first week of April and of course, so, yes, so mainly These are my you know, my job is about that. And so I rely on libraries because we are a library operations related to The library se means that everything we, we, we work with the Lewisham libraries and they are in a way our reference our main reference, and we get weekly or monthly visits from librarians from national libraries that our paths, you know, with, with the library, the library part. Okay. Only borrowing lending books. Yeah. Okay. And so the books that just made me think of the books themselves that they kind of still owned by the council or

Yeah, okay. So it's almost like the library facilities is run by an eco communities. Is that right?

Yes, yeah. Okay. Everything that we organise as a community library is also Lewisham libraries because we are part of the Network of Libraries, because we have books and everything that belongs to Lewisham libraries. Yeah. And accountancy effectively.

And how long have you worked at Crafton Park library? As a volunteer?

So one year as a volunteer and now is one year almost two years as a manager. Yeah.

And because you mentioned also like the volunteers and the role that volunteers play in kind of running the library and keeping it going. And could you maybe talk a little bit more about, you know, the role of volunteers? How I guess how they are supported through the work through volunteering at the library, but also kind of what the library gains from having volunteers.

Well, we have, of course, different types of volunteers. And you know, a given time, because we have people that, for example, are still active in the work world, let's say that they want to take, you know, some time off, they want to do something in the community. So they come to us, they work without, we have people that retire. We have people that had some problems, some mental issues, issues, all kinds of things.

Coming to the library to get back to the world, they feel that they basically get so, that different kind of people and people that are migrants for example, and English is not their first language and they come to the library because the library to work with try to help them or people that have lost the job. And they want to do something while they're waiting to get another job or they want to develop a skill that they might need in the new job. So we try to help them.

And is that kind of done in an informal way? I mean, do you have training in terms of supporting people through these particular needs? Or is it no more kind of informal?

Well, it is formal and informal. For example, people that don't have English as the first language. We have on Wednesdays and Fridays, so when the library's closed, we have a free piece of class. So most of the people come into the library and sign you know, we're really confident with their English and everything that we suggest them go the class or sometimes it's the other way. Free conversation. We don't call it class, which is run by a volunteer, usually on Tuesday, so just for people to come and practice everyday and so that's for the English, then there's digital inclusion. And this is because as you might know, in the library, we have a small area with computers where people can use the computer for free, if they are members of libraries. And most of the time, what we do for money as

a manager and my volunteers problems for example, they have to apply for something they have to upload some documents and they are not really confident, they come to the desk and they ask for, we have and one of the things that we do is that sometimes we suggest to come to the Digital Inclusion class which is also on a Wednesday, when the library is closed. So we do an informal between us so we are usually identify. But my volunteer, which of my volunteers who are my volunteers have the skills and the day are of course not confident, but they are willing to have them. And for example, if there are people that have some specific problem, I would ask them maybe to come when these volunteers are in the library, yeah, guy, or if it's something, you know, easy that we can do ourselves, we will do it, you know, to the desk and reception. So, so yes, there is nice that you were asking me about what the volunteers do for the library when **basically without the volunteers, the library would be shocked because I am the only person tied in there,** you know, and we have so many activities going on, we have the library, so the landing and the of course there are machines

that we have machines.

And that's fine. That's the problem you're looking for.

You don't know how to use the online catalogue library. Let's say let's call it like photocopy for the email, they can print straightaway, so brilliant, so well.

Thank you for giving me so much. So much food for thought this is great. And so one of the things that we were thinking about is how people are really like one of the resources of the library, the people themselves. So, you know, people like yourself and me and the other volunteers. And I wondered, I mean, it sounds like the volunteers already give so much to the library. And I just wondered if you if you kind of see that there are any more opportunities where volunteers can be kind of better supported or like their role further enhanced at the library to kind of, I guess, bring their skills and talents like more to the fore?

Yes. Because just to give you an example, and one of my volunteers, he's a retired psychologist. And he was very nice. I talked to him; I said, I would like to do something.

But in order to do this, this would have been done. We needed a room in the library that was coming and going. And I tried to create a corner so that he could you know, keep going.

Because he was very successful. We had the two sessions. And we had something like

12 people and the first people in the second people from all kinds of backgrounds,

and all kinds of ages, and that was amazing. I thought it was great. **But he was very, very difficult to, you know, to create a corner where no one was going to disturb.**

And so, **we have to, you know, do it if we had the money, you know, to create, like, a small room that we can also maybe rent for other activities.** That would be right. Yeah.

So, um, do you feel like the kind of physical building itself sometimes limits the activities that you want?

Yes. So different ideas that have been developed and seen some of the projects were supposed to have resources. They were not. They were never fulfilled. So, spaces are not organised best way

Trying to change?

Yes, it should be. Let's say that regularly, you should review what you have in order to see if it's something that still fits your needs. Yeah.

So I wanted to go touch on a little bit of the different groups of people who use the library. And I suppose one of the questions is like how much data and information do you gather on on the library users at the moment in terms of different activities, but also like a breakdown of their demographics?

Because it's something that I really wanted to do since I you know, I've been made the manager we don't even have the minimum stuff. Just to tell you. I've been fighting basically for the last year or a year and a half. **Because we need to know.** Yeah. All right. You know, I can tell you from my direct experience, yeah. Who are our users, the different groups because I'm there every day. **But I cannot give you a breakdown data.** I don't have it. You know, because if I had that now with the one of my volunteers, just before we were starting the Mail Chimp newsletter saying and we wanted to post it on Facebook and because we do have almost 900 Facebook followers. Yeah. And we wanted to post the link there and ask people to, you know, enrol for activities that they're interested in or just you know, to say to us which range of age they were, what they were interested in order to gather information. So I cannot give you numbers.

That's okay. So what do you think it would take to get to the point where you can collect the information that you need?

I definitely need a volunteer that can help me with social media today. You know, yes, I have everything ready, **but I don't have the time.** And also I mean, the skills. Yes. **I do understand about mailchimp, but you understand about this and that but I don't have a really detailed understanding.**

Yes, I would need someone to do the email newsletter at least to put it together. Yeah. And send it, you know, and send it out to you.

Okay, well, maybe maybe I'll volunteer. Yeah, we should keep having a conversation because I'm nearby and like I said.

Do you love the library?

I use it a lot. So if there's anything I can do...

And then the other thing was just then from your like, from your observations, like Who do you kind of identify as the groups that are currently using the library? Are there any people that you're trying to reach that you find difficult or, you know, what are your kind of thoughts around that just from observation?

Let's say parent and child. So everything that goes on in the children's library I think that those opportunities toddlers to have a fun time together.

Yeah, work the library for the professional. Yeah, because we do have a lot of people that come to the library because it's quiet Friday morning when they want to use it, prepare the

they wouldn't need they would use the cafe. But basically, they don't care about the books, the library library, they might occasionally buy something from the secondhand bookshop

but they don't really use the library service and so professional and then there are

We try to council services jobs to get more skills and I love free stuff like that.

And I think that these are more or less.

Yeah. And just going back to the group of professionals. One of the very early ideas that we had, but we've kind of moved away from it now was this idea of like coworking. The possibility, the kind of potential for libraries to be like coworking spaces. And then I guess we came to the conclusion that in some ways, it's just already happening. And but maybe it's just like an issue of PR, really that not everybody has in mind. Of course, I can just go to my library, my local library. What are your kind of thoughts around like libraries as co working spaces?

I think it would be great. WiFi. Your printing wire last?

Yeah, because what we were exploring then it's like actually how to get these how the other these people who come to the library are also resources. So if you had like a dedicated co-working space, there's no reason why you couldn't then start to build a community of people that can then kind of learn from each other. And like Skillshare and things kind of within that.

That's what I'm trying to do. Tear free in assists because the beneficiary. Trying to become professional. Because she was using every day, the library and we were talking, she was talking, talking, talking, talking, and when she finished, you know, and I said, you know, well, if you, you know, if you want to because she needed six people six cases to write the final paper for our class classical, so basically in order to become our current culture, so I said why don't you offer it for free at the library? Yeah. And so people that come to the library can, you know, take advantage of you have been done and you will get what you want and you know, you get six people. That's it. And he was very successful. Yeah.

That's great. Um, so I just want to ask you some questions about kind of like digital technology. So you've talked about obviously, we know that there's the computers and people come for the internet and for Wi Fi. Could you talk a bit more about like the role of digital technology in the library environment broadly, but also what other opportunities you think there could be for the library kind of in relation to the internet? What could be what you know what we could do more of technology, the internet and the library? So I guess the question is thinking about the relationship between libraries and the internet, you know, because they're always cast in opposition, like, oh, the internet killed libraries, because now everybody can find information, you know, immediately. So I'm just wondering if you think that there are any opportunities for libraries to kind of harness the internet more as part of like, you know, yes.

I think that's definitely the library. Yes, we have computers on their own, okay. It's not that you know, they just to give you an example, or books, stuff like that, there are courses, there are magazines that you can read for free, you know, in every language, okay? There's something like press reader and the fact that maybe professionals know about this, and they can look at this on their laptops and be more successful for the library.

The people into the available in the library. browser and we can say to them if you have something wrong maybe we can show you how to connect.

And another thing for the internet is that libraries should let's say be more critical?



Because that's what libraries are about, you get a lot of information and you can see what is right and what is wrong.

You're can play really from retired?

Yeah, I think that's really important.

What do you like, in a kind of tangible sense? What do you think? What do you think that could look like do? I mean I completely agree that that libraries have the potential to play that role. But can you think of a like an activity that you might do that would kind of help that?

Well, for example I would say that it would be great to have conversations and show the references and stuff like that. I don't know how to develop them because it seems to me that we are pushing towards less and less face to face. It would be something like I would say something like a week or three activities for different kinds of people's families, something for families or something for people working and also people from the community.

I mean, I don't want to be a professor from somewhere, maybe having someone for you to cover. He knows that he's in a way respected and I'm ashamed. Yeah. Because I think he would be. He would be more.

Down, up and not from up to down. Yeah. If you feel like I'm clear on, you know, yeah, yeah. But more grassroots kind of thing.

Yeah. Brilliant. Thank you so much. I don't want to take up too much more of your time because you've been so generous. And I just one final question, which is like, if, if you had one thing that you really wanted to do for the library as like a future plan, what would it be?

Digital?

Whatever, whatever you think is important to you that you really want to develop next for the library.

I would love to have a website. You know, volunteer. I see that you know I see the website because the fact is also the website today is in a way your art. Also shows your history and also to be

I really struggle with this myself. People endlessly posting pictures of their kids and like I sometimes I get pulled into it and I think maybe this is what I should be doing and then I'm like, no, I really don't like I don't want you know, it's a weird situation that we live in. I think that's why I started blogging more because I was like, actually just want to write.

But anyway, I'm really really happy that you shared this time with me to have this conversation and I'm a huge fan of the library and I'm already thinking at the back of my mind if there's anything I can do to help with any of these things. So the job I was doing before is actually as a copywriter, so writing for websites and then I'm kind of retraining to do service design but also, you know, very interested in the library.

So, you know, if you think of something that you need help with, you know, feel free to get in touch. I get a bit worried about you know, if offering time that I can't fulfil, but I, you know, part of me really wants to offer time to help you with this stuff as well.

So no worries and you know, I always say to my volunteers, it's your time. If you don't have time, it's fine. Yeah, nobody's fault. Just tell me the problem. Absolutely. You know, because, you know, we have a lot of things to do. And that's really, really alive. That is too

many things to do. You know, this this time life is really become a job. So if you have some time and you enjoy Yeah, I do, that's the thing. So, you know, because that's, that's important because in your free time you have to use it for something that you enjoy. Even Yeah, definitely. Definitely. If you don't enjoy this anymore absolutely fine. Thank you for offering

**Anyway, you know, like, I'm gonna stay in touch with you for sure. I hope you don't mind.**

Yeah, and I hope that what I said that is of some use, really realise that he says something that is not clear because of my English and everything, please, you know, come back to me and ask me again.

## Annex 6. Interview #3 with Dann Jessen

Date: 06 June 2020

Name of the interviewee: Dann Jessen

Occupation: Architect

Name of interviewer: Zarida Zama, Iulia Tvigun

Duration of interview: 1 h 26 min 36 s

Dann. Hello. Um, well I think that we'll have probably a discussion at some point, and we'd love to hear your feedback on the project itself and we'll we'll introduce the project, a little bit later on in the conversation. And then probably towards the end I think it will probably be a bit more of an informal conversation, but also, you know, your position what you do for a living in your background, I think is really crucial for us, you know, and we're sort of using this to help us shape our ideas for other projects as well.

And so I just want to kick off by asking you. Could you tell us a little bit about yourself and your background.

So I'm architect. I am interested in the city as a practice East is a practice that has always engaged with with urban situations, and people how they use the city we've always been very interested in us. And what we have done is we have made sure we always worked with, when we worked with architecture, we have made sure we always considered what we sort of call multi headed clients. So basically it might be that somebody is paying us of course, and that does give them a certain status and ability to influence what we do and we will take that very serious, but we will also try to convince them that we should regard the place that people who are using it. The people who could be using it. And the neighbours, and so on, part of a sort of multi headed client. And so that means that that often we've thought about London as our client, the city, the situation that people live in a neighbourhood, who could be doing things, and that has led to interesting things which we also practised with our students over the years we've obviously been teaching for 15 years, and.

