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# The Promotion of Reading on Children's Mobile Libraries in the United Kingdom

by

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## Glossary

Bookmobile	Mobile library
Children's library PLUS survey	Children's library Public Library User Satisfaction survey
CILIP	Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
CML	Children's mobile library
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
Deposit collection	Books and other items owned by a public library placed in another establishment
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
Dump bin	A large box on a stand into which books can be randomly placed
Early years setting	Generic name for a school or private nursery, a preschool playgroup or children's day-care facility
ECM	Every Child Matters
Face on	Shelving the book with the cover facing out instead of the spine
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDeA	Improvement and Development Agency
IFLA	International Federation of Library Associations
INSINC	National Working Party on Social Inclusion
MLA	Museums, Libraries and Archives council
Operator	Staff member of a children's mobile library
PEEP	Peers Early Education Partnership
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PLSS	Public Library Service Standards
QCDA	Qualification Curriculum Development Authority
SLA	School Libraries Association
Spinner	Spinning book rack
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development



## **Abstract**

Children's library services offer children a means of developing their reading skills through the provision of books and other resources. Children's library services might be operated by public libraries, school library services or schools. A small proportion of public library authorities in the UK choose to operate specialist mobile libraries which cater for children alone. Such vehicles deliver a library service to children across a range of geographic and socioeconomic areas with the stated aims of promoting reading and a love of books, and accessing children who would not otherwise use library services.

This study evaluated whether children's mobile libraries (CMLs) across the UK reach those aims and examined the methods by which the aims were targeted. It was decided that the most appropriate research method was to take an inductive perspective and qualitative approach forming a constructivist methodology. The evaluation was achieved by the use of grounded theory as a general method together with ethnographic techniques, in order to observe and understand the interactions of social actors, and identify the processes used to encourage reading. Interviews with key individuals were primarily held to gain access into the field and inform the scope of the research. Participant observations were conducted on 12 of the 26 children's libraries operating in the UK and further interviews with children's mobile library (CML) operators and CML service managers were also carried out.

Extensive field notes were taken, then coded and analysed by the grounded theory method in order to understand children's and adults' perceptions of the value of a CML to their lives. A model of the influences on children's reading was developed to understand the place of a CML in children's literacy. Existing published research was used initially to set the context of the study, and then as data throughout the project. Published and recognised theories about literacy development, learning, and well-being were consulted at relevant points during the research. Analytical reports of children's library services, practitioner handbooks and professional magazines were searched along with unpublished documents provided by library authorities. Issues that were raised from these sources included: the role of untrained library staff; supplying library services to the socially excluded; working with other agencies and the use of reading intervention schemes. The history, function, purpose and definition of CMLs were outlined.

Five theories of "event", "reach", "resource", "process" and "well-being" emerged from the data and examples of best practice were identified. The daily operation of a CML was modelled using those five theories to create a transferable standard against which to judge similar children's provision. It was found that children's mobile libraries promote reading because of their transient nature; through the relationships of children with the staff who work on the vehicles; by the nature of the learning environment and specialist stock of the children's mobile library, and because they access children who would otherwise not use any other library service.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Structure of thesis**

The thesis is structured to reflect the nature of grounded theory, which was the methodology used for this study. The philosophy of the methodology is discussed in Chapter 2, prior to the review of the literature and other sources consulted. The published literature, and other information that was examined, are presented as a theoretical framework in Chapter 3. The findings of the study and a discussion of those findings comprise Chapter 4. Chapter 5 presents examples of good practice identified during the study and Chapter 6 reflects on the research. The conclusion is reached in Chapter 7.

### **1.2 Summary of contents**

Initially, the background to the study and choice of its focus are explained. The aims, objectives and key definitions are then presented. A typical children's mobile library is described to provide an understanding of the research settings. Following the introduction, the philosophy of the study is examined and the reasons for the choice of research method given. Grounded theory with ethnographic techniques was chosen as the most appropriate method to study the events and interactions found in children's mobile libraries in the UK. The use of grounded theory necessitates the consultation of literature at many points during the course of the research. A model is presented at the beginning of the theoretical framework in order to understand the context of a CML in the range of experiences that influence children's literacy. A broad range of interdisciplinary information was read from a number of types of sources, such as unpublished reports and local government web pages, as well as scholarly literature. The theoretical framework, therefore, covers four main areas: an overview of children's library services, the context of mobile library services and children's mobile libraries, a review of reading intervention schemes with relationship to libraries and, finally, theories about the acquisition of literacy and theories of well-being. The four areas are drawn together by a theoretical conclusion reached from the information that was gathered.

Grounded theory generates "theories", and five such entities were developed by this study. The five theories are presented together with their supporting arguments, findings and discussion, and cover the benefits of taking a specialist library vehicle into communities, the relationships between the social actors involved and the influence of a visit to such vehicles

by individual children. The evaluation of the operation of children's mobile library services indicated that certain working practices effectively fulfilled the aims of their service, and such practices are discussed. A model of the operation of a CML in relation to the five theories is then presented. The limitations of the current research are discussed and further work is suggested answering some of the questions that this study has raised. The thesis concludes with the assertion that it is the transient nature of children's mobile libraries, the encouragement of children's mobile library staff (operators) and the specialist nature of the vehicles that allow them to promote reading effectively.

### **1.3 Background**

The power of reading has been recognised by leaders of society for millennia. Throughout history, powerful social groups, such as the Church in mediaeval Europe, have manipulated the populace's literacy and access to information in order to rule (Feather 2004). Certain regimes have limited the access to literature, for example in 1933 leaders of the German Nazi party arranged for books to be burnt that they considered would influence the minds of the German people against the Nazi Party (Ritchie 1988). Other regimes have actively promoted reading for their citizens; Cuba, for example, conducted a National Literacy Campaign in 1961 with the aim of eradicating illiteracy (Supko 1998). Literacy is considered to empower populations because the process of learning to read develops the skills and understanding of an individual which allows them to be an active participant in society (Zapata 1994). A literate population subsequently improves the social capital and economic well-being of nations (Clark and Rumbold 2006). Butdisuwan (2000, p1) speaks of "educated manpower" being "one of the most crucial needs of any country" and outlines that rural library services are part of the Thai Government's plan to eradicate illiteracy and poverty.

Reading is not only important as a political tool, the contribution of reading for pleasure and relaxation to an individual's well-being is confirmed by many studies (Usherwood and Toyne 2002). Library services worldwide are used to promote the enjoyment of reading and improve the literacy of economically poor or distant populations, from the bookbuses of the "Alif Laila" project in Pakistan (de Silva 2008) or the village reading rooms of Botswana (Molefe 2004) to the mobile libraries of the Barents Region, within the Arctic Circle (Kappfjell 2005). Children's mobile libraries (CMLs), also known as bookmobiles in some parts of the world, operate in many countries, for example America (Lytle 1994), Thailand (Cheunwattan 2003), Pakistan (de Silva 2008), and Kenya (Atuti 2002). The services are provided for the

children of such countries either because of remote geographical location, or in order to combat illiteracy or because of a combination of both issues. For instance, the extreme geography of Thailand has led to ingenious ways of providing library services which include trains, children's bookmobiles, and boats. Thailand's librarians consider it their social responsibility to eradicate illiteracy and thereby improve children's lives (Cheunwattan 2003). Poor communication infrastructure and road systems make it hard for rural Kenyans to regularly visit a static library. The Kenyan National Library Service solved this problem in two ways, by using a fleet of vehicle bookmobiles and a camel library service (Atuti 2002).

The eradication of illiteracy in developing countries is seen as vital to the progression of society as well as improving the individual child's life and expectations and mobile libraries are used as vehicles for change. The "Alif Laila" project in Pakistan, for instance, educates slum children to such a level that they can achieve good jobs and a comfortable lifestyle (de Silva 2008). Numerous bodies fund and operate individual outreach projects, such as the Thai police, National Departments of Education, universities or non-governmental Organisations. In some nations an individual chooses to provide a service, for example a particular Columbian teacher who carries books on a donkey to outlying places in order to teach children to read (Romero 2009). In others, charities operate CMLs, for instance the Book Bus Foundation, a UK based charity, operate CMLs in Zambia, Malawi and Ecuador (The Book Bus Foundation 2011) .

The United Kingdom (UK) is a modern, developed country therefore it may be surprising that the UK Government had concerns about the literacy of the nation's children during the 1990s. Fears of the effects of poverty and social exclusion in areas of the UK on the reading skills of children prompted the introduction of a National Literacy Strategy to be taught in schools (Vincent 2000). It appears that the pedagogic aspect of the National Literacy Strategy did not inspire the love of reading because the number of British children who enjoy reading declined between 2001 and 2006 (Twist, Schagen, and Hodgson 2007) and the National Literacy Strategy ceased 2009 (Department of Children, Schools and Families 2009b).

Two international surveys in the past decade indicate that the UK's children do not attain their educational potential and have a sense of discontent with their lives compared to those in other countries. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2009 survey showed that approximately 20% of UK 15 year old students did not achieve a baseline level

of reading proficiency (OECD 2010). The United Nations Children's Fund's (UNICEF) research into child poverty during 2009 reported that children in the UK ranked 24<sup>th</sup>, from a total of 29 European countries, in a survey of the children's own perceptions of their well-being (UNICEF UK 2010). Such a result is disappointing considering that the UK government has developed a programme to enhance the well-being of children in this country. The "Every Child Matters" programme (ECM) became part of the Children Act, 2004 (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2009a).

Vincent (2000) voices a concern that cuts in library budgets diminish the resources for children's library services and emphasises that library services should find ways of serving the needs of children at risk of social exclusion. The enjoyment of reading and the progression of an individual's literacy are interlinked, because as Meek (1982, p11) states, "reading is learned by reading". This means that the content of the reading matter is important to the reader; it must be something that a learner reader enjoys and values. Enjoyment of reading and consequently literacy skills are therefore increased by giving children freedom of choice from widely available reading materials (Krashen 2004). The ability to read, write and communicate with a good level of understanding is essential to fulfil potential and to the "happiness, health, and wealth of individuals and society" (UNICEF UK 2010, p2). It can therefore be argued that increasing the literacy level of the nation and promoting reading for pleasure will contribute to the well-being of the nation and to its individuals.

Libraries have a role to play in the development of literacy. The House of Commons Select Committee's report on Public Libraries (2005) recognised the social effect of libraries, the contribution of libraries to literacy and emphasised the need for libraries to work with communities (Department of Culture, Media and Sport 2009). The International Federation of Library Association (IFLA) guidelines for children's library services state that "Public libraries have a special responsibility to support the process of learning to read and to promote books and other media for children" (IFLA 2003, p3). Neuman and Celano (2001) consider it necessary to give children access to books and stories before school age because they then find it easier to relate to books and reading when they attend school. Public library services allow books to be freely accessible to everyone, and access to a wide variety of books increases children's enthusiasm for reading (Krashen 2004). Children's library services are therefore an important source of books for children of any socioeconomic group, which allows children to become acquainted with books as: an object, a source of information and

stories, and as a means of becoming a reader.

It has long been understood that one role of a children's librarian is to encourage children to find reading matter that reflects the child's personal interests and to develop an understanding that reading is relaxing (Kerslake and Kinnell 1997). However, certain groups in society either do not understand the value of the written word or have negative assumptions about libraries (Stanziola 2008). The challenge to a librarian is to find ways of working with people who do not regard reading as a priority in their lives, in order to improve an individual's reading skills (Elkin et al. 2003).

It is therefore surprising that children's services have been paid comparatively little attention in the arena of public library research. For example, Elkin and Lonsdale (1996) state that there is little research which demonstrates the value of libraries in children's development and, generally, other establishments do not recognise that libraries contribute to literacy. More recently, the "Review of Museum, Library and Archive Activity with Children and Young People" (Naylor et al. 2006) also found that there is a need for benchmarking and more research into children's library services. The current study, therefore, attempts to increase the body of knowledge concerning children's libraries and will examine one form of a children's library, children's mobile libraries, in order to assess its contribution to children's reading skills and their well-being.

#### **1.4 Scope**

The study of CMLs in overseas countries would have been valuable as part of this research, in order to observe customs, practices, and the growth of literacy projects in developing and developed nations, which then could have been compared to the facilities in the UK. However, time and cost restraints did not allow for such research. Similarly, the issues involved in funding CML services and the comparative costs of CMLs to those of static library children's services would have generated a study that local authorities would find useful. However, the production of an accurate cost-benefit analysis alongside an in depth exploration of the contribution to literacy by CMLs would have required greater resources of time and manpower than was available. The focus of the study required the dedicated efforts of the researcher to construct a thorough evaluation of the provision of CMLs in the UK and a profound understanding of their contribution to children's literacy.

Certain UK library authorities reach out to children in particular by operating mobile libraries specifically stocked with children's books and other items with the intention that these CMLs will break down barriers to library use and will promote the love of reading (Gloucestershire County Council 2008, Southampton 2009). This study takes the form of an evaluation of children's mobile library services that are in operation, in order to assess the "effects and effectiveness" of their provision to children across the UK. It is a "summative evaluation", based on the results of a systematic series of observations of the events that occur daily on CMLs during their normal business (Robson 2002, p204). The aim of the research, and the objectives to achieve the aim, are described below.

### **1.5 Aims**

To evaluate whether children's mobile libraries in the UK aid:

- The development of reading skills
- The development of a reading culture
- The promotion of children's reading in the communities where they operate

### **1.6 Objectives**

- To investigate and analyse the reasons for taking a children's library into the community to promote a reading culture.
- To identify which actions taken by CML operators promote reading and stimulate reading skills.
- To explore the influence on a child's reading of visits to a children's mobile library.
- To identify and report examples of best practice observed on CMLs.

The research questions to be answered are:

Do children's mobile libraries in the UK influence the development of:

- A reading culture?
- Children's reading skills?

The four questions that are linked to the objectives are therefore:

- Why take a children's library into the community?
- Which activities that are undertaken by CML operators positively promote reading skills?
- What aspects of visits to children's mobile library affect a child's reading experience?
- What practices contribute to the achievement of the aims of a CML service?



The findings of the study will provide a benchmark for children's mobile library services across the UK which can be compiled to produce a "handbook" of best practice for authorities considering starting a CML service. Such a handbook can outline difficulties, suggest methods to improve such a service and highlight the operational detail of CMLs from different authorities. The study is useful to local authorities in helping them understand the consequences of operating a children's mobile library, and would aid council decisions at a strategic level. It can provide evidence to support libraries working with ECM outcomes in mind. The evidence can be used by authorities to show that they are complying with government guidelines, as a tool to obtain funding, and to demonstrate that the functions of a CML are part of an integrated library service to its community.

## **1.7 Definitions relevant to the research**

The major theme of the study is the relationship between children's reading skills and visits to CMLs. The terms "literacy", "story", "reading culture" and "children's mobile library" are frequently used in the study to explore the theme. Therefore definitions of these terms are discussed below, in order to understand the concepts involved.

### **1.7.1 Literacy**

Bullock (1975) gives a basic definition of functional literacy:

*The ability to read and write for practical purposes of daily life (Bullock 1975, p10)*

However, it is possible to decode texts and "read" the words, but have no idea of their meaning. Welsh, for example, is a phonic language which is easy to decode, but unless one is a Welsh speaker the words are not understood. Zapata (1994) broadens the definition of literacy to include understanding because reading is a cognitive process:

*Not simply being able to decode the marks on paper into words, but also meaning, an understanding in the mind of the reader (Zapata 1994, p125)*

Meek (1982) explains that reading is an interactive process because a reader interprets an author's text according to the reader's individual experience. Literacy therefore includes an element of imagination to aid the understanding of texts:

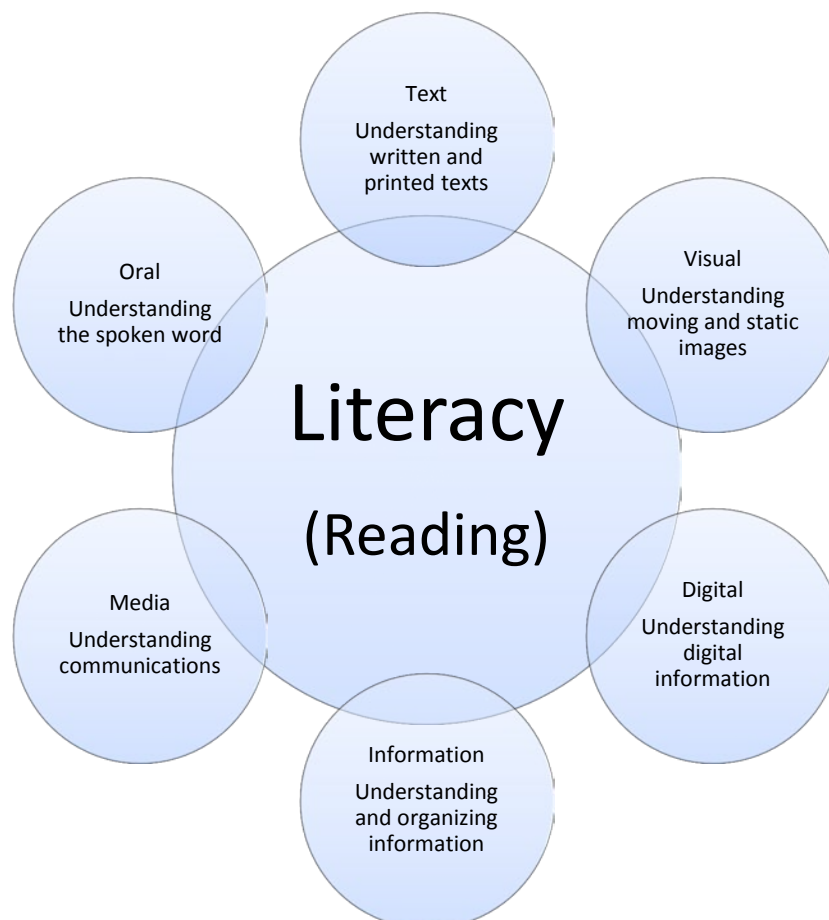
*Reading is... far more than the retrieval of information from a collection of printed records; the active encounter of one mind and one imagination with another (Meek 1982, p10).*

Elkin and Lonsdale (1996) state that the concept of literacy has broadened to cover new technologies and define literacy in such a way as to encompass making sense of other symbols such as visual images, hypertext, sound or moving images because to make sense of today's world, children need to be literate in visual and digital media as well as written text:

*A way of decoding and understanding symbols which are more than just physical marks (Elkin and Lonsdale 1996, p7)*

Thomas (2009) has termed such multiple literacy as “transliteracy”. Figure 1 (below) brings together the multiple forms of literacy and shows that each is developed from a common basis, the cognitive processes that an individual accrues by learning to read. Therefore, since reading is the cornerstone to multi-literacies, this study focuses on the ability to understand text and will therefore use the following definition of the term literacy “the ability to read printed and written text fluently with understanding and perception”.

**Figure 1: Multiple literacies and their relationship to reading as categorised by Thomas (2007), Elkin and Lonsdale (1996) and The Information Website (2009)**



### 1.7.2 Story

Meek (1991, p111) states that a story is the “longest monologue of connected language” a child hears before going to school. Livo and Rietz (1986) describes stories as a way of organising language and Meek (1991, p111) expands on that view by stating that a child can learn text and discourse, patterns of events and features of written language “without instruction” by listening to stories. Jackson (2007, p6) defines a story as “a group of details arranged in a structure, one component of which is time”. A story can therefore be considered as “language organised into a structure which relates a pattern of events”.

### 1.7.3 Reading culture

An individual's habit of reading is usually linked to a child's home background and the value that is ascribed to the skill by their closest relatives and friends (Gibson and Levin 1975). When a child sees that reading is an accepted, frequent and usual activity for the people around them, or that reading is encouraged, from books, newspapers or electronic text on computers or other devices, it could be argued that the child is part of a reading culture. For the purpose of the study, the phrase “reading culture” is therefore defined as “an environment where reading is fostered and accepted as a usual activity”.

### 1.7.4 Definition of a children's mobile library

There is no recorded definition specifically for a CML however, International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) guidelines describe a mobile library as “any library that does not stay in one place” (Stringer 2010, p5). Orton (1980, p20) offers a broader definition of a mobile library, attributed to Stanley Jast, as a “small branch library on wheels which returns at night for supplies”. Horrocks and Hargreaves (1961, p360) use the British Library Association's definition of a mobile library to describe the global operation and function of “bookmobiles” (the term used for a mobile library in other parts of the world):

*Mobile library; a vehicle devised, equipped and operated to provide as far as reasonably practical a service compared to a part-time branch library.*  
(Horrocks and Hargreaves 1961, p361).

Horrocks and Hargreaves (1961) describe mobile libraries that are fitted into such diverse, engine powered vehicles as boats, trams and trains. They also describe a pony cart that is used as a mobile library, a form of delivering library services still current in Ethiopia (Kurtz 2010). Horrocks and Hargreaves (1961, p373) conclude that the “wide variation in the type of vehicle used” is governed by factors that are local to the country in which the mobile

library operates.

Butdisuwan (2000) defines a mobile library as:

*All travelling or movable library activities in any formats such as large enclosed trucks or vans or large motor vehicles equipped with shelves and a staff enclosure to visit rural districts or remote areas where there is no other library service at specific times on a certain day or days of the week (Butdisuwan 2000, p2).*

The above definition not only emphasises the service delivered, but also indicates the reason for the service - to reach out into areas that would not have any other access to a library. Butdisuwan (2000) echoes the conclusion of Horrocks and Hargreaves (1961) that it is irrelevant what physical form the libraries take; it is the similarity of purpose that defines a mobile library.

All the above definitions apply to mobile libraries which cater for all ages; a more specific definition is needed for a children's mobile library. According to Ellis (1971) the first children's mobile libraries were re-stocked and re-scheduled mobile libraries which were used during the school summer holidays. These temporary children's mobile libraries operated between 1958 and 1968 to take books to rural village children in Nottinghamshire, Shropshire and East Sussex (Ellis 1971). Similar holiday vehicles operated in the urban areas of Leicester and Southampton during 1975, aiming to serve "non-reading" areas and to "Break down the barriers that static libraries create for children" (Orton 1980, p83). Both the rural and urban holiday vehicles were introduced to provide a library service to children who otherwise would not visit a library. Therefore, it would be fair to define a children's mobile library in the same manner as Horrocks and Hargreaves (1980), as any vehicle that provides a part-time library service, and Butdisuwan (2000), as a service specifically targeting individuals who would not gain access to a static library.

The definition of a children's mobile library for the purposes of this study is therefore:

"A vehicle devised, equipped and operated to provide a children's service comparable to that from a static children's library to encourage library use for children who might not have access to children's library services by other means". The following chapter, Methodology, will show how an exploration of the relationships between children, their reading skills and visits to CMLs, was achieved.

## Chapter 2: Methodology

### 2.1 Research design

#### 2.1.1 Research philosophy

When undertaking any research the researcher is attempting to discover what is not known. They may aim to reveal how the physical world works, the cure for an illness or the reasons behind animal behaviour. It could be said that researchers are seekers of truth. This raises the question, “what is truth?” which is a question that has been asked by philosophers for many centuries. The early scientists were called “Natural Philosophers” because they chose to study the natural world to uncover its hidden truths and their practices led to a philosophical stance known as “Positivism” (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983). The positivist view is of underlying truths, general laws of science that are derived from direct, physical observations of concrete entities. These truths are uncontested facts that can be used to predict conclusions such as humans are mammals because they suckle their young. The positivist stance is that the facts, therefore the truths, are revealed by research (Robson 2002). They are defined realities that cannot be changed.

In contrast to that view, the “constructivist” stance is that there are many versions of truth and that “reality” is a social construct (Robson 2002). The perception of an object, an event or a concept is a private, individual thought process, as varied as the person perceiving it (Mabbot 1973). The constructivist research philosophy, also known as “naturalistic” or “interpretive”, is based on understanding these multiple realities. The constructivist stance is that the world cannot be understood by universal laws (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007).

Positivistic research is based on objectivity, experimentation, procedural standardisation and measureable variables with much emphasis placed on the ability to replicate the research to prove validity (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Constructivist research centres on the world in its “natural state”, is sensitive to all nuances that may affect that world (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007) and emphasises the interpretation of processes that cannot be measured. Constructivist researchers work with people, research participants, to discover other “constructed” realities (Robson 2002) in order to understand tacit relationships between them. This study was based on the actions, interactions and perceptions of people, examining their realities and the effect on them of the phenomena under research, therefore

a constructivist research philosophy was adopted.

### **2.1.2 Methodological approach**

The nature of a research question and the desired outcomes of the research guide the selection of a research method in order to gain a meaningful, valid answer. Parlett and Hamilton (1976, p17) have stated that “The problem defines the methods used, not vice versa”. This means that the nature of what is asked dictates the methods of finding the answer; an inappropriate method would give a biased or inconclusive answer. With that consideration, research options for this study were considered before starting to collect data because the type of data collected and the method of collection and analysis would influence the ultimate result. The outcomes that were required from this study were: an understanding of children’s experiences of mobile libraries; a record of the achievements of library outreach work across the UK; a compilation of “best practice”, or effective methods of reading promotion that occur on a children’s mobile library; and a definitive knowledge and understanding of the effects of a children’s mobile service. The use of either an inductive or a deductive approach to the research was then considered.

### **2.1.3 Inductive and deductive perspectives**

Deductive research is based on logically inferring a theory from the knowledge that exists in a specific field and then testing the theory’s veracity (Bryman 2004). This could be described as a top down method, starting with the theory which is then either proven or disproven. Inductive research requires the collection of empirical data in a specific field from which theories are derived (Delanty and Strydom 2003, p5). This could be described as a bottom up process, sifting through data to find emergent patterns in order to formulate a theory or theories. There is considerable knowledge and a depth of research about the development of children’s reading skills and enjoyment of reading that have been developed in Psychological and Educational research. There have also been studies into children’s libraries; therefore, an a priori thesis could have been proposed. However, no previous empirical study of CMLs was found, therefore an inductive approach was chosen to gather and analyse data about CMLs in order to discover any effects on children’s reading and literacy.

The anticipated outcome of this approach would therefore be an answer which would indicate the reasons for taking a CML into the community, evaluate the interaction of CML staff with children, and explore the contribution of a CML to children’s reading experience. In contrast, should a deductive approach have been taken, the hypothesis would have been

proposed that visits by children to children's mobile libraries increase children's literacy and give them a love of reading. The researcher would then have needed to prove the theory by collecting and analysing specific data. The outcome of this style of research would have been either a negative or a positive answer and would not have explained reasons for taking a CML into the community, evaluated the means by which the actions of CML staff contribute to children's reading experience, or understood children's perceptions of the CML service.

#### **2.1.4 Quantitative and qualitative methodologies**

There are two paradigms of research methodologies which are described as quantitative and qualitative methods. Data are said to be quantitative if they are measurable or can be ordered, for example, degrees of temperature or a personal preference. Qualitative data are considered descriptive, for example, describing and understanding human experience (Faulkner et al. 1991). Quantitative and qualitative data can be gathered together to support and validate the same argument (Pickard 2007). The decision that this study should follow a constructivist philosophy, using an inductive approach, meant that most data were descriptive, therefore a qualitative approach to the research was more appropriate than a quantitative approach. However, because children's reading skills are routinely assessed throughout their educational lives it was considered that results from these routine tests and assessments might inform the research, giving a quantitative element to corroborate findings. However, when the assessments were investigated, it was revealed that the statistical information gathered from them would not supply a valid picture of the influence of a CML on a child, for the following reasons.

Reading ability assessment starts at school, when a child is four or five years of age. Prior to that, a child's general development is assessed under the Early Years Foundation Stage framework, but only if they attend a child care setting. Teachers are required to use formative techniques to assess children's reading skills, at the age of seven years (Key stage 1), to comply with the National Curriculum. The assessment is judged from the child's school work in a variety of contexts, and the child is allocated a level of ability, which is sent to their parents as a report, but is not published<sup>1</sup>. The design of this study was such that numerous children participated during its course, rendering it impractical to seek parental

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<sup>1</sup>[http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Schoolslearninganddevelopment/ExamsTestsAndTheCurriculum/DG\\_10013041](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Schoolslearninganddevelopment/ExamsTestsAndTheCurriculum/DG_10013041)

permission to disclose details of the children's reported reading ability.<sup>2</sup> Children undergo summative tests of reading, writing and understanding of English at 11 years old (Key Stage 2) and are again allocated an ability level<sup>3</sup>. The National Curriculum levels are based on a range of abilities that an average child is expected to achieve by a certain age. The results of the Key Stage 2 national tests are published on a government website in the form of a tabulated, numerical percentage of the children in each school who achieve their expected National Curriculum level<sup>4</sup>. Data relating to a specific individual or a nominated group that could be researched as part of this study are not published, therefore, the figures identified in that way could not specifically be linked to children who visit mobile libraries.

A targeted method was needed to gather measurable data on the reading abilities of children who visit CMLs regularly. The reading ability of individual children can be tested by reading age tests, which require the child to read successfully from a list of given words. The child's score is processed by a formula to give a "reading age" which will not necessarily correspond with their chronological age (Meek 1982). Data gathered in this way give a snapshot of the child's performance which could have been used to test a child's reading age before that child visited a CML for the first time and again after he or she had spent a number of months regularly visiting a CML.

The possibility of the researcher testing the children's reading ability was considered, but many factors argued against that suggestion, for instance choice of test, place to conduct the test, when to test and how to sample for a cross section of age and ability. These tests would not be impossible to undertake, but would need to be conducted as a longitudinal study, using more than one researcher and close liaison with a library service and a community, which was not practical for this study. Moreover, statistical data do not indicate the context of the learning experience (Parlett and Hamilton 1972). The monitoring of the child's reading age may indicate how a child's reading ability changes over a period but a CML is not the only learning factor in their life; home background, parental involvement and

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<sup>2</sup> Approximately 710 were observed on 13 CMLs over the period of 12 months.

<sup>3</sup>[http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Schoolslearninganddevelopment/ExamsTestsAndTheCurriculum/DG\\_10013041](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Schoolslearninganddevelopment/ExamsTestsAndTheCurriculum/DG_10013041)

<sup>4</sup> At the time of writing, the information was on the website of the previous government's Department of Children Family and Schools, [http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/performance/tables/schools\\_09.shtml](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/performance/tables/schools_09.shtml).



the child's cognitive ability contribute to children's reading (Gibson and Levin 1975), therefore an increase in their reading ability and enthusiasm for reading would not demonstrate that visits to a CML was the primary cause unless the other factors were strictly controlled.

All public libraries, including CMLs, collect statistics such as the number of visitors and books borrowed, but these figures naturally do not indicate reading ability or the pleasure taken in reading by the customers who borrow the books. It was decided that quantitative research methods could not contribute to answering the research questions; qualitative research methods alone were therefore chosen. The objectives of this research (see page 15) could only be reached by examining the viewpoint of people who experienced the daily function of a CML, namely children, adult carers<sup>5</sup> and CML operators. Qualitative research seeks to answer such questions as "how?" (Pickard 2007) and examines social situations through interpreting the multiple realities of the people in that situation; Bryman (2004, p279) uses the term "seeing through the eyes of the people being studied". It was therefore necessary to find ways for all research participants to communicate their understanding of a CML, including the youngest of children.

Children are the focus of a CML service. The vehicles are designed to cater for their needs, carrying children's books in a child friendly environment. However, CMLs are planned, designed and operated by adults, therefore children's perceptions of a vehicle designed for them was a crucial part of the research. As a result of these concerns, this study was designed to allow the participation of children. Furthermore, research participants are influenced by their surroundings therefore the context of the research setting is an important design consideration (Bryman 2004). Processes of interaction, such as conversation, watching, talking, listening to stories, thinking and reading were the activities under scrutiny. The same type of variable interactions between adults and children also occur in a school classroom. It was therefore useful to examine the approach taken by a study conducted in 1972 of ways to assess the effectiveness of introducing new learning programmes into a classroom.

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<sup>5</sup> The term "adult carers" can encompass parents, grandparents, older siblings, teachers, nursery nurses, teaching assistants, early years workers or child minders; any adult that is in "loco-parentis" of the child at the time they visit a CML

Parlett and Hamilton (1972, p13) describe the "Learning Milieu", or the learning environment, which is the "Social-psychological and material environment in which students and teachers work together". A reliable evaluation of the learning process can only be conducted in the learning milieu itself because learning is affected by a complicated interaction of factors such as the prior experience and perceptions of adult and child, curricular delivery systems and immediate physical surroundings (Parlett and Hamilton 1972). In order to achieve a reliable evaluation of the learning processes that occur inside a CML it was decided that the study should be naturalistic with the research setting being the CML itself. This would enable the identification of the actions taken by CML operators which stimulate reading skills and promote reading, and the observation of the interactions between operators and customers. It would ensure that the relevant surroundings would permit children to participate in the research. As the acquisition of reading skills is a process, the chosen research method required the recording and analysis of processes. Therefore to answer the research questions the method of research should be inductive, qualitative with a focus on process and an understanding of participant viewpoints by naturalistic data gathering.

#### **2.1.5 Research methods**

Action research and phenomenology were methods that were considered, but not ultimately selected. Action research is generally conducted when the researcher, or body requesting the research, is in a position to change processes. This was not so in this study.

Phenomenology was considered as a means of investigating the power of the child's experience gathering data from the children in the form of a reading diary, written story or a drawing. The drawback to this method is that it concentrates intensely on the child's experience and is suited to analysis of greater depth than this study requires (Pickard 2007). It would also only answer one research question, that is, the effect of a CML on a child.