And one of the interesting things for me that came out of that was the process of brief making and understand that as a designer, as a stakeholder in a project, you develop the brief. Now this is not rocket science. Of course, everybody knows that. But there is a thing about how you do that with people, to consider this multi headed client, how do you engage with dozens or hundreds of people in a process of this brief meeting, and also to understand that it's not something that stops. So when you intervene into a situation.

And it's ongoing. And so actually, in some ways, you can only really write the brief for a project when it's kind of done. And even then, it will evolve over time as, especially as an architect it tends to be around for a long time. And I guess I'm sort of thinking that in terms of what you're doing. That is potentially important because it has got to do with a changing way of using spaces and the resources that we have.

And so obviously there's a whole process of finding out what is available. And, and how it was meant to be, but also then how it could be. And in fact, knowing that that is not a permanent situation that is just a step to something else another time.

07:11

And, and I think that's an absolutely crucial thing about working in an urban situation to understand that there is no sort of set piece. And, and so in terms of architecture we've always considered that we're not doing setpiece architecture either. But things that matter might work across different scales

and so on, and which will influence an existing situation but that existing situation will also influence it. And over time, who knows.

And there's a sort of crucial aspect to that I think in terms of design and architecture which is what we've said is an idea about the special and the sensible. Or you could say, and the highly specific and the more generic maybe but that's, I think the special and the sensible is better because actually, it suggests that everything is highly specific to a situation. It's not quite as generalised as if you start talking about generic stuff.

But what it means is that there's a background and there's a, there's some ordinary stuff going on there's a lot of ordinary stuff. And that's how it should be and that ordinary stuff is very flexible. It's very able to be used in very many different ways by different people over time they make it their own. And the special bits might be about a particular narrative, a particular spatial situation, whatever. But that special bit will be much more, you know, demanding and much more imposing really on how people perceive it and so on. That's not to say that it can't be adapted and used in all sorts of ways but it's a different situation. And really, I think, what is maybe crucial about it is you don't want everything to be in this special category.

**It's great what you've been saying. I think there's a lot of interesting ideas there. I was wondering if you can give us a few examples of what kind of buildings you were talking about.**

What I'm talking about is, in fact, and that is probably, you know, a special thing about our practice that I'm not particularly talking about buildings. I'm talking about places in a way. And they might be buildings, or they might be public space, they might be a playground, they might be a park. And they might be just a bench. And so, the, the, the thing is that we work across a lot of different scales and situations. With this approach, I suppose.

There is a thing where the way maybe, to some extent, all buildings have aspects of this, you know, like all you like, say Victorian house, for instance, is kind of straightforward example maybe where you have, you know, certain decent rooms but actually as we have found out over hundreds of years they can be used as bedrooms, and almost like studio flats or living rooms or work spaces and so on. And so they have some quite generic qualities to it and then there would be the more special bits, potentially, in terms of how certain rooms are used. **And there are you know buildings which are adaptable over time because of the way they have been constructed.** So, a lot of that has to do with the materials like say this office. We are in here now is made out of concrete and brick. And that is making the building, actually quite adaptable quite easily adaptable because there's a very clear understanding to anybody walking in, whether they are like us, architects, or our neighbours who are printers, you quickly understand what a column is what a wall is. And that means that you can also quickly imagine how to change the space it's not like some hugely interesting process of working into fire stops and convoluted methods of construction that you might find in a lot more recent buildings. So there's two things to that.

One thing is you know methods of construction whether they're legible. And whether the way things have been together, put together is legible. **The other thing is, whether that space have been designed in such a way that it is very difficult to imagine using in different ways.** And so, you know, you can look at buildings, which are designed in using power metrics for instance, often they are very difficult to adapt, although apparently as a system that is suggesting to be flexible and you can just put whatever parameter in. But actually, in fact, they are after they have been built very difficult to imagine being something else. And because they look a bit like a toaster, or a fridge or something else that has actually been quite carefully considered at the time of conception and, which also makes it incredibly

difficult to adapt. And so, you know, you see, buildings which have lasted for a long time and been easy to adapt, like the Victorian schools. And then you see some of the more complex modern arrangements which have been less easy to adapt. That is not to say that a modern building cannot be adaptable, but it has to be considered how much other machine you designed from the outside outset, and of course there was a certain period where things were buildings were designed as machines in a way they were designed to do something very specific. And that has proven much more difficult to reuse those buildings in different ways.

**I wanted to ask you about communities, and really your involvement with communities, and how to sort of mobilise community, to get the idea of community cohesion, you know, and if there are any sort of examples that you might give us a successful community cohesion has gone where it's been unsuccessful as well.**

Well I mean I think that maybe we just need to have a bit of a conversation back and forth I can remember from different books, but the one one thing that is one very nice example was a project we did very many years ago, when in South London, instead of east of London. And it was crucial for us because what we did, has helped us afterwards, in working with communities, and what it was was that there was a market on every Saturday in this high street that we're working into. And so the idea is that we're sort of supposed to be meant to come out of the brief. We're quite wide ranging from new seats to reinvigorating the shops filling up shops that had been empty for a while.

Some new housing, a new be worked parking lot street lighting it was quite a wide range of stuff and we sort of knew that was on the clients agenda. So what we did was we set up a market stall. And we meet, so we help this market stall over four Saturdays. And the first Saturday, we asked people what they thought about the place and what they, their thoughts were. And we did that and we wrote it down. Precisely, like we wrote down precise sentences that we heard from them. And I think we got a couple of hundred or whatever they're quite a lot, and we put them on a sheet of paper, one after the other. And, and we did this kind of what we called at the time and ideas, rock, which is really not a rock. That was just a nice name it was just a drawing. And essentially what it was doing was it was taking these hundred things that we wrote down to the people could recognise what they had said, when they come back come back, probably the next Saturday to the market.

And then what we did was we sort of marked on the ones we couldn't really do anything about like you know bombs or trays or, you know, in the school is not good enough, or you know whatever, all sorts of issues you know they've been collections of real problem here. You know, things that were sort of well outside our scope we sort of Mark and said, actually. Here, counsel you heard you hear all these things right you need to do something about it but that's all we can ask the sun, and all the rest of them, the covenants which might have been half of them or whatever. We then try to find happiness in between, and, categorised so that we could begin a process of brief making bluescope for charities. And as I recall, when funding is introduced the 13 categories for the next Saturday, and then people could say, oh, what I talked about is not really going to be here by making a better Park, actually.

Because the thing, or maybe it could and, and maybe something's had lights into many of these I think it was 13 potential physical improvements we could work on. And what and then it went from there into sort of emerging in a brief like Okay, so this part could be on the third Saturday, but about play about this, it could be about that. And on the fourth one we began to have some design ideas for what it could be like, and we then every time complimented this by having models on the table where people can point to whether they could mock things and when proportions began to appear on the button in response to these four steps.

That was incredibly successful because people really felt that they could recognise what they had said, and they could understand, by and large, if we were able to not respond, or take it on board, or if we were, and why actually suddenly having a bench might begin to deal with issues of loneliness or you know whatever. And so, what was good was to be able to show in a very physical way how the comment transformed into a physical proposal. And that bench was always going to be there maybe, you know like, there was always going to be a bench somewhere, but try to deviate. Okay, try to be able to see the relationship between their concerns as clients, and the outcome worked really well. Another really enjoyable project that also worked really well was one that was conceived by the Shoah Foundation, they did a project called joined up designed for schools. And that was incredibly clever because they asked all the school councils and the pupil councils to be the client. And then they paired, they collaborated. It was a big scheme they collaborated with 100 schools 100 designers, not all architects know from Smith was doing one where they ended up getting uniforms and so on. But what was really good about that was that.

They obviously had to develop the brief, and so they would they would be working on this in between we saw them as well. And we'll be discussing what they were doing and so they would be doing plays about the school day, they were doing, you know like, trips around the school where they were showing the school to each other to suddenly become aware of the space they were in, and so on. That was also very useful and productive, I think, for, for them as a method.

And maybe a third thing which I think works really well is to ask people to interview each other. And that in a way is what the kids did, but obviously a little bit like a curated kind of thing. Whereas in certain systems for instance when we did a project, and with a community. Now I know the worst thing especially for myself. They're not stopped. Okay. So that worked in a way where the community group was asked to, we asked me where it was at the time of disposable cameras and so they only got a disposable camera.

Each group, and they were groups of three or four, and they went around in the local town centre neighbourhood, and they interviewed people about in issues what they liked what could be done, and so on and they photograph them. And so then they presented these photographs of the place they thought they knew shoot so well. And these interviews with these people they thought they knew so well as well. And of course some of what they saw and what they heard was not what they had expected. And, and empowered, this community group to build up a narrative for a kind of brief that maybe counteract some of the sort of more bombastic region. The most dysfunctional Council in the world. Had you know undertaken at the time. And so, that also, I think, functioned well. And, in fact, I'm not sure that I can think of things that I think if you put an effort into it, don't work quite well. And I find that the things that are disappointing is when engagement turns into consultation. When it's too structured. When people need too much. True.

Like, if you need everything to be able to be measured afterwards, then you have a problem, because then you will not manage to engage people. And so, you know, everything that goes into a sort of quantitative methodology, we avoid or we just have going on the sideline like, Oh, I'm sure you must also fill out this form over here so we can stick this into the pending application, but actually this is not the point. The point is that we are actively working as architects willing to listen. And we want to try to do it well. And so actually we don't need any statistics to prove that thank you very much we are treating you all as intelligent people. And we assume that we are able to listen and understand, and then we test things by going back to you. But we will not and also we will not ask people, stupid questions that turns them into designers, like, you know, do you like this or that shape better or this or that particular proposal, or this or that colour or something. So we try to make people claims, rather than in, rather than shooting the designers kind of thing.

And I think that is, I think it's absolutely crucial that these things are done with respect, both for yourself and for the community and the understanding that we all have different skills. And so, you know, when East works closely with communities. We don't ever think that we are not responsible for the outcome or the design or the architecture. And when we try to do it we try to help the client, the connection between the pin clients.

And so there's a lot of things there as well, which I think is probably crucial in this sort of making the design process which is some level of skill transfer that needs to happen people might not have the skills to respond. And so sometimes when things are really large scale like the market thing we couldn't really do much in terms of skill transfer. When we worked with a bunch of kids designing and adventure playground building inclusion, we could take them to search on someone's house and look at the most extraordinary piece of architecture with mirrors and coloured glass and layers and layers. Extraordinary fantastic ideas, and that gave the kids, a vocabulary and an ability to talk about architecture that they had never had. And so, obviously, there might be some of that, that one needs to take into account as well, because you can't just expect that people know how to discuss these things they might not be spatially aware they might not have the vocabulary. And on the other hand, what you find is with very very little input people suddenly become incredibly articulate, because of course they have been thinking about all this stuff, all their life we all do. It's just they haven't broken it down into components that they can talk about.

Okay, so, um, we just want to talk to you a little bit about what the project is. And I think we both can sort of explain different parts of it. So we've got a project that's looking at really disrupting the disruptions. And it's looking at a lean startup, what exists in the marketplace, like for example I'll give you an example of what a disruptor in the marketplace has been an Airbnb came along and disrupting Dino hotels overcame and Elgon disrupted some taxi trades and transformed. And so we're looking at disrupting, a current disrupter. And how do we do in the current climate and context we thought about this idea about existing community assets, what does this community already have, you know, it wasn't really about introducing something new into the community was about sort of realising and understanding some of the qualities, the good things that were already here. We had a look at buildings and we sort of came across this idea which was kind of inspired a little bit by you then by thinking about those characters currently in lots of empty spaces, right now. And then we also sort of moved on a little bit further from the idea we've we've been thinking about public spaces or whatever sort of you know these sort of key buildings within communities that are currently perhaps underused could be slightly more sort of amplified brace services better quality of services how much, how much do people actually use these type of services, and then sort of as a group we landed on the idea of really, really looking at libraries as sort of pivotal places within communities.

And then we sort of started having a look at our local libraries, and we were having a look at things like the services that they offer the opening hours. We then thought about a few ideas. And, well, I looked at techni library I think you do you looked at your own library, another member of the group was looking at Crafton Park library at South London.

Okay, okay. Yeah, so, um, um, and then we were sort of looking at the idea of, of, sort of people and workspaces and libraries. So for example, there's currently a lot of sort of work share you know like we work that happened. Yeah. And when looking at sort of, we were looking at this idea of sort of integrating a public space with sort of workshare. So for example, you know, some of the library could be handed over to a workshop space in the evening. They could then start generating income, and then that could then support better services in the data. And that was just one of the ideas that we had.

We're now sort of settled, well not settled. But, but one of the team had an interview with the manager of Crafton Park library in South London. And one of the things that came out of that it's a really lovely community based library. One it's just one person that earns a wage out of it the rest of the people are sort of volunteers, they volunteer from sort of people that are there because they want to work experience people that have got mental health problems, people that you don't mean it's just it's a really nice, you know, sort of support really for for community.

But one of the problems that they've got is that they don't know who uses our services. And so there's a big gap between the people that come in and also capturing that data. And we're also sort of thinking about how data can be used to then, sort of, apply for funding to actually make the services better. And so currently there's a problem that this Silvana she's called the manager of the library that she has that she that she can't really she's sort of stuck between a rock and a hard place until she really understands who her sort of users are and how many people come in and use it services you know because she needs to know that information if she's going to go off and apply for additional funding to help those services be better.

We landed on this idea of libraries being holding a lot of information or potentially holding a lot of information about the people who are using the library, and we're thinking that using that information or improving the way it's collected analysed and turned from data into knowledge could potentially help librarians to make libraries, better to provide better services, but also maybe beyond that, maybe do something for even more for the communities who know, who knows.

So yeah, um, but I, we would like to know what you think of libraries and if you go off into a library , what services do you use if you use any services you don't use at the library, and why.

Well, I've never been to the library. So that's usually done with that out of the Christian, I literally never go, and I used to. In, but I'll get back to it obviously, but one thing that you know about your brief, and what you were talking about made me think about the high street. And obviously now there's a lot of money. That's gonna be around when obviously I say, I think there will be a lot of money around for high streets very very soon. Because actually, after this COVID-19 or during, slash, as we begin to come out of it. What we will find is that a lot of businesses have gone under. And so a lot of space will become available. And there'll be a whole question about how we socially, physically, I should say distance on the high street, and in public spaces and so on. And there would be quite a lot of money, potentially for finding ways of making these spaces work.

And there'll be a lot of square metres maybe available, and it will introduce I think a whole new layer of work into the high street it's not a whole new layer it has been going on a little bit of course, with the meanwhile to use, and so on. But actually it will really solidify that I suspect, and libraries obviously part of that. And so I searched. So what I what I kind of think is that age, I think is really interesting what you're doing and actually I think that there will be something very real, potentially, that you can begin to do, you know, with that, as you go along now over the next whatever time period of time and maybe also beyond finishing the sort of project at the school where, what you're doing now.

38:00

And I don't know about you guys but I mean, you know, when I was a kid things were used in multiple ways. You know, the library was actually where people would do yoga. The school was used for kids friends classes in the evening. And, you know, everybody would go and play badminton in the school Hall. These things were used in quite complex ways. And because there was a lot of trust, I suppose,



and in, in a community, which, and I don't really know how much that really existed in England in cities in London, and I would like to actually know that because I'm not really sure about how much this is a return to something that has been but which has been not happening for a while because people have felt so concerned with health and safety, and what could go on and anti social behaviour and this then the other, so that it kind of stopped, and potentially would restart now in another format in another way. And I think that'd be really interesting to know, actually, because if it is something that happened before and in some other shape or form for sure but in principle happened before, and then died away and then might be coming back. That's quite a strong situation to work into and work with, I think. Whereas if it's a whole culture change, it's a different thing. Now there are obviously some libraries which have been more adventurous than others and so **the last time I did use the library was when we had Olive,** and we lived in Brixton cabin. And we used the new library there which was just finished I think at the time on Platinum High Street or whatever it was called. **It had a GP surgery in it,** and it had a library and probably a few other bits and bobs, but also it had all these classes where we would go with. And we would read books and sing, and there would be people coming with some, some dragons or some other weird animals and the Normans.

And that was, You know quite successfully **it also made us actually take books out of that library,** because we will go in there anyway, all these other things and so we're not so worried about whether we were going to now forever forget to bring these books back.

And so I think that there are some libraries, which are maybe better at the moment as it stands than others that sort of **layering uses in to what they already do,** and sort of enjoy accommodating things that are potentially a little bit incongruent but it's take advantage of the synergy in terms of users, then also using the library and going to the doctor and going to the baby group and doing this and the other.

And, obviously that supports the staff and it's supposed to the funding model and so on. So, I mean, you know, I don't know how you can look at it but I think **there are some libraries which are certainly more adventurous** than saying **my local library in Essex, which very much feels like walking into a draft place you really don't want to be.** And so, why not think. Yeah, why not why not why wouldn't you want to be there is, **is totally unattractive.** There is a sense of not that much going on, it feels a little bit small, you're probably not convinced that you will find the book you're after by just thinking about it, because you think oh my god this isn't the tiniest bit it looks a little bit out of day.

I don't have confidence that it has what I want, even by the way the project itself or not. Projects itself into the city. And it's not very visible. It doesn't feel very ambitious. And I certainly think **that it would just greatly, greatly, greatly help the traditional functions of the library to grow** in the way you're proposing and, you know, just retake a place in the city kind of thing.

And the other thing which I think is a, maybe a problem with libraries for from my own point of view, at least, is that, you know, it's actually become that **there are so many ways of getting access to information that I'm not convinced that just going there for the physical book can be the main thing** about a life, you know, the only thing about a library, and all and actually I think there's a real need for them to begin to multitask more than they're doing and become more relevant.

Just one more thing. Have you looked at these Ideas stores in Tower Hamlets?

Yeah.

What do you think of those?

It's great. I mean, yeah, they recognise the fact that they are not offering just books and much more. That's why they change their whole concept and the title and everything to appeal.

Yeah. There is some, there is obviously a finger sort of what you're trying to do is think about how you can make almost like the business case or the funding case for this, or are you trying to build up.

Potential scenario that could be one of many or a sort of menu of things that could happen or what is it actually, you know, beyond the sort of idea that you know what are you looking to sort of or proposing a physical intervention into a particular library to make able to make it work because most libraries of course are not set up for this multitasking and so on. Yeah, I think that's the thing as well is that, in a way, libraries, you know, the concept of knowledge has moved much further than what libraries there. So in a way, there is a real gap between, you know how we access information and knowledge from from home. And then, you know, when we go into the library that physical space and what that has to offer and the two things are incredibly different, and that maybe hasn't caught up with that. And so I guess it is. It is an idea around that. It's also an idea for how a library offers better services so less people feel like they need to go off and buy books on Amazon. Yeah, you know me and how can we get sort of a bit more reassurance around knowledge being found in a place you know, other than. So, you know, being found typically, Amazon, you know, I'll just use numbers and that's one example of potentially, you know, a library because could be a disrupter for quite a few industries.

You know, there's also the idea of, sort of, I think there's an age gap of people that just never go to libraries, you know, it sort of seems to be sort of young, young families that go because they've got children they go into stories. You know the story hour or whatever. Slightly elderly people are out of work people you know going in there to use the internet for those types of services.

Just one thing there that, you know, you know like, I really like going to the bookshop. And I don't particularly like to buy books on Amazon, but I think a lot of people must be doing that. And one of the most convenient things about Amazon, is that you don't actually have to go somewhere else you can do it at night in a weird time. And in that they get delivered to you. And so I just think that in terms of understanding, you know something like Amazon as a competitor. To me the most striking thing about Amazon is that you don't have to get out of your chair and that you can use this interface that a lot of people like their phone, or whatever. I'm just wondering how much that matters. And the other thing is that thing about time. So for instance in Copenhagen in Denver. When you have a library card, you can go into the library. It's open 24 hours, and it's never stopped me at any particular time. You never know when the staff is there because they move between different libraries. So you can just go in and use it anytime you get in with your card and you check your book out yourself.

And so that's another kind of, it's definitely not multi layered or anything but it's like convenient in terms of that you know you can do it whenever, and there's no complicated human interfaces that don't like that or, you know, I don't know what is driving the sort of success of that because it does seem to be quite success.

Just wondering about what I've read so what I personally really like about what you guys are talking about is that it's none of that. It is about trying to layer so many things into that becomes so attractive, that one wants to go again.

And also needed because suddenly as you really need where's the library might not in itself be that needed, really, and. And so there's other things you might need that makes you go there and then by the way you're suddenly close to the library.

And also because you layer all these things into it you can expand the opening hours. This is another thing that absolutely I'm totally fed up with the idea that I have to look on the internet to see whether it's open between 12 and three or something. I mean that is total non-availability which is unacceptable. You know, I just will not ever be able to engage with. And so by adding critical mass you can obviously sustain the golden hours and so on.

And I think that's absolutely crucial as well. Yeah, in which I really like that idea it just seems to me that a lot of it. Then, will have also got to do with how you use the space whether the space needs to be expanded. Whether you know what what presence does it have, you know, are these libraries that will be future successful libraries, either may be embedded in a neighbourhood, or on the high street. They will probably not be somewhere in between, you know like, because they might need to have a synergy with what's around them which is either the embedded thing into the park neighbourhood kind of thing. On to the high street where you might go anyway for something. And to some extent I think that this sort of physical reality of each building is quite crucial. And one of the things with ideas stores for instance were they were built in, like, one chapter market.

An absolutely busy area and it provides kind of the toilets for people going to the market and so on, you know, it's, it is really part of a complex public space. And it is absolutely open. You don't need to check in and face somebody looking at this library and in the eyes and see whether you're now welcome or not into their sanctuary.

And that is incredibly powerful I think. And so that is a lot about, you know, design, as well. About how are they located, how do they present themselves, what is the sequence of space that you actually move through what what do you actually get presented with.

And there is a tendency for instance amongst architects to sort of repair classical libraries and you know like the traditional libraries of beautiful space, but that does not mean that it's the right kind of space for what you guys are talking about. And so I think that there's something really important in deciding terms around what are these interfaces that you need. How do you actually engage with this building as you go along.

I don't know how much more time we have but I wanted to just actually ask you a question about this data for funding, who are the users. Is that part of your project to try to invent some clever way of getting that information?

Yeah. So we were saying, We recognise that there's a lot of work that has been done in libraries in terms of the design of the space in terms of other services that libraries can offer in terms of business models. We were playing with the idea of doing something there but we realised that there is a lot of potential in libraries as holders of information.

Because the information that it was perceived that the information is on the bookshelves. The values on the bookshelves but actually the, the value is also in the people who are using the library so we're trying to see how we can improve and maximise and make the most of this you know data that is potentially collected within a library. So that's what we're looking at the moment. That is the focus of our actually very small project, compared to what can be done.

In general, what what what strikes me anyway for what you're just saying is interesting is that, and, you know, in a way, what you're describing is a little bit like what people do on various blogs, and is that any other where people have some, like people that have the most incredible knowledge and interest

that they share in the highly specialised environments on the internet, by enlarge. And I think that the real challenge is how do you get these people out of their safe pocket of slightly nerdy interest, maybe, and really want to get into this sharing of information and actually make a physical move actually want to go do it you know to make put in the effort. And then you know like what is the benefit they get back. And how do they discover that there's a benefit because I think most people discover.

I suspect, I don't really know much about this but I suspect that if you start looking at all these we work and all those kind of places and interview people there, they will say that there's a huge benefit in having lunch together. And, you know, chatting and going for beer afterwards, whatever. And I think a lot of these people keep each other occupied in terms of business work, sustain each other's activity as micro businesses and so on. By actually being there physically in a way that they couldn't be doing from there.

And the question. The question in my mind, though, is, how does that work out? How do you get people to understand that how do you get people who might not already have clocked that to get it. And that's maybe what I find quite interesting about **how maybe you grow it from a small scale of an existing community using a library, and then increase the awareness of what they could be doing there, so that this became an organic process for that specific community, and not an implant from outside, or at least not only an implant from outside so that you know like that, like the worst thing we see in urban regeneration is when a good idea is taken, turned into an image, and is overlaid on to an existing situation and it displaces the existing success that plays after all work**, because it existed people didn't use it. They did live there, they did go about things and so on.

And the challenge I think for the library thing is a one challenge is I think how you get this existing community to first discover this potential richness and then expand that community, and and that's where I'm wondering about whether some of those things about this sort of data stuff this for funding, who are they how many are they, whether there's ways of building into that things which are maybe a little bit like, you know what I was talking about before in terms of skill transfer. In this case, skill being, even the understanding that communication is valuable. That information is valuable that sharing it is valuable that you grow through the synergies, and you know inventing things, maybe inventing things that you can sort of insert as agents into that situation, by which this existing community will begin to experience through experience, you know, get it. Not from being told. And, and I think that that is maybe the, the crucial thing in our life and understanding that this is being is never something that happens over a long time. It's a long project.

The other day and a friend of a project we're doing in Custom House which is quite interesting. It has a high street and you have to stop me if I'm waffling too much but I'll try to do it quickly. But it has a high street. 900 homes will be built, replacing 270 s it is now so dense that the new high street replacing the existing it's all very rundown. But there's a very powerful community there. The main thing they want to do is, is a bookstore, because they see the bookstores being the community hub. They see it as the place where people will come with their kids, where they see it as the place where young people can go and study when they live in flats which are too small. And, and what we're trying to do at the moment is convinced the council should in the meanwhile accommodate this bookstore in some of the empty units for the next few years and so it can grow strong and move into a new unit. When the bill, when the high street is being renewed in faces.

Another thing we are doing is we are trying to grow, to make a tree nursery and obviously that's not a library but the story is the same. It's a tree nursery on a plot of land which is in phase two or something like that and that is that trees would be grown for the next five years, by the local community to be used to street trees in the neighbourhood as and when it gets developed.

What is interesting about the issue around that, is that it's fine for us we can design a temporary trainers, very very easy. No problem. But how do you get the community to engage with the team responsibility for the maintenance consult with the management over three years, because we will be working there for one year, let's say, but in one year you don't establish all this, like one year's one cycle of saying trainers, is life, who makes sure that it's happening for the next years and so on, and so there's an incredible complex thing to accept it this is entirely possible to build up, but you can't necessarily prove it in advance. And so you need to gamble a little bit and look at other places where it's happened and then build up quite a long term processes.

And now the last thing I need to say, while I've been chatting about this last bit here what it reminds me of was the most amazing place of visited. That sort of fits the bill, a little bit. And it's in San Paolo, and it's called central couture Well, I sent you a link for it afterwards.