The methods chosen for the study took elements from both grounded theory and ethnography, to gather, analyse and compare empirical data. Such an inductive approach allows situations to be understood by the analysis of participants' perceptions and their interaction in the field (Charmaz 2006, p23). Such a dual methodology was chosen because neither grounded theory nor ethnography would have fully answered the research question should it be used on its own. Both approaches demonstrate many similarities but also possess some significant differences; these will be discussed in the following section.

### 2.1.6 Grounded theory and ethnography

Considerable debate exists around the nature and definition of grounded theory. It is considered both a strategy and a style of data analysis (Robson 2002) which can be used in either a qualitative or quantitative study (Charmaz 2006). Potrata (2010, p154) describes grounded theory as “a methodological approach, as it can utilise almost any method”. Pickard (2007) categorically states that grounded theory is not a research method, however, Charmaz (2006) repeatedly refers to grounded theory as a method. Robson (2002) describes grounded theory as a general method that exploits procedures, is systematic and co-ordinated and it is that interpretation which was used for this study. No such debate surrounds ethnography which is consistently termed a qualitative method that is applied to understand the nature of a research problem, theory or model (Fetterman 2010). Therefore, the combination of a grounded theory strategy and the method of ethnography, produces a structured methodology which will lead to understanding the phenomenon of a children's mobile library.

The subject of CMLs is a novel field, no previous academic, empirical research having been conducted in the area. Grounded theory is considered most effective in the analysis of a new area particularly because it fosters the possibility of further research (Robson 2002). Similarly, ethnography also can be used to “seek insight” and provide an understanding of the phenomenon, which can then “guide later research” (Robson 2002, p109). This compatibility extends to the attitude of the ethnographer and the grounded theorist as they begin to gather data. An ethnographer is advised to enter the field with an “Open mind, not an empty head” (Fetterman 2010) which means that the researcher should hold the objective view that the outcome of the research can be open ended (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). This precept, that a researcher should have no preconceived idea of what concepts will emerge from the data, is also present in grounded theory (Pickard 2007). This is not to say that the researcher should be entirely innocent like a blank sheet of paper because each person carries knowledge that they have gained from previous experiences (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). The skills and knowledge of an ethnographer, however, can be put to use as a research instrument “Par Excellence” (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, p16) and in this study, the researcher used prior teaching and educationalist experience to gather data about children's perceptions and understanding, while telling stories and talking to children on CMLs.

Both grounded theory and ethnography seek to understand different people's perceptions and other realities, seeing events and actions through the eyes of the participants (Fetterman 2010 and Charmaz 2006). It was important to understand the perceptions of children in order to reveal whether visiting a CML had affected their reading skills. Ethnographers are also sensitive to the fact that the presence of a researcher can affect the world being researched (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). It is for this reason that ethnographers like to fully embed themselves in a situation for a long time, to become such a common feature of the participants' world that the participants revert to their usual behaviour (Fetterman 2010). It is at this point that grounded theory differs from ethnography; grounded theorists do not embed themselves in one setting but rely on reflexivity to counter occurrences that may have happened due to their presence in the research setting (Charmaz 2006).

As discussed above, the focal points of the current research were the processes of the interaction between the participants in the naturalistic setting. Grounded theory analyses and compares processes across a range of research settings (Charmaz 2006); it studies one phenomenon in many places. Ethnography, on the other hand, is the intensive study and description of one place and its culture, social structure, people and their behaviours, the study of many phenomena in one place (Robson 2002). Combining both strategies produces a technique of intense scrutiny which can be applied to a range of settings. Grounded theorists look for patterns in data because the comparison of data from different research settings illustrates commonalities and isolated events. The outliers, single events that are highlighted by comparing data, are not disregarded by grounded theorists but noted and included in the theory (Morse 2007). Robson (2011) considers that the examination of outliers and extreme cases leads to a fuller understanding of the research subject. Such an attribute of grounded theory meant that any effective practice that was found in one CML alone was considered and included in the findings as examples of good or poor practice.

Both grounded theorists and ethnographers commence research by gathering a broad spectrum of data, then narrowing the focus to follow emergent theories (Charmaz 2006 and Hammersley and Atkinson 1983). Ethnographers and grounded theorists both use the term "thick description" (Charmaz 2006, p14) to describe extensive observation field-notes or participant narrative accounts, to engender "rich data" (Charmaz 2006, p23 and Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, p4) which "reveals participants' views, feelings, intentions and actions" (Charmaz 2006, p14). Extensive field-notes were therefore gathered.

The attitude towards data analysis differs between grounded theory and ethnography, although each method simultaneously gathers information and analyses data. Fetterman (2010, p2) claims that, in ethnography, "...analysis precedes and is concurrent with data collection". Grounded theorists do not begin analysis until the first batch of data is collected (Charmaz 2006). Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) reveal that ethnographers look for the meaning in what they find, the analysis generally taking the form of conceptual notes or memos. However, grounded theorists use more rigour by systematically coding the data in multiple ways, using memos to reflect on the findings and check for gaps in data to be filled later by focused data gathering. Both methods then use what is found to shape the research and emergent theories are pursued (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, and Charmaz 2006). A grounded theorist repeatedly returns to the field, gathering data until data saturation is reached (Charmaz 2006) whereas ethnographers stay in the field to follow "Hunches" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, p174). This study adopted the grounded theory approach.

Finally, the outcome of each method is different. The outcome of an ethnographic study is an "ethnography", a written report, article or book that conveys a social or cultural point of view from the aspect of an insider (Fetterman 2010). However, the outcome of a grounded theory study is a "grounded theory", an "abstract theoretical understanding of the studied experience" (Charmaz 2006, p4), it comes to some conclusion. The combination of grounded theory and ethnography produces a penetrating and explanatory portrayal of a situation (Charmaz 2006, p25) that is, the description, understanding and underlying theory that can satisfactorily answer the research questions. Grounded theory with ethnographic techniques was therefore chosen as a means of producing a definitive answer to the research question: do children's mobile libraries in the United Kingdom influence the development of a reading culture and promote children's reading skills?

When discussing grounded theory it is important to note that there are two schools of thought on the dogma of grounded theory. Put simply, grounded theory was developed as a research tool by Anselm Strauss and Barney Glaser, who eventually disagreed about its development (Charmaz 2006). Strauss considered that a "formal theory" could be developed which would be a general, abstract theory which could be applied to other disciplines. Glaser decided that staying at a "substantive theory" level would be adequate, producing "middle range" theories which are derived directly from, "grounded in", specific social phenomena (Charmaz 2006, p7). This study does not aim to develop an abstract theory, but to find substantive theories as applied to CMLs.

In summary, the combination of grounded theory as a strategy and style of data analysis with ethnographic data collection methods was chosen as the most suitable methodology by which to answer the research question. Ethnographic methods allowed the researcher to enter the naturalist setting of CMLs in order to understand the perceptions of the social actors in that world. Gathering data across settings produced knowledge of the processes that stimulated reading skills and the perceptions of children from diverse geographic and demographic backgrounds. The constant comparison of data from each CML identified patterns which caused the development of various theories. The rigour of grounded theory data analysis ensured that a valid conclusion was drawn, and the question was satisfactorily investigated.

### **2.1.7 Validity**

The validity and credibility of research depends on the transparency of the thought processes of the researcher, so that the research journey can be followed, and the conclusions can be understood by other interested people. The researcher should be "Sceptical, subjecting ideas to disconfirmation", and should closely examine observations and conclusions to safeguard against bias (Robson 2002, p18). The methodology for this study was chosen because it incorporates rigorous techniques that can be followed to verify its validity. The constant comparison of data and the iterative process of data gathering, analysis and corroboration of theories provide a self-regulating system that ensures against bias. Charmaz (2006, p51) sums it up in the following way, "...The grounded theory method itself contains correctives that reduce the likelihood that researchers merely superimpose their preconceived notions on the data."

### **2.1.8 Development of theory**

A significant feature of grounded theory as a strategy was that no a priori theory was developed from studying literature before data gathering commenced. Literature about children's librarianship and theories concerning the development of reading skills were searched and read before gathering data in order to provide a context to the study and it was discovered that there is little specific literature about CMLs. Therefore grounded theory provided the freedom to explore relevant literature when the need arose. There are many known theories concerning literacy development and the learning of reading skills which have been studied, developed and tested by many psychologists, sociologists and educationalists over decades and this research did not set out to rediscover what is already known. This study was an evaluation of whether those theories apply in a specific situation

and to discover whether that situation contributes in any previously unknown way to children's reading development.

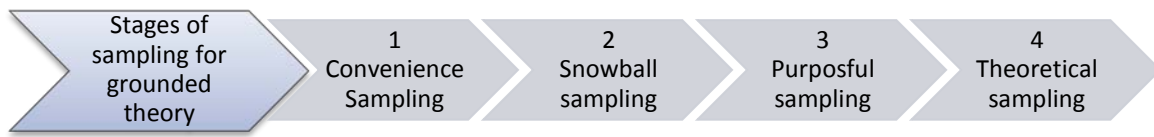
The bottom up aspect of the chosen methodology allowed theoretical concepts to be developed from the data before comparison with extant theories instead of gathering data to support hypothesis. In consequence, the findings were firmly based in the data and could not have been superimposed on observations by bias, the observer only seeing what they believed to be true.

### **2.1.9 Sample size, type and scope of research**

The research population of the study was made up of all people who have encountered a CML in their work or at their leisure in the UK. A systematic and intensive study of 228 local authority websites was initially made to discover the approximate number of children's mobile libraries currently operating in the UK (see appendix 1). The search continued throughout the duration of the study and found that only 16 (3.68%) of local authorities operate vehicles that fit the definition of a CML. At the time of writing, those 16 local authorities operate a total of 26 CMLs. Pickard (2007, p59) defines sampling as "...the process of selecting a few from the many in order to carry out empirical research".

Grounded theory incorporates its own selection system for specifying the scope of the research and identification of samples. Decisions about sample size are not taken before going into the field (Flick 2006) and sampling strategies may change as research develops, clarifying over time which participants will supply the richest data (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Grounded theory sampling follows specific stages as research develops, which delineate the size and nature of samples taken. Figure 2 (below), lists the four stages of sampling techniques used in the current research to select the participants who were interviewed and the CMLs in which observations took place. Initially, convenience sampling (Morse 2007) was used to select individuals who held knowledge about CMLs. A head teacher and a past children's mobile library service manager were consulted and from these contacts, by snowball sampling, two more key figures were found.

Two vehicles were visited and their operators interviewed, but observations did not take place because the CMLs were not scheduled to be in service at that time. The operators of two CMLs were interviewed, in person, without a visit to their vehicles; email conversations

**Figure 2: Sampling strategy used**

were held with operators of three other vehicles and a telephone interview conducted with the operator of one CML. In total, first hand information was gathered from 20 vehicles. Information was gathered from the websites of three CMLs. Therefore a total of 23 CMLs were investigated which covered all 16 local authorities. Observations were carried out in 12 CMLs. Two further vehicles were visited where their operators were interviewed but observations were not conducted.

The greater proportion of the data was gathered in the form of detailed field-notes over the course of 18 months. A total of 20 participant observations were conducted which involved approximately 710 children (aged between 2 years to 12 years), 40 parents and carers and 29 CML operators as participants. All the adult participants were questioned and approximately 160 children were engaged in informal questioning. In the initial stages of the study, two open, in depth interviews and six semi structured interviews were held as a precursor to the investigation.

The data from those initial interviews were analysed and the scope of the study was formed. Mobile libraries that specialise in children's services are operated either by the public library authority or by a Schools Library Service. It was decided to concentrate on the public library operated vehicles because their service is focused on the individual child, with regular visits to the same groups usually according to a scheduled timetable. Schools Library Service vehicles supply the needs of the school curriculum, rather than the individual child, and do not visit schools with the same frequency as public library service vehicles. Schools Library Service vehicles are therefore less relevant to the research at hand.

The decision to limit the scope of the research to public library operated CMLs led to the next phase, which was purposeful sampling, in order to gather a broad set of data. It was initially decided to conduct the research in three library services that operated in different types of location, urban, rural and coastal. At this stage, five population subgroups were formed, past and present CML operators, past and present CML service managers, children who visit CMLs, their carers and teaching or child-care staff.



As the study progressed, it became clear that the process in other vehicles should be observed in order to compare operations around the country; to discover if the same processes occurred on each CML and to examine the different aspects of each service. Two more authorities were sampled. The analysis of the data collected from the five CML services started to produce theories which needed to be checked by returning to the field. It is at that stage in the grounded theory strategy that samples of individuals or groups are selected "according to their expected level of new insight" to serve the developing theory which is termed "theoretical sampling" (Flick 2007, p126). This phase of focused data collection was conducted over five different authorities, totalling ten library services. Sampling and data collection continues in the grounded theory strategy until no new data is found in each of the population subgroups (Morse 2007) and every theory is verified. This is termed "Theoretical saturation" (Flick 2007). It is at that stage that the researcher can leave the field. Table 1 (below) outlines the reasons for the selection of certain services at the different stages of sampling. The three initial services did not visit children in certain communities necessitating gathering data from a service that uniquely takes a CML to children's secure units and one that entered the heart of urban estates to serve the community with a roadside service. The final phase of theoretical sampling was the collection of focused data to explore theories which had insufficient evidence at that stage, so children's reading skills, family interaction, operators actions, and minority communities were examined on five more vehicles.

#### **2.1.10 Ethical research**

Conducting research within ethical guidelines offers protection for participant, researcher and the organisation which funds or supports the research. The participants should not be deceived or compromised, should be fully informed about the research, and should be reassured that their information will be treated with confidentiality and anonymity (Bryman 2004). The design of a study must not cause harm to participants (Robson 2002) and as the majority of the participants in this study were children under the age of twelve years, therefore considered to be vulnerable, consideration of their safety was at the forefront of the research. The Children Act 2004 (DfES 2004) stipulates that "children's services", which

**Table 1: Services sampled together with the reasons for their selection**

Sampling technique	Service code	Observation No.	Geographic Location	Reason for choice
Purposeful sampling	A	1	City suburb	Inner city service
		2	Inner city	
		3	City suburb	
	B	4	Rural village and county capital	Rural service
		5	Rural villages	
		6	Rural villages	
	C	7	Coastal town	Coastal service
		8	Rural village and Coastal town	
		9	Commuter town	
Further purposeful sampling	D	10	City	City CML service that visits residential care and secure units
		11	Town City	
		12	City	
	E	13	City estate	City CML service that visits urban estates
		14	City estate	
		15	Inner city	
		16	Inner city	
Theoretical Sampling	F	17	Greater London suburb	Suburban CML. data collection focused on reading skills
	G	18	Rural villages	Specialist rural CML that works with families
	H	19	City	Inner city CML service that visits site for itinerant populations
	I	20	Industrial town	Urban CML with close community links. Data focused on operator actions

are defined as “anything done for or in relationship to children or relevant young persons”, should protect children from harm and have regard to a child’s physical and mental well-being. In practice, this means that to be able to include children as participants in the research, the following safeguards were put in place:

- Ethical clearance from Loughborough University was sought and granted.
- The researcher had previously undergone a CRB check.
- Consent to involve the children was requested from intermediaries, namely, the children’s mobile library service, managers and operators, parents, school staff or early years workers (see appendix 2)
- The children involved were told about the research and given the choice not to contribute (see appendix 3)
- All participants were told that they stop participating at any time without giving a reason (see appendix 2)

- All parties were informed that data would be kept anonymous and confidential (see appendix 4)

The following section will demonstrate that the fieldwork was carried out in such a way as not to contravene the Children Act, 2004.

## **2.2 Data collection instruments**

### **2.2.1 Observations**

The ethnographic technique of naturalistic observation is a means of scrutinising the object of research in such depth and detail that the actions which are observed are recorded in order to be analysed and interpreted at a later date. Observations can be conducted in a variety of ways. Participant observation requires the observer to have full involvement with the participants and their activities in their own environment. In semi-participant observation, interaction with the setting and research participants is kept to a minimum. Non-participant observers do not interact with research participants (Pickard 2007). The technique of gathering data through observation has been criticised as leading to bias because the observer adds their personal interpretation to the images that they see (Adler and Adler 1998). Based on the constructivist concept of multiple realities, what is being observed is different for each observer, dependent on their characteristics and perspectives (Robson 2002). "Bias" can be turned to advantage if the observer has the correct tacit knowledge because a deeper insight of the situation can be formed (Pickard 2007). In such a case, participant observation, with more opportunity to understand the phenomena under research, will produce richer data than non-participant observation. Also, McKechnie (2006) considers that participant observation is the most appropriate method for studying babies and toddlers.

Non-participant observation was not possible in the confined space of a children's mobile library particularly at busy times when the mobile was full of inquisitive children. Semi-participant observation would have been possible through confining interaction to asking questions to clarify research participant actions. Participant observation was chosen for three reasons. Firstly, because it was practical to join in the daily tasks of a CML. Secondly the freedom to interact with participants at will gathered rich data. Finally, the researcher possessed the appropriate tacit knowledge to interpret the interactions observed. As a qualified and experienced teacher and librarian, the researcher had developed skills to

communicate with children, operators and teaching staff, the experience to assess children's literacy ability and the training to actively listen to participants, thereby gathering richer data. This latter skill was crucial in remembering the incidents during observations as notes were not written down as events occurred, but at a convenient time as soon after the observations as possible. Such method of recording incidents risked the loss of some data due to the difficulty of remembering all details. However, sufficient data were gathered over many observations to compensate for loss of detail.

It was decided to use the traditional method of writing notes in a field note diary to record the observations for a number of reasons. The use of audio or video technologies to record children's activities would have entailed obtaining advance permission from a large number of parents<sup>6</sup>. Had the sample size been defined, it would have been possible to ask parents' permission in advance. However, the study was based on the natural situation of the day to day function of a children's mobile library, which involved several hundred participants, making parental permission impossible. Video recording also produces excess material that all participants, adult and child, will not have given permission to record which again poses an ethical problem (Flick 2006). Furthermore there is the danger that participants might behave in a different way from normal if know that they are being filmed, resulting in biased data. The written word was supplemented with still images of the interior and exterior of the vehicles and their operators, who gave consent for the photographs to be taken.

Grounded theory data gathering is focused and selective, therefore specific interchanges between participants are easy to record in note form. In six observations CML operators were audio recorded reading stories aloud to a group of children. The recording was undertaken, with the permission of the story teller, in order to study and analyse and compare their technique. The tone, pitch and timbre of their voice would be difficult to record by note taking. The recordings of the stories were transcribed and added to the field-notes for analysis.

The observations were conducted at intervals over the course of a year which ensured that annual events were included. The Reading Agency's "Summer Reading Challenge"<sup>7</sup> featured during the first observation, in August 2009, and at the last, in July 2010. World Book Day

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<sup>6</sup> Approximately 710 children were observed during the course of the research.

<sup>7</sup> [www.readingagency.org.uk](http://www.readingagency.org.uk)

activities and a visit to a community festival were also observed. The first five CML services were observed for three days each. The timing of the days was selected in advance with CML managers to ensure that a representative selection of the demographic served was visited. Three of the services operated more than one vehicle, therefore, observations were carried out on two vehicles at those services. In two cases, the service runs a CML for children under the age of 12 years and another CML for children under the age of five years. The third service had vehicles in the North and in the South of the county which operate in slightly different ways. The last five vehicles were visited for less than a day each, because the second phase of data gathering required brief, intense, focused observations.

Each observation of the CMLs commenced immediately the researcher sighted a vehicle and a mental note was taken of the outside livery, the design of the interior, the arrangement of books and presence of displays, toys or other objects. A photographic record was also taken of the interior and exterior at a quiet time during the observation to allow comparison of vehicles. A participant observer becomes actively involved with the phenomenon that is being researched therefore the researcher helped CML operators with their first tasks, noting what they were and how they were done. On some occasions, the researcher boarded the CML at its base which provided an opportunity to speak to operators or other library staff about the CML and to listen to the conversations between them. On other occasions, the researcher met the vehicle at its first stop of the morning and after a brief introduction, the task of welcoming children onto the CML took precedence. Note was taken of the way the children were greeted by the operators and the reaction and actions of the children and their accompanying carers. The researcher outlined the research to the children's carers and gained permission for the children to participate, if not granted beforehand.

The observations generally progressed by the researcher spending time with the children and either playing with them, reading a book with them or engaging them in conversation, usually starting with the phrase "Hello, I am here today to find out about the [name of vehicle]". The actions of the operators were also noted, for instance if they sat at the counter, or also mingled with the children, if the children showed them a book or talked to them. Certain CMLs had a set routine at each stop, for instance welcome the children, ask them to sit down and then read a story to them, after which they could browse, choose books to borrow or just sit and look at books. Such routines were noted with attention paid to the order and type of activity.

During the story sessions, the storyteller was closely watched and their method of controlling the children, their interaction with the children and the children's reactions to the story, their facial expression and body language, were monitored. The actions of accompanying adults were also observed. A record was made of the story that was read and any physical actions that the storyteller used to illustrate the story or questions asked by the storyteller, or ways that the storyteller involved the audience were included in the field-notes. The researcher read stories, once the routine of the CML was learnt, in order to talk to the children, examine their knowledge of story conventions and find out their relationship with books. During those sessions, the reactions of the children to the story were observed, such as their answers to questions asked by the researcher and their physical expressions. The researcher was able to gather data in such a way because of prior experience of working with children.

The manner in which children handled books, the interest they took in certain stories and their recognition of story characters (from books, film or television) were also observed. A mental note was made when any child concentrated on a book to the exclusion of the activities around them. The observer watched these actions while doing other activities, such as putting books on a shelf or sitting with a child. As the subject of the observations became more focused, for instance the interaction between parent and child on a CML, attention was paid to smaller details such as the way the parent and child sat together, the child's eye movements across the page and the movements of the parent's finger.

Conversations that were overheard between children, adults or adult and child, were a good source of data. These were not remembered verbatim, but a sense of the nature of the conversations was recorded in the field-notes. During some of the observations, the researcher was invited into the school or early years setting which the CML visited to speak to staff. This proved a valuable way to ask questions. Conversations between operators were sources of rich data because they frequently expressed their opinions of the service in which they worked. At the end of each session, all these observations were recalled from memory and typed up as detailed diary entries (see appendix 5 for an example).

### **2.2.2 Interviews**

Interviews are conversations, a two way communication of questions and answers which reveals participants' feelings, concepts and ideas (Denzin and Lincoln 1998). It was decided

to interview people who encounter, or had encountered, children's mobile libraries in their work or leisure, to collect data from multiple viewpoints (Pickard 2007). Individuals construct their own realities and the thoughts and opinions of participants cannot be identified by only watching their actions. An understanding of the participants' version of reality gives substance to data that cannot be seen (Charmaz 2006). Current or previous library service managers, children's mobile library operators, children's mobile library customers and their carers were interviewed because of the different ways in which they perceive the service. For instance, the experiences felt by a story teller and his audience vary depending on factors such as an adult remembering a childhood tale or a child hearing the words spoken for the first time. The processes involved can be revealed by taking each person's perceptions of the situation (Pickard 2007).

Ethnographers identify "key actors", individuals in a community which they are studying, as representative of groups of that society (Fetterman 2010). The concept of identifying key people who are conduits into a certain community can be extended to seek out individuals who hold specialist knowledge about the research topic. Individuals who had prolonged experience of CMLs were interviewed at the outset of the study to provide information to lead the data gathering process. It was decided that most participants should be questioned in situ, in the CML that they were visiting. Key individuals, such as service managers or previous CML operators would be interviewed in a place of their choice, commonly their office or a meeting room in the building where they worked.

Various styles of interview were considered: formal, standardised, semi structured and informal (Patton 1990). Formal interviews were considered an inappropriate way to collect data for the current research for the following reasons. The environment of a working CML is not an appropriate place to conduct a formal interview because it is public area usually filled with customers and a timetable of scheduled stops to which to adhere, therefore the participant would have no privacy and little time to make their response. Also, the standardised questioning of a formal interview is too inhibiting to use in grounded theory where the participants' unbiased thoughts are sought (Goulding 1999). Three interview styles were chosen dependant on the interviewee and the information sought: open intensive interviews; semi-structured interviews; and informal questions based on a question framework. Charmaz (2006) considers that the use of in depth, open, intensive interviews collects good quality, rich data. Interviews of that style were used to gather initial information at the start of the study, with two key individuals, to accrue a broad range of

data before the full emphasis of the research took shape (Goulding 1999).

Semi-structured interviews use a schedule, but questions can be asked in any order and further lines of questioning can be pursued for greater depth of information (Bryman 2001). Semi-structured interviews were chosen for use with CML operators and their managers. Interviews that were conducted on board CMLs took the form of brief informal conversations based on a question framework (Bryman 2001). Such a style of questioning suited the transient nature of visitors to each CML, and the ages of participating children. Table 2 (below) outlines the style of interview undertaken, the participant interviewed, the reason for choice of that participant and numbers of participants who were interviewed.

**Table 2: Interviewing strategy**

Interview style	Interviewees	Why chosen
In depth, open interviews.	Early years development librarian	Previous manager of a county mobile library fleet, project managed the development, building and launch of a children's mobile library.
	Retired librarian	British expert on Mobile Libraries. Previously drove a children's mobile library.
Semi-structured interviews	Head teacher.	Head of an East Midlands school that received a CML service.
	Early years development librarian	Experienced CML operator
	Early Years librarian	Managed a children's mobile library team
	Manager and operator of suburban CML	CML been featured in journal article, to supplement a shorter visit and observation on the vehicle
	Manager and operator of rural CML	To see two of their CMLs that have unusual features and to supplement a shorter visit and observation on one vehicle
	Operations manager of rural mobile library service	Library service has many CMLs
Informal questioning	29 CML operators	Research participants
	40 parents or carers	Research participants
	Approx. 160 children	Research participants

### 2.2.3 Question framework

A question framework which specified the topics to be covered during conversation with research participants on the CML was prepared in advance, in order to prompt data rich, relevant answers as recommended by Patton (1990). A maximum of six open questions allowed participants to express their views or opinions without the influence of the interviewer's suggestions which complied with guidelines by Faulkner et al. (1991). These conversational answers were followed by focused questions when necessary or their meaning was explored further if they had not been understood by the researcher. The



vocabulary used in the questions was an important point to consider as they had to be understood by the interviewees the majority of whom were children under 12 years.

Three sets of questions were devised, one set for operators, another for teachers, parents and carers and a third for children (see appendix 6). Each set of questions was linked to the aims and objectives of the research, but expressed in a slightly different way for each participant group. For instance, children were asked "Tell me about the [name of CML]" whereas their carer was asked "What does the CML mean to you?" and CML operators, "What does the CML represent?" These questions are linked to the third objective of the research, which relates to the potential influence of the CML on a child's reading. The reasoning behind the phrasing is that the child will tell a story about how the CML relates to them, the carer's attitude to the CML will influence how the child uses the facilities, and the operator's response should indicate their understanding of the influence of a children's mobile library.

The question framework was altered to phrase questions in a more specific way as data were collected and processed, as the focus of the study narrowed and as gaps in data appeared necessitating more insight into participants' actions (see appendix 7). Focus groups and participant diaries were considered as ways of gathering data, but rejected in favour of the more common forms of ethnographic data collection, participant observation and interviews. The reasons for this decision are discussed below.

#### **2.2.4 Focus groups**

Focus groups are a concentrated way in which to collect data from many participants (Pickard 2007). The notion of using focus groups to find out what happens in a CML was considered. However, although focus groups offer a forum for participants' thoughts and opinions, and can generate interesting and valuable discussion around topics (Pickard 2007), placing the participants in an artificial setting does not generate the same processes that occur in the naturalistic setting. More importantly many children's mobile library customers are infants under 5 years old and are unlikely to be able to voice their opinions in such circumstances. Such young children might find such a situation intimidating and would be unlikely to contribute useful data. Focus groups were therefore discounted as a method for the current research.

### **2.2.5 Participant diaries**

Diaries kept by participants provide data about their thoughts, feelings and behaviour. Their use in library and information research is regarded by some researchers with suspicion, because diaries rely on participants regularly and honestly completing the entries (Pickard 2007). Nevertheless, reading diaries were considered as a means of monitoring the progression of participants' reading. A reading diary might list the books children have completed, the date they started and finished the book and comments written by the person listening to them read, or from the children themselves. The information contained in the diary could have been analysed to discover any increase in the difficulty of the books read, or greater speed in reading books, suggesting that their skills were improving. The idea was rejected because the completion of a reading diary by young children would have entailed an involvement in the data collection from parents, teachers or CML operators. It would also be difficult to gauge the effect of visits of the CML on a child's reading skills, since any increase in reading ability could have been down to any number of factors including the "Hawthorn effect". That is, an increase in performance as a result of taking part in a research project (Cook 1962).

In summary, the data collection instruments chosen for the study were the ethnographic techniques of participant observation, open interviews, semi-structured interviews, and informal questioning based on a pre-planned question frame-work.

## **2.3 Data Analysis**

### **2.3.1 Background**

The general method of grounded theory contains ambiguity about the specific procedures used to analyse data. Although considered to be a qualitative form of research, the original publication which brought grounded theory to the attention of researchers, "The Discovery of Grounded Theory: strategies for qualitative research" (Glaser and Strauss 1968) is vague about the precise actions that may be used to synthesise raw data into information and includes a chapter on the use of grounded theory to develop theories from quantitative data. The grounded theory strategy allows data to be collected with a range of techniques, for example this study chose to use participant observation with some interviews, but other researchers commonly use in depth interviews or surveys (Charmaz 2006). Therefore, the data may be held in the textual form of field notes, transcriptions or images which can be analysed by coding. The collaboration of Strauss and Corbin (1998) produced a detailed

account of analytic coding and memo writing techniques that allow theories to emerge from the process. Glaser considered that restricting data to such a rigid system of analysis would not allow the data to evolve which would result in a staged theory (Heath and Cowleyb 2004).

Charmaz (2006) complicates the problem by setting out her grounded theory techniques for analysing data through many phases of coding and use of memos. Glaser and Strauss (1968) originally allow for variations in style of analysis and method:

*Grounded theory can be presented either as a well codified set of propositions, or in a running theoretical discussion using conceptual categories and their properties (Glaser and Strauss 1968, p31)*

Heath and Cowleyb (2004) recommend that researchers who use grounded theory should work to its main principles of; constant comparison, theoretical sampling and the emergence of theory, then use the form of analysis which suits their own understanding, either to a rigid framework or in a freer association of ideas. Many other researchers have written about ways to analyse data for grounded theory, each using forms of coding and labelling the many phases of coding by various terms, so ultimately it is not clear how to “do” grounded theory data analysis.

Glaser and Strauss (1968) are clear about certain aspects of grounded theory and it is those aspects that are emphasised by other authors. For instance, researchers must first consider the raw data in detail, and ask open minded questions about the incidents or actions that the data records. Flick (2006) lists the questions as: “What? Who? How? When? How long? Where? How much? How strong? Why? What for? By Which?” (p300). The information gathered from that process is then gathered into “conceptual categories” in which comparisons are made between incidents (Glaser and Strauss 1968). As the researcher considers the data, their developing thoughts are captured; hypotheses develop and change to ultimately form “Theories”. Glaser and Strauss (1968) emphasise that grounded theory is a form of “comparative analysis” and that it should be used to compare certain processes across a range of research settings in order to form a general understanding of those processes.

Glaser and Strauss (1968) specify that the collection of data, their coding and analysis should be “done together as much as possible. They should blur and intertwine” (p43). The

data should be analysed by a system of “joint coding and analysis”, to produce a flexible and systematic approach of categorising the data as information, thoughts and theories form in the researcher’s mind (p102) and Glaser and Strauss (1968) use the term “constant comparison” to describe that form of analysis (p105). There are four stages of analysis:

1. Comparing incidents applicable to each category
2. Integrating categories and properties
3. De-limiting the theory
4. Write the theory

This means that data are gathered into conceptual piles, which can be compared and a resulting hypothesis is concluded (p105). The resulting theory should “explain or predict” the process under scrutiny (p31). Data collection and analysis cease when sufficient data has been gathered to confirm a theory (theoretical saturation). The conceptual categories are part of an open ended scheme in which there is a place to include all the data gathered. Ultimately, the analysis of the raw data is essentially due to the thought processes of the individual researcher who must, therefore, record those thoughts in some manner.

### **2.3.2 Coding**

Glaser and Strauss (1968, p106) advocate that “coding need only consist of noting categories on margins” but “can be done more elaborately”. Robson (2002) states that grounded theory data analysis is similar to using common sense to reason out a complicated problem. The first set of data is therefore coded freely, using words or phrases that answer the questions posed (2.3.1 above). “Initial” or “open” codes are applied to a word, sentence, or paragraph to reflect actions and processes in the text being analysed. Such codes are spontaneous annotations, that is, responses from the researcher to the data, which form the backbone of the research. This first stage of analysis generates many codes, which are then simplified into “higher order and more abstract codes” (Bryman 2004). For example, the data analysed for this study generated the codes:

- An experience out of the setting
- A really nice treat
- Something different
- A place to have fun
- A good experience
- A memorable experience

Those codes, above, became synthesised into “break from daily routine”.

As data continues to be gathered and coded, the synthesised set of higher order codes is used and new ideas that may emerge are given new “initial” codes, which may then be synthesised into a higher order code. The next stage of analysis could be to formulate theories, as Glaser’s approach, or to categorise the higher order codes into “coding families” in order to realise the relationship between those codes (Charmaz 2006). This study chose to group the higher order codes into conceptual categories. For instance, the following higher order codes were grouped into the sub-category of “CML as an event”.

- Break from daily routine
- Excitement
- Child’s perception of CML
- Operator perception of CML

The categories are not derived from theoretical concepts which were devised before data collection, but develop from the concepts contained in the initial codes. Finally, those categories are linked to form a cohesive structure for the information. Patterns and concepts can be identified and traced because all the data from all observations, interviews or documents are consistently processed in this way. For instance, the category “CML as an event” was linked with the category “Physical attributes”. The emergent ideas then form theories, for instance the two above categories formed the theory of “Event” (See Figure 18, below). The theories developed during this study will be presented in the findings chapter.

### 2.3.3 Memos

“Memos” are analytical responses to the data from the researcher which can be attached at any stage during the analysis. For example, Glaser and Strauss suggest that as ideas occur to a researcher their thoughts should be noted in a memo. Bryman (2004) considers that memos are notes to remind researchers about the terms that they have used and a means of noting reflection on the research. Charmaz (2006) describes memos as a place to make comparisons and to clarify thought; they are spontaneous responses by the researcher to record insight and impression. Memos are a way of following the reasoning behind the development of a theory. For example, as shown in the passage below, the memo attached to the sub-category “Break from daily routine” outlines the analogy of a CML being like a “Travelling show”, indicates the psychological effect on children and prompts the researcher to investigate a half remembered, extant, educational theory:

The CML is like a travelling show who's arrival is anticipated, the waiting makes the adrenalin flow, then the excitement as it arrives, the rush when to get on board and the interior of the CML, a story, the buzz of choosing a book all squeezed into a short space of time, then you get off. The vehicle leaves like a visitor from an Ibsen play and all go back to normal.

Children learn better when the brain is in a state of arousal (find out more on that theory)

Theme is "something different".

The concept raised in that memo led to the development of the theory "Event"

#### **2.3.4 Summary of data analysis**

The initial development of grounded theory allowed for raw data to be analysed by any means chosen by the researcher as part of the analytic process. Linking the concepts held in data to "conceptual categories" to form hypotheses, as opposed to accepting or rejecting data on the basis of evidence relating to a pre-supposed theme was the technique that differentiated grounded theory from previous forms of qualitative research. As researchers used the strategy of grounded theory, specific coding techniques were developed and refined. The stages of data analysis for grounded theory are difficult to define, because they take a cyclical form and may happen simultaneously as data in the form of text, or images, are gathered and processed. To state it simply, the preliminary data is coded to make codes that can be used as a means of sorting subsequent data. New codes are generated at the same time. Eventually the data is converted into a series of concepts that can then be linked together to explain or predict a phenomenon, that is, a "theory".

The data gathered in this study by means of field-notes of observations or interviews and transcriptions of storytelling, were coded in that way, starting with data from the pilot study which aided the development of higher order codes. The higher order codes were then sorted into sub-categories and categories and linked together in conceptual hierarchies out of which theories developed. Data collection ceased at the point when no new concepts emerged from the first phase of coding. The theories that emerged from this study and the processes leading to their development are presented in Chapter 4: Theories, findings and discussion.

#### **2.4 Pilot study**

The purpose of the pilot study was to test elements of the methodology and data gathering techniques including:

- The practicality of being a participant observer in a small space
- The amount and quality of information likely to be given by participants
- The effectiveness of the question framework previously devised
- The reliability of writing up the field-notes as soon as practical after the observations had taken place
- The practicality and usefulness of audio recording and transcribing story sessions
- The most functional software for data analysis

The pilot study was conducted on a CML which visited schools and early-years settings in a large city. The researcher worked as a volunteer on the CML for three non-consecutive days at settings which were selected to represent a cross-sectional sample of the service users. The ages of the children who visited the CML during the observations ranged from two years to six years. The researcher told stories to the children and listened to the operator's storytelling, joining in the rhymes, actions and chants. The children's reactions to the stories were observed, noted and reflected upon. Being a participant observer worked well because the children were uninhibited by the presence of someone they regarded as another story teller, or member of library staff.

Travelling in the vehicle as it moved around the city provided a good opportunity to talk to the operator. The staff, who worked in the establishments which were visited by the CML, also willingly answered questions and contributed their own thoughts and opinions. Sufficient data were gathered from adults, but it was more difficult to talk to children. However, as the observations progressed, the researcher integrated the questions into the storytelling process to ensure that a dialogue would occur. The researcher found it difficult to memorise all the topic areas listed in the question framework and so non-intrusive crib sheets were used as an aide memoire. The framework was simplified to produce "prompts", key words printed on small slips of paper, which could be consulted during the observations as a means of recalling the questions.

Field-notes were typed in the style of a diary at the end of each period of observation allowing the memories to be captured while fresh in the mind of the researcher, with emphasis being given to the issues under investigation, that is, the actions and interactions between staff, operators and children. Such a method proved to be efficient and audio recording and transcription of the CML operator telling a story was also effective in the analysis of the story telling techniques. At the end of the field work observations, a portion

of the resulting text was experimentally coded by using different forms of computer software in order to establish the most practical analytical tool. Two features of Microsoft Word (Microsoft Corporation 2010) and two specialist qualitative data analysis software packages were explored to discover their ease of categorising and manipulating coded text. A software package, "Qualrus" (The Idea Works 2010) was chosen, but ultimately after handling the bulk of the data, the researcher completed the analysis on paper. Overall, the pilot study confirmed the choice of grounded theory with ethnographic techniques as being the most appropriate form of methodology for this study. The next chapter examines the documentary evidence which was consulted during the study.



## **Chapter 3: Theoretical framework**

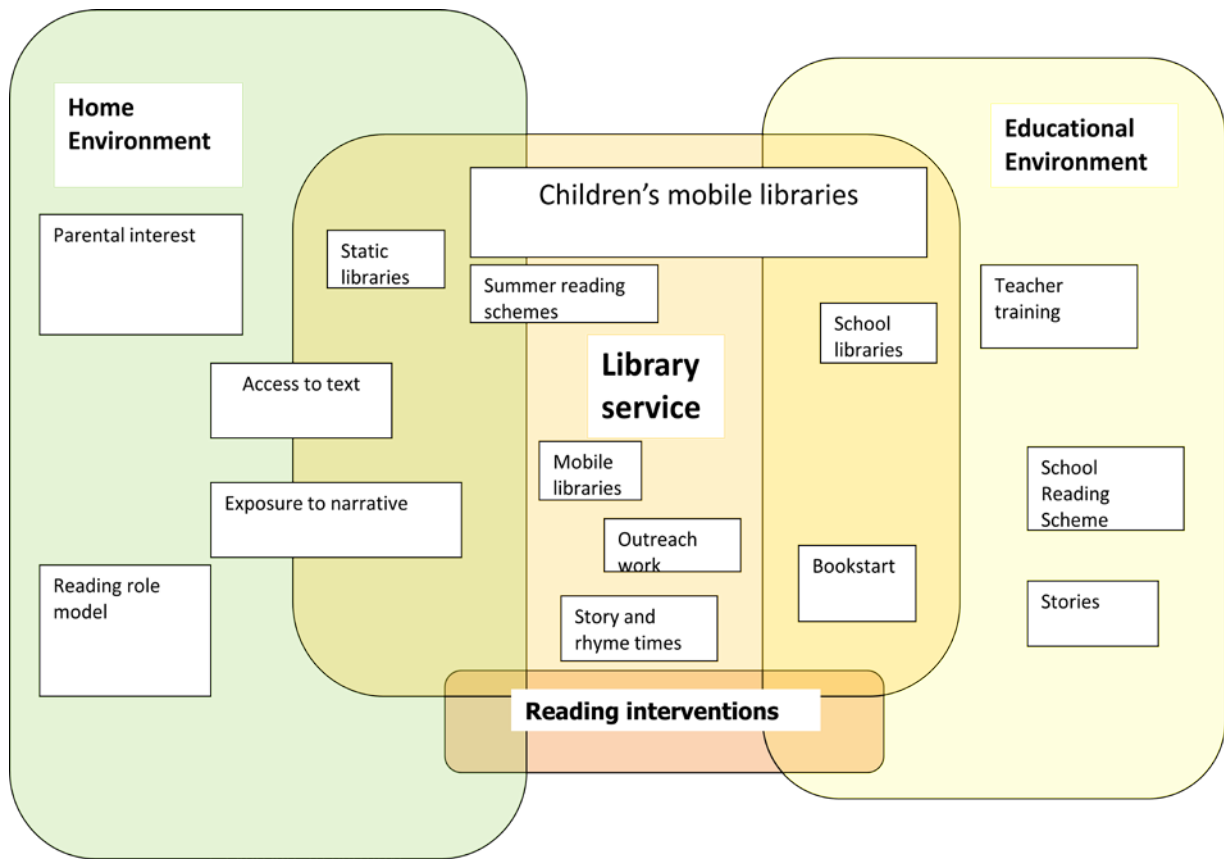
### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter dealt with the selection of grounded theory as a strategy combined with ethnography as a method to form the methodology for this study. This chapter is concerned with information already known about children's mobile libraries and background data which will support a theoretical framework for the study. First, a model of the many influences on the development of reading skills is presented to understand the context of a CML within the area of literacy development. Second, published research and site documents which were read to provide a theoretical basis for the research are discussed.

### **3.2 Influences on children's reading skills**

Children's cognitive abilities are a factor in determining the ease with which they learn to read. However, external environments may develop or impede children's innate abilities, for instance, a child who has appropriate levels of cognitive development will be slower to read should they live in a house with nothing to stimulate those skills (Gibson and Levin 1975). The model (Figure 3 below) depicts the three main areas of influence and one minor area of influence over children's acquisition of reading skills; the home environment; the educational environment (nursery or school): library services and reading intervention schemes. The greatest influence is the home environment where parental involvement and encouragement supplies children's motivation to read. Access to texts, (newspapers, books, computers) and exposure to narrative (stories, oral or read aloud) are necessary to learn to read, and these are available at home, in schools and in libraries. Libraries also supply summer reading schemes when children are at home in the holidays.

Key factors that affect children's literacy in the educational environment are: the training teachers receive in order to be able to teach literacy, the effective use of a school reading scheme, the frequency that children hear stories and whether the educational establishment has a library accessible to children. Library services overlap with the educational environment, because libraries can form partnerships with educational establishments. School library services provide books for children and teaching aids for teachers. Libraries and early years settings collaborate to distribute Bookstart packs, for example (Bookstart 2009).

**Figure 3: Model A influences on children's reading skills**

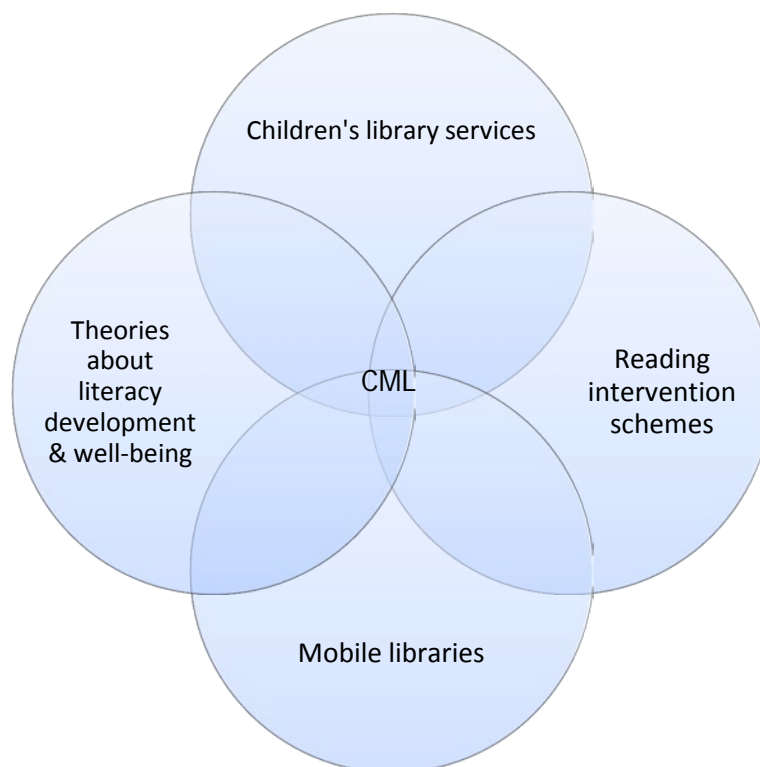
The library service includes static libraries or mobile libraries that children can access with their parents, story and rhyme-times and outreach work in the community, for instance book collections in children's centres. Reading intervention schemes stretch across all areas because they can be conducted in children's homes, libraries or educational establishments. Model A shows that a CML can be accessed by children from their home environment, as it stops in their neighbourhood, as a library service within a community and from their educational setting, and that children's reading skills are influenced by many factors.

### 3.3 Consulting the literature

Grounded theory uses literature as a form of data, to be gathered and analysed during the process of research (Goulding 1999). Therefore, the literature that is discussed in this chapter was gathered at different times as the study progressed. A small amount of literature was surveyed prior to the research in order to establish that no other academic study about CMLs had been published, to work out the general scope of the project and to

set the context for the study. Although there have been academic studies of children's libraries and librarianship there is a gap in knowledge and understanding of CMLs which is worth filling. There are many and various ways that reading is promoted in the UK and a CML is only one strategy amongst numerous methods attempted by different organisations. Figure 4 (below) sets the context of a CML within the body of literature previously written about children's library services, reading intervention, mobile libraries, and children's reading development.

**Figure 4: The position of a CML in the provision of reading promotion**



Academic literature was consulted during the ongoing analysis of each observation in order to understand the processes under scrutiny and to compare and corroborate findings with extant theories of learning and literacy. Therefore theories concerning the development of literacy were investigated and the concept of well-being and its relationship to reading and libraries was explored. A CML is a children's library service as well as a mobile library therefore literature concerning both those aspects were examined. A CML is also a form of reading intervention, and works with other agencies, such as Bookstart, in order to develop children's reading skills and reading for pleasure. Therefore, analysis of Bookstart's work was explored, together with that of similar schemes, in order to discover the effectiveness of such interventions.

### 3.4 Theories about learning and literacy, well-being and the contribution of libraries to literacy

#### 3.4.1 Learning and literacy

Through considerable previous research, it has been shown that there is a strong link between a child's home experience with books and their ultimate literacy ability (Bonci 2008). Meek (1991, p74) uses the term "environmental print" to describe the words that children see everywhere, inside or outside their homes. Words appear on television screens, computers, mobile phones, crisp-packets and sauce bottles. This sort of text plays a large part in a child's awareness that print conveys a message (Meek 1991) and can be used by parents and carers to stimulate a child's developing literacy (Brock and Rankin 2008). However, text used in such a context does not replace the benefit of growing up with books at home, especially if reading is shared with parents.

For instance, Meek (1991) considers that adults and children who share books gain a common experience which not only encourages literacy, but also enhances their relationship:

*Adults who read to children both model for them the process of reading and offer them a set of different contexts for their shared conversations, thus extending the experiences that they share (Meek 1991, p98).*

It is known that children's reading skills develop when adults model reading skills by reading to children and by reading themselves because children perceive that reading is a valued activity. The value that parents ascribe to books at home develops a child's understanding of the function of literature. By sharing the experience of a book, through listening, children not only benefit from intimacy with their parents, but also gain the capacity to understand the rules of narrative and learn ways of thinking about information. Such a background gives children an educational advantage (Heath 1994).

The parent and child book sharing experience need not be solely confined to times when they are at home. For example, McKechnie (1997) studied the interactions between mothers and daughters in a Canadian library. The children were at a pre-reading stage and could not understand the text in the books that they picked up and showed to their mothers. The mothers' natural responses were to interpret the pictures and words and to engage in

conversations with their daughters about the books and story they contained. McKechnie (1997) compared the others actions with Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD) and concluded that mentoring a child's interaction with written language and books stimulates their learning experience. Vygotsky (1978) used the term "zone of proximal development" to specify the state that a child enters when acquiring a skill:

*...what is in the zone of proximal development today will be the actual developmental level tomorrow -that is, what a child can do with assistance today she will be able to do by herself tomorrow (Vygotsky 1978, p87).*

He believed that children learn by attaching newly acquired information to information that they already know and adults can mediate the learning process as they question children about the task in hand.

Children need to be encouraged and praised when they attempt literate behaviour, pretending to read or turning the pages of a book to look at the pictures (Meek 1982). Parents do not recognise that such seemingly minor actions which are performed by their children are, in fact, important milestones of literacy development (Hannon 1995). Parents therefore need to be shown that when their child learns to write a random group of letters, or pretends to read to their dolls, the child has achieved a skill that leads to literacy. Similarly, McKenzie et al (2007) believe that parents and carers may not understand the importance of small actions such as reading and singing rhymes to young children, therefore may need to be shown how to interact with children to stimulate literacy. The manner in which parents learn to develop children's literacy is effectively achieved through an informal situation, as can be seen in the following example. McKenzie et al (2007) studied the actions of parents and children as they listened to stories and sang rhymes during story sessions at a number of Canadian libraries. They concluded that the participants, adult and child, all learnt an expected form of behaviour from copying each other and the library staff. This form of learning is known as "situated learning" (Lave and Wenger 1991) which McKenzie, Stooke and McKechnie (2007, p2) describe as "learning embedded in social practice".

Many libraries provide story sessions for parents and children where adults and children learn new rhymes. Nursery rhymes are excellent tools for the development of literacy because singing and listening to rhymes help children to learn the cadence of speech (Butler 1980). The ability to hear and recognise sound is developed in the womb, and by the time a

child is born their neurons start to distinguish which sounds form language and which do not (Brock and Rankin 2008). Children need to develop an awareness of these individual sounds to eventually match what they hear to the written code and to understand spelling patterns (Gibson and Levin 1975). The ability to recognise and play with the smaller sounds that make up words is called phonological awareness. Nursery rhymes split words into phonemes by their rhythm and tone, therefore it is easier for children to identify the sounds. Muter et al (1998) state that a child's phonological skills arise from two sub-skills: the ability to recognise rhyming words and the ability to recognise phonemes, and the latter skill is the most important factor in learning to read. On the other hand, Foy and Mann (2003) believe that such phoneme awareness is not learnt automatically but has to be taught, and children do not develop such a skill until a later age. Whatever the method of acquisition, Brock and Rankin (2008) consider that a basic grounding in such phonological awareness is necessary before a child learns phonetics in a formal way. Hearing and singing rhymes help children develop the ability to hear phonemes which contributes to their future reading skills. The acquisition of literacy and learning to read is made difficult by the difference between normal conversational language and printed literature.

Hannon (1995, p40) draws attention to the fact that there are "profound differences between oral and written language" and Gibson and Levin (1975) observe that grammar and vocabulary used in the formal written context is very different from spoken language. Consequently, when learning to read, the act of decoding symbols on a page is made harder due to children not being able to anticipate the message conveyed by the text in front of them. Listening to stories read aloud, prior to the attempt to decode text, develops skills of prediction which help children to place the words of a story into context (Brock and Rankin 2008). The greater number of stories children hear, the more experienced in prediction and vocabulary those children will be. Therefore, access to a wide range of reading materials is a vital step in learning to read. Personal selection from a variety of books encourages children to read for pleasure. Krashen (2004, p37) argues that "Free Voluntary Reading" allowing children to choose what they want to read instead of perusing rigid reading schemes, results in improved language skills: vocabulary, grammar, spelling and comprehension along with cognitive development. Adults should not take over the choice of books for their child because reading for pleasure is stimulated by making choices in person. To alert children's curiosity they should have the "opportunity to look at any book he chooses" (Gibson and

Levine 1975, p267). Clark and Rumbold (2006) consider that the early ability to select personal reading matter builds self-esteem and develops intrinsic motivation.

Gibson and Levin (1975) propose that it is children's natural curiosity that gives them the motivation to read and the desire to find out what is in a book. This presupposes that children understand that books contain something of interest. Meek (1982) suggests that children first need to be stimulated by experiencing pleasure from the content of books:

*The learner has to learn that the stories in books bring pleasure and delight, a way of looking at the world. All else in literacy will follow because he will want to be part of the process so as to prolong what he enjoys. Once he has found how stories work he will know that print on a page unfolds as a living event (Meek 1982 p23).*

Clarke and Rumbold (2006) take a different view point, suggesting that children need to discover the relevance of reading to their lives in order to find a motivation to read. There are two forms of motivation, intrinsic, the desire to pursue an action for its own sake, and extrinsic, an external reward gained after an action (Gibson and Levin 1975). Clarke and Rumbold (2006) consider that adept readers show intrinsic motivation because they know that they will feel pleasure from stories or discovering information. Other children may need to be prompted to read by an external reward, such as stickers and certificates or praise and acknowledgment. Children can understand the relevance of reading when they gain the external reward of good marks for their school work.

Both Krashen (2004) and Chambers (1991) consider that personally selecting books increases children's desire to read. Chambers (1991) adds that browsing is essential for children to be able to feel comfortable when faced with the variety of choice in a book filled environment. Such an opportunity builds children's confidence in selecting their own reading material. The self-confident, self-motivated learner can then use those skills throughout their life (DCMS 2003). The benefit of independent library experience to a child is the opportunity for them to take responsibility and exercise their freedom of choice (CILIP 2002b). Children's autonomous use of a library allows them to learn the information seeking, browsing and reading skills needed to develop into an independent learner (Vincent 2000).

### **3.4.2 Well-being**

A number of published studies trace the physiological and psychological effects of reading. Those that have been conducted all conclude that reading for pleasure lowers stress levels and relaxes individuals more efficiently than other physical or mental activities. Nell (1988) conducted the most intensive research comprising five different studies, believing that reading for pleasure could affect physiology and temporarily change an individual's consciousness in a similar way as dreaming, or a hypnotic state. Three of Nell's (1988) studies tested participants' reading abilities, questioned them about their reading habits, and closely observed 33 of the participants as they were reading books of their own choice under laboratory conditions. Using the same participants, the fourth study examined changes in their physiology while undertaking a series of tasks. The participants' facial muscle activity, respiration, skin potential and heart activity were monitored as they relaxed with eyes closed, listened to white noise with open eyes, read part of a favourite book, relaxed with eyes closed again, read a work related passage, looked at neutral photographs, performed mental arithmetic and visualisation. Nell (1988) found that "ludic" reading stimulated the body greater than the other tasks, causing skin and muscle activity, changing facial expressions and a variance in heart rate. However, the mental and physiological arousal ceases as soon as the individual stops reading which causes deep relaxation. Nell (1988) argues that the instant cessation of physiological arousal causes reading to be an effective inducer of sleep. Nell (1988, p46) also considered that the individual gains "reading gratification", a sense of pleasure.

A more recent unpublished study conducted at the Sussex Innovation Centre, (Mindlab 2009) has corroborated Nell's (1988) work. The heart rate and skin conductance of participants was measured in order to detect levels of stress, while they were undertaking a variety of leisure activities. A short episode of reading, just six minutes, lowered the individuals' level of stress considerably more than the same periods of listening to music, drinking tea, taking a walk or playing a video game.

Nell's (1988) final study, again using a selection of the previous participants, examined the theory that the cognitive state alters as an individual reads. Csikszentmihalyi (2002) terms the altered state as "flow", an exhilarating state that produces pleasure. Ryan (2010) gives an example of such an altered mental state as being so engrossed in the book as to not notice a phone ringing, or the light of the room getting darker. Nell's (1988) participants contributed data by giving a phenomenological description of their feelings about reading. Nell (1988) evaluated their needs and gratifications as the participants expressed the strong



emotions that they felt while reading. Nell (1988) argued that reading changes cognitive consciousness, in the same manner as dreaming because the participants reported that after experiencing the strong emotions caused by cognitive immersion in their chosen narrative, they felt relaxed and in a lighter mood.

Brock and Rankin (2008) consider that stories are important in developing children's emotional well-being because they help children make meaning of events in their lives. Through stories children develop cognition and empathy and come to understand the world in which they live. Meek (1991) reasons that stories provide children with an imaginative repertoire of ways of coming to terms with their emotions. Stories are a safe way of learning about fear, anger, and love, with the reassurance that such emotions are normal and can be controlled and allayed. The perception of mental and physiological relaxation due to the act of reading for pleasure was studied by Usherwood and Toyne (2002) who found that reading contributes to an individual's well-being. The studies above show that the act of reading causes physical relaxation, lowers mental stress levels, alters cognitive state, and stimulates and rationalises emotions which improves an individual's well-being.

A state of well-being, however, develops from the effects of many factors. Prilleltensky et al. (2001) consider that the well-being of an individual is influenced by the amount of power and control that they perceive that they hold over their own lives, and list three things that lead to "wellness".

1. The opportunity to access valued resources that satisfy human needs
2. To be able to exercise participation and self-determination
3. To be able to experience competence and self-efficacy which instil a sense of stability and predictability in life (Prilleltensky et al. 2001)

The resources that children need to live satisfactorily include nutritious food, a safe place to live and a secure attachment to other people. The term "Self-determination" refers to the process that occurs when an individual is able to make decisions about matters that affect them, which is difficult to achieve as a child. Prilleltensky et al (2001) suggest that opportunities should be made for children to react with adults on an equal basis, to enable children to feel that their choice and contribution is valid. Competence and self-efficacy occurs when an individual completes a task well, such as learning to ride a bike. Bandura (1977, p191) describes self-efficacy as "mastery arising from effective performance". Prilleltensky et al. (2001, p155) put forward the argument that children are a "marginalized

population with little political power” who usually “come last in allocation of social resources”.

It is therefore important to the health and well-being of children that they find a place to give them the opportunity to make choices and achieve mastery over a certain skill. It could be argued that a library is a place that fulfils such requirements. In a library, children may choose books that they enjoy, become competent at the skill of selection and improve their reading skills to achieve mastery over reading. Once mastery is achieved, the activity of reading can lower stress, increase relaxation contribute to emotional health and improve the well-being of an individual.

### **3.4.3 Libraries and literacy**

Public libraries, historically, have demonstrated their social importance as developers of adult and childhood literacy (Kerslake and Kinnell 1997). Lonsdale (2000, p31) reports that, children's library services have a concern for “instilling a desire and love of reading”. Elkin and Lonsdale (1996, p66) believe that a library service has a significant contribution to a child's “intellectual, emotional, social and educational and language development”. Kerslake and Kinnell (1997) comment, that globally, public libraries have demonstrated their social importance in the role of promoters of literacy. Lyman (1977) reasons that a library service has the ability to foster reading skills because it can supply stock relevant to its surrounding community and provide access to a broad variety of reading matter, both in subject matter and level of reading difficulty. However, Denham (2000a) discovered that, in UK children's libraries, due to the need to target groups of low literacy, other children were not receiving the full variety of resources to support their literacy needs.

Lonsdale (2000) believes that the definition of literacy should be considered when planning children's library services. The new technologies of social media and the internet require different literacies such as visual literacy and information literacy (Elkin and Lonsdale 1996). Therefore children's libraries should provide digital resources to help develop those skills and respond to children's needs. Such resources are currently found in community libraries. Pahl and Allen (2011) investigated the literacies that children used in a community library, by means of children themselves becoming researchers. They found that literacy was not constantly focused on one element in the library, but was involved across a number of activities from reading the titles of the books in the library to reading social networking sites and using computer games. The children performed such activities in the library because

they considered it a safe space and they felt supported by the library staff. Pahl and Allen (2011) consider that the library assistants became supporters of literacy by being role models and enabling the children's literacy.

There is an acceptance amongst the library profession that the role of libraries is to support learning and to facilitate a pleasure in reading (CILIP 2002b). Denham (2000b) states that librarians attempt to foster a love of reading by supplying children with a wide range of literature, by organising promotions and library activities, by making children aware that books can be enjoyed, and to give the love of reading, but not to teach reading skills. Denham (2000b), however, does not explain the practical details of how librarians achieve such tasks above that of mentioning that librarians should model reading behaviour.

Static libraries frequently hold story telling sessions on a regular basis, and a number of libraries run reading groups for children and for families (Denham 2000b). The children who use public libraries consider themselves to be good readers, enjoy reading, have a higher reading attainment than non-library users, and are encouraged to use libraries by their parents (Clark and Hawkins 2010). Denham (2000a) states that it is hard to establish the credibility of libraries with local authorities because they do not always recognise the link between libraries and literacy. Such a sentiment is echoed in the report "Start with the Child" (CILIP 2002b), with the concern that the contribution of libraries to changing children's lives is not recognised. Elkin and Lonsdale (1996) stress that the benefit of a library in the role of supporting children's reading, and access to information, is that a library provides equality of access to all children irrespective of ability or geographic location. The neutrality and equality of public libraries is corroborated by the research of Clark and Hawkins (2010) which could find no socio-economic group dominating children's use of libraries.

### **3.5 Children's library services**

Over the past two decades there have been three major surveys of children's library services; the Department of National Heritage report, "Investing in children", in 1995; a British Library Research and Innovation report, "A place for children", in 2000 and two years later, in 2002, CILIP produced the report "Start With the child". The "Investing in Children" report states that "children are our future" (Working Party on Library Services for Children and Young People et al. 1995, p57), meaning that children's library services are a training ground for the development of the use and knowledge of a library system, consequently producing adult library users. The reports examine existing provision and recommend

changes to existing practice to ensure that libraries meet children's needs. Library services for children are supplied by three main providers: public library authorities, schools and local authority schools library services.

Librarians have been giving children access to books since the 19th Century (Elkin and Lonsdale 1996). Initially, some public libraries integrated children's books into their collections, others had children's sections, and some, such as Nottingham, had separate children's libraries. Since that time it has been commonplace for each public library to have separate children's areas. The 1944 Education Act stimulated improved library services for children in schools (Elkin and Lonsdale 1996). School libraries are not run by public library services, but by the school in which they are situated (SLA 2009). Some Local Authorities provide links with schools by offering schools library services which loan books, artefacts, worksheets and the expertise of librarians to teachers and school librarians. Certain of those schools library services own a mobile library that takes books, with the librarians, to visit schools. Funding arrangements within authorities generally mean that most schools library services charge for their services in some way, for instance subscriptions and loan fees (Devon County Council, 2009).

Library services in general deal with two other issues which are important in terms of children's relationships with libraries. Firstly, library authorities take services into communities in a number of ways as outreach work. This can be in the form of book collections lent to groups, or library staff who work within the community. Secondly, the development of customers' reading skills and their literacy has been an important part of the role of a librarian for many years.

### **3.5.1 Public library children's services**

The Public Libraries and Museum Act, 1964<sup>8</sup> states that library authorities must encourage both adults and children to make full use of a library service. The Act requires local authorities to provide a "comprehensive and efficient public Library Services for all persons desirous to make use thereof". The "Investing in Children" report indicates that there are differing interpretations of the terms "comprehensive and efficient" which makes enforcement of the Act difficult (Working Party on Library Services for Children and Young People et al. 1995, p22). The power of the Act has been tested since that date, by its use in

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<sup>8</sup> (Great Britain ) section 10 (1)

a local enquiry to investigate whether the actions of Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council breached its statutory duty (Chateris 2009).

The enquiry found that Wirral council was not compliant with the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 because they had interpreted the term “efficient” in a purely fiscal way (Chateris 2009, p7), saving money, and had not considered the overall requirements of the “persons making use thereof” (Chateris 2009, p40) or made any attempt to assess whether the libraries were supplying the service that local people wanted. The efficiency expected in the act, as interpreted by the enquiry, is the fulfilment of the needs of different people and groups that make up the local communities within the each authority, making the service “comprehensive”, meaning, including all. This includes a “due regard to the general requirements of children” (Chateris 2009, p57). The Act can therefore be interpreted as a statutory requirement for local councils to provide a library service for children, the only statutory service “available to children from babyhood to adolescence” (Elkin and Kinnell 2000, pxii).

The role of a public children's library encompasses the promotion and encouragement of reading for pleasure; assistance with language development; the promotion of books and information; teaching and encouraging children to use libraries and the development of cultural awareness (Elkin and Lonsdale 1996). The national survey, “A place for children” (Elkin and Kinnell 2000) examines the relationship between children's reading and public libraries to assess the effect of social changes on children's library needs. It finds that most library authorities target children under the age of five years “partly because it is at this stage that attitudes to books are formed” (Elkin and Kinnell 2000, p13), although some authorities focus on teenage readers. At the time the report was written, ICT (Information and Communication Technology) was becoming an important library resource for children and the needs and role of parents was considered with the provision of “Parents” collections which include books about aspects of parenting and children's development.

“Start with the Child”, the report commissioned by CILIP, is an “assessment of the needs and aspirations of children and young people in the UK” (CILIP 2002b). Taking the children's viewpoint it explores their vision of what a library service should be and suggests ways of developing children's library services to fit with their wishes. It primarily recommends that children's library services should be seen as a core service to public libraries and recommendations from the report include the following:

- Government initiatives concerning literacy and learning should include library services
- Staff working within a library service should receive a basic training in working with children and new staff should demonstrate an interest in serving children and young people
- Library policies and procedures should be reviewed to prevent barriers to library use, specifically by socially excluded groups
- Strong links should be made with other organisations and partnership working should be encouraged (CILIP 2002b)

A more recent survey has found that around half of children claim to use a public library because they find the reading materials interesting. Approximately one third of children like to use libraries because it is “a friendly space” with computers, and they consider that a library helps them “do better” at school (Clark and Hawkins 2010, p17). Other publications about children's libraries are written as handbooks or manuals of how to manage a children's library, for instance “Managing library services for children and young people” by Catherine Blanshard (1998), or as a textbook such as “Focus on the Child” by Elkin and Lonsdale (1996). Such authors consider other details that they believe are relevant to a successful children's library service in addition to the factors mentioned above, for instance:

- The importance of the stock of a children's library and its accessibility
- The suitability of the library environment to the needs of children

Each of the issues raised in the above paragraph will be separately discussed below.