It's a building where people go, and it's open, it's available, it's got theatre, it got work places it's got, you know, Miss draw, it's got library it's got exhibition space. It's got quite a lot of circulation space for nothing, which happens to have nicely mirrored windows where people can practice dance in front of. There's quite a lot of the kids in San Paolo who grew up and grow up in very small flats. And when they have to do group work, they go to places like this or that, in particular, if it's very successful out of its successes by the management which looks as if there's almost no management, you know, like there's of course some way you can go and get some information but otherwise. Nobody ever comes and asks you what are you doing there would you need help with this, that everybody had just let left to their own devices to use this space within reason for sure. The management is there, but it's like clever parenting you know it's like, guiding people without being too present.

And I think that's an interesting thing about all these things with interface design and so on, you know, how do you actually make that so sophisticated, that it's supposed this kind of news, where things need to feel immensely available although they're not really. At the end of the day there is tough at the end of the day this is managed, but you have to find a way of achieving that fine balance, you know, which for instance is not achieved at the Barbican which couldn't be like that. But you do not feel like going and doing something random in the Barbican although this acres of space. And, but it's not totally unsuccessful either, but it's just not as good. And so there's just sort of like, I think that's a very sophisticated thing to achieve actually.

Anyway, so that was a bit of a rant.

I love it that I love what you've said you've said so many things that touch on Social Innovation have really got me thinking about, about the approach that we, you know, that I'm going to take in terms of, you know, how to, how to actually you know look at the issues that are currently going on with the library and absolutely you're right you know it's not about us going in there and imposing solutions, it's about us recognising that as affording the sort of almost a platform for the community to recognise what an asset they then mobilise the community to then start coming up with things that they need us to post to what we think that they need. No. Yeah, absolutely. And, and, you know, like that needs to be happy to mention but sometimes a lighter touch that one things, you know, for people to take over and be able to take ownership over time.

Yeah, and I think that's really crucial and what you said there about it being happens over an extended period of time and, you know, and that idea of, perhaps even ownership of as well of, you know, of these sort of innovations in an ultimate, they only survive in the hands of people that really care about them. Yeah, absolutely. It's a sense of ownership right, you know, ownership.

Yeah. But then, but then any crucial to that story is, is people getting to know each other 3 | 2 ones and three, you know, reexamining what they think that they know. You know, and from a really love to sing that you said about the disposable camera as well just taking pictures of what you think you know, and then going to have a conversation about it. It's so simple, these things are so simple that it's just you know like almost providing another person, you know, for them, you know, it just just by opening our eyes. Open your eyes and looking. Another really good thing interesting thing comedians and there's a book by somebody called shows pick which is all about looking. And it's just about. I can send you the link for it. It's it but it's I mean you might only find it so interesting or useful, but it is really about how you go into a space, and you just suspend judgement. You just look.

And you just register. And you just serve and you just see what is actually in here okay there's seven chairs, there's these bookshelves two tables. And there's a car herd, is that no there's lamps. Oh, I see this switch done like you know, whatever, and all that stuff is absolutely crucial, you know like, does it for instance have a switch, like could people switch on the light if they want, many new buildings don't have a switch in the meeting rooms.

And so you don't know, as a random user, how to switch on the light, you have to speak to the manager to switch on the line doesn't work. Right. You know, there's just, you know, all these layers all this stuff oh you can't open the window. So it's not really a good place to bring food is what you have ventilate properly after you've used it, somebody is going to do yoga afterwards. You know it.

There's so many things that need to be understood, for these things to be able to work. And and I think it's really exciting to work into an existing building though or in a situation with that but also the building and see what kind of changes are actually needed, you know, to make this possible.

And, and, of course, again, you know, the most flexible places are the ones where you can open the windows and switch on the light and you know do normal things, but a lot of new buildings, you can't do those things. And so it's not rocket science but it is a step back sometimes I think maybe we should kind of stop now to know or whatever, I don't know if you have any more questions, otherwise you can just always ask again as opposed to whatever.

Yeah, of course. I'd love you to send the links.

**I was just wondering about your experience in the library and you said he didn't go for a long time now, I understand that you went with you when you first had your daughter, and you were there. Were you there because you wanted to go to the library and occupy Olive with something and do something with her, or was it because you were visiting the GP, and you decided to go in. What was your motivation?**

Well the GP because that GP wasn't ours. It was a library, and I think the motivation was covering, probably, then. Now, you might get a way of doing something that stimulates all. It was a way of growing up with the ideas that libraries and books exist and that good places to go.

And it wasn't a. **It was also a way of meeting other kids, and also other grown ups,** because you're going to be mad, as you're puttering about at home with a child. And so **it's served a lot of very strict for what you like, responding to very straightforward needs or desires,** which I think we're also have to absolutely love the space. I mean, I hate the architect if you go there, you might have might not like it I think it's terrible, but yet it was well done. **It was new, it had a lot of nights. And it felt like somebody**

cared. It was actually, it really felt as somebody cared. It felt like a civic gesture. It felt like society mattered. Somebody had invested money in a place for the public to use it and felt civilised.

And in a way that you know a lot of places don't when they're not cared for when they feel underfunded, and so on. I mean, like I really, I personally get quite affected by walking into a place where I feel like this is the end of society. And, you know, all public funding has been chopped off by some stupid government. I don't like to go to places which feel not cared for. And I think a lot of lives feel uncared for, and I think it's one of the things that keeps me away from them.

But I haven't but also the other thing is that actually, I think it's really difficult to fit things in two days. So, I'm obviously not working all day. I didn't when I was, you know, having a hard time working spending a lot of time at home with her when she was, was a little fixable and found it difficult not to find the time. And maybe I don't prioritise it enough but, you know, because obviously I do have weekends.

Maybe I don't think the libraries are good enough.. We can programme. I prefer to go to where I'm at maybe the problem is books are not that expensive really unless you consume a lot of it.

And so, so, so actually, by and large, how we get our books is by going to the bookshop which is quite nice. And, and then we swap books with friends. And that seems to work pretty well. And so that's also part of it, that I don't particularly want to somehow go to this unattractive place at a time, that doesn't fit, and then have to remember to bring the bloody book back and read it within 30 days and whatever the goals are these days. And so I think that there's something about that whole interface which is just not convenient. And you know when I started thinking about libraries last time was literally when Zarida asked about this conversation and. And as you know, I can't lie, one past one sort of pass for me was my god it would be so much more convenient. If we could just access all these books online and they could just send them and we had to pay a pound to get them delivered. You know, and that is because I don't feel that it's an attractive thing to go because I don't actually think that even the supermarket I try to avoid online shopping, and so on, but I think libraries are particularly unattractive spaces. And, you know, that's a big thing for me.

Thanks. Yeah, it's really interesting, because I think people so far haven't told us this.

What do people say?

I think we weren't asking really the right questions. That's the problem here, that's always an exercise as well. But you said that you like the book shops and what is cool about the book shops that isn't cool about libraries, would you like to book the bookshop?

Can you log in to Waterstones, and although, again, I find that I don't like the design, and so on, but I find it careful. I feel like somebody is giving value to my experience to my being there. I feel that the books are presented in attractive ways. And, and so on and so on I feel like there's a nice atmosphere. Therefore, and generally the other people who go there also enjoy being there. I guess it might be similar in the library that the people who actually go there, enjoy being there. It's just I don't know why things have to be so bad, physically like terrible lighting worn out shitty carpets in horrible colours, terrible plastic chairs shelves that have not been renewed for generations. And you probably can't see out of the windows because they're so dirty.

It's not really the kind of experience I feel like yeah Saturday, that we go with the alternative is to go to the Tate, I mean, honestly, how can that compete. And so, I think that, I think it needs to have its game right. And so that is both got to do with all that stuff that I'm talking about now but I think also the other uses. Because clearly what drew was shadow Knights to the library when he was little as an exam

was that there was something we really wanted there. And then books became part of it and we did borrow books and we did bring them back and we have become part of that sort of exchange and economy.

Because we went there anyway. And actually, while I say it was nice to go there because it felt careful. **We might even have gone to the library, even if it had been a bit awkward as well,** because we really needed, I don't know, we might have, you know and and so I think that there's a combination of different layers and they all play a role, but until you, there's always a reason for what you do. And so you'd like you must feel the need to go there or feel that it's a nice thing to do.

And at the moment the library is probably in my life, not a need and it's not nice and doesn't stand a chance. But both of those things could be improved on. And a lot of some of that has got to do with funding, which I think is why **it's so clever to layer more things into the building, because clearly they need money to become more attractive.** And then as it happens, these other uses might also be exciting. So it's kind of a win win, I would say.

**Sure. My last question would be about information, and what sort of information, did you leave at the library, about yourself when you're checking out books?**

I remember when we got our library card. And when you go into the library, any sort of information, any sort of interaction where you were giving him a bit of information about yourself, verbally or non verbally.

**What do you remember?** So, in other words, what does your local library know about you?

So basically, obviously, they would have had whatever information to get the card so I suppose like you know like to know what is your address. I don't even know whether they had our telephone number or email address, I can't remember that. **I wouldn't be too bothered if they had had.** But I don't remember. I don't remember if there was some smart questionnaire about our interests in this than the other, I really do not remember. Otherwise, we didn't give any information. I don't think much.

**So do you, do you think they knew when you were coming in for the events, I understand you were attending events?**

Just walking in about. I was asking whether they were that you were coming with your daughter, would they be with did they understand that you were going there with your daughter, or well okay so yes I mean so these things like say these events and so now obviously organised. And, and they would not they would obviously be there would be a gathering of parents with kids, you know, five to 10, or whatever and it started at 10 of what have you. And so in that kind of thing. **I mean of course they would observe that this was going on, but I don't, but it's not as if we checked in, or, you know, particularly set. We are here for this.**

**And when you were saying that you were interacting with other children and with other grown ups. Were you exchanging information about yourself with them, and your interests and your daughter's interest?**

Oh, just like chatting like we are now in a way, what slightly less formal, but yeah. So, but **the staff was not part of that so again it would not particularly feed into any kind of intelligence that the library would have held.** And I think a lot of the people who did the kind of events or whatever that we attended were outsiders, who probably were either renting the space and doing something that we might have contributed some money to a component or a, or they might have been paid for by the



council or the library, but probably, you know, we're not. I don't think they tend to because employees are also doing these events. **So I don't necessarily know that the library developed much intelligence.**

Okay, so what information then you would be willing to share potentially with the library as an organisation that can maybe use this information further for improving their services or maybe even doing something even better for the entire community? What would you be willing to share with them?

Be willing to share with you something nice with it. I mean I'm sort of wondering about. You see this is where I don't know if I don't actually even quite understand your question. Do you literally mean like my email address, my telephone number or my interests, or what I would like to do with everything? Yeah, **I would be very happy to share that, of course, in whatever format, really.** But I do, I do think that **there is a problem with a certain kind of you like the question for me is really how do you ask these questions in a way,** I believe in.

And, you know, when I get, you know, consultation forms from the council about whether they're now going to change the road junction or something. And I do sometimes bother filling them out because I have an opinion on it. But **I'm well aware that it's all just going to be registered somewhere in some pie chart,** and then actually they're either going to do or not do what they were planning to get on within the highways department anyway.

**And so I'm not too excited by that.** And so I think that, you know, obviously there's a **there's a quality and having a relationship with a place, or with a group of people** and that's one of the things we try for instance to do when we're doing projects that involves communities is like we're there consistently we try to come back the same faces. **We try to remember who we're talking to.** We try to engage with existing community groups that already have a dynamic between them, which means that they will be able to open up that collectively they will get to know us that they will cost about us afterwards, and so on. Because that all helps right to be part of the situation, and not just somehow like at arm's length, asking Christians that nobody knows which part of the computer in or whatever they ended up in.

And so I think that **there's something about being accountable by being true and being present.** And surely in a library. That is crucial because it's a local community it's not like some nationwide referendum or something, it's a very local intervention. And so, you know, whether that would be you. In principle, or whether that would be about enabling the staff in the library to become better at that kind of thing. That has to be thought about or whatever. But I think it's absolutely crucial that these things can be believed in, and that there's continuity.

**And that you don't feel oh this is just another health and safety question there are some statistics somewhere,** so you know don't ask whether I'm white, black or something else, it really does not matter. And, you know, if you must ask it at least admit that we putting that at the very back of the ship for, and you check it out and that that will mean, and we'll be interested in what he said, You know, like it's really, I think it's really crucial that one communicates in a way where it becomes obvious that you're interested. And that you want to do something with the data, and we all know that that ethnicity form is useless. And in any productive way, and so it's really important to you know for me it's very important that that is presented as not important, but like, I'm here to do everything correct. And that is really untrustworthy, you know. So, I think they get all those schemes you know like you need to connect. And, and then often you can get quite a lot of information. And so the question is how long does that, because you know like you do need to tick boxes as well at the same time, and you do need to have consciousness data and so on. But you need to find ways of for people I think to believe that the qualitative aspects of what they do matter more to you. And that's what you're going to work with and this is just going to back it up. And so basically you know I think it's quite good if you

don't, you'd like to offerings and one thing that maybe would you like that I would not like would be, every time I walked into the library that I'm checking in and I'm being asked What are you doing here today. Thank you very much. That is not a clever way it's not that it's secret that I'm gonna or that I'm not willing to provide the information except that is the wrong way of going about things. And it needs to be based around something that makes sense to people, and that way you know if you feel like there's a mutual benefit in sharing the information.