#### 3.5.1.1 *Government initiatives for literacy*

The literacy levels of UK citizens have been under political scrutiny for decades, which means that the delivery of children's library services has been subject to the various changes in government educational policies. The Bourdillon Report (1962) emphasized the need for specially qualified children's librarians and the later Bullock Report (1975) stressed the contribution of libraries to literacy (Elkin and Lonsdale 1996). The National Curriculum was introduced to schools following the Education Reform Act 1988 which increased children's demand for non-fiction material in libraries (Elkin and Kinnell 2000). The last Labour government introduced the National Literacy Strategy in 1998, which standardised the way that reading was taught in schools, and has overseen two National Years of Reading (1998/9 and 2008). The Rose report (Rose 2006) and the end of the National Literacy Strategy, keep the issue of reading at the forefront of politics. The recent 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools White Paper recommends a freer approach to the teaching of reading in an attempt to increase national

literacy (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2009b)

More recent law relating to children does not appear to recognise the educational worth of a child's experience in a library. Since the introduction of the Children Act 2004, any work with children should be aimed at achieving the five outcomes of the Labour Government programme "Every Child Matters" (DfES 2004). The headings for the five outcomes are: "Be healthy; Stay safe; Enjoy and achieve; Make a positive contribution; Achieve economic well-being" (DfE 2011). This means that children should learn how to keep physically and mentally healthy; to understand how to avoid dangerous circumstances; to have the ability to enjoy life and achieve their potential; to be a responsible citizen; attaining and retaining enough money to live comfortably (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2009a). The reasoning behind the policy is that the investigation into the Victoria Climbié case<sup>9</sup> expedited government plans to legislate for statutory services that work with children, to mutually communicate and co-operate (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2003). Originally, health, education and social services, but not library services, were named in the Children Act 2004, as co-operative partners to work together under local authorities as Children's Trusts to produce joint strategic plans for the well-being of children. The internal market strategy of funding each partner was broken down by the introduction of a pooled budget. However, since the change to a coalition government in May 2010, the partners that are expected to work together are:

- *district councils*
- *strategic health authorities*
- *primary care trusts*
- *youth offending teams*
- *police*
- *probation services*
- *persons providing Connexions services*
- *Jobcentre Plus* (DfE 2011a)

Educational establishments may choose to join the partnerships, but again there is no

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<sup>9</sup> Victoria Climbié was an eight year old child who died in 2000 from neglect and abuse by her guardians. An enquiry into the case by Lord Laming in 2003 showed that Social Services and the Health Service missed many opportunities to prevent the abuse. He recommended that a national agency was set up to prevent another such occurrence, and children's trusts should be set up so that all agencies working with children could communicate.

mention of library services as partners.

The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) commissioned research to investigate the way that the cultural sector could become part of local authorities strategic planning for children. The resulting report by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA 2009) indicated that although children's commissioners understood the educational opportunities presented by museums, libraries and archives, their involvement to achieve ECM outcomes was not considered. Nevertheless, public library strategic plans are closer than other cultural agencies to Every Child Matters and have always had "a more clearly defined pedagogic and social purpose than museums and galleries" (Naylor et al. 2006).

The contribution that libraries make to children's well-being has had some recognition as library services are already in partnership with SureStart and children's centres (IDeA 2009). SureStart is the Government's programme which brings together early education, childcare, health and family support under one building, again as a result of the Children Act 2004. The link with SureStart, coupled with the government learning structure for children from birth to five years old (The Early Years Foundation Stage) has led to the development of the role of Early Years librarian. Such a librarian works in a library authority in partnership with SureStart to deliver their programme to low literacy parents and young children in their community and demolish barriers to library use (Rankin and Brock 2009).

It appears that although the work of children's librarians was recognised in the 1960s and 1970s as having a beneficial effect on literacy, with the exception of the SureStart partnership, Government policy makers no longer understand the relationship between libraries and readers. "A place for children" concludes that the research on which the report was based "showed overwhelmingly" the developmental effect that library usage has on children, "improving their reading skills and helping them to grow intellectually, socially and culturally". Such an effect had been overlooked by "Policy makers and politicians" at both local and national level who had "Failed to grasp the hugely significant role of libraries in the future shaping of the nation's children" (Elkin and Kinnell 2000, p115). Two years later, the "Start with the Child" report also considers that local and national government strategies do not pay sufficient attention to the benefits of library services to children:



*The role played by public libraries in providing regular under-fives activities and storytimes as well as work with the parents and carers has not been recognised adequately, even though libraries are effectively the only holistic cradle to grave service, capable of supporting a National Literacy Strategy (CILIP 2002b, p37).*

The report recommends that the contribution of library services to the well-being of children should be included in future local and national policies (CILIP 2002b).

### 3.5.1.2 *Children's library staff*

Jast (1939, p101) describes a children's library as "Trained staff with a collection of books". Although 70 years has passed since Jast (1939) published his book, his views as an experienced librarian still hold strong. He believed that staff working in a children's library are able to have a different relationship with children than that of their teachers. Library staff can act as mentors to help and guide children to select their own choice of books but teachers are concerned with the pedagogy of reading. Jast (1939) expresses the opinion that there are good books and bad books, ones that are badly written, or shallow in meaning, but that does not preclude children from reading them. Fleet (1973) also considers that staff should not contradict children's book choices, but should make suggestions for more appropriate books and let children make their own decisions.

Jast (1939) states that, the role of library staff is to encourage children's reading and help them to progress to books with greater intellectual content. Chambers (1991, p34) emphasises that individual encouragement about their book choice is important to children. Krashen (2004, p66) believes that children's reading achievement is "consistently related" to the quality of staff that are employed. Elkin and Kinnell (2000) report that the participants in their research consider that children's library services should employ specialist staff. This is because children need the continuity of service from staff that they know; without "their own librarian" children "lose stability and confidence" (Fleet 1973, p33). There is debate whether library staff who work with children should be qualified children's librarians, or just specialist library assistants. Denham (2000b) voices a perception amongst librarians that a children's librarian has the sole skill to respond to children's individual reading needs:

*Children's librarians were seen as constantly matching the child to the book: they were usually the only person with this particular expertise, this particular subject knowledge, providing the right material for the individual child (Denham 2000b p83)*

Such a skill is judged to be developed by the training that a children's librarian receives. Denham (2000a) recommends that children's library staff should be trained to respond to children's wide variety of reading needs. A children's librarian should be able to understand child development, have knowledge of children's books and other related materials, and be up to date with educational trends (Elkin and Lonsdale 1996). Fleet (1973) considers that "the best training" is on the job, with a mentor, having:

*...day to day contact in a busy library with an experienced librarian learning to use books with children both by observation and development of her own ideas (Fleet 1973, p61)*

This advice is aimed at trainee librarians or librarians with another specialism. Fleet (1973) also suggests that children's librarians should attend story telling courses. The personality of the staff member is also considered to be important. IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations) guidelines state that early years librarians should be enthusiastic, be able to communicate with people well, analyse and evaluate user needs, be flexible, eager to learn, and work well with other agencies (Rankin and Brock 2009). Blanshard (1998, p51) warns that "There is no fixed formula for communicating with children". Other personal qualities such as empathy and understanding are also considered necessary to work with children (Elkin and Lonsdale 1996). Fleet (1973, p50) agrees that a children's librarian must have the ability to become "en rapport" with children and parents and to give tactful help to children. Staff also should have the confidence to advise parents (Denham 2000a), be open to new ideas and liaise with other children's organisations. A good working knowledge of their library's book stock is also considered an important attribute for a children's librarian. An implication that it is necessary to be a qualified children's librarian to successfully work in a children's library can be taken from the literature. However, the research that was conducted for "A place for children" revealed that children's library staff who were not trained librarians thought that they were being underused and might have the same skills and empathy with children as librarians (Elkin and Kinnell 2000).

### 3.5.1.3 *Reaching the socially excluded*

The term "Community" can cover a wide range of demographic groups. Within each city, town or village there are groups of people who can be categorised and divided by age, income, racial origin, religion and other attributes (INSINC 1999). In each community, there are also outsiders, people who do not fully integrate into society and may shun any concept of education or information, people who are termed "socially excluded" by staff of public services. A comprehensive CML service must be directed towards children from such families to fulfil its purpose. Therefore, at this point, it is worth examining the definition of the term "social exclusion" and discussing the people who may fall into that category.

The Social Exclusion Task Force defines social exclusion as:

*...a short-hand term for what can happen when people or areas have a combination of problems, such as unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime and family breakdown (Cabinet Office 2010).*

The Task Force explains that social exclusion is cyclical, each resulting generation becoming disadvantaged. Zapata (1994) claims that the relationship between poverty and literacy is linked and argues that illiteracy is also a self-generating circle; that is, it is both a cause and a symptom of poverty. Once a group is separated from society, they lose the ability to exercise their human rights, including the right to education (Zapata 1994). INSINC (1999) suggests that a downturn in the global economy is responsible for the start of social exclusion because it causes a rise in long term male unemployment. The loss of jobs in certain geographic areas leads to social decline which then affects educational achievement and breaks down family structures (INSINC 1999). Kamerman (2010) describes social exclusion as:

*A multi-dimensional concept, involving economic, social, political, cultural, and special aspects of disadvantage and deprivation, often described as the process by which individuals and groups are wholly or partly excluded from participation in their society, as a consequence of low income and constricted access to employment, social benefits and services, and to various aspects of cultural and community life (Kamerman, 2010 [np]).*

Kamerman (2010) differentiates social exclusion from financial poverty because she considers that it is rejection by society and the breakdown of community which leads to social exclusion, rather than a cause inherent to an individual, such as possessing little

money. Kamerman (2010) holds the same opinion as Zapata (1977) that “constricted access to civil, political, and social rights and opportunities” inhibits a group from being active citizens.

Buchanan (2007, p188) lists indicators known to be associated with a risk of social exclusion adding “lack of access to quality early years provision... disabled children and children with special educational needs; vulnerable families and children in need” and “discrimination” to the previously mentioned conditions. Buchanan (2007) believes that it is important to intervene during childhood to prevent the cycle of social exclusion. Zapata (1994, p124) explains “Knowing how to read and write is the prerequisite for practising the right to learn...” which illustrates the importance of providing children from disadvantaged groups with the opportunity to increase their literacy. Better reading skills will then allow such children to “access and process information, to create and apply new knowledge” and thereby improve living conditions for themselves and subsequently their own children. Theoretically, their participation in society should then break the cycle of deprivation.

It is considered that public libraries are able to work more effectively with disadvantaged groups than other agencies (BOP Consulting 2009), which gives library services a role in breaking the cycle of deprivation. Social change has been the remit of public libraries in the UK since their establishment in the mid-nineteenth century (Kerslake and Kinnell 1998). A public library is frequently described as a neutral space that is accessible to all (Rankin and Brock, 2009) and Baechtald and McKinney (1983) consider that a public library is a leveller of society because it is a place that any young person can visit, irrespective of social standing, to mix with others on an equal basis.

#### 3.5.1.4 *Working with partners*

The concept of library services working in partnership with other agencies, for the benefit of their customers, has been stated frequently over the past decades. For instance, Lyman (1977) suggests that libraries should collaborate with other promoters of literacy to develop their customers’ literacy skills. Elkin and Kinnell (2000) highlight the importance of working in collaboration with other agencies but at the time of their research the internal market budgetary system made such partnerships difficult to achieve. The “Start With the Child” report praises the benefits of working in a strong and long lasting partnership and recommends that library service managers should work in partnership with other local authority departments and external agencies to “exploit the potential to improve their

services" (CILIP 2002b, p25). Partnership working has become more expected in recent times, so much so that "Collaboration is now central to the way in which public policy is made, managed and delivered in the UK" (Rankin and Brock 2009, p40). Examples of such partnership working is the Bookstart<sup>10</sup> scheme, which will be discussed further in section 3.6, (below), and the previously mentioned work with SureStart (Section 3.5.1.1, above) which has a target to increase active library membership.

#### 3.5.1.5 *Contents of a children's library*

The items stocked in a children's library should have relevance and appeal to the children that the library serves. The way that the stock is procured, the person who selects it, and how it is displayed have a bearing on the successful use of the library because, according to Elkin and Lonsdale (2000), children will only borrow the items if they consider them interesting. Elkin and Kinnell (2000, p66) consider that the stock of a public library is a "uniquely objective" source of information which is available to all. Books are not the only items of stock which can be borrowed; toys, treasure baskets and story-sacks are available in libraries for children under five years old (Rankin and Brock 2009) and DVDs and CDs for all ages of children. Jast (1939) considers that the quality of stock in a children's library is always high, because children's authors are skilful writers and the stock is selected by children's librarians. His premise is based on his experience in the last century; the situation is currently different, because there are other routes of stock selection for libraries. Lonsdale (1996) reports that there are two schools of thought concerning the choice of stock for children's collections. The traditional view is that only specialist professional children's librarians have the training, knowledge of children and children's literature to be able to select the most appropriate items. A more contemporary view is that non-professional library staff who work with children and the children who use the library service should provide a contribution to the selection team. Blanshard (1998) corroborates the latter view by stating that:

*Valid contributions to selection and reviewing can also be made by children, teachers, parents, colleagues, and others interested in using and reading children's library books (Blanshard 1998, p165).*

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<sup>10</sup> Bookstart is a scheme developed by the Book Trust which gives children two packs of free books, advice for parents about reading, story-telling, and library membership. The first pack is for all babies, the second is given between the ages of 3-4.

Blanshard (1998) recommends that a balanced approach should be used for purchasing stock, with a mixture of visits to suppliers' showrooms, using nominated bookshops and by using stockists catalogues. However, currently, many public libraries are using library supplier stock selection services, items that are chosen at the warehouse and directly sent to a library authority. Such a system is more economic for the library authority and some variation of genre is possible to more closely match the local needs of a library (Askews 2011).

Specialist bookshops are used to supply libraries with stock such as graphic novels, bi-lingual books or books in languages other than English to obtain a more tailored service (Lonsdale 1996). Denham (2000b) reminds us that children from a variety of ages, intellectual and physical abilities, and cultural background all use libraries, therefore the stock needs to reflect those differences. Many libraries, for example, serve multi-cultural communities and children from these should be able to access literature that reflects their cultural diversity, for instance, stories from their home country and books in the language of their parents (Elkin and Lonsdale 1996).

The stock should be laid out in a way that logically reflects children's knowledge and understanding for them easily to find the item that they want (Eyre 1996). Lonsdale (1996) recommends that children's stock is categorised into subjects with which they commonly work instead of classifying them using a taxonomy. A collection also needs a policy and to be managed, regularly updated and out of date or damaged stock discarded.

#### 3.5.1.6 *Environment of a children's library*

Public libraries generally include their children's provision in a designated area within a main library building. The children's library can be situated either in a separate room or in a space delineated in a certain manner to indicate that it caters for children, such as, children's furniture and a story mat featuring a colourful design. Guidelines for the design of such spaces have been published by librarians for many years. Fleet (1973, p26) states that children's libraries should be designed "from within to without" meaning that the interior design is important in order to appeal to its users:

*By pleasing design, the library should attract readers into it. Formal buildings often look forbidding, particularly to children and young people, but if they can see from the outside an informal layout with modern furnishings and people using the library, they too may be enticed inside"*  
(Fleet 1973, p29)

Eyre (1996) states that the "environment should be conducive to the function of the library", that is, although the fixtures and fittings may look attractive, they should also be functional, such as lower bookshelves and kinderboxes so that children are able to handle books and make their own selection. There should be room for prams, buggies and toilet and changing facilities to cater for parents who bring babies and toddlers to the library (Rankin and Brock 2009).

Rankin and Brock (2009) write about the management of library provision for children under the age of five years and comment that a psychological approach should be taken to the interior design of a children's area. They report that designers and psychologists consider that the "feeling" of an environment contributes to a child's learning. Nichols (2011) concludes that the sensory appeal of interior architecture is just as compelling to a young child as the story a storyteller has chosen. Denham (2000b) states that a children's area should be informal, safe, accessible, welcoming, and neutral, in such a way that children feel ownership of the space. Similarly, Fleet (1973) considers that a children's library should be relaxing, comfortable and contemporary with appropriate "guiding", the signs and labels that guide customers to the items they want. Children's work that is displayed in a library provides another connection to children and is a means of involving local schools with the library.

### **3.5.2 School libraries**

The recent report "School libraries: a plan for improvement" states that currently 81% of primary schools and "almost all" secondary schools have a library space (Douglas and Wilkinson 2010, p 9). There is, however, no statutory requirement for schools to include a library or employ a qualified librarian to manage the library which means that the quality of provision varies greatly from school to school. In 2002, CILIP produced a set of guidelines for primary school libraries which stated that they should be run by either a full-time qualified librarian who may be shared between a number of schools or, an "enthusiastic and experienced" teacher (CILIP 2002a, p5). It appears to be the case that in reality primary school libraries are looked after by teachers and volunteers, some of whom have little

experience of children's literature. Similarly, only 59% of secondary school libraries are managed by a qualified librarian (Douglas and Wilkinson 2010). Research conducted by Williams et al. (2001) raised the implication that school libraries which were not managed by a qualified librarian were of lower quality than those that were and consequently children's achievement suffered. Williams et al. (2001) found that there appears to be a link between an effective school library and the personality of the library manager. Douglas and Wilkinson (2010) recommend that school librarians should be trained in child development, child psychology, and ways of teaching literacy.

School libraries are generally viewed as a place where children can develop learning and information skills and facilitate teachers' delivery of the school's curriculum (Elkin and Lonsdale 1996). The "CILIP Primary School Guidelines" repeat the same recommendations for a school library as those for a public children's library. For instance, stock and environment should be accessible and appropriate to the needs of the children (CILIP 2002a). The SLA (School Libraries Association) recommends more rigorous guidelines for study space, seating, ICT facilities, display and staff working space (SLA 2011). The controlled environment of a school library is seen as a safe haven for children with special needs and those who find it difficult to form relationships with their peers (Williams and Wavell 2001). Douglas and Wilkinson (2010) believe that such a role should be formalised in the school's safeguarding policy.

The opening hours of a school library should start before and end after the school day, to provide extended services for children (Douglas and Wilkinson 2010). Such services are identified by teachers as a way of providing equal opportunities for children who would not otherwise have an appropriate environment in which to study (Williams and Wavell 2001). However, school libraries are not usually open to students during holiday times. Currently, the contribution that a school library can make to a school's achievement and that of its students is not fully recognised by some head teachers and school governors. Douglas and Wilkinson (2010) believe that there is an intellectual underinvestment in the potential of school libraries because of such an attitude. The situation could be remedied by involving the library in the strategic planning of the school. The costs of running and staffing a high quality school library could be defrayed by partnership working, with public libraries, or businesses, or with other schools as a consortium.



Nevertheless, children who use school libraries feel that they gain a motivation to read and enjoyment of books by visiting the school library, which helps their overall learning (Clark 2010). Williams and Wavell (2001) find that children learn a wide range of knowledge unconnected to the school curriculum by the use of the school library and that it is a place where children can be responsible for their own learning and gain the confidence to work independently. It could be argued that the non-statutory and unregulated nature of school libraries leads to patchy provision across the UK. Some children benefit from attending a school that supports a well qualified and experienced school librarian, whereas others in the same local authority do not enjoy such a privilege.

### **3.5.3 School library services**

Certain local authorities operate a special library service for schools as an economic means of providing a wide range of curriculum support materials and professional advice on literature and information (Elkin and Lonsdale 1996). The service is administered in some cases by the local authority education department or in others by the department responsible for libraries (Douglas and Wilkinson 2010). School library services can offer consultancy and training for teachers who manage a school library, and provide bundles of books and other items specially selected for specific project work in the school curriculum. The service is to support the school, however, not the individual child (Elkin and Lonsdale 1996).

School library services are currently funded by a devolved budget; schools are given the money in their general budgets to buy back the service. As many school library services are closing it shows that schools are choosing to spend that portion of their budget elsewhere therefore school library services should choose a different business model. A more efficient use of the school library service would be for clusters of schools to “share” a librarian. Douglas and Wilkinson (2010) recommend that school library services should concentrate on helping to develop children's reading and information skills and seek funding from businesses or other commercial enterprises.

### **3.5.4 Outreach services**

The reason given for taking a library service into the community is to provide a service for “hard-to-reach groups and individuals” who would not otherwise access a library service (CILIP 2002b, p34), and to cater for families who find a library hard to reach. Lyman (1977, p99) states that, the philosophy of a library service should include its availability to “all pre-school and primary-age children” and to enable its use by children, the service should “take

the library to the child". Such outreach work is part of providing a "comprehensive and efficient" service, as required by the Library and Museums Act 1964. Lyman (1977, p60) considers it "absolutely essential" that to provide services for children and their parents librarians should "go outside libraries to homes, migrant camps, parks, plants, churches, neighbourhood centres and many other areas of the community". The importance of getting books into the community is also stressed by Hill (1973, p45), who proclaims that "books should be where people are" and believes that libraries should supply books to playgroups in order to get "books to children who would not otherwise see many until they started school".

The practicalities of getting to a library either by foot or by car is as much a contributing factor to the reason why families visit libraries as any activity aimed for children within the library (Nichols 2011) For instance, residents interviewed for the Wirral enquiry stated unaccompanied children would not be able to walk out of their estate safely, to the site of a proposed new library because the estate is situated between a motorway and a dual carriageway (Chateris 2009). A recent survey by the Literacy Trust reveals that half the children questioned responded that they did not visit a public library because "no-one had taken them" (Clark and Hawkins 2010, p9).

A means of solving such a problem is suggested by the "Investing in Children" report which recommends the location of library deposit collections in "non-library settings" where children and families congregate, such as early years settings (Working Party on Library Services for Children and Young People 1995, p56). A deposit collection is a number of books that are chosen by a children's library service and placed into another establishment Fleet (1973). The presence of a member of library staff can enhance the effect of such a collection. Hill (1973, p46) recommends that children's librarians should hold storytelling sessions in "pre-school organisations" rather than invite groups to the library. Hill (1973) considers that it is an opportunity to develop a rapport with very young children and understand the home backgrounds of the children. The children will associate the librarian, as an individual, with "the enjoyment of listening to stories" and will develop links with the library service because the child and the parent will be more likely to visit a library "if they have met a librarian informally first and have established how simple it is to borrow books" (Hill 1973, p46). Rankin and Brock (2009) state that, currently the role of an early years librarian, is to work in the community, not merely in a library setting.

Children's library services can also work with children's residential homes to provide "looked

after” children with books. Marsh (2006) writes of a project in Derby which placed deposit collections in children homes, linked the homes with nearby or mobile libraries and members of Derby City Libraries children’s team visited to talk to children care staff and renew the collection. The project was judged to have successfully promoted reading and increased the access to books for those children.

### **3.6 Reading interventions and libraries**

Baechtald and McKinney (1983) state the importance of library staff becoming role models for disadvantaged families in order to improve literacy, because a library provides a space where parent and child can interact and work together. Similarly, an observational study of rhyme time sessions in Canadian Libraries concludes that informal modelling behaviour by children’s librarians effectively teaches parents ways of telling stories and singing rhymes (McKenzie et al. 2007). Lyman (1977) states that children need the involvement of their parents, in role of guide or model. The attitude of parents towards reading skills is more important for the development of a child’s literacy than the child’s socio-economic group or the literacy of the parent (Close 2001). Children themselves believe that their most significant reading role model is primarily one of their parents or, if not, then another close family member (Clark et al. 2009).

A longitudinal study of the PEEP (Peers Early Education Partnership) intervention presents substantial evidence that children’s pre-reading skills increase when other adults model the use of stories, books and rhymes to parents, with their babies and toddlers (Evangelou and Sylva 2003). PEEP projects run in early years settings, schools and libraries and are a means of teaching parents how to develop their children’s literacy and numeracy through interaction and play (PEEP 2009). The programme uses a framework developed at Sheffield University by Hannon (1995) which teaches a structured approach to help pre-school children develop literacy skills which any parent can use. The approach was labelled the ORIM (Opportunities, Recognition, Interaction, Modelling) frame-work and is based on the four principles that Hannon (1995) considered necessary for the development of literacy. The principles are listed as:

- Opportunities to learn - give children an opportunity to play with books, pens, pencils, paper and experience letters and numbers in the real world.
- Recognition and valuing of their early achievements – praise children when they have learnt a new skill.
- Interaction with adults in literacy situations – signing cards, turning pages, reading together.
- Model of literacy - letting children see them read or write for daily tasks as well as for work or pleasure.

These four actions can be easily achieved during a trip to a library.

The most significant intervention in which public libraries are presently involved is the “Bookstart” project (Bookstart 2009). Public libraries employ Bookstart project officers in order to work together with health visitors and nursery staff. Packs of books are personally given to children by staff and health visitors, while Bookstart project workers model storytelling and rhyme to parents at home, in clinics or early years settings and invite families to join their local library. Children receive their packs at around the ages of nine months, eighteen months and between two to three years (Bookstart 2009). Many studies of Bookstart have been conducted from its outset in 1998 to the present day. Findings from all of the studies confirm that the Bookstart programme has encouraged parents to read books with their children regularly. A group of 41 children from the Bookstart programme were followed up to the age of seven years and it was found that their literacy and numeracy was significantly higher than classmates who had not been involved in the scheme (Moore and Wade 2003).

The report “Investing in Children” recommends taking a library facility into community places to reach parents and children who would not otherwise enter a library building (Kerslake and Kinnell 1997). Neuman and Celano (2001) tested such an approach with libraries in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania through the “Books Aloud” outreach project. Deposit collections of books were given by the libraries to under fives settings with training in reading aloud to children for early years staff. The libraries also supplied mentors for the staff, who ensured that the books were displayed, read and circulated instead of being kept in a special and treasured place. A culture of reading for fun developed. It was felt that training and mentors were a crucial part of the success because they overcame staff reserve and lack of confidence (Neuman and Celano 2001).

A similar scheme was attempted in Britain during the 2008 National Year of Reading. "Book ahead" was a partnership between libraries, the School Library Association (SLA) and the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). DCSF provided funds for public libraries to buy books chosen from a list compiled by the SLA to create deposit collections in early years settings (Eccleshare 2008). Training was not part of this scheme, but a free booklet and website gave advice to parents and carers (SLA 2008). An evaluation of the scheme concluded that stronger links had developed between library services and early years settings; certain library services supplied training to early years staff in storytelling and the use of books. In some cases the provision of services to early years settings was strategically reorganised and in one case a mobile library service has started visiting early years groups regularly. It also had the effect of children becoming more confident in the way in which they handled books (E.R.S 2009).

Intervention to improve literacy during children's early years appears to be a successful approach. However, once a child is in full-time education, and has proficient reading skills, these need to be practised to be maintained at the same level of competence. During school terms, children read text daily as part of their learning. Teachers noticed that after the summer break, children's reading skills dipped and had to be reinforced. It was found that when children continued to read through the summer holidays their skill did not diminish (Kerslake and Kinnell 1997). Further recent and thorough research by Kim (2004) has proved that the number of books a child reads during the summer holidays significantly correlates to the improvement of their reading ability over that time. This is of benefit to the child and to the school. "In other words, summer reading programs that motivate children to read independently at home represent a potentially cost-effective strategy for preventing reading loss" (Kim 2004, p184). Access to books in the summer break is therefore important. As a result, each summer, libraries work in partnership with the Reading Agency to host the Summer Reading Challenge <sup>11</sup>. Children of primary school age are encouraged by rewards and activities to visit their local library and keep reading through the summer (Reading Agency nd). Reading continues to improve when it is sustained while children are not at school (Vincent 2000).

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<sup>11</sup>The Summer Reading Challenge uses different themes to keep children reading over the summer holidays. The children borrow, read and review six books during the holidays. They receive gifts and stickers each time they visit a library and their progress is charted. Children who complete the challenge are awarded a certificate (Reading Agency nd)

Gender differences also appear to become a factor with the sustaining of reading throughout childhood. Over the past 12 years a debate has arisen concerning the extent of boys' desire to read. It appears that boys neither fulfil levels expected for their age when undergoing assessment nor describe themselves as "readers". Small (1999) contends that the fault is not with boys, but with the testing mechanisms, boys are reading, but the method by which children are tested does not truly reflect boys' reading habits and their preferences. A study in 1998 showed that boys borrowed more library books than girls (Dunne and Khan 1998). Ten years later, however, a survey conducted by the National Literacy Trust (Clark 2008) identified that boys thought that reading was more of a girl's pursuit and recorded a significant gender difference in reading for pleasure; boys' answers suggested that they did not enjoy reading. Boys' interpretation of the word "reading" however, may have led to a misleading result because research into the reading behaviour of boys indicates that boys' preferred reading matter is visual, informative and read on a computer. That is not the reading material in which children are tested and which is promoted (Small 1999) therefore boys think that they do not read although they spend considerable time reading from the computer screen. On the other hand, Ofsted (2003, p4) state that there is no clearly defined "boys reading style".

The concern that boys do not enjoy reading prompted a joint initiative between the SLA and the DfES to encourage boys to read books, called "Boys into Books". The SLA prepared a list of 20 books chosen to stimulate boys reading and the DfES donated copies of those books to school libraries in the UK, during May to September 2007. The list is available at the time of writing, has been published as a book and as a downloadable resource on the SLA website (SLA 2009). There are numerous other reading interventions that are currently being practiced that are partnerships between schools, football clubs and other agencies, but these will not be listed here because they do not involve partnerships with libraries and are therefore not as relevant as those discussed above.

### 3.7 Mobile library services: a brief history

The first mobile library recorded in Britain is the Warrington perambulating library inaugurated by the Warrington Mechanics Institute in 1859 to increase their annual circulation of books. It was little more than a horse and cart that was operated in order to take books to working men who were reluctant to ask for books at the Institute itself (Orton 1980). The Warrington perambulating library appears to have been an isolated innovation in the UK. The next recorded mobile library was in 1931, when Manchester's "Bibliobus", a converted bus, served newly built housing estates as a lower cost option than that of building new branch libraries (Orton 1980). It seems that the reason for the introduction of these mobile libraries was less than altruistic, since the Warrington vehicle improved statistics and the Manchester bus solved funding problems. Nonetheless the librarians who organised the services recognised the importance of supplying books to communities who would not otherwise access a library.

Orton (1980) writes that, in 1952, there were one hundred mobile libraries operating in Britain. A survey in 1954 by the Library Association indicated that only 10% of mobile libraries carried any books for children. Nottinghamshire appears to be first library authority to use a mobile library for children's purposes. Two "spare" mobile libraries were stocked to tour rural villages during the school summer holidays of 1958. Orton (1980) suggests the service was implemented because public libraries inside school buildings were closed during the holidays (Orton 1980). Other counties, such as Shropshire and Wiltshire (Orton 1980), Devon and Norfolk replicated the provision during the 1960s (Kerslake and Kinnell 1997). The reasons for doing so are not recorded but it could be deduced that summer activities were planned to keep up literacy levels.

A flurry of library outreach provision in urban areas, with aims to improve social conditions, occurred in the mid to late 1970s. For instance urban aid funding from the government was used to set up children's mobile libraries, such as the Derby Book Bus with its mission to provide a service for children in deprived areas (Parker 2009). Leicester operated a "Magic" bus in 1975 in the "non-reading" parts of the city while a year later Southampton's book bus was implemented, with the remit to break down barriers between children and libraries (Orton 1980). The CML operated by Kirklees council came about in 1986 because of funding issues. A vehicle was considered to be the most cost efficient method of providing children's

services in a rural area from a centrally based team of children's librarians (Stringer 2009). At some time prior to 1986, Birmingham City built "Words on Wheels", an exhibition library (non-lending), for early years children to create a link between libraries and parents (Elkin and Lonsdale 1996). Despite a non-operational gap of some years the original vehicle, at the time of writing, is still visiting early years settings to promote literacy. During the 1990s a vehicle called Readiscovery, funded by the Scottish Arts council toured Scotland with children's authors (Aberdeen Press and Journal 1998) and two vehicles in Powys, called "The Book Runners", were introduced to "Take reading to the road" and reach children who otherwise would not visit a library (Kerslake and Kinnell 1997).

A recent survey of mobile library users showed that the perception of a mobile library is as a limited extension of a library service to people who cannot access a static library. The participants of the survey stated that borrowing books was the main reason that they visited a mobile library, and were concerned that if other services were offered on a mobile library, the lending service would be diminished (Newton and Casselden 2010). Such a view is in contrast to the experience described by Dyson (1990) when an experiment in an urban Welsh estate successfully combined the mobile library service with the Citizens' Advice Bureau, the Deeside community agency and a local neighbourhood rights centre. An estimated one third of households on the estate visited the vehicle, and people discovered a personal relevance to the library service. The views of library users who were surveyed by Newton and Casselden (2010) seem to be coloured by an out dated stereotype of a mobile library. For instance, despite prior protest when one library authority replaced a static library with a new, highly technological vehicle it was well accepted by the customers who had not expected such an up to date service.

Mobile libraries are recognised by library authorities as being useful for partnership working. Sheffield, for instance, operates a small vehicle to distribute Bookstart packs to early years settings, and as a place to tell stories to groups of children (see Figure 5 below). It provides "greater flexibility" to the early year's library service and visits targeted groups such as traveller sites, homeless groups, teenage parent groups and "other relevant settings". Although it carries story sacks, puppets and other visual aids, such items are for use by the story tellers on the vehicle, not for loan. It does not issue books, or run to a regular timetable (Anonymous 2011, p22).



**Figure 5: The Sheffield Bookstart delivery vehicle**

The cost effectiveness of a mobile library has again become apparent. This can be seen in Sheffield replacing six community libraries with a mobile library service and has noted that the use of the stock has increased, therefore lowering the lending cost per book (Newton and Casselden 2010). Library staff and mobile library users expressed fears that a mobile library does not provide the same social role as a static library, however Dyson (1990, p27), concluded that a mobile library provided “a focal point for social interaction” in housing estates where “the sense of community is not as strong” as a small village. It is recognised, however, that by including mobile library services into its overall strategy a library authority can increase social inclusion, aid partnership working and provide access to lifelong learning (Newton and Casselden 2010)

### **3.7.1 Children’s mobile libraries**

As there have been no other academic studies of CMLs, the information gathered in this section has been pieced together from grey literature. For example, local authority websites and unpublished library service reports, with additional descriptive items from professional magazines. The literature describes vehicles, sets out the aims of their service, and outlines the manner in which the services attempt to achieve those aims. The following sections offer a descriptions of some typical children’s mobile libraries operating in the United Kingdom, at

the time of the research. Each CML has individual identifying features but there are also many similarities between vehicles.