Brilliant. Thank you. Thank you, Dann. That's really interesting what you said about engaging people before you expect them to come up with information. And it's almost creating a conversation and create a sort of mutual understanding about why there is the exchange of information. They need to understand the process and they need to feel that that you might come back, or that you will feed some findings back to them. You know, there needs to be that you need to be part of something where the information flows back and forth for him to be working I think that's great, thank you so much.

## Annex 7. Interview #4 with Simon Higgs

Date: 10 June 2020

Name of the interviewee: Simon Higgs

Occupation: Director V22 Libraries

Name of interviewer: Loren Hansi Gordon

Duration of interview: 30 min

So I'm going to start recording now. And so maybe could you tell me just a little bit about your? Well, first of all, just say your name and then your role within the library.

So I am Simon Higgs. I am director of the V22 libraries. So I run the libraries at Forest Hill, manor house and Sydenham Hill.

Forest Hill is the community library that we believe is open more hours than any other community library in the country. You know, seven day a week service, and idioms. The first one that we took over basically was just under the threat of closure, or someone was going to come and take it over and we wanted to make sure it was part of the community that took it over to run a community based library. And so the Forest Hills society free to trade association and V 22. came together. This is how I got involved v 22. Never heard from before this and we We took it over. It was apparent that we were making a success of it. And so the council approached us and said, no one's taking manor house, would you like it? And I live very close to manor house. My house is only my youngest son was actually at the nursery opposite manor house. And so we went and looked at it and said, Yes. And then signum came up more recently. It was being run by eco communities, also on Chrome. But they were just they had too much going on. And really not the support staff to make a go of it a lot needed doing within the building. It's in them, and retreats to a very good buildings and heritage projects. And so we agreed to take that one over as well. So we only actually had that for about six months. President we love them now. Now. Of course, it's been closed for two of those now. And so yeah, we just tried to turn that round. It's a much quieter life. It's only a three and a half days a week. But yeah, so we've got three different IPS in three very different parts of Lewisham with different needs, different users, running them all on the same model, which essentially involves having a paid member of staff in each library, if we can have manor house that happens to be me because we don't have the budget to quite cover an extra person. And then I sort of oversee the whole thing within the buildings rather than trying to lots of people have turned libraries into Park cafes, or pass gyms or all sorts of other things are diversified into lots of other things. We were trying to keep our footprints of our libraries that we inherited the same and so far we have and so what we do is we take the other spaces within libraries, so things that used to be offices and staff rooms and kitchens and turn it into studio spaces and rent them out to artists.

We also opened a secondhand book and record shop on the high street in Forest Hill, which generates some income coming in as well. And then Apart from that, we just try and get grants from either the local authority, which isn't very likely, or to third parties, the Arts Council, people like that, to try and keep the places going. Because all of the buildings, certainly Forest Hill and manor house, especially our heritage buildings that you can get funding for the upkeep of those buildings. Manor house is great to start listed for us to upgrade to listed so there is funding to be so that was seemed like a clear decision then to kind of stick to a core Library Service. As you kind of perceive it. Could you talk a little bit more about that kind of decision and what you see is like the core services that you want your libraries to offer.

I think people think of libraries and they think of the traditional book borrowing side have things. And there's a great appetite amongst politicians trying to save money. So look at book borrowing figures, see them falling. And think this is a good excuse to close my views because people aren't using them.

The truth of it is, the way the information is handed out is just different these days, computers have become far more important. Nobody even prints encyclopaedias anymore. So if you're ever doing research, you went to a library to look in the textbooks. To get that research now you go to the library, to log onto the computer to look online to find that information. Because it's very often not in a book. So while book borrowing does decrease, the use of the library actually doesn't. And the visitor figures for Forest Hill and manor house over the last four years since we've had them completely bear that out. Risk numbers are not falling usage is going up. We have queues sometimes using the computers, we have 19 computers in Forest Hill, and they are going from the moment we open till quarter an hour before we close. And there's somebody on them all the time, man a house, we've got 14 computers, they're just constantly on the go. That is the demand. It's people coming in being forced online to access services. So whether it's applying for benefits, whether it's doing job searches, you know, just down to blue badges or anything and everything. You know, refugees, people with English a second language, people with mental health difficulties, people with physical health, technical difficulties.

Things like law, service law help, that's all been withdrawn. You know, we have books on that. And we have specific websites we can direct people towards, it's a lot about signposting in the right direction and it's a lot about trying to help people more than it ever was. You know, 30 years ago, that wasn't what it was about. It was about disseminating information. But now it's, it's about Hold on.

Yeah. Okay, so yeah, I was thinking about the core service around information where it was previously held in a book, but now it's about helping people find information online. So and how much do you kind of know about the different groups of people that access your libraries? Are you able to kind of gather much information about?

Information on the people using the library isn't great. The one good thing about a library along with public parks, they're really the only spaces that everybody uses. It doesn't matter. You know, if you're young or you're old, you're affluent. You know, everybody uses a public library, whether it's to take you know little Tarquin along to make sure that he's reading better than all the other kids in his class or whether it's just to try and you know, the only source of books that you've got for your four, five year old. Everybody uses a public library, as I say, it's certainly at Forest Hill, the democratic we get a lot of people job searching because the job centre is just down the road. It's the only one left in the bar. And so a lot of people get sent straight from the jobcentre, up to Forest Hill, a lot of them haven't even got email addresses. So we have to start getting them signed up to anything.

And, uh, you're kind of volunteers. I'm assuming that you work with some volunteers as well, is that really everyone is volunteer...

30 volunteers all together across the three libraries.

And do you kind of give them some basic training around supporting visitors' needs or how does that look?

Yes, as volunteers come in, they get to learn the basics, and then really, we sort of its relationship develops, it's not perfectly voluntary. A library isn't for everybody. Some people really sort of get into it and they have the ICT skills already. And so we tend to push those people more towards being able to help people. We're just currently developing the system because it's all a little bit been a little bit ad hoc. We're trying to develop a system whereby we have technical support on certain days or certain times of the week so that we know if someone comes in and says they need help with a certain website. And the only people there are, you know, three senior citizens with the best in the world who didn't know how to use computers themselves.

Six months earlier, they at least can say somebody 'come back tomorrow morning between nine and 12; there'll be someone here to help you'. So yeah, we have volunteers who will specialise in that. In

the same way we have volunteers who specialise in the children's library and during writing time with children. And so I had two thoughts going on at once then they both teach.

So the first question I wanted to ask was about the kind of computer and ICT service in your abs kind of observation. Do you feel like that's the biggest demand at the moment? And the biggest kind of skill set needed within the library?

We can always do with people who know more about it so that we can do it more; volunteers who understand and can help people.

Yes, yeah. And then the other question I was thinking of was around things like the writing time or other like book groups and other activities, they kind of services that you look to increase and do you kind of do them in response to the specific local communities or how do they kind of come about and evolve?

It's a bit of both. Some services we just inherited. So Forest Hill, we have two runtimes. We have one incredibly popular one, but sometimes we just have to shut down because it becomes a health and safety risk. We have too many people coming in. And sort of one in the afternoon and then but we also inherited an origami class which is mostly seen is coming along and doing origami. But we discovered that we had a demand for children's to origami as well. So we developed that as an additional service. At manor house, there was no craft club, but there was very much demand. People can come in and say, Well, have you got a craft? So we formed one. So some of its demand lead. Some of it's something we already have. Occasionally we will try something else. So we had a we got three book grip training about a house, someone wants to do another one that would just be people turning up reading short stories there, and then and then discussing it. And I thought, Yeah, that's a great idea. Let's do that. And it never worked. So some of these you think are gonna work done, unfortunately. We just provide different things.

Yeah. And is that how you kind of measured demand really about people approaching you with ideas or, or requests for different things, different services?

I mean, we look to see what other libraries are doing as well. There is a very good library is the South node library where they do all sorts of things. They have a tool lending library and they had lots of different sort of writing groups as well as reading groups and things. And so we tried to borrow a little bit from that. We also get involved with local services. So the fair share of Manor House the lady who runs the fair share, we regularly liaised with her. And we're trying to start a gardening group for senior men at manor house because we have grounds and the grounds need an upkeep and they want to run groups for men, but men don't want to sit around talking about their feelings or knitting or what have you, but an outdoor activity. So yes, it's a mixture of things really.

And what would you think are kind of some of the biggest challenges that these different libraries are facing at the moment in the different context?

Unfortunately, the problem is funding. It's always going to be funding you know, we have no money from the council at all to run the service. They provide the books, and they provide the software that we allow people to borrow and return books. And that's about it. So we have to pay all the bills within the building. If we weren't a charity, we would also have to pay the business rates. We haven't you know, we have to do all the cleaning, and obviously supplying toilet rolls and all those sorts of things. Which, if you have been to Manor house, but it's it's over four floors, there are six toilets in that building. And so we have quarter million visitors a year coming through the door, and some of them are only going to yoga classes or visiting midwives or what have you. But it doesn't matter. They all come in, they all use the toilet overhead to train these old buildings, or is a huge cost. Yeah. And so it's those core costs that you're so strong. get funding for. So if you want to run an art project and you

want to do something with disabled people, then you can apply for funding and you'll probably get it. If you want to fund a member of staff for the next two years, or pay the electricity bill or next two years, no one's interested.

Yeah, I think that's a really good point. So in terms of the current business model around kind of leasing out some of those extra spaces to artists, is that kind of sustainable do you think is it's functioning obviously, do you think it's a good long term model?

It doesn't fluctuate. It's, uh, we can put the price you know, if not working, we could put the prices up slightly. Obviously, we don't want to do that because artists aren't gonna mess with that money either. And when it comes to time to the economy, like now we can potentially see a real shrinkage in the number of people looking for spaces. So yeah, it's not perfect, but it's better than lots of other models. And it means that we don't have to sort of corporate sponsorship, and we're not. You know, we're not having to sell everyone who comes through the door a cup of tea, or charge them extortionate prices to use the printer, more sunlight, because now to actually charge them to use the computers. You know, it just seems to fit the objects are running live as far as I'm concerned. So yeah, no, I don't want to get okay.

And so I just want to share a little bit about one of the ideas that we've been exploring in this module. And we've kind of done quite a lot of desktop research, obviously, the current climate is slightly confined to what we can do. And we've been having some conversations with people with other librarians as well. And one of the things that we were thinking about was this idea around data and information, and I know it's quite a contentious topic. But one of the things that we thought about was how libraries might be able to kind of get to know their visitor community better. And I think there can be a scenario where people can come and go for weeks and months. And as a librarian or Library Manager, you might not have a particularly close relationship with them or know what it is they're coming in for. And so our estimation was that if you could get to know the visitors better, it might help to design services for them, or like more closely aligned to their needs. So have a kind of, I guess, a clearer picture about what those demands are kind of within the community beyond people just asking for things specifically. So we were thinking about a service that could support library managers with a range of different tools, and kind of like ethnographic tools, observation and also like conversational tools, or engagement tools for gathering more information about visitors. So I'll just share with you like are this this might look like absolute nonsense to you because it partially is but we've sketched out what we call like a service blueprint. And tell me if this makes absolutely no sense because actually it might not. I'm coming at this completely cold now where what I need to do I want to share my screen with you. Basically what we've done is kind of mapped out what this a journey through this service might be. So I'm going to share this with you a second.

Okay, so this is a working kind of map of, of our service. So what as I said, what we were thinking is that we've had lots of discussions, where there's a group of four of us and we were thinking about data in a much more kind of like in a much more hardcore sense of like, getting to know like, demographics age, but also in a kind of softer sense in terms of doing like storytelling and listening and more kind of ethnographic data collection around visitors to kind of get a softer sense of who these people are, what people's interests are, and whether that feeds into building certain areas of the collection. Like if you know, your local community actually has a lot of gardeners or lots of people interested in architecture or, or whatever it is, then you can start to kind of build build your collection around that. Or it might be that through doing like regular engagement. session. So you learn that lots of people within the community would like a particular activity, for example. So it's definitely not new or rocket science, but we're thinking how that

might be applied and helpful for library managers. So this is a kind of a kind of customer journey. So our services aimed at community managers. So it's aimed at like, library staff. So the first kind of step is that you might be kind of thinking that it would be useful to have a bit more data and information. And then what we would do is kind of circulate a leaflet about our surveys. So you'd have that first introduction. And we imagine it being a digital toolkit, so something that's accessible online. So you could go on to a web page. So it's this kind of pink section that I'm left Yeah, and so you can kind of have a Google and you find this toolkit online, and you kind of recognise it because you've seen the leaflet and it feels like okay, this is a secure source of information. And you'd be able to browse the homepage, and then you'd kind of start to think what we would like to do is kind of list the information by outcome so that you can start to recognise instantly, whether it's like, build closer relationships with with visitors, so you kind of click on that. And then you would be taken through to a kind of step by step guide have an activity. So it could be a workshop setting, or it could be how to do like a, a day or a week of observation within the library. And to help to kind of gather this data and information about what people are doing kind of within the library. One of the things that we were interested in was actually Looking at interactions. So one of the activities was thinking about mapping interactions within the library in the physical space, so in the building, but also between people, and to see what that could actually teach you about how the library is being used. So by doing a kind of a day or a week or a month of observations, you might learn that you probably know this a bit anecdotally anyway. But you know, the, the hotspots where people like to go and sit where you might need more kind of like plug plug sockets or kind of hidden corners of the library that are maybe being used more or less than others, or bits of furniture that are being interacted with in ways you haven't thought about. Also some of the kind of conversations between visitors that are taking place that might be a kind of spot for rethinking the service or adding to services in a different way. So we've got a range of toolkits that we need to develop a bit further and we kind of recognise That, like library managers and volunteers have a lot to do anyway. And we were thinking that kind of support line would be helpful for this. So you might have kind of been on the website and seen the toolkit, but to then actually deliver one of the activities, you might need a little bit more kind of support to do that. So we were thinking that a support line where you could speak to somebody before setting up one of these activities and get a little bit further guidance on that would be useful. And then the the kind of next aspect of this is thinking about supporting libraries and libraries staff to actually process that information.

And to kind of visualise it so that you can take action off the back of it. And we've done a lot of reading and thinking about data privacy, but also the kind of ethics around data. There was an interest as well, but we haven't necessarily taken the project in this way, but thinking about Data trusts, and how libraries could have a role to play in terms of actually being guardians of data within the local communities. I think there's a kind of element to this where if you are going to gather more information and data from your community that that's kind of held securely and ethically, but could potentially then also be a resource for that community to draw on. And so that's something that we've been interested in learning more about.

But the idea with this is that it's it also that the data doesn't become a burden because I think you don't want your team to collect all this information and then spend hours kind of in doing data entry and input. So the idea with this service is that it could be inputted easily into the toolkit, and then turned into visualisations or analysed in a way that enable you to draw out kind of core themes within That data. And we were thinking that that would then be useful for things like funding applications. And one of the conversations we had was with somebody who had applied to get some work done around adding in some extra plug sockets, because they'd observed that more people coming into professionals kind of using spaces, you know, co working or what have you. But because there was no data or information around that, it was hard to kind of apply for

and secure that funding. So that's kind of where we're thinking with this is that if you then have that at your fingertips, it's easier to start to access some of that additional support, and also even just talk about what you're doing on social media or on your websites, etc. And so that was kind of some of the possible outcomes that we were thinking for this kind of data and information that kind of empowers the library. And yeah, so that's broadly like what we were thinking with this, this kind of service based around the toolkit. In empowering library managers to make the most of the information and knowledge from their community to provide better services. Yeah, so that's it kind of in a in a big nutshell.

It'd be great to get any reflections or thoughts on that.

### Simon's Feedback on Service Concept

Yeah, no, I think I mean, obviously, gaining more information about the people who use the library can only be useful having something to backup figures to backup any kind of funding application also incredibly useful. Indeed, it would have to be, as you say, easy to submit the data and, and somehow easy for to make sure that everybody's inputting the same level of data because obviously, the trouble with having loads of volunteers is they are all on someone running on three hours a week and the level of information that they're likely to understand and be able to input compared to Somebody who's on 1020 hours a week is going to be different. And I wouldn't want that to disrupt the information coming out of it. So it would have to be fairly simple for everyone to use in that respect. That would be the only thing that worried me though, the thing I'd be concerned.

Otherwise, very good question. Okay. Fantastic. That's great to hear. And I think the next step for us is that we're developing the elements of the toolkit in a bit more detail, because we were thinking about a kind of prototype. So we were looking at three types of activity. And so we need to develop those in a bit more detail. One is more kind of observational, the other one is around storytelling and engagement. And another one is around looking at where data is generated within the within the library and thinking about that in a more kind of holistic way. So yeah, I mean, if you'd be interested in seeing any more of those developments, I'd be more than happy to kind of share them with you. And we're also going to be presenting this next week and Silvana from Crafton Park, who will be joining us for that presentation. So I'd extend that invitation to you as well. It's Wednesday. And just within it'll be on zoom. And it will be to a number of stakeholders, probably yourself, you know, if you'd like to come and Silvana and our other course mates, who have been working on this project and another project, so we'll kind of present our ideas and findings and the feedback as well. And that will be next Wednesday afternoon. So you'd be welcome again to join us. Fantastic, thank you. And that's really great. Is there anything else that you that you think would be useful to share that we have that I haven't asked you or that you think is really relevant to this top my head if I think of anything else, I can always drop you in email.

Yeah. No, no, this is good. I think almost impossibly, I'd like to know why people don't use their library or don't don't understand the things that they can get from them. I mean, we get so many people will come in and say what they can do that and then interested in that. And I'd like to to get the information out there more sharing information, more, all the things that you can do within your library. And I think find out why people don't why you know, lots of people to use to use libraries years ago, don't anymore and why other people just don't, don't use it. And I think you know, is that slightly down to ethnicity? Oh, some groups, not using like saying it's not for them? Hmm. You know?

Yeah. And I think actually these kind of tools would be so helpful in in uncovering, on the one hand uncovering some of that stuff. I mean, there's no reason why you couldn't extend an engagement activity to non library users. You know, you could learn those skills in in engaging



people that within the library, but you could also do a call out for non library users and do an engagement, try and, you know, understand some of that with the same kind of skill set. So that's one thing but I think you also touched on this idea around communication and just being able to really talk clearly about your services and what you do offer and celebrate your successes as well. I think that's one thing that libraries sometimes struggle to do is actually show off what is being done in the kind of broader social set offer. which hopefully a service like this that that kind of gathers that information together could could help With. Yeah, brilliant. Thank you so much for your time, Simon. I really appreciate it.

Very interesting.

Okay. All right. Well, I'll send you the details about the presentation. It's Wednesday afternoon. But once I know the time, I'll send that over to you. Thanks. Have a great day.

Bye.

## Annex 8. Interview #5 with Silvana Altamore

Date: 18 June 2020

Name of the interviewee: Silvana Altamore

Occupation: Crofton Park Library Manager

Name of interviewer: Loren Hansi Grodon, Iulia Tvigun, Zarida Zaman, Yingyin Li

Duration of interview: 47 min

So we're going to just give a brief introduction to the service. And then it would be great to just get your both general and also specific feedback on things that you think could work differently or that you're unsure of or that you think don't make a tool. Just kind of like any thoughts on that would be really helpful. Okay, so I'm going to hand over to the reader who is going to just give a little bit of a kind of story about the service, and Yulia is going to share her screens, I think you'll be able to see something as well.

Yeah. Okay. I'll just wait for you to start sharing.

Okay, so, yeah, so this is called Get to know and it's a toolkit for empowering community librarians and this is our team Flotilla. So just to give you a little bit of a scenario in terms of, of a library manager's position in terms of what might happen here, also a bit of perspective on a customer or user as well sort of using the space. So we've created a little sort of scenario to give a little bit of a feedback loop in terms of how the service might work. So I'll just read through some of this text for you. You don't need to read through it all. I just get through it. So meet Sonia, who is our community Library Manager. She is working in the library. She's there five days a week, and she was approached by a local artists called Joanne who uses the Library but she's also an artist and she wants to find out if she can run some art workshops as part of the library function. And she does that she does it over three executive evenings, but what she finds That she only has two attendees that come. And she's a little bit disappointed because she thinks that, you know, people are just not interested in what I want to do in the library.

So with the Get to know service toolkit, and you'll find out a little bit more information about that shortly, some you can review the data. And she can also have a look at the visitors interests. And she actually had already has a little bit of a blueprint around some of the interests that the that the users of the library have already expressed. And so she's now thinking, How can I put, here's a bit of knowledge that I've got, here's somebody that is using the library in a different way, but it hasn't quite worked out. So what can I do? So she then thinks about the knowledge that she has, she thinks about putting a calendar of events together that reflects some of the information that she's got through this collected data. She then shares that on social media platform. She has some like she has some interest from People that are also library users that go off and mentioned comments on Facebook, she then creates a calendar of events that actually is slightly more successful than just one random event. And that really informs her decision making and she uses that on a continuous basis in terms of updating, what the what the offering is in terms of sort of events happening in the library.

Perfect. Yeah. I would buy really, okay.

Okay, so the next slide is just a kind of overview of our service. So it's called Get to know you've had a bit of an illustration of how you might use it. But in a nutshell, it's a digital toolkit that should be easy to use. And it helps library teams to learn more about their visitors and improve services based on what the needs and interests are from their their library community. And so it helps with data collection, but

also engagement and we use a range of different methods. From kind of like ethnography activities, to more engagement activities, and you're supported to do that through a community support line and various different tools in the toolkit. And then we also have an element that visualises the data that's been collected in a way that we hope would be easy to consume and draw out insights and kind of turn that into either information for funding applications, or perhaps comments that you want to share on social media that kind of illustrate the successes of your activities that you're running. That's it kind of in a nutshell. We're going to go I'm going to hand over to Lulia now and she's going to talk a little bit more about what those different activities might be that to collect data.

So we came up with three main activities, which are named after a profession or a role that you will librarian can try on to collect some data that you usually otherwise won't necessarily collect. So the first activity called the data scientist, this is an activity that helps you understand where in your library you already have tangible data produced as in like maybe your browsing history on their workstations, the computers that you mentioned earlier, or maybe it's the visits in the online catalogue if you have such a catalogue. So, it could be digital as I just illustrated, it could also be analogue. Maybe you have one of those you know, maybe you use still the the flyers that are sort of attached to the first page of the book where you say, who is like till till what date you can read the book when you need to return it. So it will draw your attention to the things that you were doing in the library. You Or the things that are there in the library and are already creating some sort of data and how to make sense of the data. The other activity would be the archaeologist and this is an activity that will ask you to think about the assets that you have within the library as in like furniture, maybe maybe if you took a closer look at the how furniture is used, maybe you would understand something, understand more about your visitors maybe there's something they like more maybe there is a window that they like to sit by more than other maybe there's been a lighting in a specific corner of your library, or maybe some bookshelves are visited more than others. So this this archaeologists, you know, like like urologist usually look, they look at broken vase, and they're like, Oh, I actually know who made it, how how it was made, when it was made, how it was used. That Thank you. Kept oil or maybe they kept wine in it. So you would be looking at a physical object in your library and how people are using that physical physical object. And you will be drawing conclusions from that. And the third one, the Wise One is named after, you know, chieftains of tribes, how they usually sit by a fire with their tribe, and they they tell stories to each other. So we were inspired by that. And we were thinking maybe you can use, learn how to use and use storytelling techniques, and interview techniques with your library users, library visitors to understand them better. So these are basically three roles that we named after a profession that we propose that you use to get data to learn how to extract that data. And then using our toolkit, maybe also to visualise it. So when you have that data presented, very nicely, visually, you will be able to draw conclusions and propose improvements for your services in the library. Yeah. Yes. Great. Do you have any questions do let's open this to a conversation?

Yes, I mean, it's great. And I think you look in the right places, because, yes, we do have data that we could use. And we can create maybe data; that's absolutely true. Not sure about the archaeology. There are books that are more boring; the most boring books or stuff like that. We, we do these, you know, **we know why people sit at one table more than another. That's because there's a socket there and they can recharge their laptop** and that is something for example that yes, **it is useful to look where people why sit there and yes, it definitely gives you an idea or what is necessary.**

From the digital point of view of the data, you say, yes, you can develop some data that maybe are hidden. I don't understand exactly what you mean? Do you mean in inputting data ourselves where we think that might be or just have a look of something that it's already there. For example, when you said the data came to my mind that we have active in the library, of course, for everything that we sell, and

we sell services, so printing papers, the use of the computer, we sell books, because we have a secondhand bookshop.

That's data. So that, for example, I do use that data to see if we sell, for example, more children's books than other books. That is the only data that I can see at the moment that I can use apart from the number of people getting to the library. That footfall. Okay. So how would you in these, uh, you know, another library, for example, that has already using the the tail as already using the footfall device counter? What other data do you see? And how are you going to input to the data or do you mean to create a way to gather data? That's not clear to me. Yeah.

Yes. So when what I'm saying about the Data Scientist. Yes, if data like the what you were saying how many books you sold, whether there were children's books or other types of books, that's exactly the type of sort of thing. That's exactly the type of information that you will be looking at. In this when you will, when we will suggest that you play the role of the data scientist. Maybe other libraries don't do that, you know, maybe it maybe you can use your browser browsing history on the workstations to learn what people look at.

That's not possible because that's privacy. When people browse on computers at the library, it's there because they log on with their name. Okay, we give them a ticket and that ticket is linked to the their name, okay. So whatever they browse that is their business. So we don't have, you know, we don't know where to set for example, there are some stuff that is, you know, blocked. They cannot, for example, gamble because everything that is related with gambling is blocked automatically by the computers. But I don't know what they what they browse. And I don't think that I could access that because of privacy. For example, when they print, you know, we say to them, if there is something really, really private that you want to print, please let us know because we will just Click Printer without looking at the preview. This is something that we sign we have an agreement a, you know, data data, privacy, we are not going to look at what people print because it's the private stuff. So, and also the website, for example, you were saying, looking at books that people are looking for on our website.

We don't have a single website, we're part of a big, big website, which is which have libraries. So usually people look for the book, and then the website gives you the options of where this book can be found. So yes, maybe we could ask them what kind of books are Most Searched in our past, let's say, of the website. But definitely we cannot look at users.

Okay, so don't have access to the bigger catalogue that you just mentioned.

No, I don't, but I can theoretically write to Lewisham libraries and say, is there a way to know what kind of books are people looking for in Croft on Barker stock? Yeah, I could. But definitely, I cannot see the history of the browsing history of people sitting at the computers because that's privacy data. You know,

Okay, I didn't know that. Yeah, that's useful. That's very useful. Do you have a Facebook page? Or like a social media page?

Yes, we have a Facebook page or we have an Instagram, Twitter.

And do you do social media management beyond just posting? Do you look at the statistics and insights of those pages and trying to maybe get some ideas of what content is better? At what time do you post?