### 3.7.1.1 *Type of vehicle*

Current British children's mobile libraries are coach built to order around the chassis and cab of a lorry or van "base vehicle"<sup>12</sup>. The length of the vehicle can be as much as 10 metres, such as Lincolnshire's "School Mobile 2" , (Lincolnshire County Council 2009b) or as short as the Rhondda Cynon Taff "Readabout bookbus" which is only 6.9 metres long (Rhondda Cynon Taff 2010). A lift for easy wheelchair access is a common feature as found on "Words on Wheels" from Birmingham City Libraries (Birmingham City Council 2010) and Edinburgh's "Book bus" which also includes suspension that drops to allow the step on the vehicle to become level with the kerb (The City of Edinburgh Council 2008).

### 3.7.1.2 *Livery*

The external livery of children's mobile libraries is designed to be eye-catching (Orton 1980, 83). For example, Derby City Libraries' Reading Rocket (Figure 6 below), which is no longer in operation, featured the drawings of Nick Sharratt, an illustrator of children's books (Stringer 2003). Sharratt's book, *Rocket Countdown*, (Sharratt 2000) was chosen as the theme in order to appeal to children (Harrison 2004).

**Figure 6: The livery of Derby's "Reading Rocket"**



<sup>12</sup> The information is taken from the 2009, A. G. Bracey Ltd, mobile library catalogue. The manufacturers of base vehicles that they quote are Fiat, Citroen, Peugeot or Renault.

The “white, pink and purple” colour scheme of Bexley’s children’s mobile library (Figure 7 below) is designed by adults to “appeal to children aged 4 to 11” (Oliver 2006, p42).

**Figure 7: The livery of Bexley’s “Children’s Library”**



Edinburgh City Libraries, however, chose children’s ideas for the livery design of Edinburgh’s Book Bus (Figure 8 below) which features coloured squares and circles arranged in spectrum order (McCloskey 2008).

**Figure 8: The livery of Edinburgh’s “Book Bus”**



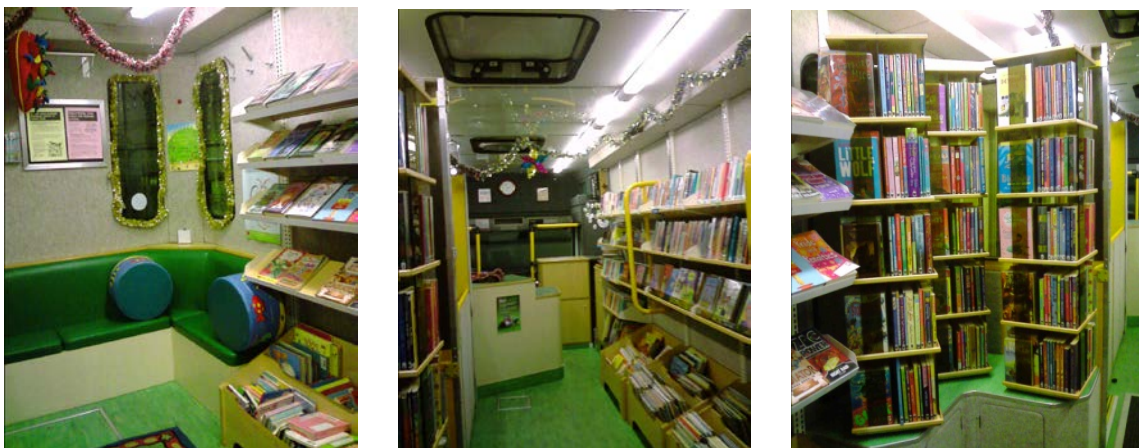
All the designs are bright, unique and identifiable, allowing the children’s mobile library to stand out in towns, cities or countryside.



### 3.7.1.3 Interiors

Lushington (1984, p424) advises that a child should feel ownership of the space inside a library. The size of fittings should be to the correct scale and there should be space for the child to “settle down” privately with the item they have chosen. A CML has little leeway for private spaces, but children’s needs are considered by the library staff who make decisions on the design of children’s mobile library interiors. For example, the interior of the Edinburgh Book Bus is described on its website as being “Created with children’s needs in mind” (McCloskey 2008) (Figure 9 below). The shelving and seating are low. The decor is intended to create a welcoming atmosphere. The interior fittings are changeable so that the stock can be presented “to suit the particular venue and the reading interests of children” (The City of Edinburgh Council 2008).

**Figure 9: Interior of the Edinburgh “Bookbus”**



The brightly coloured interior of Derby’s “Reading Rocket” (Figure 10 below) featured a soft furnished story time area and face on shelving (Harrison 2004). Bexley’s children’s mobile library features “spinning paperback racks, kinder boxes, air conditioning, and flat screens” and it is unusual because it has two PCs for use by customers (Oliver 2006, p42). Lushington (1984, p425) states that a child’s first impression of a library should be “a magical, colourful world of variety and activity offering creative freedom”. That ethos is reflected in Birmingham’s “Words on Wheels” display of work that children complete during craft sessions (Birmingham City Council 2010). Similarly, Stockport’s “StoryBus” (Figure 11 below) exhibits a large appliquéd hanging with the words “Welcome aboard our StoryBus” embroidered in red (Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council 2010). Therefore, interiors of children’s mobile libraries, in common with the exteriors, are bright, eye-catching and designed to appeal to children.

**Figure 10: Interior of the "Reading Rocket"**



**Figure 11: Interior of Stockport's "StoryBus"**



#### 3.7.1.4 *Stock*

It is not surprising to find that the stock carried in a CML is targeted at its clientele (Lincolnshire County Council 2009b). The stock carried by the Edinburgh Book Bus is listed as: picture books including dual language, interactive board books, poetry and joke books,

comics, popular fiction, teenage titles, popular information, books about hobbies, large print books, audio books, oversize books for storytelling and story sacks (The City of Edinburgh Council 2008). The web page of the Swansea CML states that it “carries books, films and story sacks” (City and County of Swansea 2010). Stockport’s “Story Bus” specialises in working with the under-five age group and therefore stocks CDs, DVDs and toy packs (Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council 2010). “Words on Wheels” carries “audio visual facilities, tactile books, oversize books with large print and Braille items for children with visual impairments” (Birmingham City Council 2010). The stock lists examined demonstrate that each CML carries a wide variety of books suitable for the children and young people who they serve and additional stock items that are appropriate for the specialism of the vehicle.

### 3.7.1.5 *Overall description*

To generalise, a typical children’s mobile library in the UK is a purpose built vehicle, decorated with images appealing to children. The inside of the vehicle is fitted out with suitable shelves and seating similar to a static children’s library. There are computers for children to use in a few children’s mobile libraries. The stock carried comprises books and other reading materials, fiction and non-fiction, suitable for the age and ability range which the service targets. Some also stock appropriate video tapes, CDs, DVDs, story sacks and toy packs which are available to individuals and childcare settings.

### 3.7.1.6 *The purpose and function of a children’s mobile library*

The operation of a CML involves a purpose and a function. The purpose can be expressed as the ideology behind the operation of CML which should fulfil certain principles of the library service. The principles are generally expressed by library authorities as publically declared aims or mission statements in their promotional literature. For example the aim of “gaining access to new audiences” is stated on the web page of the Gloucestershire “Share-a-book” service (Gloucestershire County Council 2008) and Manchester’s CML, the “Reading Voyager” (Manchester City Council 2010) (Figure 12, below). The intention of “promoting reading as fun” is posted on the web page of “Words on Wheels”, the CML for Birmingham (Figure 12, below) and “Readabout bookbus”, the vehicle operating in Rhondda Cynon Taf (Birmingham City Council 2010 and Rhondda Cynon Taff 2010). The motive of “Making a difference” to children was stated by Harrison (2004 p12) as the stimulus for the introduction of Derby’s “Reading Rocket”<sup>13</sup>. Three aims are common to most CML services: “access to new

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<sup>13</sup> The “Reading Rocket” service ceased in March 2008



audiences", "promoting reading as fun" and "making a difference", which implies that library authorities understand the importance of the role of CMLs in early intervention for the promotion of reading.

**Figure 12: Photographs of CMLs operated by Gloucestershire, Manchester and Birmingham.**



**Gloucestershire's CML; "Share-a-book"**



**Birmingham's "Words on Wheels"**



**Manchester's "Reading voyager"**

### 3.7.1.7 Accessing new audiences

The idea of access to new audiences is interpreted in different ways by various library authorities. For some, it is to introduce children to library services at an early age. Oliver, (2006, p42) notes that Bexley's children's mobile library visits primary schools to "catch the children at an early stage in their education", because young children are unlikely to have adopted negative attitudes to reading and library use. Bexley is not unique in that axiom, and the majority of children's mobile libraries target primary schools and early years settings. The management of Birmingham City Libraries also understands the power of an

early introduction to library facilities because it uses “Words on Wheels” to introduce books, stories and libraries to “children and their carers”. As an exhibition vehicle<sup>14</sup>, its aim is to demonstrate, in an enjoyable atmosphere, the items which can be borrowed from local libraries (Birmingham City Council 2010).

Other library authorities consider that their service is needed as a way of including children who otherwise would not have access to library services. The perspective of Manchester’s library authority has given its “Reading Voyager” the aim of taking library services “Directly to children for whom access to mainstream services would be difficult”. It prioritises visits to disadvantaged areas which includes traveller sites (Manchester City Council 2010). Similarly, the target social group for Edinburgh’s “BookBus” is children with additional needs and those who “cannot easily access building based services” (McCloskey 2008, p18). Therefore, in order to reach such an audience it visits special schools and young people’s secure units. Leicester City Libraries put forward the opinion that all children are difficult to reach with static libraries, and the aim of their CMLs is to serve children directly by visiting early years settings, schools and by operating in the streets of large suburban estates (Leicester City Council 2009b) (Figure 13, below).

**Figure 13: Photographs of children's mobile libraries operated by Leicester City**



Leicester’s “Book Bus” for children under 5 years



Leicester’s “Book Bus” for children over 5 years

In the past, library authorities have used devices such as high visibility of vehicles, or changing the contents of a vehicle to be relevant to a specific community, to attract new audiences. For instance, the Southampton Book Bus attracted people by being painted pink and new customers were encouraged to visit the vehicle by the liaison work of a community

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<sup>14</sup> An exhibition vehicle is one that carries books that can be viewed, but not borrowed (Horrocks and Hargreaves 1961)



librarian (Orton 1980). Similarly, the Kirklees CML targeted non-reading audiences by parking outside the local rugby stadium on match days and attending local festivals, stocking up with books relevant to each event (Stringer 2009). Perhaps it is easier for people with an aversion to the concept of a library to step inside a gaudy vehicle than enter a building. CMLs are intermediary facilities infiltrating communities that cannot easily go out to libraries. They are able to move to where the need is greatest and attract customers who would be reluctant to enter a library building.

#### 3.7.1.8 *Reading as fun*

The concept of promoting reading as fun is publicised as a fundamental aim for many children's mobile libraries. The promotional information for Rhondda Cynon Taff's "Readabout Bookbus" clearly states that the "emphasis is on reading for fun" (Rhondda Cynon Taff 2010) (Figure 14, below) and in a similar vein, Stockport's "StoryBus" web page declares that "The StoryBus is about reading for fun" (Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council 2010) (Figure 15, below) while Leicester's "BookBus" service emphasises that it provides "an accessible and fun introduction to reading" (Leicester City Council 2009b). Bexley's service implies that reading is an enjoyable leisure pursuit because the CML aims to make a difference to "children's attitudes towards reading" (Oliver 2006, p42).

#### 3.7.1.9 *Making a difference*

Through improving access to reading material, and promoting reading as fun, authorities that operate children's mobile libraries claim that they are trying to change the course of children's lives. Harrison 2004, (p10) writes that an aim of Derby City Libraries' "Reading Rocket" is to "establish a socially inclusive service from the start" by dispensing with charges, fees and streamlining the joining procedure. Such a statement echoes that of Derby City Council's aspiration to "improve children's and young people's prospects, and improving life chances for disadvantaged people and communities" (Harrison 2004, p12). Gloucestershire's "Share-a-book" service seeks to change children's leisure habits by encouraging reading in areas where static library services are under used and "many homes contain no books" (Gloucestershire County Council 2008). Lincolnshire Libraries operate five CMLs: three visit primary schools and two go to Early Years settings (Figure 16, below). All five of the Lincolnshire vehicles have the aim to "provide targeted stock and increase access and choice to young children" (Lincolnshire County Council 2009a p2).

Figure 14: Screen shot from website of Rhondda Cynon Taff's CML

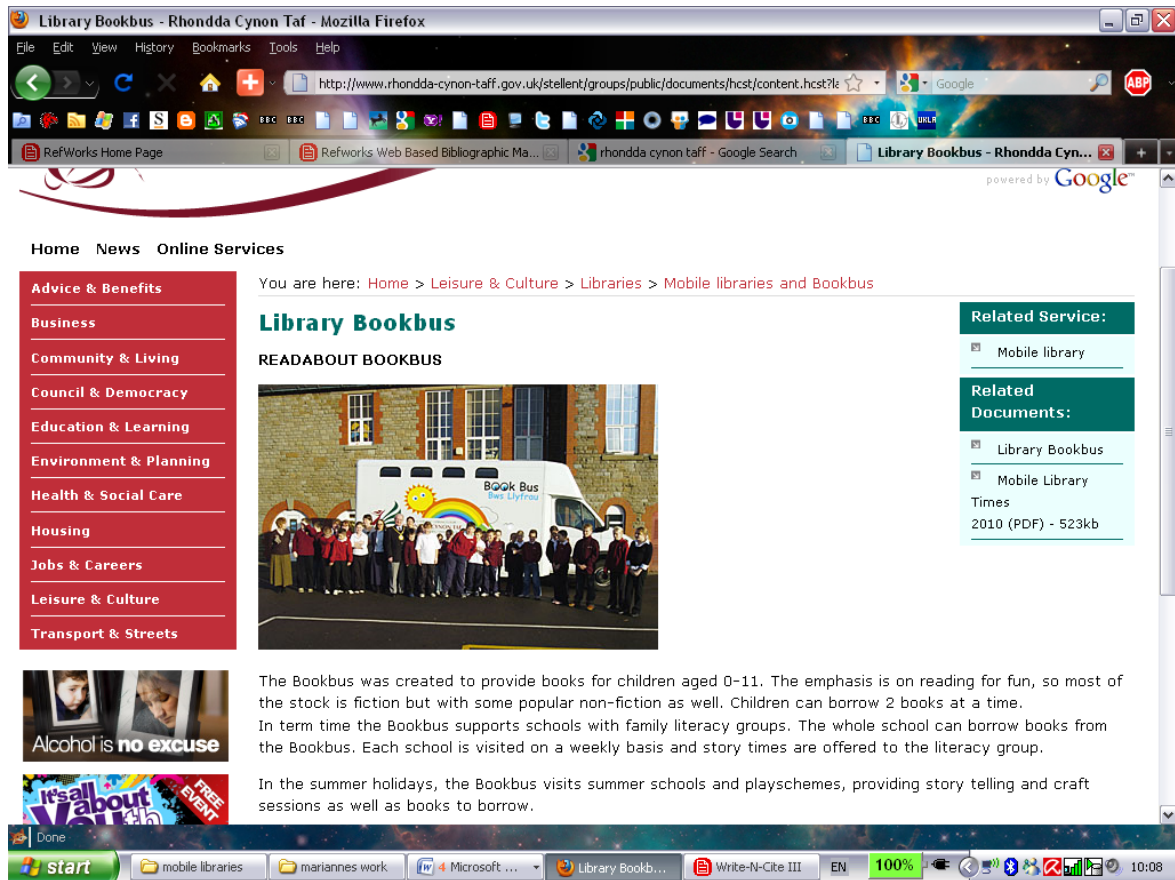


Figure 15: Photograph of Stockport's "StoryBus"



Exterior



Interior

Library authorities therefore believe that the use of a vehicle allows library services to enter places and communities where books are scarce, attitudes to reading are negative and access to library services are difficult. From analysing the literature produced by library

authorities in order to bring CML services to the attention of the public, it could be argued that the ideological purpose of a children's mobile library is to change children's lives by introducing them to the world of reading as a gateway to pleasure.

**Figure 16: Photographs of two Lincolnshire CMLs**



**Exterior, Lincolnshire's "Under 5's" vehicle**



**Interior, Lincolnshire "school" vehicle**

Aims can only be fulfilled by actions, so the function of a CML is to implement the aims of the service by using practical methods. For instance, to "access new audiences", and find children who require a library service, the locations and times of CML visits must coincide with the availability of such children. For example, Dyson's (1990) study of the mobile library service in Powys found that rural children could not access the library service because mobile libraries stopped in villages during the time when village children were at school in another town. In order to reach the aims of "making reading fun" and "making a difference" the actions taken by CML operators should be focused on enjoyment and directed towards enhancing reading skills and abilities. These concepts appear to be understood by certain library authorities who send their CMLs into places such as the streets of satellite estates, (Leicester City Council 2009b) local community events (Birmingham City Council 2010), primary schools, early years settings, children's centres and summer play schemes (Lincolnshire County Council 2009b).

#### 3.7.1.10 *Breaking down barriers of access*

CMLs claim to spread the love of books and increase literacy by breaking down barriers to library membership. Lyman (1977) classifies these barriers as: institutional, social, physical, intellectual, psychological and financial. Library authorities anticipate that the action of

taking a CML service out amongst children will break down any antipathy towards the library service and establish a point of communication with people who find it hard to access libraries. For instance, Orton (1980, p83) relates that the community librarian who managed a "Book Bus" in Southampton during 1975 used the vehicle to "break down the barriers that static libraries create for children". Such action is believed to have several effects: barriers to access are removed, children can use library services independently and books are taken into their homes. This section will consider the barriers to library membership and describe the methods CML services employ to eliminate the barriers.

The cause of an institutional barrier is described as the staff attitude towards the customer. Staff that are officious or do not offer individual, practical help to a customer will discourage people from using the library. Lewins and Renwick (1989) studied the static and mobile libraries in one local authority to discover the reasons why some families, with children under the age of five years found it difficult to use the services. The study found that library staff needed to "have a very positive attitude" to encourage the children and their families and to "combat the sometimes hostile reaction of other library users to babies, toddlers, and older children" (Lewins and Renwick 1989, [np]). The "Start with the Child" report (CILIP 2002b) reiterates that children need a warm welcome into libraries and staff attitudes must be adapted to working with children through a combination of correct recruitment and training.

Joining procedures and the cost of library charges, such as fines, are thought to alienate some excluded groups (CILIP 2002b). Derby City Libraries' "Reading Rocket" dispensed with the usual library rules, such as minimal joining procedures and overdue notices and fines, in order to lift institutional barriers and build a child centred, trusting relationship with its customers (Harrison 2004). A similar concern for developing an understanding with apprehensive visitors is shown by the statement on the Stockport "StoryBus" website which informs potential customers that "there is no charge for any late returns or damaged books... these things happen" (Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council 2010).

Social barriers are defined by Lyman (1977) as an absence of knowledge about the library service. Stanziola (2008) reports that people who do not use libraries do not realise what services a library can supply. Many CML services, for instance Derby City Libraries' "Reading Rocket", use CMLs "to raise awareness of library services" (Harrison and Renwick 2003, [slide 5]) and to inform the public about what services are available to them. For example,

the web page of the Birmingham City vehicle, "Words on Wheels", explains that the CML service can "introduce books and libraries to children and their carers in your community" and promote the reading materials which can be found in a local library (Birmingham City Council 2010). The presence of a CML in a neighbourhood is therefore a method of overcoming a social barrier and promoting the library service.

Physical barriers of access to library services can be: the distance to the nearest library; lack of transport to access a library; a building that cannot be easily entered due to a customer's physical condition or the accessibility of items once the customer is inside the library. The rationale of taking a CML into the heart of a community to stop in streets at regular times is that, if children cannot or will not go to the library, the library will go to them. Derby City Libraries started a CML service in order "to take services to new audiences in their own communities" (Harrison and Renwick 2003). Manchester City Council operate a CML "to take library services, books and more, directly to children for whom access to mainstream services could be difficult" (Manchester City Council 2010) and Leicester Libraries aim "...to provide a direct street level service for children..." (Leicester City Council 2009b). The physical barrier of distance to the nearest library and lack of transport disappears when a CML stops in customers' streets. For example, Leicester's "Bookbus" service started in 1980 and quickly developed the pattern of promotional visits to schools and childcare settings during the morning and weekly scheduled "street stops" to issue books and develop a link for children with main library services after schools had finished for the day (Working Party on Library Services for Children and Young People et al. 1995, p84). At the time of writing the Leicester "Bookbus" service is still operating in the same way after thirty years, with around 36 scheduled stops in outer city estates<sup>15</sup> at the time and place that is accessible to children (Leicester City Council 2009b, Leicester City Council 2009a).

Vincent (2000) voiced concern that fewer children visit public libraries on their own due to perceived dangers and increased traffic hazards. However, when a child has access to a CML that stops in their neighbourhood, they can learn to use the library independently. The convenience of a stop near a customer's home also makes it possible for parents of young children, or people with physical disabilities, to use library facilities. CMLs generally, have lifts that bring wheeled vehicles, such as buggies or wheel chairs, on board the vehicle, for instance, the Rhondda Cynon Taff "Bookbus" (Rhondda Cynon Taff 2010), allowing access to

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<sup>15</sup> Leicester City Bookbus timetable, 2010

people who would find it hard to enter some buildings. Thought given to the interior design of the library makes it easier for children to examine and choose the items that they want to borrow. For example, the Edinburgh "Bookbus" boasts convertible shelving to cater for the needs of different groups in its area (McCloskey 2008) and the "Reading Rocket" presented stock face-on, in kinder boxes and spinners with shelving "geared to children's needs" (Harrison 2004, p10) in order to make browsing easier.

Lyman (1977) uses the phrase "intellectual barriers" to describe two problems that some library users might encounter. Firstly, users may not understand the content of the stock because of its language or its ability level. Secondly, the technical jargon of catalogues or sign-posting within the library could prevent customers from finding the item they want. The issue of reading a book in a mother tongue has been minimised in the past decade, for instance, the report "Start with the Child" (CILIP 2002b, p61) states that "many libraries have recognised the need to stock books that reflect different cultures and that are in different scripts". CML services consider the language needs of their customers, for example, the Lincolnshire CMLs all carry dual language books and audio books (Lincolnshire County Council 2009a). The developmental, pre-reading stage of younger children is also considered because the customers of Stockport's "StoryBus" can borrow books, CDs, DVDs or a book and toy pack (Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council 2010). The barrier of intellectually accessible content is being broken down.

Eyre (1996) proposes that the subject signs in libraries are printed in a clear and simple way and libraries should adopt the bookshop style of displaying books in dump bins, spinners or face on so that children can find books that they want. CML services do not describe the way that their stock is sign-posted in their literature, therefore it cannot be assessed if this barrier has lifted.

Psychological barriers are more difficult to eliminate. People who have never visited a library hold negative perceptions about the relevance of library to their lives (Stanziola 2008) and therefore need considerable persuasion that libraries can be of personal benefit. People who find the act of reading a challenge, and those at risk of social exclusion may find libraries intimidating and unapproachable (DCMS, 2003). The customers of the Edinburgh "Bookbus" were initially apprehensive of the library service, but Kirkby (2008, p20) describes the effect of the CML as having "helped young people to feel more comfortable using library services" because the smaller space, with fewer people, allows them to feel more relaxed. It therefore

seems that the use of a CML can dispel psychological fears and give positive perceptions of a library service.

There is an assumption amongst many young people that you need to pay to use a library (CILIP 2002b) which naturally sets up a financial barrier. At the time of research, CMLs commonly neither charge for items, nor fine children for overdue books. For example Harrison (2004, p10) states that the "Reading Rocket" had "no charges and no fines" (p 88) and Kirkby (2008, p 19) explains that the Edinburgh "Bookbus" has an "amnesty" on fines and "outstanding loans" to "encourage membership". The perceived barriers of access to library services, institutional, social, physical, intellectual, psychological and financial, can all be reduced or removed for children by the use of a CML service in their neighbourhood. The following sections examine CMLs' visits into neighbourhoods and explore the activities which occur during such times.

#### 3.7.1.11 *Children's centre visits*

Many CMLs visit children's centres or SureStart Centres in order to develop links with parents and help them to support their children. A statement from Gloucestershire County Council (2008) declares that its CML, named "Share-a-Book", "...aims to bring books and storytimes to targeted groups of preschool children and their parents and carers". They also "promote leisure reading at home and show that reading is fun". Other CML services also work towards making such links, for instance, the Stockport "StoryBus" is allied to a SureStart Centre and serves the community in its catchment area. The published StoryBus timetable shows the places it visits, including schools, nurseries and plays areas and also gives the time when stories are told, so that parents and children can come to listen. The "StoryBus" webpage invites children under the age of five and their parents and carers to "come aboard and have a look" with no need to "belong to a group" or to "come with a school class". This demonstrates that there is an attempt by the "StoryBus" operators to model storytelling skills to parents in their area.

Similarly, Oxfordshire library services operate a "mobile children's centre" in co-operation with Oxfordshire Rural Children's Centre Project (Oxfordshire County Council 2010) on which parents and children can participate in story and rhyme sessions and find information about parenting, health, childcare and employment as well as borrowing books. The aim of the "Children's Centre Mobile" is to focus on developing language and literacy through working

with rural families<sup>16</sup>.

#### 3.7.1.12 *Early years settings visits*

Many children who are not yet old enough for school attend early years child care settings without being accompanied by their parent. CMLs in many local authorities visit those settings, and certain library authorities have CMLs which specialise in services for children under the age of five which regularly visit the Early Years settings in their areas. Lincolnshire (Lincolnshire County Council 2009a), Leicester City (Leicester City Council 2009b), and West Sussex (West Sussex County Council 2009) are examples of authorities which operate such a service.

The West Sussex “Northern Bookbus” (see Figure 17 below) is staffed by a “library outreach worker” who spends two days a week as a CML operator and three days a week working with various early years settings. The outreach worker reads stories and sings with the children, is “a good role model to staff” giving them “ideas of new stories and songs” and showing them how to develop a “reading friendly environment”<sup>17</sup> and promoting library membership. This operator is developing a link with children who may become library users and is teaching early years staff the value of stories to children’s developing literacy. The two Lincolnshire “Early Years Mobiles” visit a total of 311 early years settings over a fortnightly cycle where the operators tell stories and rhymes either on the vehicle or inside the setting. The aim of their service is to provide “targeted stock and increased access and choice to young children” (Lincolnshire County Council 2009a).

#### 3.7.1.13 *School visits*

Children’s mobile libraries visit primary schools and special schools to provide a service for the individual child and, by doing so, provide a wide variety of reading material to children who would otherwise have limited access to books and library services. The frequency of visits and their objectives vary according to each library authority. For instance, Powys uses the two vehicles known as the “Bookrunners” to access every child in the county by visiting

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<sup>16</sup> Oxfordshire County council, [2010], *The Children’s Centre Mobile*. [Unpublished report for CILIP Branch and Mobile Libraries Annual Mobile Meet]

<sup>17</sup> Somers, B., 2009. *Report: library outreach worker*. [internal unpublished document]



**Figure 17: Photographs of the West Sussex Under fives CMLs.****Northern Bookbus****Southern Bookbus**

each primary and special school. Although the vehicles operate under the auspices of the School Library Service they operate as a public library with the aim to give “every child the opportunity to browse and borrow from our extensive stock of Welsh and English books” and “take the branch library to the school”. The service was started to increase children’s access to quality books but the large area which both vehicles have to cover means that the service can only visit each school on a termly basis (Powys County Council 2010).

Lincolnshire fares rather better with the provision of three specialist CMLs that visit only schools. These vehicles cover the county through monthly visits to each primary school, also with the aim of giving children a wider variety of books from which to choose (Lincolnshire County Council 2009b). The CML operated by the London Borough of Bexley also gains access to children by targeting visits to schools. The service was implemented after a Best Value Review of Bexley Library Service and influenced by the “Framework for the future” (DCMS 2003) report that recommends that libraries should work in partnership with schools to develop children’s reading. Bexley Library service chose to target children in primary schools because it was thought that, if children’s attitudes to reading and libraries could be changed at an early stage, they would become lifelong library users. Bexley does not attempt to visit every school but uses low participation in the Summer Reading Challenge, the distance from nearest static library and reports of literacy and numeracy levels as an indicator of need and select schools to which they offer their service accordingly (Ware 2005). Edinburgh Libraries also decided to prioritise the schools that would receive their “Bookbus” service using the premise of physical access to library a service; it is “for those

who cannot easily use building based library services" (McCloskey 2008, p18). The Edinburgh "Bookbus" therefore targets special schools and children's secure residential units in addition to primary schools that are over one mile away from the nearest static library in order to take "Reading resources to children who would not otherwise have much access to books" (McCloskey 2008, p20).

Many other CMLs visit children during school time and it can be said that in many UK local authorities children are being sought out by library services in order to develop their reading abilities by having access to a broad selection of good quality, up to date books. However, schools close during the holidays, and during that time CMLs provide a service to summer play-schemes and set up camp in parks and playgrounds in order to reach children.

#### 3.7.1.14 *Summer play scheme visits*

In the past, several library authorities fitted out mobile libraries to serve as children's holiday mobile library services expressly to make books accessible to children in urban or rural areas (Orton 1980, p66). Storytelling and craft activities provided the draw for children to visit the vehicle and to prompt them to choose books (Working Party on Library Services for Children and Young People et al. 1995). For around the past 10 years public libraries have adopted the Summer Reading Challenge to motivate children's independent reading. This means that CMLs can also take the Summer Reading Challenge to places where children congregate. For instance one Lincolnshire "Schools" CML, visited a local holiday attraction weekly with the aim of "Supporting the Summer Reading Challenge" (Lincolnshire County Council, 2009c). Rhondda Cynon Taff's "Readabout book bus" visits "Summer schools and play schemes, providing storytelling and craft sessions as well as books to borrow" (Rhondda Cynon Taff 2010). Leicester City "Bookbus" parks in a supermarket car park for three mornings during the summer holidays, for storytimes and a colouring competition ("All aboard for the bookbus" 1999). It therefore appears that CMLs provide books and library services during the summer when schools are closed and in places where library access is difficult.

#### 3.7.1.15 *Community events*

Community events are not only an opportunity for CMLs to distribute books amongst the community and provide literacy based entertainment, but they are also ambassadors of library authorities (Working Party on Library Services for Children and Young People et al. 1995). "Words on Wheels" regularly attends community events such as the Young Readers Festival (Birmingham City Council 2010), and Manchester's Reading Voyager web page

states that "Participating in community events can offer an excellent opportunity for children to visit us and get involved" (Manchester City Council 2010). Stringer (2001, p51) has photographed a Barnsley mobile library decorated as a float to take part in the Mayor's parade. In the opinion of Stringer (2001) each mobile library is "a microcosm of its parent Authority" and should give "a good impression of that Authority" (p50).

The Leicester City "Bookbus" visits "Carnivals" where it hosts storytelling, puppet shows, and activities that "Promote the library service and benefits of books and reading" (Department of National Heritage 1995). Eyre (1994, p14) points out that the advantage of a vehicle is that it can be used as a promotional tool at major community events. The presence of a CML at a location where it is not usually seen demonstrates the work of the library authority to the general public and may well attract new customers to its service and to local static libraries.

### **3.8 Conclusions that may be drawn from literature**

The literature sets a context of what was known and understood of children's literacy in relationship to library services. The appraisal of the published work reviewed in this section brought to light a number of key issues that were also identified through analysing the data. Certain assumptions that are expressed in literature were proved to be true, when compared to the findings, while other assumptions were not supported by the results of the observations. The issues of most importance were identified as: early interactions between parent and child; the contribution of library staff to developing children's literacy; children's mobile libraries work well with disadvantaged groups; library stock should reflect the community it serves; and that there is a variety of library provision for children. These issues are summarised below.

Children gain their early literacy skills from interaction with adults in their home environment, so the most effective way to increase the literacy of a community is to show parents and carers how to stimulate their children's innate ability before the children are given formal reading instruction. Previous research has shown that children who share books with adults, hear stories read aloud, and sing and listen to nursery rhymes, acquire the skills needed to learn to read (Brock and Rankin 2008). Children learn that reading gives pleasure when they choose their own reading matter and through making those decisions children discover that they can teach themselves. Adults must not dominate children's choices

because allowing children to exercise their self-determination stimulates intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy, which leads to well-being.

It is of some concern to the authors of documents reporting on library services that insufficient recognition is given to the contribution of children's library services to the development of literacy (see section 3.5 above), for example, "Start With the Child" (CILIP 2002). Library staff enhance children's reading skills in a non-pedagogic way by encouraging children to develop at their own rate and through enabling children by providing stock that is relevant to their community and supplying a safe environment. The staffing of all children's libraries appears to be a crucial factor in their effectiveness and there is debate about whether only specialist and highly trained staff should work in a children's library. A similar debate has arisen concerning the selection of stock for children's libraries. There is an understanding that qualified children's librarians should select stock for children's libraries, but new models of stock selections are emerging and frontline staff and customers are sometimes consulted.

At the time of writing it has been identified that local authorities, have a statutory obligation to provide library services to children, which can be achieved by working in partnership with other agencies such as schools and children's centres. Working in partnership is an advised strategy for libraries so that they can continue giving access to all strata of society. Public library services have gained a reputation for working well with groups at risk of social exclusion and prior research has shown that children of all socio-economic groups use libraries (Naylor et al 2006). Library outreach work has contributed to the achievement of the reputation, through providing services to "hard to reach" groups and establishing links with static libraries.

Other forms of children's library provision include libraries in primary and secondary schools and schools library services. School libraries are expected to promote reading and aid information literacy, however, as school libraries are not statutory, the quality of their service varies from school to school. Schools library services supply schools with books and library and curriculum support. Nevertheless, their funding model makes it difficult for all schools to use the service and so a more effective model is required.

Official reports that have been compiled about children's library provision over the past two decades, such as "Start with the Child" (CILIP 2002), highlight the benefit of children's

libraries, in general, to children's literacy and well-being, but do not closely examine the role of a CML. A CML is a vehicle designed to overcome physical, geographical, psychological, and other barriers to library use. It carries stock suitable for the age groups and communities which it visits. A CML can be seen as an alternative learning experience to that of a school because the aims and objectives of the library service emphasise the choices of the individual learner as opposed to the pedagogic ethos of a school. A CML also provides learning opportunities for children under school age. Pre-reading skills can be developed through operators working with children and their carers. The vehicle itself can be used as a means of promoting the library service at community events and to provide an efficient service to cover all parts of an authority's jurisdiction. The specialist nature of its stock and general appearance gives a perception of greater informality than a static library. This perception can attract visitors who would not venture into a static library.

The next chapter deals with the data which was gathered through the grounded theory and ethnographic method and discusses the findings in relationship to the substantive theories which emerged from the data and with information which was gathered from literature.

## Chapter 4: Theories, findings and discussion

Five substantive theories about the effectiveness of children's mobile libraries were developed from the grounded theory methodology. Each theory is examined in turn below, and its emergence from the coded field-notes is explained. The findings are discussed under each theory heading, including: excerpts from the field-notes, as evidence, information, and ideas derived from the literature, and existing theories on literacy development. Finally a model of the operation of a CML derived from the five theories is presented.

### 4.1 Theories

The following five theories emerged from the study:

1. **Event:** A visit to a children's mobile library arouses the brain into a state that facilitates learning because it is viewed by customers as an "event"
2. **Reach:** A children's mobile library has the potential to reach any child of any ability anywhere in the United Kingdom
3. **Process:** Children's mobile libraries provide a learning environment where interactions between social actors promote reading skills
4. **Resource:** A children's mobile library is a source of expertise that is drawn upon by children's educators and carers to enhance their own knowledge and skills and to support their teaching
5. **Well being:** The feeling of well-being that is stimulated by children's own actions on a children's mobile library reinforces their desire to read

Theories 1 and 2 show that a reading culture can be developed, promoted and supported by taking a CML service into communities. Theories 3 and 4 illustrate the interactions and processes that occur on CMLs which promote reading and stimulate reading skills. Theory 3 and theory 5 show that the environment of a CML and the encouragement of operators influence children's reading skills. These five theories could be summed up in the following way:

"A children's mobile library is a specialised resource that can reach children equally, delivering learning processes that achieve well-being, by the means of being an event."

An explanation and discussion of the findings that led to the development of the theories

follows below with reference to relevant literature and excerpts from the field-notes. A table that cross-references aspects of the above theories and where they appear in this chapter can be found in Appendix 8. This shows that many of the issues contained in the theories are iterative and can be found in more than one supporting argument. To preserve anonymity, names that occur in the field-notes are pseudonyms for CML operators, other participants are referred to by their status, for instance “child” or “teacher”.

## 4.2 “Bringing books to children”

*A visit to a children's mobile library arouses the brain into a state that facilitates learning because it is perceived as an event.*

The above theory was derived from the statements of adults and children who were questioned during observations and from listening to, and watching, the reactions of the children in each CML.

Figure 18 (below) shows the levels of coding used to form the theory of “Event”. The body language of children was expressed in the field-notes in terms of the emotion that they displayed at the time. Emotional body language is a more accurate predictor of an individual's emotional state than facial expression because it can be interpreted with less ambiguity by an observer (de Gelder 2006). Conversations between participants and responses to informal questioning about reasons to visit and perceptions of CMLs were also documented. The field-notes were later annotated with initial codes which were sorted into the sub-categories of:

- Break from daily routine
- Excitement
- Child's perception of CML
- Operator perception of CML

These four sub-categories were then clustered as the generalised category “CML as an event” to reflect the perceptions that the participants expressed.

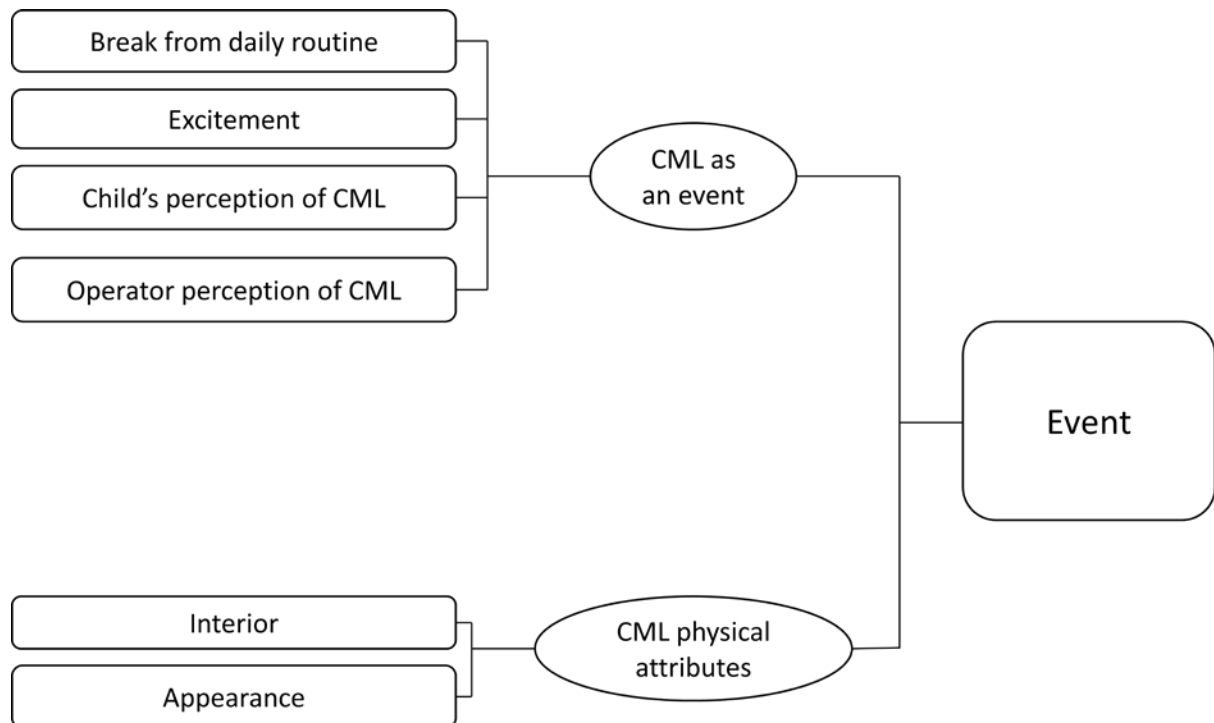
The design and layout of the CML were noted as a way of understanding whether these attributes had any influence on the children's attraction to the vehicle. Children on the CMLs observed were asked the open questions “tell me about the [name of vehicle being observed]” or “what do you think about the [name of vehicle being observed]?” in order to

discover whether the design of each vehicle influenced its perception. Comments from operators about vehicle design were also written down and the resulting data was coded into the sub-categories of:

- Interior
- Appearance

These sub-categories formed the generalised category “Physical attributes”. The concept of CML as an event will be discussed first followed by analyses of children’s perceptions of CMLs physical attributes.

**Figure 18: Coding hierarchy for the theory of event**



#### 4.2.1 The CML as an event

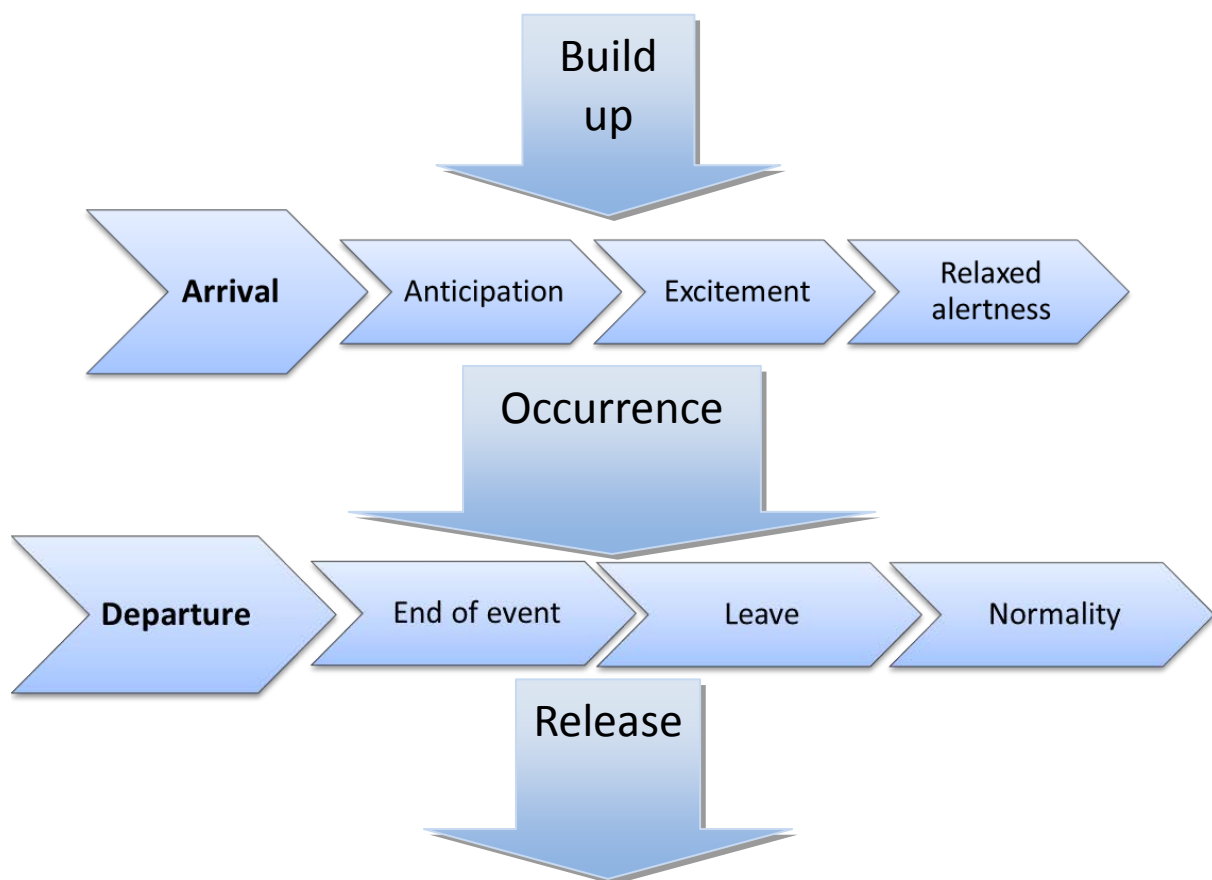
The observations found that children’s mobile libraries encourage reading skills by stimulating children’s brains into the state of arousal which facilitates learning and that it is the coming and going of the CML which makes it effective. Parents, teachers and carers describe a visit to a CML as “something different” and “like a trip out” and it is perceived by children, parents, teachers and operators as a special event, an exciting break from daily routine that allows children to have fun.



Children learn best in a state of “relaxed alertness” which can be triggered by an event (Caine and Caine 1991). Activities that arrive and depart are attractive because they are perceived as a brief opportunity to enter a different existence, a break from the daily routine (Carmeli 1987). CMLs provide such transient events because they arrive at a school or nursery, or in a neighbourhood, for a period of time and then travel on to their next destination. Caine and Caine (1991) consider that effective learning involves the alternation of several states of brain arousal; build-ups and releases because staying in one state does not aid the human brain into gathering and then processing information.

Figure 19 (below) shows the sequence of incidents, synonymous with a visit of a CML, that stimulate children into a state when learning can occur. The build-up to the visit starts with anticipation of the arrival of the CML, which children express as excitement and which, in turn, stimulates relaxed alertness.

**Figure 19: The build-ups and releases of a CML event**



Children therefore become more receptive to the interactions that occur in the vehicle. However, the event must end because the vehicle leaves and a release of tension allow children to return to a neutral state. Release from the heightened level of excitement and alertness is necessary because “the emotional impact of any lesson or life experience may continue to reverberate long after the specific event” (Caine and Caine 1991, p82) therefore a state of reflection is then needed.

#### 4.2.1.1 *Anticipation and excitement*

Parents and teachers who were approached in the observations, commented about children's mood on the day of a CML visit. For instance, a mother stated that her 3-year-old-daughter was excited on Tuesdays due to her anticipation of the visit to the CML. The child ran from shelf to shelf, not being able to concentrate on choosing a book: <sup>18</sup>

I spoke to a girl of three and her mother. I asked the girl what she thought about the bookbus and books. All she replied was “Yes”. “Oh”, said her mother, “That’s all she’s saying at the moment!” William started talking to her, and all she replied was “Yes”. Her mother told me that the girl looks forward to coming on the bookbus; she gets quite excited on a Tuesday. The mother reads the books to her daughter. The girl was certainly excited, she ran around a lot, and her mother couldn’t get her to look at the books with her to choose (Observation 14).

There is a strong link between emotion and behaviour (de Gelder 2006) and the girl's behaviour demonstrated her excitement. Older children expressed their excitement in more focused ways as can be illustrated by the reaction of children who were put into small groups to choose books:

The children were enthusiastically choosing picture books. As soon as they entered the vehicle they headed straight for the back shelves, grabbing book after book examining each one and talking about it together before deciding which to borrow (Observation 6).

Their directness of approaching the shelves and the speed with which the children handled and sorted the books demonstrated the excitement they felt as a result of the experience they had on the CML.

The anticipation of a good experience was shown by the emotional body language of a group of children as they walked towards their CML during observation 10:

The four year olds were bright and lively, they were smiling broadly as they approached the vehicle (Observation 10).

Facial expressions, such as smiling, release endorphins into the body which echo and

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<sup>18</sup> Text indented and in smaller size here and subsequently indicates quotations from the field-notes. Observation numbers are listed in Table 3, page no. 112

reinforce the emotion being portrayed (Sylwester 1995). It can be assumed that the four year olds were smiling in anticipation of a pleasant experience and because they smiled, they felt pleasure.

Some first time visitors to a CML do not correctly anticipate what they will find on entry before they enter a CML. The body language of certain children revealed their surprise at entering an interior of a vehicle that did not look like a car or a lorry but was recognisable as a library. For example, a teenage boy boarded the CML during observation 19:

After a while a boy came on and said "Oh I didn't know this was a library!" He sounded pleased, and his eyes lit up as he stood still and looked around. He asked, "Can you just take the books then?" The girls told him he could (Observation 19).

The phrase "This is a library!" was uttered by a young girl as she sat on the floor looking around at the books and book-shelves with curiosity, during observation 12. She appeared to be surprised at her surroundings:

A girl in a yellow dress sat on a pouffé flicking through a board book and looked up and moved her head around to survey the books and said "This is a library" in a pleased tone. I said "Do you like this library?" She said "yes". The boy with the book looked around and said "You could sleep in here, but there are no beds" (Observation 12)

In observation 6 children were overheard trying to make sense of their CML as they compared it to a caravan:

A group of the younger children sat on the steps spontaneously talking about the vehicle. One boy said "It's like a caravan." A girl replied that it was "like a caravan with books in". They thought it was really good that it moved around from place to place (Observation 6).

It appears that the children observed were trying to equate the experience of a mobile library to other knowledge that they had previously acquired. The experience is different, which makes it exciting. Caine and Caine (1991) state that the human brain attempts to make sense of the world by looking for pattern and order. When that order is disturbed by a novel experience, such as surprise, the brain is stimulated and stress hormones are secreted.

Caine and Caine (1991) argue that the state of relaxed alertness is stimulated by the secretion of stress hormones into the brain that prepare the human individual for facing a challenge. However, there are two types of stress: distress which is caused by the secretion of cortisol; and eustress (excitement), which is produced by adrenalin and nor-adrenalin. Distress manifests itself with feelings of threat and helplessness, whereas eustress "accompanies an appropriate degree of personal challenge" (Caine and Cain 1991, p66). It

can therefore be said that the brains of children who are excited about the visit of a CML are primed to face the challenge of whatever learning experience they find on the CML. The heightened state fixes the experience into the memory, and this was illustrated by the remarks of a group of children from Observation 1, who remembered events from their last CML visit, one year previously. Some of the children remembered that they “Had to clap their hands to open the door” and their friends recalled the story that the operator told them about a rainbow, and even remembered the shelf and position of the book from which he read.

#### 4.2.1.2 *A break from daily routine*

The adults who brought children to visit CMLs perceived the visit as a special event, even when the event happened regularly. For instance, some CMLs operate to a weekly timetable whereas others visit groups on a monthly basis. Teachers and early years workers, who were engaged in conversation during the observations, gave the reason for using a CML as it being “something different”:

The playgroup leader said that it was good for the children to come out to do something different... (Observation 15).

The nursery manager said that it was “Something Different”, it was a different person telling different stories in a different way (Observation 1).

Other phrases used by teachers were “Really nice treat” and “A trip out”. An Early Years worker said that the benefit was to give the children an experience out of the setting, it was...

Good to get out into a different environment. The storytelling is different when someone else does it... (Observation 15)

A play leader at a summer school wanted children to have access to a different range of books:

... it gave the children a chance to read something different (Observation 4)

Parents also considered that CML visits were a break from the daily routine.

In two separate instances, mothers had travelled with their children to a CML from another area by car. A young boy who visited a CML located at a rural village during half-term was accompanied by his mother instead of his local childminder. They had driven from the nearest town where they lived:

The boy had visited previously with his childminder. They returned some books they had already borrowed. I explained what I was doing there. His mother said that he really likes the children’s mobile library. She thinks that it is brilliant, because although they live in Smallton, which has a

library, you don't feel like going there when you are out and shopping and doing other things (Observation 18).

That parent had taken time and trouble to travel to a CML, because it was "something different" and not part of the daily routine of shopping and not in her locality. The trip to the CML had become an event for her and her son. The second example was set in a large town (observation 20), where the mother reported that she travelled to the CML regularly from an area of the town that has no library, originally with her daughter who was currently in nursery, and subsequently, as on that occasion, with her son. For that mother and son, the experience was "a trip out". It can be therefore be surmised that a visit to a CML is perceived as an event whether the visitor travels to the vehicle or waits for the vehicle to arrive.

The event of a CML arriving and then departing is analogous to a travelling show that creates excitement for a short time, interacts with the public, and then departs. The attraction of a travelling show to its audience and the psychological effects of sudden arrival and departure were researched by Carmeli (1987) as he studied a small circus as it toured the UK. The findings of Carmeli's (1987) study relate to the sense of excitement raised by CML visits. Carmeli (1987) found that the circus travellers used tried and tested techniques to make their performances successful. A week before the circus arrived anticipation was created, by handing out posters. The Big Top sprang up suddenly during the night:

*The arrival of the Big Top itself was extremely sudden. Circus travellers consider the fast build-up (and pull down) of the Big Top and its sudden and surprising appearance as part of the familiar attraction of the circus. The circus usually comes at night (after a performance at another town, pull down and travelling). "In the (following) morning people (townsfolk) realize it was not here yesterday" (Carmeli 1987, p224).*

The surprise provoked by the manifestation of the Big Top caused drama and excitement, and similarly, the surprise and arrival of a CML also causes excitement. Carmeli (1987) continues his analysis by suggesting that the attraction of a travelling show relies on its departure as well as its arrival. He posits that the continual cycle of arrival and departure gives a sense of timelessness and infinity to the customers, who manage to snatch a small piece of another reality:

*The arrival of the circus embodies or alludes to a mode of existence or an ontological state, which is always there, beyond the bracketed reality of everyday life (Carmeli 1987, p239).*

Children and adults who visited CMLs considered that a CML had a special experience to offer them, the “something different”, whether it was books, personality or a way of telling a story. The operators generally tried to make their vehicles an interesting place for children, such as displaying of children’s work, (observations 13 and 17) and facilitating a relaxed atmosphere on board, because they believed that a CML was a place where children could have fun. For example, the operator Bill said that he “really likes” the children coming aboard and making a noise (observation 4). His colleague, Peggy “likes it when the children are lively and interested” (observation 6). Matthew, an operator from a different service, thought that the book bus was a place for children to have “an adventure” (observation 12). A CML then may be described as a world of story and literature that is forever moving from place to place; and the opportunity to experience that world for a short time gives a visitor a sense of release from their daily grind.

#### **4.2.2 Children’s perceptions of CML physical attributes**

The overall appearance of the vehicle appeared to have little or no bearing on its attraction to participants. The vehicle that hosted Observations 4 and 6 was not designed for children. It was an existing vehicle that had been stocked with children’s items after a reorganisation of that specific service:

The vehicle does not have any special livery; it looks like a generic van. The books are shelved spine on, and are quite tightly packed, but that does not seem to make any difference to the children, they manage to happily browse. They have no real kinder boxes, but picture books are stored on the bottom shelves. Yet the children all told me that they really liked the vehicle (Observation 4).

The appearance of the CMLs in the study varied internally and externally, because mobile libraries are custom built, planned and designed on an individual basis. The interior design and liveries that were seen differed from plain to elaborate, faded to bright, and old to new.

The only comment noted from a child specifically about the appearance of a CML was read from a customer comment book which praised the cleanliness of the vehicle:

Tess showed me the visitor comments book, where the traveller children have written how nice the bus is. They like the cleanliness, the space and the people (Observation 18).

No child commented about the interior when asked “What do you think of the CML?” They expressed no opinions about the seats (or lack of) or shelves, or colours. In fact, the children generally commented on the books.

Such a finding is in contrast with the expectations from the literature review. Library authorities assume that a bright livery appeals to children (section 3.7.1.2 above) and that the interior should be designed to suit their physical needs (section 3.7.1.3 above) and psychological needs (section 3.5.1.6 above). The implication is that library authorities should be clear about the reasons for making the livery of a children's mobile library noticeable for if a plain CML is as attractive as a brightly coloured, illustrated CML, then the authority could forgo the expense of customising each vehicle. However, it could be possible that the impact of the vehicles appearance is so subliminal that the children do not notice that they have been influenced. To prove the value of customised livery, a parallel study of the attractiveness to children of a plain CML and a colourful vehicle would need to be completed.

### 4.3 The CML reaches the remote

*A children's mobile library has the potential to reach any child of any ability anywhere in the UK.*

The above theory was derived by asking children who visited CMLs about books and reading in their home, by taking note of those children's physical, mental and reading abilities; and, by observing children from a wide range of geographic locations. The term "the remote" is used in this study as a shorthand way of expressing the people in society who find it difficult to use or access services to which they are entitled, often termed "hard to reach", that is, people who either choose not to access services or do not know that there are services that might help them. The services examined in this study are specifically library services.

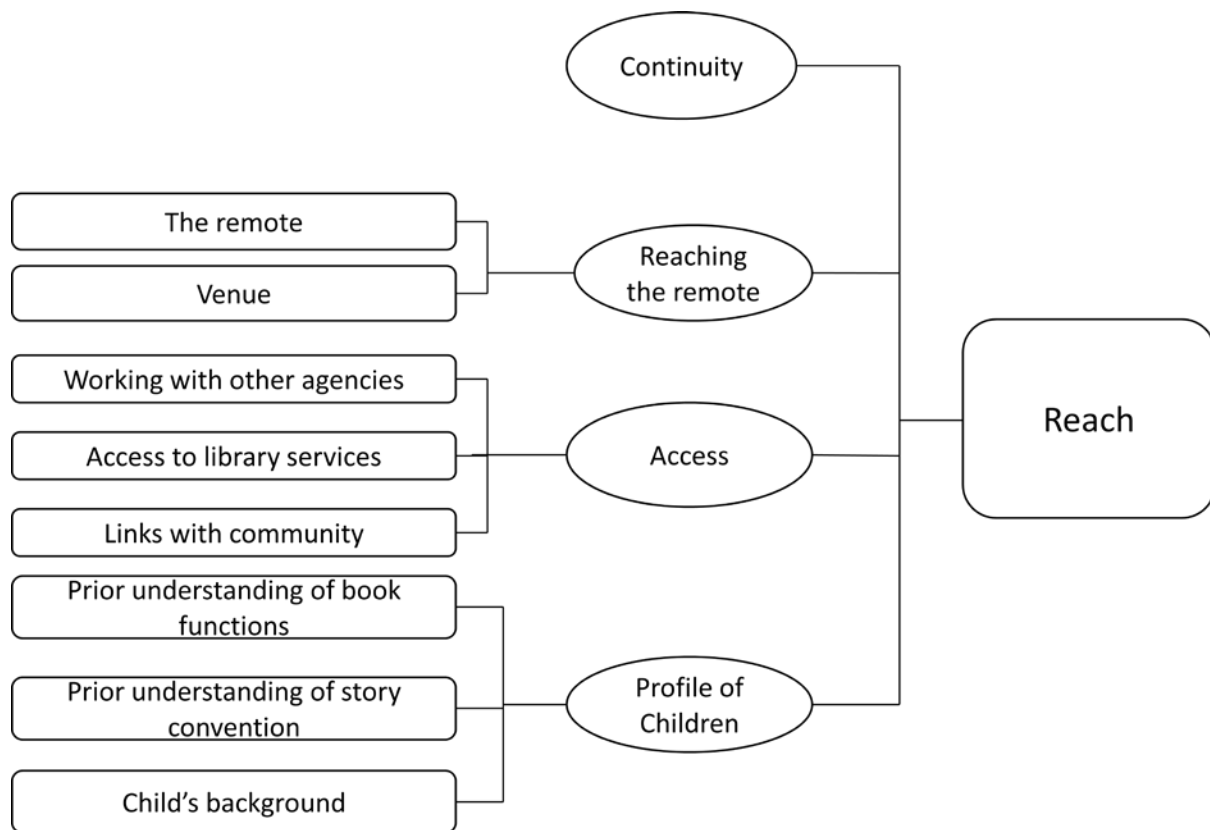
Figure 20 (below) indicates the codes that were used for analysis of the field-notes, in order to denote an understanding of the background and abilities of the children observed, the demographics of the locations visited during the observations, the reasoning behind CML service manager's choice of locations, and the distribution of stock within those locations.

The initial strata of codes were grouped together to form the following categories:

- Profile of Children - a picture of the typical child who visited a CML
- Access - the availability of library services within communities
- Reaching the remote - the location of CML services
- Continuity - the availability of provision when a child has passed the age of eligibility to use a CML service

The four categories were grouped under the generalised category “reach” to map the effectiveness of CMLs in their attempts to “break barriers of access” and “spread the love of books”. The categories “access” and “reaching the remote” are interlinked and will be discussed together. The category “continuity” is not in the scope of this study so therefore will not be pursued. It was found that children of all abilities and a wide range of backgrounds visit CMLs and, in consequence, “hard to reach” are served by CMLs. It must be emphasised at this stage that, although observations were carried out on locations throughout the UK, CML services are only available in a minority of regions (appendix 1)

**Figure 20: Hierarchy of coding for theory of reach**



The study found that participating children covered a range of physical and educational abilities. In general, CMLs are able to take library services to the places where children are located, therefore, CMLs have the potential to enable children of all abilities to access to a library service, should they choose to do so. This means that CML services are inclusive and have the ability to serve children who may not otherwise have the choice of a library service.



#### 4.3.1 Profile of children observed

No predominant feature was detected in the spread of reading and pre-reading skills shown by the children who were observed during the study. It was not possible accurately to assess the literacy or socio-economic background of each individual child's home. Teachers, carers and operators offered their opinions and impressions as to whether the children's home life was supportive of reading, such as:

The teacher commented that they were all good readers and come from backgrounds where parents buy them a lot of books (Observation 6).

I asked the teacher about the background the children come from. She said most of them would not have books at home. They come from very deprived homes (Observation 13).

However, as the information was from a second party it cannot be considered more than an indication of the relationship between parents and the establishment concerned. The children themselves either did not answer the question "do you have books at home?" or they exaggerated the amount, for instance "Millions". Durkin (1966) states that the socio-economic status of a family does not give any indication of children's early reading ability and previous research discussed in the literature review concluded that children from every socio-economic group visit libraries (Section 3.4.3 above). Therefore data about the socio-economic background of CML users was not pursued further for this study. However, in general, the children who were observed showed that they had acquired certain basic literacy skills.

As can be seen in Table 3 (below), the majority of children were able to handle books correctly, that is, books were held with the correct orientation and pages were turned from right to left as illustrated by a child in Observation 4:

The girl then asked me to read a lift the flap Maisy book. When each flap was lifted she correctly identified all of Maisy's friends. This showed a familiarity with the book. She knew how to turn the pages and lift the flaps. When that was finished, she said "Again again" [Teletubbies](Observation 4)

Also, in most cases assessed, children understood the concept of a story and could identify characters from well known books, television programmes or films as could this pre-school child in observation 12:

One boy grabbed a "Pirates of the Caribbean book". I said to him "What's that?" The worker said "It's a pirate". I asked him if we could look at the book together. I turned the pages, and he saw a picture of a ship. He said "I got this home dd". I understood that he has the DVD at home. (Observation 12)

**Table 3: Location of CML services observed and children's understanding of books and stories**

Observation No.	Geographic Location	Venues	Children's profiles	
			Understand books	Understand story convention
1	City suburb	Nursery	Yes	Yes
2	Inner city	Primary school	Yes	Yes
3	City suburb	preschool	No	No
4	Rural village City	Summer play-schemes	Yes	Yes
5	Rural villages	Pre-schools	Yes	Yes
6	Rural villages	Primary schools	Yes	Yes
7	Coastal town	Nursery Pre-school Workplace nursery	Yes Yes Yes	Yes Yes Yes
8	Rural village Coastal town	Pre-schools	Yes	Yes
9	Commuter town	Pre-schools	Yes	Yes
10	City	Workplace nursery Family centre (street) Special school	Yes Yes Yes	Yes Not assessed Yes
11	Town City	Special school Children's secure units	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
12	City	Family centre Nursery Primary school	No Yes Not assessed	Yes Yes Not assessed
13	City estate	School	Yes	Yes
14	City estate	Streets	Yes	Yes
15	Inner city	Parent and toddler group Pre-school Primary school Montessori school	Not assessed Yes Yes Yes	Not assessed Not assessed Yes Yes
16	Inner city	Community festival	Yes	Yes
17	Greater London suburb	Primary school	Yes	Yes
18	Rural villages	Street Children's centre	Yes/no Yes/no	Not assessed Not assessed
19	City	Travellers site Fairground site	Yes Yes	Not assessed Yes
20	Industrial town	Street Primary school Children's centre	Yes Yes Yes	Not assessed Yes Yes

This means that the children in the observations have had previous experience of hearing stories, albeit through popular media, and of handling books. Gibson and Levin (1975) state that children who have experienced a print and language rich environment at home, from the familiarity of seeing books, magazines and newspapers around them, find it easier to learn to read. It was noted that the picture book "Dear Zoo" prompted a positive response at all of the observations where it was offered to children as a choice of story; the book was one included in children's Bookstart packs and was therefore likely to be in many of the children's homes (Bookstart 2009) :

I read Dear Zoo to them, and although they initially voiced familiarity with the story, they did not remember which animal was in each package. They interacted with the story, guessing what was hidden behind each flap demonstrating that they understood the convention of listening and responding to the story (Observation 5).

Children within the same area of population demonstrated a wide range of levels of familiarity with books. This point is illustrated by an example from Observation 7 where one pre-school child was able to handle a complex pop-up book, but another child from the same setting did not know how to use a basic book:

... a boy brought me a haunted house pop-up book; we went through it and talked about the images. Another boy came to see what we were doing and pushed in to work the pop-ups (some had wheels and levers). The first boy said that the book was “nice”. He said that he had lots of books at home. One girl said that “Mummy” read to her. I read some more “That’s not my princess” books. I observed a girl who was holding a book, but did not appear to know how to turn the pages (Observation 7).

A year 7 class that visited a CML during observation 10 visited included a child who was seen borrowing three history books, whereas another child from the same class chose a board book. Although of the same age-group and same area of population, these two children showed that they had widely differing taste and reading ability.

The children represented a wide variety of reading developmental stages, from some who were ardent readers with many books at home, to others with few reading skills, no personal books and no adults reading to them at home. This finding demonstrates that a CML treats all customers equally, no matter what their reading skill, and provides a service to children of all abilities and backgrounds and agrees with the wide body of opinion expressed in section 3.4.3 (above), that libraries provide equality of access to all socio-economic groups.

#### **4.3.2 Reaching the remote**

Lyman (1977) believes that libraries aid literacy development and if a child cannot visit a library then, “take the library to the child” (p99). Table 3 (above), indicates that the children observed came from a spread of demographics, geographical areas and backgrounds including remote villages, traveller sites, secure units, special schools, primary schools, early years settings, cities and towns. The range of venues shows that CMLs do take the library to children where ever their location. Certain CMLs also operate at the times of day when children are available. Service E, for instance works during the evenings and service I at weekends, but such operational hours depends on the funds available to the specific service. For example, the manager of service F stated that he:

...would have liked to have used the service after school until about 4.30 so that there could be a link with children and parents, but there was insufficient funding to staff that (Interview (i)).