I am the Social Media Manager. And yes, I do try to look at... I am the manager of the library. It's quite difficult for me you know to do I just do a bit of decent bit of that. Yes, I do look at the statistics and analytics. Say it is different time. And different audiences, like for example, Facebook, it's very good for us, because we have a lot of families, young families. So everyone that is looking for something for their children to do, they look at our page. So that's good for us. Instagram is a completely different audience. We have a lot of people that are more interested in books of a certain type, let's say University more or less. People that are interested in vinyl, because we sell by unit also. And different, I would say that age is lower in on Instagram. While on Facebook. We really touch let's say Up to us certain age people that are, let's say over 60 over 60 or 70. So Facebook, it's quite good for us. There. We do have a lot of people looking at that tweet.

So would it be useful if you had in the toolkit that we're providing more information about how to manage social media?

Oh, yes. Yes. Because it seems to me that every social media or every social is different and can touch and reach different audiences.

Yeah. And if it was specifically designed, but the advice about it was specifically designed for libraries, and information centres that would have been even better. Would you agree with that?

Yes, yes, of course. Yeah.

So I just wanted to, because we talked about, we talked a little bit in depth about this idea of thinking about where data is generated in the library. And I think that was a really useful feedback and discussion. And one of the other toolkits is more kind of ethnographic approach. So this idea of having conversations, so engagement with library visitors, and it's more kind of conversational, and that way kind of building up a closer picture of who the visitors are, and then kind of learning more about their interests that way. So that was the idea of like the wise one, so it would be great to kind of get your thoughts on that whether you think that that kind of conversational engagement activity might be something that you could imagine doing in the library and that it would be useful if it would be useful?

Yes, it's definitely useful because you know, you talk to people and the more you know them, you know, you ask them let's, I would say the most of people are willing to help. So, if you say to them, what do you think of this? What do you think of that? What do you think we're missing? I think that yes, people. It's something that I do that I would do, definitely. Maybe explaining what we want to do. Just not out of the blue saying, but what do you think if Yeah, you know, but good enough. Context is yes, it's definitely useful. And this also works not only as a feedback, it's a way to have quality feedback. Because if you don't have quantity, because it's not that you can do, you can really do this with a lot of people. You can do it with people that are regulars that you can engage in conversation or there have to be an event or something, you know. So it's definitely useful. But it's important to give context.

Yeah. So do you feel that if the toolkit was able to give you a bit more kind of support and structure around delivering or Yeah, hosting some of those engagement activities? Would that be useful? Would you say?

Yes, it would be definitely useful. And it's more useful to have feedback like this, you know, written feedback.

Yeah. No, not very many people engage in that. Yes, definitely. There were like, for example, in the toolkit, it's the there was, like a couple of examples, you know, how I would you suggest to people to talk about something and give a bit of the context that without, you know, telling all the story, but just, you know, saying, how to engage also people in on these. Yeah, definitely. I think it is very useful.

Yeah. Brilliant, thank you. And then to just go into one of the other ideas that we had, which was around looking at this is a kind of observational activity. So it would involve either yourself or one of the volunteers spending some time observing what's going on in the library in a bit more of a focused way. Because I'm sure there's things you absorbed just from being in there, you know, all the time, but actually looking at interactions in the library. So how different individuals interact, also how they interact with the building, and the layout, and all and also things like furniture. So this would be a kind of observational activity where you would write down notes and potentially take pictures, as a way of gathering a kind of 360 impression of what interactions are taking place. It might also lead on to thinking about what goals people have when they come into the library. And if they're able to fulfil those goals, what kind of steps they go through, where if it's printing, if it's somebody coming in, who's wanting to print, do they come in and look around and not quite sure where to go, maybe sit in the cafe and then work their way up to the desk and ask about printing. So observing those interactions and activities over the over duration of time that you have a couple of hours or a day, and using that as a way to kind of build up data or information about the library.

Yeah, definitely. Yeah, that's useful. But if you're not an anthropologist, you know, looking at what people do, it's not easy. It's easy if you have some prompt, let's say, yeah, so even there are like two or three questions like, what is the first thing that people do when they get into your building? Because I'm trying to keep in general Yeah. Where do people look? First of all, they get into the building. Is the service well? Well advertised, is that a sign? Do people look for a sign? You know, something like that? Because otherwise with that observation now they feel not trained? Yeah. You know, and yeah, especially Yes, yes. Sorry.

No, I think that's a really strong point. And particularly, we were thinking about the fact with all of these activities that you're working with a lot of volunteers and not everybody is working a full day. So it's how can these things be things that can just be picked up and used by anybody? I think that's one of the challenges that we have to like, translate some of this. And one of the other aspects that we were thinking About is actually like a support line. Because we imagine that okay, there's information available in the toolkit and you might like the sound of something you might think, Oh, I'd like to be an anthropologist for the day. But I'm not quite confident about it. So I'll give the phone line a ring, the community help phone line, and then I'll get some more kind of guided support around how to deliver some of these activities.

Yeah, I think it would be great, but you call the support line and how much the support line might know about you? And maybe then if you download the toolkit at the same time, you should upload some information about your library? Yeah, all because if I call a support line, and they don't know anything about me, yeah. You know, difficult, it will be difficult for me to explain. Yeah. So far we have one entrance. Yeah. So if you call the support line, the support line should have some basic information in order to deliver something advice straightaway, or maybe just take notes and then send back something after some time because I'm not an alkaline support line. But anyway, you know, they should know something about me when I call or when I contact them, you know.

When I presented the three activities I asked you whether you understood what they meant, and you said some yes, some didn't. And you asked me, What did you mean by the data scientist?

Right? So you asked me what did I mean by the data? So imagine you didn't speak to me, you actually opened the website and you saw exactly the same information. So would you, you would still need to ask someone this, right? So you would want it?

Can you look to the slide back for a second so I can read it again? Can you record and visualise it? Well, to have, you know, it might be not me, **might be another person and say no to all those questions. And then in a way, if I say no to all those questions, I say, well, maybe, you know, maybe I don't have this data. And actually, you really have to think about it.** And there is data somewhere, you know, and you can get today you just have to think about it. So, if, you know, if there was something saying we can help you find, yeah, exactly, because I find the data that might help you or as you create the data between You know, sometimes you have to create it, there's nothing you can do about it, you know? Yes, yes. I don't ever mean that that's something that I discussed with Lauren, and **we don't have a mailing list.** And to me, **it would be amazing to have an email list through MailChimp, and have people clicking and telling me what kind of activities they want to see in the library. And I can send them targeted advertising for what we are doing and be sure that people can come. But I don't have it. Yeah, I have to create it.**

Silvana, how confident would you be in terms of interpreting data, if you were sort of maybe I don't know, did a survey and maybe you had sort of a visualisation of, of this data? How confident would you be about doing the next steps with that data?

I can give you an answer on this like up like a possible answer, you know, from my point of view, if the data is too fractured, **so if I have 25 categories, you know, of audiences. That's very difficult for me to interpret. If I have big chunks, like 25% of people like family events 72% of people like avant garde theatre. Okay. That is easier. Because I'm not a data analyst saw for people that are not trained to do because it's very difficult to do data analysts, you know, it's not easy, because the meaning can get lost.** So, yes, quite confident if it's not too complicated. It's a very easy breakup, then yes, if it's a bit more complicated, like for example, those questionnaires that take 15 minutes to fill out with a lot of questions that is more complicated for me to understand. And I believe that he will be more complicated also for other people that, you know, the more you look in detail, the more is difficult to get to the details. So I would feel more confident to use something like, yes, we like events for children. Yes, we like calligraphy and we don't like on our garbage theatre. I don't know, just saying, you know, I don't know. It's clear what I mean. Yeah, no, absolutely. is clear.

And would you do you think do we need to consider time as a factor in this in terms of like the time pressures that you're under, and your volunteers potentially, in terms of kind of dedicating time to collecting this information and processing it like other things that we should be aware of in relation to your other responsibilities and how that might impact your ability to to kind of use the toolkit, um, yes.

**Time definitely would be an issue.** Yeah. Because for example, **if I have to input all the data myself or ask other volunteers, or train my volunteers, you know, to do that,** because you can be lucky and have volunteers that have absolutely no problem in doing that, but you might not have them, but you need the data, **so you have to train them.** So yes, definitely.

Um, so I have one question a little bit back to the like, conversation to the user and also the activity side. It's like when you're having a event For example, a family event with the youth at the library, did you transform the feet? The outcome or the experience of my camping and, and activity with the customer into knowledge or data then like getting it useful for your future management of the library?

Are you asking me if I've done it or if I've done it before?

Yeah, yeah. Yes. Yeah. It's like when you have a band have an activity already have one. So do you transform the experience you have with the customer together into knowledge or data that getting useful for your future management for the library? Do you do that? Yeah.

Yes, Yes, I do. But not with the For example, I've never done a questionnaire. I've never done that. Maybe I've done it once. Okay? I prefer to just go around the room and talk to people and ask them if they enjoy the event. If there was something that we can do back. For example, I asked if the price was fair, if it was an activity that we add a ticket, I always ask if they sorted that the price was fairer, or if there was too much, and, you know, yes, but it's very informal. And it's just for me, my notes, let's say, so no, I don't do it to yourself. structure for Norway Centre for like getting this kind of knowledge from the customer is your personal experience and knowledge about the customer is it good that we are designing activity or designing a way to absorb information in this kind of activity to the customer and then you can share to your volunteers and they are doing the same thing and collecting this kind of like information in like a natural way like having a conversation. Yes. into something can be written down. Yes and has to be something like two or three questions like and for us. It's important to know what kind of people came if they enjoyed the event, if it was, you know, Fire of the price, or if they thought that there was something stronger, or you know, yes, definitely, yeah, it will be great to have other people going around the room. You know, it's not only me, but I've had that of course, we can have more feedback because there is a limit of the number of people you can talk to, you know, one person, so, yeah.

Thank you. Thank you. And that the question is, you're saying that when people are like finding some book from your library, they are going to the website is not just around to you, your library, right. So, instead, like will they like ordering the book from your library or or have Phone call before they come to a library. Is there a lot of people just like, go here and then find the birthday fund in the website or any borrow by someone else from your library? Things like that happen?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. They it happens. And yes, there are a lot because the problem is that the problem but you know, we are on this huge database of Lewisham libraries, which is like eight libraries or something like that. So, the stock is Lewisham libraries, but is then you know, distributed the, in all these libraries. So yes, sometimes people come and they say, but I've seen on the website that had the book is here and Well, sometimes Well, first, the book might have been withdrawn the book might not been on the shelf for for some reason, you know, because maybe it's a display or, and yes, and sometimes it's a problem because people are disappointed because maybe they come from another, you know, part of the of Louis Shama to get to that book. But, yes, this is a problem and we have to deal with it and I tried to explain to people that why'd the book might not be there, but they wanted the book, there's not not very much I can do about it. Yeah.

And you wonder, is that always like, fix the problem. For example, I used to work in an inner store that they will like recon all stuff in the store like once a month or one three months to fix the data, I think is the the website that people can find the resources, also having this kind of activity to fix the data from your library, is that correct? and things like that. Because sometimes missing and you have been reported to do to the website, and maybe they don't gather my information. So it's always wrong on the website information.

Yes, but I do say, you know, we do say if there is a problem with the book, but we don't manage the website. The only thing that we can do is write in an email and say, user came ask for this book. Book



was the Dara book might be withdrawn and please update website and you know, and we wait for that to Do it about we we have no access whatsoever to Aleutian library's website. So no like a one way like conversation from there. Yeah. And your feedback is not that much effectively leaving them to fix the problem, right. Yeah.

**One last question. And you said Do you have your own system or your own data to collect or managed to book in your library?**

We have the seat. Our system is Lewisham library system.

Okay. We don't have a separate website. Hmm. It's all all the books in Lewisham libraries belong to Lewisham libraries, which is an institution and then the different, the different books the books are distributed. Did in cut for library Croft import library, Lewisham library blah, blah, blah. But they're all part of the same boat. Let's say dickly the book is in Crafton Park.

ownership is with libraries. Okay, okay, I understand. But my question is not a separate system is like, do you have a document or think about like, your own library the content of it know?

Another new like, think about like, what exactly how exactly do you mean like an inventory just for you want to know if we have a document. We do all the books that are physically across them back. We know we don't Okay, thank you. Thank you.

So I don't want to take up too much more of your time. So I think it would be nice just to you know, an open question if there was anything you know that you would really love to see in a toolkit like this that we could change or something we could add that would just be really great to hear the kind of final closing let me just have a look again and

Oh, sorry, I just wanted to have a look at the slide that you shared. So I think the deep purple or blue has the overview of the service like the overall service if you go up one and for some reason knighthoods support line and we realisation digital to keep no i think that's I mean you touched the the important point so you know that you need you need to have your data and use it like you know have your cake and eat it and yes no I think it's absolutely for now I cannot think of anything else no problem. If they think of something else then I'm happy to share it with you. Yeah. No I i mean i think you touched everything is of interest which is are you engaging your different audiences you And how you can get to know them in order to engage them. That's what we need to do. Yes, yeah. No, I think he's right. No, I think, yeah, for now, it's fine. Thank you.

**You know, that's been so helpful. So we've got a lot of work to do now just you've given some really, really helpful feedback. And we're gonna digest all of this, and you're gonna see like a supercharged version of this tomorrow. Thank you so much. It's great. Thank you.**

Thank you.