CML services enter all areas and neighbourhoods in their attempt to give all children the choice to use a library. For instance, CML operators of service N stated that their service aim was to “reach every child in the county,” whilst Lillian took the view she should “go where there is need and desire for a children’s mobile library” (Interview (i)).

Certain of the children who were observed using the CMLs were not able to visit any other library. A variety of reasons was presented, such as being geographically remote from a library, being dependent on an adult accompanying the child or the child not being able to leave their establishment. For example, the CML studied during Observation 6 regularly visits a very small village school in a large stretch of farmland. The teacher of that school commented that:

The service is vital because they are so rural, the children would not have a chance to go into a library otherwise (Observation 6).

CMLs serve many children under the age of 5 years who are dependent on an adult to take them to library. The adult may choose not to visit libraries for psychological reasons or because of working commitments. For instance operators Tess and Lydia, work closely with a children’s centre that:

...works with some parents who are struggling, and it is hard for the parents to make the emotional effort to come to a place that is full of books (Observation 18).

Whereas the operators Jill and Liz, who knew the families which used their long standing service, described the parents of some of their youngest customers as:

...“Time poor”. Their parents put them into nursery at 8.30 and pick them up at 6.30 so they have no time for stories or reading at bedtime (Observation 7).

CMLs also visit closed communities, such as traveller sites (observations 18 and 19) or children’s secure units (observation 11) where children are not allowed out from that community:

The teacher told me that she thought the book bus was a wonderful asset. The children would not go to a static library “outside”. The girl said “I wouldn’t” (Observation 19).

The unit manager came to talk to me however, and told me that she thought the bookbus was of benefit to the children. They would not access a library in any other way (Observation 11).

Therefore this is a group of children who would not have the opportunity to use library facilities if a CML did not visit their community.

#### 4.3.2.1 *Venue*

Due to the small number of CMLs operated by library authorities and the large number of children in each authority, demand for CML services exceeded the supply. In consequence,

each library authority selects the target areas for their service and each authority used a different set of criteria for the selection process. The CMLs observed chose venues based on the criteria of access and local availability of library services, deliberately targeting “Hard to reach” groups but, at the same time not excluding from the vehicles any children who used other library services or lived in areas that were not classed as disadvantaged.

Table 4 (below) shows that the predominant criterion selected by library authorities, was to operate a CML in areas of disadvantage. The information was not available from two authorities, whilst two other authorities attempt to reach every child in their area using more than one vehicle. Both those authorities serve large rural counties and only achieve their aim by scheduling the service on a monthly basis in one case, and a half termly basis in the other. Although Table 4 (below) indicates the theoretical choice of venue for a CML to visit: in reality the places included in a CML schedule were more diverse.

**Table 4: Criteria stated for choice of venue**

Service code	Criteria						
	Low provision	Low literacy	disadvantage	Hard to reach	Children under 5yrs	Blanket coverage	Not known
A					✓		
B						✓	
C			✓		✓		
D		✓	✓	✓	✓		
E		✓	✓	✓	✓		
F		✓	✓	✓			
G	✓		✓	✓	✓		
H	✓		✓	✓			
I	✓		✓	✓			
J			✓		✓		
K							✓
L			✓				
M							✓
N						✓	
O			✓		✓		

For instance, several CML services had begun in an area of deprivation, which then changed.

For instance the operator Laura commented that:

...some stops may not be in a disadvantaged area, but that is because they were put on the programme some time ago and have built up a good set of clientele, they are very busy, so it is hard to withdraw the service (Observation 19).

The operator Lillian deliberately included places that were not in areas of disadvantage so that the CML she operated was not a means of stigmatising a community.

Lillian is willing to adapt to whatever the climate is and to go where there is need and the desire for a children's mobile library. She also believes that only going to schools with a significant amount of disadvantaged children makes the visits of the library as a flag to show that they are not performing well. If the vehicle obviously visits high performing schools as well, the other schools will not feel stigmatised.

There is much to be said for operating a CML in all demographic areas, including those not at risk of social exclusion, because parental interest in reading is more important to a child's literacy development than their class or social deprivation (Durkin 1966). Although a family may be economically secure and be able to access many services, if the adults have no interest in reading, they will not stimulate the child's desire to read (Gibson and Levin 1975). There are numerous practical reasons why children and parents may not be able to access a static library, as outlined in section 3.5.4 (above) therefore a mobile facility that can reach them would provide a needed service.

It is also sometimes difficult to gain access to children through their school. The offer of a CML service to a school does not guarantee that the school will accept, for instance in interview (iii) Clarrie explained that some schools rejected the service "For no apparent reason" and Nathan (interview (ii)) said that the route for his service was developed by inviting all schools not near a static library "and the ones who replied were turned into a timetable". To reach those children, the service should be provided out of school time, such as with Service E. CMLs do attempt to reach the remote and many services are successful in that aim, but there are currently insufficient numbers of CMLs in the country, and insufficient resources to reach every child.

#### **4.3.3 Summary**

It can be concluded that there was no predominant ability group that visited CMLs in any one area of population. That is to say, that there were not all good readers in socio-economically thriving areas or all poor readers in areas of deprivation. In all areas of population, but not in all settings, children showed that they were either well experienced with the function of books, or had a reasonable working knowledge of books, with some who did not know how to handle a book at all. Many children recognised book characters and had knowledge of the concept of a story. The children observed came from all backgrounds and abilities.

It was apparent through the setting of location criteria that CMLs make an effort to serve children who would not normally access library services, the “new audiences” which CMLs aim to reach (see section 3.7.1.7 above). This study shows that where local authorities operate CMLs they do reach “hard to reach” children as well as children of any ability and it could be argued that, with sufficient CMLs, library services have the potential to reach every child in the UK.

## 4.4 Actions by operators

### 4.4.1 Process

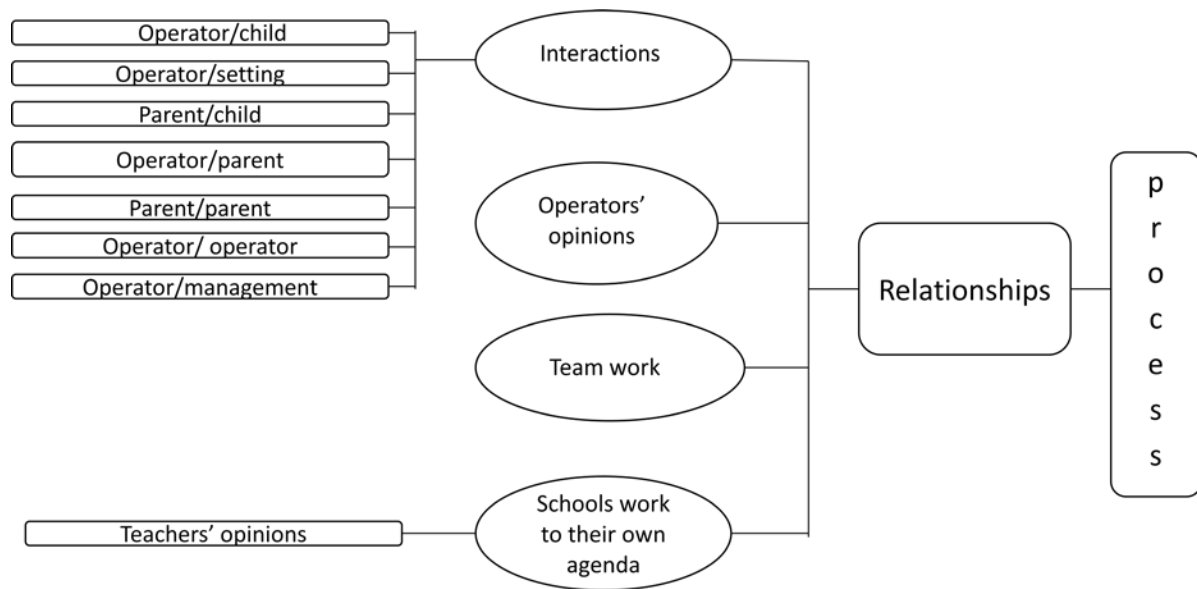
*A children's mobile library provides a learning environment where interaction between social actors promote reading skills.*

The above theory contains two themes: the learning environment and the relationships between the people who visit a CML. The construct of a learning environment will be analysed in detail in section 4.5, while this section focuses on the interactions between people, that is, the relationships that are formed as soon as children and adults enter a CML.

Figure 21 (below) charts the levels of codes that were initially derived from coding each interaction that was observed between all actors and then recorded in the field-notes. The data collected from each observation and interview was compared and found to form four areas which were subsequently sub-categorised in the following way:

- Interactions - the social exchanges between people who are on board a children's mobile library
- Operators' opinions - the reflections of the operators concerning their actions and their effect on children's learning
- Team work - the amalgamation of workers into teams that promote reading
- Schools working to their own agenda - the difficulties faced by co-operating with organisations who need to work to targets set within their own organisation

These four categories were clustered under the generalised category of “Relationships” because each area deals with the interlinked personal communications that affect the running of a CML service and the promotion of reading skills. It was found that the relationships between the participating adults and children were trusting, co-operative and supportive and were based upon reading and children's developmental activities.

**Figure 21: Coding hierarchy developing the theme of relationships**

#### 4.4.1.1 *The relationship between children and operators*

The majority of interactions noted were between CML operators and children, as children were numerically the largest group to visit CMLs. The pattern of interaction between operators and children that emerged from analysing the data is shown in Figure 22, (below). The relationship between children and operators can be expressed as a series of stages, each one leading to the next. The operators initially developed a rapport with children which set up a trusting relationship. The operators placed value on the children's literacy skills by praising and encouraging their reading. This led to children gaining a sense of achievement; a feeling which the operators shared as they observed their customers gain skills.

**Figure 22: Phases of interaction between CML operators and children**

#### 4.4.1.2 *Developing rapport*

The operators who participated sought to develop a bond with the children who used the CML by using several strategies: greeting the children, making introductions, conversing with individuals and using humour.

The majority of CML operators welcomed children and their carers onto the vehicle. Some



operators used the individual child's name others welcomed everyone as a group. Children under the age of five years were frequently helped up the steps onto the vehicle by operators, which provided them with the opportunity to individually welcome the child as in the example below:

...The first group of 7 children were welcomed by Harry, who stood in the doorway and told them to be careful of the steep steps, helping them on board (Observation 5).

Table 5 (below), shows that operators greeted children as they boarded the vehicle with the exception of the operators from Service D. The staffing rota of service D was erratic with no operator consistently assigned to the CML. This posed two difficulties: operators who did not necessarily want to work with children were scheduled to work on the CML, and the erratic timetabling meant that any one operator only spent an occasional day working there. Table 5 also shows that, on one occasion observed in that service, children were greeted by name. This was because the operators themselves recognised that the service needed a consistent approach and once a week a children's librarian accompanied the vehicle as it visited secure units and special schools. This situation will be discussed later in the section dealing with best practice (Section 5.2 below).

In contrast, it can be seen in Table 5 (below) that in observations 7 and 8 on service C, children were consistently greeted by name because the operators had served on that vehicle for 11 years, learnt the children's names and had known the older siblings of some of their customers. Similarly, observation 14 was conducted on a CML that provided a service on streets in large city estates during the early evening when children had returned home from school. The operators, who were regularly deployed for that route, were found to have built...

...up quite a rapport with the customers, they know them by name, know their friends and their siblings (Observation 4).

When groups were welcomed on to a CML and the children were seated in order to listen to a story, the sessions began with introductions to any new staff, visitors or children. For instance "Helen introduced me to the staff and the children" (observation 9). In service A, all the children were asked their names by the operator either before telling a story or before they left the vehicle. The importance of such personal introduction is that it demonstrated to the children that they are individuals who are valued. A two way relationship is invited by the operator offering information about themselves as well as requesting it from the children. Operators also have the opportunity to talk to children on a one to one basis while

**Table 5: Operator greetings to customers**

Service code	Observation number	Location	Child greeted by name	Child greeted individually	Children greeted as group	Children not greeted
A	1	Nursery "S"			✓	
	2	School "AF"			✓	
	3	Playgroup "W"			✓	
B	4	Playgroup "T"			✓	
		Summer play-scheme "L"			✓	
	5	Preschool "M"		✓		
		Preschool "T"	No children boarded, operator went into preschool			
		Preschool "E"		✓		
	6	School "M"	No children boarded			
		School "N"			✓	
		School "W"			✓	
C	7	Nursery "LO"	✓			
		Preschool "SR"	✓			
		Nursery "WC"	✓			
	8	Preschool "FV"	World book day, story in preschool			
		Preschool "LR"	✓			
		Preschool "SM"	World book day, story in preschool			
	9	Playschool "SS"			✓	
		Preschool "B"			✓	
D	10	Nursery "RBS"				✓
		Family centre "VP"		✓		
		School "PP"				✓
	11	School "WS"	✓			
		School "H"	✓			
		School "SK"	No children boarded			
	12	Family centre "GD"				✓
		Nursery "BH"				✓
		School "B"				✓
E	13	School "WB"			✓	
	14	City estates	✓	✓		
	15	Parent and toddlers "BM"	No customers boarded			
		Playgroup "SP"			✓	
		School "AA"			✓	
		School "M"			✓	
	16	Community event		✓		
F	17	School "RP"			✓	
G	18	Village "F"		✓		
		Children's centre "H"		✓		
I	19	Site "T"		✓		
		Site "F"		✓		
J	20	City play area	✓			
		School "CG"			✓	
		SureStart centre "A"			✓	

the children are browsing or whilst processing a book that is being loaned. The subject of the conversation is frequently about the book being borrowed but the topics of football (observation 19) and a community event (observation 11) were also heard. The operators gain knowledge and understanding of their customers' interests and tastes by way of these conversations.

Ofsted (2003) states that boys respond well to individual attention. For instance, Dan outlined in interview (v) that, when he realised that boys were reluctant to show that they wanted to read in front of their friends and were taking any book without thinking of its content, he started advising them on which books to read, recommending ones that he had read. As another example, Lillian was observed talking to each child about their choice of book:

They show the books to Lillian or their teacher, Lillian spends a lot of time with children examining the books and talking to them about their choices (Observation 17)

The concern with the development of boys' literacy indicated in the literature review (section 3.6 above) suggests that the informality and individual attention received in a CML is a method of encouraging boys to read. Cordial relationships between staff and children, with the use of humour to make learning fun also have a positive effect on boys' literacy (Ofsted 2003).

As might be expected, the manner in which humour was used varied according to the operator and the circumstances. In an example from observation 13, after the children had been seated ready for a story, Adam introduced himself and his colleague to everyone by appearing to inadvertently answer his own question and then praised a child for his perceptiveness:

"Hello, my name is Adam, and you will never guess what William's name is... what is William's name?" a boy replied "William". "Well done, in some schools they take ages to work that out" replied Adam (Observation 13).

Usha used pantomime audience participation to keep children interested in her story, asking them to point out the shark, but then deliberately looking in the opposite direction:

Usha played with the audience, asking where the shark was and when they said "There", looking around in the wrong place, or turning the book so that it could not be seen, she had them calling "It's behind you" (Observation 16)

Involving children in the stories by such methods demonstrates to them that stories found in books can be enjoyable and are fun. Dan explained a different approach (interview v). Dan works alone and does not read stories to groups of children. However, he tries to "Make the children feel welcome by joking with them".

Peat (2001) claims that humour has long been used by teachers as a tool for increasing learning, motivation and bonding; it can lead to increased awareness, facilitate a relaxed atmosphere, improve memory by dispelling fear, increase "group cohesion" and contribute to learning being "fun". Shatz (2006) adds to the list, an increase in students' interest and

motivation, a means of bridging a gap between student and instructor and a means of reducing student anxiety. Stambour (2006) also considers that “classroom comedy” can improve student performance by “reducing anxiety, boosting participation, and increasing students’ motivation” and that humour makes learning fun. Humour provokes an emotional response and acts as a “buffer” to relieve stress. Baughman (1974) considers that humour helps people cope with new concepts and difficult emotions, which is the reason that it is appropriately used by operators as a welcoming strategy to children who are new to a CML. Therefore, when Dan “jokes around”, Usha plays pantomime, and Adam makes deliberate verbal errors, they are forging a bond with the children, laying down a relaxed atmosphere and showing that a CML is a place to have fun.

Humour is a cognitive skill (Baughman 1974), that is, one has to be able to understand what the joke is, which means a child must reach a certain level of cognitive ability to appreciate the humour. Stambour (2006) warns that for humour to be effective, it must be “tuned to the audience’s knowledge”. To be effective the humour should be pitched at the right intellectual level for the child. Operators did not always judge the correct level of humour. For instance, Bill asked a group of mixed age children to spot the jokes in the story that he was reading to them (observation 4), however, they were puns and none of the children responded.

Baughman (1974) states that humour is not only allied to laughter. Baughman (1974) believes that the act of laughing is not only physically beneficial but also creates a social bond because it is a form of language. Laughter “relieves tensions” (Baughman 1974, p69) and was used in this way by certain operators. For example, Paul worked like a children’s entertainer, using humour throughout each visit observed and producing laughter during each story time. During observation 1, Paul produced a popup book about spiders and instead of opening it immediately he built tension by telling the children that he does not like the book, therefore he keeps it tied up so that the spiders do not escape:

He rattles it. “Can you hear them?” he asks. He opens the book and thrusts the popup into the children for two or three seconds, lots of laughter, and he does it again.

P- Well, it’s actually called- well it’s just called Spiders. It’s actually got Spiders inside it. Would you like to see it?

Children Yeah

P- I don’t like to get it out, really, ‘cos I’m quite scared of spiders, I am. (Indistinct sounds) I like to keep it tied up but they sometimes manage to undo it. They’ve undone it, look. Can you hear them

trying to get out? (Sound of book rattling)

Children Yeah, No (despairingly)

P- I don't like it. I'll put it away, shall I?

Children (indistinct sounds) Oh, then child screams, more screaming, laughing and giggling  
"Do it again", more screams, "and again".

P- Oh dear, I'll tie it up again, oh that was scary (Transcription, observation 1).

Laughter is an ancient play vocalisation, as explained by Winerman (2006b), and although now associated with humour, it originated as a means of communication. Whereas humour is "a more modern cognitive and linguistic development", laughter is used to show others that "we mean them no harm" and it contributes to cooperative behaviour, showing positive feelings towards someone and is therefore a "tool for social bonding" (Winerman 2006b). If that is so, then when Paul causes the children to laugh, he has made a link between the children and himself, made himself vulnerable and gained their good will. The laughter dispels the fear that he has induced by anticipation of the unpleasantness held within the book.

Laughter itself can decrease levels of stress hormones in humans (Stambour 2006) so, as the children laugh, they become more relaxed. Winerman (2006a) explains that the part of the human brain known as the amygdala becomes stimulated when someone finds something funny, and that area of the brain controls the "reward system". The brain's reward system is the "biological mechanism" that recognises pleasure in humans (Bozarth 1994). Therefore when CML operators use humour to develop a rapport with their customers, they are also supplying the children with a pleasurable experience that they will want to continue.

#### 4.4.1.3 *Building trust*

Most library authorities ensure that there is a consistent team or one CML operator allocated to each vehicle in order to build a trusting, professional relationship with the customers. In her 2002 Reith lecture, O'Neill defined trust as the reliance that others will act as they say they will and the acceptance of others that we will act as we say we will (O'Neill 2006). Graham, an operator who worked with young people in a secure unit, keenly felt the need for children to trust him, as shown in this example:

Graham also apologised because he had forgotten to bring the book the boy had asked for on the previous visit. He wanted Darren Shan's "Tunnels of Blood". Graham was profuse in his apology because he wants the children to trust him and for them to know that he will do what he says he will. He told the boy he would bring it next time (Observation 11).

A key aspect in the relationships between operators and children, once rapport is

established, is for operators to demonstrate that they will act as they say they will, which builds trust and shows integrity. Many of the operators who were interviewed expressed the opinion that they considered themselves trusted adults in the life of their customers. As Jast (1939) expresses, the relationship that library staff have with children is different from that of a teacher. Lillian strongly believed that children need encouragement and enthusiasm and someone who is “not their teacher or parent taking an interest in them” and Laura considered that part of her job was to be “another caring adult in the children’s lives”. Such mutual trust allows a child to attempt new tasks and strategies that pose the risk of possible failure (Moll and Whitmore 1998). This trusting relationship was seen when a boy entered a CML, unaccompanied by an adult, asked the operators “can I go up now?” He was asking their permission to move to a more difficult reading book as presumably he did at school. Both operators, William and Jenny, spent time with him, suggesting possible books:

There were no other customers, so William, who generally mingled with the children, and Jenny went to help him look at books, they discussed together what sort of book he might like, based on some of the books their children had read at his age. Jenny found a storybook and a “Star Wars” animation graphic novel. They showed the boy some books, letting him look at the inside for him to see if he could manage the text on his own. He looked and happily chose two (Observation 14).

In the area of education, the development of trust between adult and child leads on to a supportive relationship that gives the child sufficient reinforcement of their skills for them to feel valued (Moll and Whitmore 1998).

#### 4.4.1.4 *Showing value*

In each vehicle observed, operators treated children seriously with value and respect. Value is also a stimulus for a child’s motivation to learn. The value and status of a certain skill in the context of a child’s world is perceived by the child from the reaction of trusted adults. Should the adult place a low value on that skill, they will not communicate positively to the child when that child is attempting to acquire the skill. In consequence, the child will also consider that it is not worth learning that skill (Stone 1998). It follows that, when a child is attempting to develop their literacy and reading skills on a CML, the value placed on their attempt by an adult has a bearing on the worth a child invests in reading. As an illustration of that point, a child repeatedly interrupted Helen, the operator, as she read a story about a train to a group of children aged less than five years. As the train reaches “station number two” the child exclaims;

Child A I like number four  
Helen Ooh...  
Child A I like...  
Helen ...we're going under water  
Child A I like it  
Helen What a place to be, there is so much to do  
Child A (over Helen) I like it  
Carer Andrew!  
Helen and so much to see. Next, dive, deep as we can go and find all the treasure hidden down below. Can you see treasure?  
Children YEAH!  
Carer Sit still Austin  
Child A I like you  
Helen Oh, I like you too darling, Are we ready? The whistle's blowing  
All TOOT-TOOT  
Child B It's blowing bubbles in it  
Helen Yes the bubbles, it's going to blow bubbles, ready. Quick jump aboard  
(Transcription, observation 14)

Child A heard the phrase "number two" and, responding to what he heard, wanted to express his opinion that he liked the number four. Although Helen acknowledged his statement by saying "Ooh", he felt it necessary to persist. Helen dealt with his interruptions in a sensitive and calm manner using a cheerful tone of voice, and when he changed tack and told Helen that he liked her, she made the positive comment that she liked him also, and carried on with the story. A second child shouted out "it's blowing bubbles" when she spotted the picture of the train in the story book and Helen corroborates the statement. Each child was exercising a cognitive function, understanding language and visual stimulus, both important features in developing literacy and reading, so with Helen giving them positive reinforcement, the children could feel that their contribution was valued.

All operators who were observed talking to children praised and encouraged individual children's reading skills. It was noted that Bill praised children for reading books as they returned them (observation 4), whereas Lillian had devised simple activities, such as a bookmark with the question "What is your favourite character in this book?" to encourage children to reflect on their own skills. Dan reinforced a child's choice by giving them a positive opinion about any book they choose that he had already read. Harry was observed speaking to children under the age of five years about picture words and content of the book they had selected (observation 5). No operator made negative comments about a book

that a child showed them. However, not all operators talked about or looked at books with the children, as Table 6 indicates. It appeared that, on some vehicles when operators were paired, one partner became more involved with the children and their reading skills while the other partner carried out more administrative work, such as issuing books, or making tickets or talking to staff and did not share books with children. Only in one partnership did neither operator (Brian and Matthew) become involved with the children's reading on the vehicles for reasons that will be discussed in Section 5 (below).

**Table 6: Operators' book sharing with children**

	Shared books with children	Did not share books with children
Lone operator	Paul Helen	
Partnered operator	Bill Ted Harry Jill Liz Heather Graham William Adam Shula Jenny Usha Lillian Trudi Tess Lydia Laura Amy Brenda Tom	John Peggy Phil Alan Derek Corinne <b>Brian</b> <b>Matthew</b>

#### 4.4.1.5 *Noting achievement*

Moll and Whitmore (1998) state that when there is a trusting partnership between child and adult, the adult expects the child successfully to complete challenging tasks. When that occurs, both adult and child feel a sense of achievement. Operators believe that they can help increase a child's literacy because they directly observe their customers' reading habits change. Many operators emphatically expressed the opinion that they "know" that the CML has influenced children's literacy and reading habits because the operators have watched children develop searching and browsing skills, refine their taste for certain genres, and become acquainted over the years with works by favourite authors. Lillian explained that she now stocks teenage fiction on her CML, which children of the same age would not have



been capable of reading when the service started seven years previously. Dan also said that he has observed how his customers have changed their reading habits and Jenny talked about previous customers, children from city estates, who have since become university students.

The operators believed that they changed lives from their personal experience of children's skills and their relationship with the customers. It cannot be proved that the development of these children's literacy skills were entirely due to visiting a CML; as previously discussed there are many influences on children's education. Operators perceive that some of their customers have successfully completed the challenging task of being a reader and therefore feel a personal sense of achievement. In the eyes of the operators, visits to their CML have given children a chance to improve their prospects in life. The operators believe that they have fulfilled one of the aims of their services, "making a difference", as discussed in section 3.7.1.9 (above) and it is this positive feedback that ensures that the operators keep mentoring children.

Hannon's ORIM frame work (Hannon 1995) (Section 3.6 above) echoes the pattern of an operator's relationship with the children that visit CMLs. The visit to a CML gives a child an opportunity to learn. Operators recognise and show value in children's early achievements by encouraging and praising children's comments during story times. Children and operators interact in literacy situations and operators model literacy skills by allowing children to see them read. The research conducted by Pahl and Allen (2011) in a community library showed that the children felt supported by the library assistants and also thought that the library staff enabled literacy by support and by being role models.

#### 4.4.1.6 *The relationship between operators and other agencies*

The second largest number of interactions observed was between operators and the staff of the other agencies which CMLs visit. Generally, relationships between staff and CML operators were seen to be cordial, with some very close working relationships and others of a more distant nature, being observed even within the same authority. Developing a trust with other agencies and their understanding of the benefit to children seems to be crucial for the CML to access children. Debrowski (2006, p38) states that people who work together and want to share knowledge do so because they think that it is mutually beneficial, " they seek to gain social capital by developing long term relationships". Many operators were observed either nurturing or attempting to develop such a relationship.

For instance Lillian explained how she “makes friends” with teaching staff, school secretaries and school caretakers. She considered that collaboration with school staff is “vital”: secretaries are important allies because they allow her access to head teachers and caretakers provide access to the school grounds. The trust and sound understanding of each other’s methods between operators Jill and Liz and two of their regular preschools was demonstrated by jointly planned World Book Day activities (appendix 5). Each preschool needed to prepare three things: a space for the CML operators to sit and read a story inside the setting, to lay a trail with props for the children to be able to re-enact the story together with the operators and setting staff, and a private area where a CML service manager could change into “The Bookstart bear” (observation 8). The operators were therefore reliant on preschool staff to make the preparations, and the preschool staff were reliant on the operators and their manager to arrive on cue and lead the activities. The mutual benefit of the exercise was that both the CML operators and the preschool staff provided an event that allowed the children to experience a story in a way that would not have been possible without collaboration.

Staff who work with children under the age of five years appear to have a sound understanding of the educational value to a child of a visit to a CML. For instance, a teacher from the nursery class of school “CG” was observed writing in the CML customer comments book about the way that a CML helped the school achieve five of the six areas of Early Learning Goals for their pupils (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2008) and this prompted a conversation with the researcher:

The teacher had been writing a very long comment in the comments book, and got up to go to the back and talk to Amy. I went to join her because I need to say who I was and why I was there. I asked why do they bring the children on, and she said that they are an excellent service, and by bringing the children on board it fits in with so many things on the six aspects of under five strategy (Observation 20).

In the teacher’s opinion the CML and its operators provided an experience out of the nursery setting (Knowledge and understanding of the world), it aided social development and gave the children a sense of responsibility and value (Personal, social and emotional development) CML story-times provided opportunities for children to hear rhythm and words (Communication, language and literacy; Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy; Creative development). Such understanding of the mutual benefits of taking a class of children to visit a CML shows trust in the service.

The development of trust can be difficult when schools have external stresses with which to deal. It can be seen in Table 5 (page 121 above) that some places did not bring children to visit the vehicle on the day that observations took place. There were various reasons given for this. Of the two classes of school "M" that usually visit, one was not available due to taking a test, and the other had not brought their library cards to school with them. Peggy suggested that the children could use the school ticket to borrow books, but the offer was declined:

Peggy tells staff member that they could come and borrow books with the school ticket, but the staff member said that it was up to her, they would, but she is doing what she has been told. The Head wants the children to use their ticket only (Observation 6)

This indicates two issues. Schools are under pressure to formally assess their pupils and the head teacher in this instance was focused on the children taking individual responsibility for their library cards. The operators, however, recognised the value of visits to the CML by the children; Peggy commented that the school was wasting the resource offered to them; "Us being here and not being used." There appears to be some tension with the relationship of the head teacher with the CML service, because Bill had commented that the school "Runs hot and cold" by that he meant that sometimes the children arrive, and sometimes they do not, there was no trust between the head and the CML operators. Often schools do not realise that they can achieve many of their targets by thoughtful use of a CML.

In contrast, although the young people of a secure unit, School "SK" (Table 5 above) did not come onto the vehicle as scheduled for observation 11, the unit manager came to speak to the researcher to explain their absence. There were many meetings happening at the school, which involved both staff and individual students. The manager expressed her opinion of the positive benefit of the CML to the children. She considered that the children would not have access to a library in any other way and the books that were borrowed were read to the students by the staff of the unit and the students also read to the staff. This is an example of an establishment having to comply with a set structure of reviews for children's progress which sometimes interfere with other experiences that would be beneficial to the child. The onus is then on the CML operators and their managers to understand the pressures under which other agencies have to work and adapt the service accordingly.

#### 4.4.1.7 *Relationships between operators and parents*

Only four of the participating CMLs regularly encountered parents in their daily routine.

However, the operators who worked with parents showed consideration, warmth and understanding to those who visited the CML with their child. Operators encouraged the use of static libraries: Usha, for instance, was heard talking to families about their local library when the CML in observation 16 visited a community event. Operators supplied information to parents about other services; Tess was seen looking for information about a SureStart event for a parent during observation 18. Amy offered practical developmental advice to a parent about potty training (observation 20). Operators also engaged in friendly banter with parents; during observation 14 Jenny decided to learn to count to three in different languages, so enlisted the help of parents:

Jenny decided that she wanted to learn to count to three in as many languages as possible, so asked some mothers what their native language was. One woman taught Jenny to count to three in Hindi. She tried that out at another stop and another woman tried to teach her to count further.

They were all amused and laughed (Observation 14).

It is important to work with parents because they are the best people to enhance their children's literacy; they are role models for their children.

A recent study of children's reading role models conducted for the Literacy Trust concluded that children and young people believe that parents are "the prime figures who can inspire reading" (Clark et al. 2009, p7), with their mother being the most influential. Meek (1982) considers that the adult's attitude to the child's reading is a crucial factor when a child is starting to learn to read. She advises parents that reading should be a shared and relaxed activity. Other family activities as simple as one to one conversations prime the child's language development, which in turn helps the child to acquire reading skills (Gibson and Levin 1975). In her longitudinal studies of early readers in America, Durkin (1966) concluded that children who learnt to read at home with their parents prior to attending school continued to be ahead of their classmates who had not had that experience.

#### 4.4.1.8 *Peer relationships*

The relationships between peers, that is between parent and parent, operator and operator and child and child, were observed and found to be generally supportive. Parents offered suggestions to each other, children helped each other, and operators worked as a team. In observation 18, two mothers met on the CML for the first time, but one recommended a parenting book to the other who then took the advice and borrowed the book:

Mother 2 spotted a baby parenting book on the parent's shelves and picked it up and said "Oh that is a really good book. Do you have the next one? The one about toddlers?" She got into conversation with Mother 1 and explained how good the book was and what topics it covered.

Mother 1 looked at it and borrowed it herself (Observation 18)

The interaction between the parents was one of helpful and friendly advice. The CML enabled two people to make a connection and allowed the situation for one adult to give information to another.

The age group of children had a bearing on the amount of interaction between the children of that group. Children under the age of five years, who were observed, focused on their own activities, listening to a story or looking at a book on their own or with an adult. The following example of concentrated listening, is one of many times that the phrase "The children listened" was repeatedly written in the field-notes during numerous observations:

The children listened to the story intently answering Jill's questions (Observation 7).

In observation 10, the younger children chose a book to look at individually and did not share the books with their peers:

Their nursery nurse told them to look for things for their topic, which was animals and springtime.

They were very happy to pick up the books, sit on the benches and look through the books themselves (Observation 10).

In observation 5, however, the group of children under the age of five years appeared to prefer to take a book to an adult:

He took the book to show to the pre-school staff member. She was still busy looking for books.

Harry was bending down, looking through a Burglar Bill book with a boy. Harry pointed out Bill's mask covering his face and said that he was a "Bad man". A girl was looking at a book, to which she said aloud "This is a Louis book". That means it was about the character Louis. She was correct. She took it to show to Harry... (Observation 5)

However, children in groups over the age of five years were observed engaging in many interactions with each other, some were co-operative and some showed rivalry. Children were frequently seen helping each other look for specific books or authors. For instance, a girl wanted to find a "Famous Five" book that she had not yet read and a friend was helping her search:

One girl was gathering Famous Five books for her friend. The friend sorted through, saying "I've got that, I've got that, I haven't read that one" (Observation 4).