## Annex 9. List of insights developed from research, autoethnography, and interviews

- Library visits are down by 35%
- Free internet attracts library visitors
- More older people started to use libraries
- Less young people use libraries
- The word library does not associate with all other services provided by the library
- Bookshop displays (shelves, windows) rather than library displays work better
- People want libraries to have more options. Therefore, libraries change
- Libraries need to free up spaces for activities (off-site storage)
- Libraries are understaffed and staff need training (in many areas) and their roles expanded
- Libraries must accommodate digital spaces (power sockets)
- Libraries must accommodate people with dementia, disabilities, mental health issues, buggies
- Visitors feel uncomfortable because they can't eat/drink in libraries
- Librarians are undervalued, yet expected to fulfil a variety of roles e.g business support
- “we need to understand how our libraries function as, and as part of, infrastructural ecologies”
- Libraries should be open for longer
- Parents are more aware of the benefits of libraries than non-parents
- Libraries already play an import role in communities across the country
- Library users have the potential to benefit one-another through sharing skills, knowledge and resources
- Some libraries struggle to accommodate their multiple functions in existing spaces
- Some libraries already function as co-working spaces and social enterprises but this is undervalued and underused
- Communities expect libraries to be able to support them with multiple services - from loaning free books, to help finding jobs, to activities for children
- Libraries in the UK hold a wealth of resources, from their buildings, books, access to internet, place in the community - these can be made more of.
- offering free access to digital material has the potential to disrupt monopolies like Audible.
- Library spaces offering free internet access can disrupt the co-working industry - providing working hubs within people communities to avoid travelling into central areas.
- Library buildings help earn an income through space hire when the main library is closed.
- There has been a consistent decrease in the number of 16-24 and 25-44 year olds accessing the library, and an increase in older groups.
- The most common reasons for using technology at public libraries was for free internet access, at 34 percent of respondents who used public access computers in libraries and 53 % found the internet access very useful
- Libraries have an opportunity to compete with other content providers in the digital space. E.g free audio books from your local library
- Libraries have a statutory duty to encourage both children and adults to use their services
- Different libraries are serving different roles in different communities

# Annex 10. Survey responses about how important is the service that can be provided by public libraries? Source: Statista 2020

Sports & Recreation > Art & Culture

## How important is this service that can be provided by public libraries?

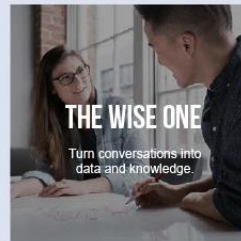


Annex 11. Mockups of Get-to-know, the digital toolkit. Home page and the Wise One page (in detail).



A digital toolkit for library teams  
to learn more about their library visitors  
and improve services based on data and insight.

[More](#)



[Support](#)

[Resource](#)

Information generated within libraries is a resource  
to build closer relationships with visitors and  
innovate services to best respond to  
changing local community needs.

Get-to-know was funded by Ufi VocTech Trust.



Contact  
Flotilla  
6 Penrose Way  
Greenwich Peninsula  
London  
SE10 0EW

Legal  
Data protection  
Freedom of Information  
How are we funded?  
Privacy and Cookies  
Terms and Conditions



## The Wise One

'The librarian engages users through conversations. They learn about library users by asking questions, exploring issues raised and feeding back. Relationships are formed and library users are no longer anonymous but seen as 'friends'. Both parties have a great opportunity to learn and listen and bond' .



Can we turn conversations into data and knowledge?

Description: Learn, listen and engage library users through conversations, questions and anonymous feedback. Engaging library users in conversations allows for them to give a fuller picture of who they are and for the library to be transparent about what's going on and why. Talking to library users so they understand why their feedback is important to the library and how the information they give will be used.

**Duration:** The activity of conversations can take from 5-15 mins.

**Resources:** You will need a notebook and an iPad.

**Step by step guide:**

Choose a suitable location to engage the library user. Ensure they are happy to talk and have time for a conversation. Have a set of questions ready to ask.

Capture the conversation through note form or ask if you can take a voice recording using the iPad.



Get-to-know was funded by Ufi VocTech Trust.



Contact  
Flotilla  
6 Penrose Way  
Greenwich Peninsula  
London  
SE10 0EW

Legal  
Data protection  
Freedom of Information  
How are we funded?  
Privacy and Cookies  
Terms and Conditions

Annex 12. Presentation of the Get-to-know toolkit.

# Get To Know

A toolkit to empower  
community librarians

BY FLOTILLA (HANSI, IULIA, ZARIDA, YINGYIN)







# 205 million visits

“In the financial year 2016 to 2017, libraries in England received more visits than the Premier League football games, A&E services, and the cinema combined.”



“We lack good data on how libraries are used and the changes they’ve been undergoing”.



Research for the UK Government's Libraries Taskforce, published 2018

#research




Community Library Director

“...gaining more information about the people who use the library can only be useful. Having something to backup figures, to backup any kind of funding application, is also incredibly useful”.

#interview

Key insights

# literature reviews, interviews and auto- ethnography:



**libraries are currently losing out because they are not collecting information on visitors**

**library visitors data is a resource generated within the library ready to harness**

**digital technology is essential to the future of libraries**

# Sonia, Community Library Manager



## runs a workshop

Sonia is approached by a local artist, Joanne who is interested in running a workshop at the library Joanne runs three events and only has two attendees. She's really disappointed

## reviews the library data

With Get-to-know Sonia can quickly review the library visitors' interests and see what the demand is for activities and what those activities are

## put together a calendar of events

Sonia then begins to put a calendar of events together, informed by the library users feedback. She shares this on social media platforms. Sonia is continuously getting feedback to inform what happens. She's able to create an ever changing vibrant calendar of events.

Our service

# Get To Know

## digital toolkit

a simple digital toolkit for library teams to learn more about their library visitors and improve services based on data and insight.

## observation & engagement

introduces data collection through observation and engagement methods to support decision making and improvements.

## community supportline & visualisation

a dedicated community supportline and easy to use data entry, analysis and visualisation features.



# [www.get-to-know.library.uk](http://www.get-to-know.library.uk)



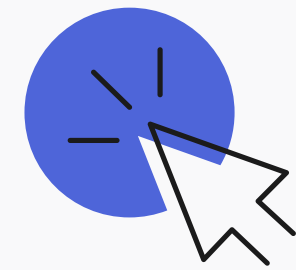
## The Digital Guru

Learn how to use digital tools such as email, social media pages and data visualisation tools to better understand and communicate with your library visitors. After applying some of these techniques and learning new tips you will be able to engage with your visitors more than before.



## The Ethnographer

Learn how to turn observations into insights and get to know your library visitors better. At the end of this activity you will have generated information about how people interact within your library, how goals are achieved, and how the building is navigated.



## The Wise One

The librarian takes ownership of engaging library users in conversations through storytelling and explains why feedback is needed, what it will be used for, and how it can be used to improve library services. The librarian also has an opportunity to understand if members do not wish to engage and why.

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## The Wise One

'The librarian engages users through conversations. They learn about library users by asking questions, exploring issues raised and feeding back. Relationships are formed and library users are no longer anonymous but seen as 'friends'. Both parties have a great opportunity to learn and listen and bond' .



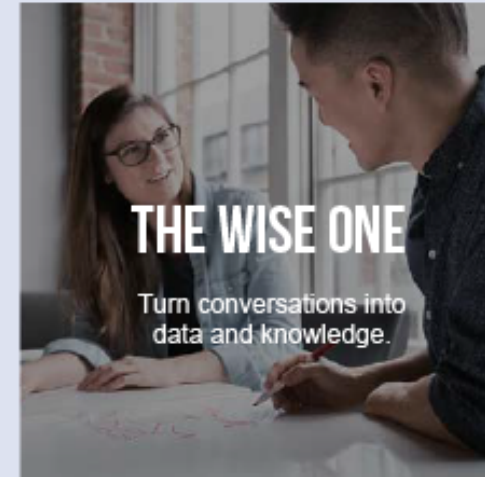
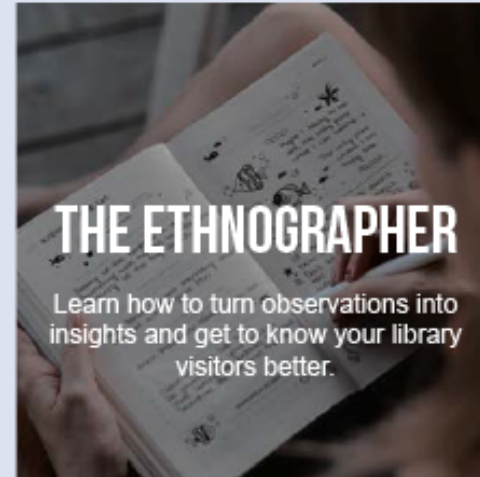
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A digital toolkit for library teams  
to learn more about their library visitors  
and improve services based on data and insight.

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## Key insights

# prototyping, service blueprinting, and testing:

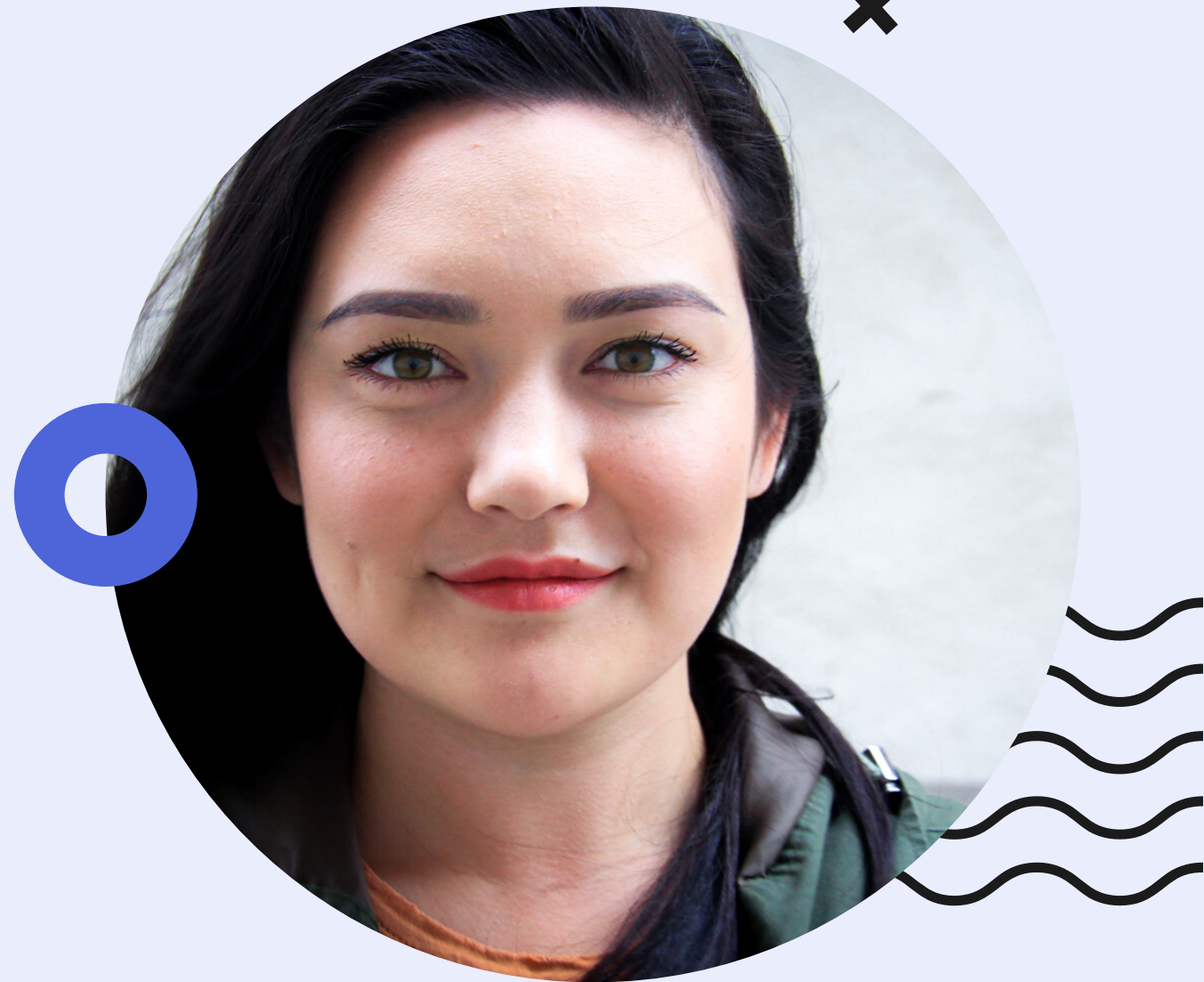


**the service must be accessible and user friendly to suit fulltime and volunteer staff.**

**data needs to be simple and digestable to be useful.**

**community support line would enable library teams fully embrace the new tools and build confidence.**

# Polly, Writer and library member



## visits her local library

Polly visits the library to look for an illustrated book on birds, she finds a book but doesn't interact with anyone.

## engages in conversation

When Polly returns the book a volunteer asks her to take part in a conversation. Polly shares her interests.

## feels part of the community

Polly spots a library post about an event to connect local writers with artists in the area. It's exactly what she needs.



**Information generated within libraries is a resource to build closer relationships with visitors and innovate services to best respond to changing local community needs.**



**That's why we created Get-to-know**



Thank you.

Any questions?



Designed by Flotilla.  
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