Children were seen discussing books as they showed them to each other:

They swarmed on and got stuck into choosing books, taking books off the shelf to examine, showing them to their friends and talking about them. These were aged between nine and ten (Observation 6).

On another CML children had sufficient time to sit and read books aloud to each other:

The children spend a lot of time talking to each other about the books, or helping each other search for books, or reading to each other (Observation 17).

Rivalry was not common, and the instances of competitiveness were between boys who wanted the same book as their friend, as in observation 4 when two boys were seen trying to wrench a book from each other. During observation 5, John explained that three of his young male customers reserved the same book to see who could read it first. Ofsted (2003) reports that boys' learning is stimulated by an element of competition. Overall children's peer relationships observed on CMLs were focused on books and supportive of reading, therefore reinforcing each other's desire to read.

The operator teams which were observed in the study demonstrated good working relationships with each other. Roles were clearly delineated, but often swapped; each person knew which task to undertake. Jill and Liz had worked together for so long that they swapped roles with ease, taking turns at reading stories, with no verbal communication (Observations 7 and 8). Harry and John kept up a constant, good natured, banter with each other about aspects of their jobs, including the value and need of child development training (Observation 5). Shula and Derek formed a double act, Shula reading stories and Derek providing special effects (Observation 15). Camaraderie is enhanced by team building events in some services, such as service I, where the mobile library operators go fell walking together. Others are comrades in adversity due to tensions with management. Altogether it could be said that operators interacted to the benefit of children and worked towards the same objective.

The interactions that were observed indicated various relationships. Specifically, operators work with children, building rapport and trust, showing the children that they are valued and believing in the joint achievement in enhancing their reading skills. Trust between operators and other agencies must be developed for the children to gain maximum benefit from visiting a CML. However, external pressures on other agencies sometimes make it difficult to build such a relationship. Peer relationships are mutually supportive and beneficial to reading and gaining a love of books.

#### 4.4.2 Specialist resource

*The highly specialist nature of its collections makes a CML a reliable source of literature and information.*

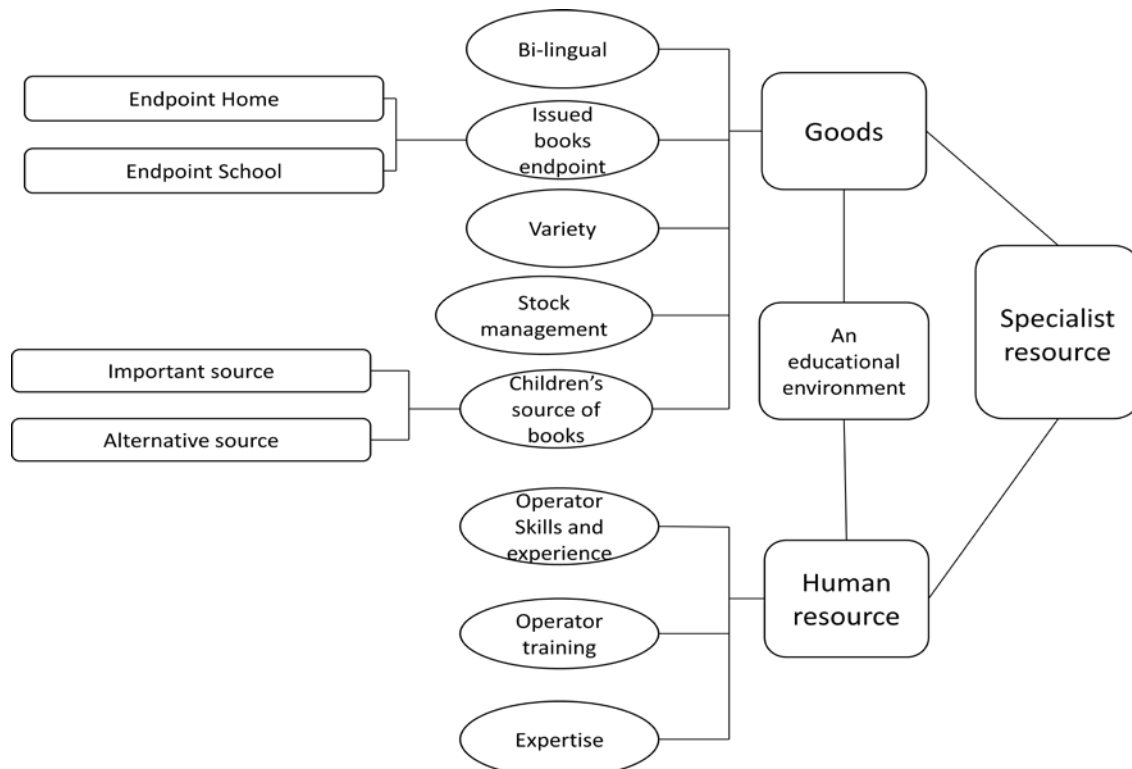
The theory presented above suggests that a CML is a source of expertise which is drawn upon by children, children's educators, and carers in order to enhance their own knowledge and skills and to support teaching and learning.

Figure 23 (below) depicts the strata of codes that were derived by selecting phrases recorded in the field-notes, describing either the stock of each CML, or the skills and abilities of the operators. The initial level of coding therefore formed two discrete clusters from the outset which then became the categories:

- Goods - the items that formed the stock of CMLs
- Human resource - the CML operators

The code "Educational resource" fitted both categories which led to the category "Goods" and the category "Human resource" becoming linked to form the theme of "Specialist resource".

**Figure 23: Coding hierarchy developing the theory of specialist resource**



It was found that CMLs are a concentrated source of varied literature for, and about, children and that people who work in a book rich environment gain expertise from experience, on the job training and continued exposure to the stock. Together, the stock and the operators are used by adults and children alike to further individual knowledge, which aids teaching and learning, and promotes reading.

#### **4.4.3 Goods**

The codes that made up the category of “goods” were devised from comments and observations about the stock found on CMLs and its journey into the community. The meanings of the codes are as follows;

- Stock management – the decisions made about which items to carry on a CML
- Variety – the extent of the collections found on CMLs
- Educational resource – the way that books from CMLs are used by adults
- Bilingual – books in other languages than English, or books in English and another language, which are carried by CMLs
- Children’s source of books - where children would obtain books if not from a CML
- Issued books endpoint - what happens to books after issue from a CML

##### *4.4.3.1 Stock management*

Table 7 (below) shows the distribution of types of stock that was found in the collections of the vehicles which hosted observations. It can be observed that all participating CMLs are mainly stocked with books with four vehicles also distributing audio books, one lent video tapes, and one lent book packs which included relevant toys. Five CMLs carried books for adults about childcare and teaching children.

Stock is commonly ordered by a middle manager or stock control team who sometimes take into consideration the recommendations of the operators. The process of ordering was observed at the office of service G after interview (ii) had taken place:

He took me to see the children’s team who happened to be doing a stock selection panel there and then. They choose so many books online from a children’s book wholesaler and go on quarterly book buying visits. They often take Nathan, the operator, with them (Interview (ii)).

This topic will be covered in more detail in section 5.3 which deals with best practice.



**Table 7: Types of stock noted on CML observations**

Service code	vehicle	Type of stock						
		Children's books	Parents collection	Teaching collection	Dual or other language books	Audio books	Video tapes	Toy packs
A	V1	✓			✓			
B	V2	✓			✓	✓		
	V3	✓		✓				
C	V4	✓	✓		✓	✓		
	V5	✓	✓					
D	V6	✓			✓	✓		
E	V7	✓				✓	✓	
	V8	✓						
F	V9	✓						
G	V10	✓	✓					
I	V11	✓						
J	V12	✓	✓					✓

Four of the CMLs which were observed held a selection of adult books concerned with parenting, childcare or teaching issues, and which were termed a “teacher collection” or a “parent collection” (see Table 7 above). A significant use of such a collection was witnessed during observation 8 when an early years worker asked for information on how to support a pre-school child, the mother of whom had recently died. This indicates the value of having such resources to hand:

She started talking about a child whose mother had died very unexpectedly on the last day of term. The staff member had been asked to help counsel the child and is being trained to do so as she does. She has been promised a qualification for doing it. Jill, the operator, instantly started telling her about some books that would help her do the counselling, and some that would help the child with the bereavement and how to deal with her emotions (Observation 8).

#### 4.4.3.2 *Variety*

The stock on a participating CMLs was considered wide ranging in genre, subject, ability level and style by children and adults. Teachers and early years workers stated in conversations during the observations that they cannot stock the variety or quality of the books available on CMLs in their own settings:

The playgroup staff said that they liked the library visiting because it gave the children a larger selection of books than the small collection they had (Observation 4).

The staff like the service because they consider that the children benefit from having a wider variety of books from which to choose (Observation 5).

Chambers (1991) states that children require a wide selection of books from a variety of

subjects or genres to be able to discover the ones they like. It was noted that, on CMLs, children are able to find the books they want to read, for instance in observation 6 a girl remarked that the CML was "...brilliant for me, because it has all the rainbow fairy books". During observation 17 a child emphasised that their CML "...has all the books I like. I like History books". A teacher considered that the range of books on the CML was superior to those in her local library:

She considered the service really important to enhance the children's experience of books because there was so much variety and so much to choose from, more than in her home static library (Observation 6).

Lyman (1977) believes that libraries "have a unique role in the maintenance of reading levels" because they provide access to reading materials that "have a variety of reading levels and meet diverse interests and needs" (p26). It was apparent during the observations that in most CMLs children's "diverse interests and needs" were being met.

The teacher of a class of children with advanced reading skills remarked that the CML which visited their school was "vital" because the selection of titles that the CML made available to her class was more extensive than those in the school library:

The children chose advanced reading, mainly fiction. The teacher commented that they were all good readers and come from backgrounds where parents buy them a lot of books. They were voracious readers and couldn't get enough books. There was not enough variety in the school library (Observation 6).

Krashen (2004) reports that children read more when a large number of books are available to them. Stock which has been become well known to children does not encourage children to read. If that is so, then, as a CML visits many places with a constant turnover of stock being withdrawn and returned, a considerable proportion of the books that children will see change each visit. A wide selection ensures that children do not become bored with the stock available on a CML and will therefore read more. To further stimulate children's reading one operator uses the technique of rearranging stock within her vehicle:

Lillian moves the stock around from time to time, to challenge the children's choices, if they are used to getting joke books from one corner, then suddenly there are poetry books there, they may think of getting that instead (Observation 17).

Conversations with children showed that they believed the range of stock was helpful for their knowledge and reading skills, for instance a boy holding a book about dinosaurs commented...

The library has helped me know more about things because of all the books it has (Observation 17).

...and a boy reflected on the way that borrowing books from the CML helped his reading by stimulating his curiosity:

I asked a boy if he thought that choosing books from the library vehicle helped his reading and he said yes, because if he read a book about information, he would read some of it, and then want to know more about the information so he would read it all (Observation 6).

The wide range of books available on CMLs can therefore be said to stimulate children's desire to read, which in turn increases their overall knowledge and aids their reading skills.

#### 4.4.3.3 *Educational resource*

It is not only children who benefit from the stock on a CML. Teachers and carers also use the stock to advance their own learning, such as to understand and find information, improve childcare skills, or for enjoyment. Table 8 (below) charts the books that were borrowed during the observations and then used for educational purposes, together with the reasons given for borrowing the books. It was noted that individual adults borrowed children's non-fiction books for three reasons: to increase their personal knowledge of a subject (in observations 6 and 20); for the children to consult as part of their current topic work (observations 5 and 6); or to use with the child to share an activity (observation 20). This means that adults are learning the content of children's books and are able to share the experience with the child.

The staff who were questioned commented that they used the stock on the CML because it was available and of good quality, for example, a nursery school teacher remarked during observation 20 that ...

...she could borrow books herself and sometimes did when she needed something special for a topic. She also emphasised the good quality stock and range of books, there was always something for everyone's taste (Observation 20).

Table 8 (below) also shows that teachers and carers sometimes use the books as a classroom resource for children to use at will. For example, the researcher was invited into a preschool to see the book corner where the CML books are located, in easy reach for any child at any time:

All the books are placed in a book corner, accessible to the children. Apparently children remember which ones they chose. They tell the staff "I chose that one" (Observation 5).

**Table 8: Books from CMLs used as educational resource**

code	Obs. No.	Location	Resource borrowed by adults	Reason given	Books kept at setting?	Reason given
A	1	Nursery "S"	Not applicable			
	2	School "AF"				
	3	Playgroup "W"				
B	4	Playgroup "T"	Summer reading challenge worksheets	Follow up work for summer reading challenge	×	
		Summer play-scheme "L"			some	Parents worried about losing books. Reading also a theme of the play-scheme
	5	Preschool "M"			✓	Issued to preschool, added to book corner
		Preschool "T"			✓	Issued to preschool
		Preschool "E"	Books about fruit and vegetables	To use with children during sessions	×	
	6	School "M"	No customers boarded			
		School "N"	Books about the history of toys. Book on science	For classroom display To aid lesson plans	some	Concern about return
		School "W"			✓	
C	7	Nursery "LO"	Story books	To be read aloud at story time	✓	Issued to school, added to book corner. Children take home books from school library
		Preschool "SR"			✓	Issued to preschool, added to "boost resources"
		Nursery "WC"	No books issued			
	8	Preschool "FV"			✓	Issued to preschool, added to book corner
		Preschool "LR"			✓	Issued to preschool, added to book corner
		Preschool "SM"	Books on counselling a child and bereavement	For staff member to counsel and help recently bereaved child	✓	Issued to preschool, added to book corner
	9	Playschool "SS"			✓	Issued to preschool. Children take home books from pre-school library
		Preschool "B"			✓	Issued to preschool
D	10	Nursery "RBS"			✓	Issued to preschool, used at story-times and browsed by children during sessions
		Family centre "VP"	"Popular culture" books	None in family centre library	Not known	
		School "PP"			Not known	
	11	School "WS"			Residential school	
		School "H"	Reading book	For pleasure	Residential school	
		School "SK"			Residential school	
	12	Family centre "GD"	Extra large books	For use with "Peep" group	Not known	
		Nursery "BH"			✓	Issued to preschool, added to book corner
		School "B"	No issues			
E	13	School "WB"	No issues, story-times only			
	14	City estates			×	
	15	Parent and toddlers "BM"	No customers			
		Playgroup "SP"			✓	Issued to preschool, used

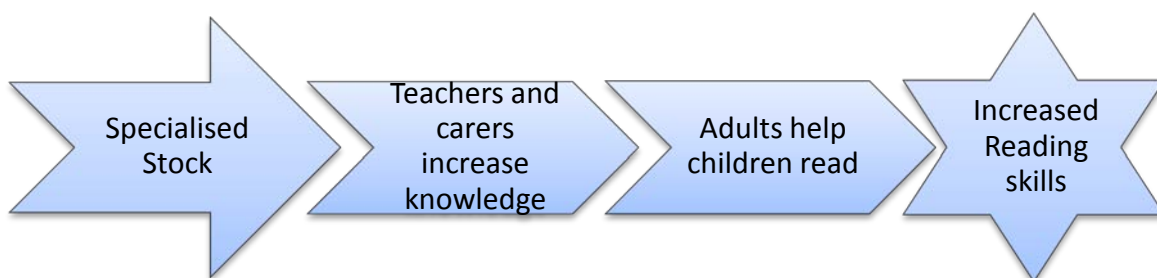
code	Obs. No.	Location	Resource borrowed by adults	Reason given	Books kept at setting?	Reason given
						extensively with children
		School "AA"			Not known	
		School "M"			✓	Issued to preschool
	16	Community event	No issues, story-times and craft activities only			
F	17	School "RP"			×	
G	18	Village "F"	Childcare books	To aid parenting	×	
		Children's centre "H"			×	
I	19	Site "T"			×	
		Site "F"			×	
J	20	City play area	Craft book	For activities with child	×	
		School "CG"	Topic book	To help with planning	Not known	
		SureStart centre "A"	No issues, story-time only			

During observation 15, early years workers emphasised that they used the books borrowed from the CML as a means of developing the child's awareness of story and literacy, by comparing the stories to an experience personal to the child and allowing the child to put their own words to the pictures:

They also used the books in playgroup quite a lot, looking at the pictures and discussing them with the children who often equated what they saw to things from their own experience, such as, Maisy is going shopping, and I went shopping with my mum, or I have dress like that. The children also use the pictures to make up their own stories (Observation 15).

Figure 24 (below) shows that the specialist stock on a CML is used by teachers to increase their own knowledge and augment their classroom resources. Encouragement by the staff for children to use the CML books develops the children's perception of books as a source of information and enjoyment, allows children to practice literacy skills, and demonstrates that reading and borrowing books are valued and valid activities. Such a demonstration of the importance and fun of books reinforces children's desire to read, which in turn, practises their skills, consequently improving their reading.

**Figure 24: CML stock supports the teaching and learning of reading skills**



#### 4.4.3.4 *Bilingual*

Certain CMLs operate in areas where a high percentage of the population speak a first language which is not English. Those CMLs are therefore stocked with dual language books to serve that portion of their customers, as previously seen in Table 7 above, and prove to be a useful resource for the people who work with those families such as the following family centre worker:

She also considers the dual language books that she can borrow from the bookbus a useful resource. They are getting increasing numbers of varying nationalities coming to the centre (Observation 10).

These dual language collections are usually greater and more varied than those in static libraries. One of the operators remarked that...

...the only books that are frequently lent to other libraries are the dual language books, because the bookbus has the greatest selection (Observation 7).

Dual language books allow children whose first language is not English to improve their reading skills in their own language, which then helps them transfer those skills to reading in English (Krashen 2004). Brock and Rankin (2008) explain that if a good standard of literacy is not achieved in the first language, a child becomes "Semilingual", that is, the child does not become proficient in either their first or second language. The provision of dual language books on CMLs therefore supports children in developing reading skills.

#### 4.4.3.5 *Issued books endpoint*

It can be noted from Table 8 (above) that many books from the CMLs observed do not make their way into children's houses. This is unfortunate, because parental interest in a child's reading has been shown to have the greatest influence on a child's literacy development (Bonci 2008). Nevertheless the books that were issued to children, pre-school settings or school classes during the observations and which were not sent home with the child, stayed in schools and playgroups to enrich the settings' collections:

I asked the setting staff if the books stay in the setting or go home with the children. I was told that the books borrowed from the bookbus stay in the setting to boost their resources. They like the bookbus visiting to give a greater selection of books than they can provide themselves (Observation 7)

It was made clear by educational staff that books borrowed from CML are used by the children:

The books were put on a shelf in the nursery, although the setting had books of its own, and were used during story-times and looked at by the children (Observation 10).

Therefore, although the CML books do not get into children's homes, they do get into

children's hands. When Neuman and Celano (2001) investigated the effectiveness of the "Books Aloud" scheme, putting books into pre-school settings in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania (section 3.6 above) they found that children's experience and understanding of books increased. This means that children will benefit from using CML books, if only in their early years setting.

Table 8 (above) also shows that in at least two early years' settings, although the CML books were not taken home, books from the settings are sent to children's homes:

The staff think that the book bus is a good extra resource. They say that anything to get the children handling books is beneficial. They have a well resourced school library and children are allowed to take books home from that (Observation 9)

It appears that the increased volume of books that a CML service makes available to children is beneficial to their reading skills, whether the children take the books into their homes, or use them in the school, pre-school or nursery. However, it is possible to increase the stock of such an establishment by providing a deposit collection and training to early years staff. The question of whether books supplied to an early years setting by a CML are a more effective tool to stimulate literacy than books supplied as a deposit collection, will be discussed further in section 4.5.9.3 (below).

#### 4.4.3.6 *Children's sources of books*

When questioned, many children remarked that the books they read come from sources other than the CML. Borrowing books from other libraries was commonplace, but schools and shops were also mentioned. Some children who regularly visited other libraries, either static or generic mobile libraries, considered that they preferred the CML as a source of books. A typical response to the question "If you did not get books from the CML, where would you get books?" was given in observation 17:

A lot of the children told me that if they did not get books from the CML they would get books from the local library. Many seem to do that, but they said the CML has a more appropriate selection of books. A few children said that they would buy books, and only one said that they would get books from school. They like the books bus because it is "colourful and has nice books in it" (Observation 17).

Children appear to have considered the expense of buying books as compared to the inexpense of borrowing them. One of the "voracious readers" from observation 6 stated that she could acquire more books by borrowing them from the CML:

Another girl commented that she liked the CML because she could get a lot of books, there were so many to choose from, and it was cheaper than buying books because they are so expensive (Observation 6).

During observation 19 a young girl who said that she “read a book a day” speculated that, if she did not borrow books from the CML she would buy them, she would need to “save up her money”. It can therefore be said that, for some children, although a CML is not their only source of books, it is an important source of books that supports their desire to read.

For other children who were observed, a CML is the only source of books. For instance, observation 11 took place in a CML that visits residential establishments where children cannot access normal library services and do not have parents who will purchase books for their children:

Some are resident, some are day pupils. They were brought on one at a time by Nora, the education support worker who has worked in partnership with Alan to nurture reading and reading skills. Nora told me that most of the boys come from places where books are not considered important (Observation 11).

Some children who do live with their parents also cannot access books from sources other than a CML, because of isolation from common services. Lydia spoke of a group of home-schooled children that her CML visits in the countryside:

A number of home schooled children use the CML as a resource for ordering books... ..Some of the older children bring their younger siblings, because they are in loco parentis. There is an age group of around 8 to 10 year olds for which they cannot cater, apart from ordering books. These are a group of children who would not otherwise get library facilities (Observation 18).

A CML, therefore, is an important service for such children.

#### **4.4.4 Human Resource**

The codes that formed the category of “Human Resource” were drawn from conversations with operators, and with teaching or early years staff, and observations of the interactions between the operators and their customers. The codes and their meanings are:

- Operator training – training that operators have had either prior to the current post, or as part of the training for the current post
- Operator skills and experience – the skills and experiences of operators prior to their current job
- Expertise – the level of knowledge that operators showed about books, reading, children, and the job in hand during the daily routine

##### *4.4.4.1 Operator training*

The operators who were observed and interviewed came from a wide variety of employment



and educational backgrounds. Only a few of them had completed formal training for working with children or librarianship. Table 9 (below) shows that, of the 33 operators who were asked about their previous training, six had been trained to work with children and four of those had had training to develop children's literacy.

**Table 9: Operators training before and after taking up post**

Operator (Pseudonyms)	Training or qualifications prior to post			In service training after appointment	
	working with children	literacy	library work	storytelling	other
Paul	None	None	✓	✓	None
Bill	None	None	None	✓	✓
Ted	None	None	None	✓	✓
Harry	None	None	None	None	None
John	None	None	None	None	None
Peggy	None	None	None	✓	None
Jill	None	None	None	None	None
Liz	✓	✓	None	None	None
Helen	✓	✓	None	None	None
Phil	None	None	None	None	None
Heather	None	None	None	None	None
Alan	None	None	✓	None	None
Graham	✓	None	None	None	None
Brian	None	None	None	None	None
Matthew	None	None	None	None	None
William	None	None	None	None	None
Adam	✓	None	None	None	None
Shula	None	None	None	✓	None
Derek	None	None	None	None	None
William	None	None	None	None	None
Jenny	None	None	None	None	None
Usha	None	None	None	✓	None
Lillian	None	None	None	None	None
Trudi	None	None	None	None	None
Tess	✓	✓	None	None	None
Lydia	✓	✓	None	None	None
Laura	None	None	None	None	None
Corinne	None	None	None	None	None
Amy	None	None	None	✓	None
Brenda	None	None	None	✓	None
Tom	None	None	None	✓	None
Nathan	None	None	None	None	None
Dan	None	None	None	None	None

Two operators were formally qualified in library work; the remainder had been expected to learn the skills as they worked. For instance, the operator Peggy explained the brief nature of the training she received to work on a CML:

Peggy told me that her training to be an operator was on-the job, she had one day in the office, then the next out at work on a mobile (Observation 6).

Similarly, the operator Nathan developed his library skills by having worked in libraries for many years:

Nathan related that he had no formal library or child training, but he has worked in libraries since he left school, many years ago. He has worked for a number of authorities, had driven a number of mobile libraries and learned on the job (Interview ii).

Nine operators in three different library authorities had been offered in-service training in story-telling skills, but the training had not been offered to operators who worked for other authorities. A conflict in the opinions of operators was noted; some felt that they needed training in telling stories, while others did not. An argument on the subject of story-telling training was observed between operators Harry and John. Harry wanted training, whereas John felt that his life experience was sufficient to read aloud to children:

Sometime later Harry and John had a spontaneous discussion about whether they needed any training for reading aloud and storytelling techniques. Harry said that they had had no training at all for working with young children. He would like to know more about their psychology and learn storytelling skills...

... John felt that his training as a Sunday school teacher and the experiences of reading aloud to his grandchildren fitted him to read on the mobile library and that professional storytelling technique was not necessary. Harry then analysed John's story session and said that the children were not all engaged with the story until the end when the poster was shown; Harry said that the children became animated when they could interact. They agreed to differ. The discussion was good natured (Observation 5).

In one authority an operator stated that he had rejected the offer of a storytelling course because he felt that telling stories did not suit his personal skills:

Both operators have not had any in service training about working with children, although Brian was offered story-telling training. He refused because he does not feel confident enough about doing story-telling; he feels that it is not his forte. He is happy to interact with children and wouldn't mind doing drawing activities with them (Observation 12).

The situation with Brian, shows that although courses are available, operators may choose to refuse them. The reasons for Brian's reluctance to tell stories will be discussed further in section 5. Overall, it was found that CML operators did not receive basic training with working with children, which is in contradiction to the recommendations of the report "Start with the Child" (CILIP 2002b). It could be argued, therefore, that the operators are not able to enhance literacy due to the lack of relevant training. However, it appears that their enthusiasm and personal skills are a more appropriate indicator of their competence than any formal training because of the skills, experience and expertise that operators displayed in the observations.

#### 4.4.4.2 *Operator skills and experience*

Most of the operators who were observed enjoyed working with children and showed enthusiasm for their job. The operator William gave his reasons for finding job satisfaction:

The bookbus is driven by a permanent driver, detailed to that vehicle alone. His name is William and he has been working on the vehicle for the past 7 years. He told me that he really enjoys the job and likes working with children. He prefers to be out on the road “doing the schools” rather than the office work (Observation 13).

William felt that his person skills suited a practical job and interaction with people rather than paperwork. The operators Bill and Ted expressed their feelings about their jobs in conversation during observation 4 as did Phil and Heather:

Both said that they enjoy the work very much, and both seemed positive about the importance of enhancing reading and literacy and of overcoming disadvantage (Observation 4).

Both commented that they enjoyed the job they were doing and thought they were doing something that improved the social aspect of some children’s lives. They said that they were not interested in the numbers of children who came on board; they thought that a difference could be made in small ways by being a stimulus for one child at a time (Observation 10).

Such altruism shown by the operators indicates their belief in the process of encouraging children to read. It appears, therefore, that personality and dedication to the purpose of a CML are desirable traits in a CML operator.

It was notable that, during separate conversations a number of different operators and CML service managers volunteered the same thoughts about the recruitment of people to work on CMLs. The opinion was often expressed, that prior training, experience, and qualifications were irrelevant to the recruitment process. People, who had appropriate skills to work on CMLs, were sorted out at the job interview stage. For example, a CML manager spoke about her staff selection process:

The manager said that in her opinion, picking the right people at the interview stage is the best way of getting “Good Material”. She considers that the success of her service is due to the quality of the staff (interview (i)).

An operator from a different service explained how it came about that he worked on a CML:

He told me that he had previously worked in a factory, and then drove a van. He has not had specific training for working with children or teaching literacy. He thinks that staff with the necessary skills are chosen during the interview process (Observation 13).

Similarly, three operators who work on the same team, talked about the diverse backgrounds from where they came, prior to their current operator posts:

They all commented that they were surprised when they got the posts because they had not had any experience of working with children or in libraries. They feel that they had been successful because of the skills that they showed in their interviews... Amy thinks that their manager is good at selecting the right person for the job (Observation 20).

Therefore, generally, CML operators are appointed because of their inherent qualities, not because of their training or qualifications. This finding accords with the recommendations of the report "Start with the Child" (CILIP 2002b), which states that new staff should demonstrate an interest in serving children and young people.

#### 4.4.4.3 *Operator expertise*

The expertise demonstrated by most of the operators who were observed included: knowledge of stock; understanding customer needs; ability at reading aloud; and, telling stories imaginatively. Many of the operators displayed enthusiasm as they talked to children and read aloud. The operators considered that they learned the skills of a CML operator through the experience of doing the job.

Operators who worked regularly or daily with the children and children's books on CMLs become knowledgeable about their stock through handling, shelving and reading the books and discussing them with children. Apart from vehicle V1, each vehicle on which observations took place was a lending library, so it was observed that a flow of books was checked in, replaced onto the shelves and other books were checked out by operators at each visit. For example, two operators were seen to be fully occupied with returning and issuing the books borrowed by children:

Meanwhile at the desk, all that operators Bill and Peggy were doing was returning, sorting, and issuing books (Observation 6).

The space in a CML is so small that books are routinely replaced into their allocated space as soon as possible:

Stock is shelved away swiftly at the end of each group, or even during the individual reading time (Observation 7).

Such constant handling and processing of books involves feeling the size and weight of the book, reading the book's title and author, knowing where to place it on the shelves, and seeing an image of its cover. The activation of all those senses plants information about the book into the operators' memory. Caine and Caine (1994), state that people learn and remember such daily experiences unconsciously, the resulting information being recalled when necessary.

For example, the operators Helen and Nathan showed their enthusiasm and knowledge of the books in their respective CMLs by selecting certain items from the vehicle bookshelves and talking about them to the researcher:

She was also enthusiastic about the stock; she kept showing me books and saying “Have you seen this one? This is good one, I like this one” (Observation 9).

He has a thorough knowledge of his stock. We later went onto the vehicle, and talked about many of the books together, which he took off the shelves to show me. He reads a lot of the stock, and he is very sensitive to new trends (Interview (ii)).

An operator can build up a picture of books’ content by talking to children about the books they have borrowed. For example, the operators Jenny (observation 14) and Trudi (observation 17), were both observed talking to children about the books they had chosen as they were borrowing them. The operator Dan commented that he asked the children about the books they have read as they are returned:

He said that he talks about the books with the children when they return them....

...The children discuss the books with him and he has often read the books himself to see what they are like (interview (vi)).

Operators generally showed that they knew which stock was the most popular with their customers. For instance, the operators William and Jenny showed their concern that the stock they carry does not reflect the tastes of their customers:

The operators said that they are a bit frustrated because the stock librarians don’t let them have certain books; the film and television tie-ins for instance. They are given books that don’t go out very well. The Beast Quest series, for instance, were very slow to move until they almost insisted that some children read them. They feel that the stock they have on board is too top heavy with teenage fiction. They think that there should be more non-fiction because it helps children with their homework and a lot of children like books about things (Observation 14).

When questioned about children’s preferred choices, most operators were able to answer swiftly, without consulting records; they knew that their customers liked “Jacqueline Wilson and Anthony Horowitz” (observation 5) or “horse books” at a rural location (observation 6) or “The Gruffalo, Shhh... and Bear Hunt” on an under fives CML (observation 7). The finding that CML operators are knowledgeable about children’s literature and the tastes of their customers, although they are not trained children’s librarians, is in contrast to the assumptions given in literature which emphasises the need for training and belief that only children’s librarians own the skills to understand what books children want (see section 3.5.1.2 above).

Operators of many CMLs were seen telling stories and reading aloud to children having built up knowledge of those books and developed their own techniques of storytelling. The operator Lillian described how she learnt her expertise:

Lillian learnt her library and storytelling skills by driving the vehicle for a pilot scheme that her library authority undertook before purchasing the current children's mobile library. Children's librarians went out with the pilot vehicle, to tell stories. Lillian watched what they did, saw that different people read the same story in different ways and realised that there is no "right" way of reading a story (Observation 17).

Lillian watched other people undertake the same task, storytelling, and synthesised the information to develop her own style and confidence. Bandura (1974) believes that "observational learning", watching other people's behaviour, is a means by which an individual can selectively learn new skills. Lillian therefore gained her expertise of reading stories by watching other people.

Other operators generally did not express their learning process in as much detail as Lillian. For example, Bill ascribed his competence to the length of time that he had worked on a CML:

Bill said that he had picked up his skills with children as he went along...

... Bill told me that he had been with the library service for 10 years, had initially driven school library service vehicles, which schools paid for. He then went to the under fives vehicles, and when the service was reorganized a year last May, he became a driver of any of the mobile libraries (Observation 4).

Bill had not reflected on the process that made him a competent CML operator.

It was noted during the observations that CML operators were generally regarded as experts in children's books by children, staff, and parents and in one case, the library authority. Operators demonstrated possessing the appropriate expertise to be able to recommend books to children. For instance, the operator Graham suggested a certain genre of book to an older child:

Graham suggested a graphic novel to the boy because the illustrations in them are so good that they could give him some inspiration for his own graffiti designs. Boy four took the suggestion and borrowed the book. He seemed pleased with the idea (Observation 11).

Similarly, the operator Dan explained that his reading of children's books helped him to recommend them to his customers:

After three years of recommending books to them and telling them about the books that he has read, basically, helping them to choose books, they now know what book or author they like and they look through all the books on the shelves to find them. They are now "properly looking". He is

now working on recommending books that are similar to their favourite themes and authors (Interview (vi)).

Teaching staff used the expertise of operators to suggest and find books on the theme of the school's planned topic. The books were used both as a classroom resource and as a learning tool for the teacher (section 4.4.3.3). The following examples from the field-notes also show the regard that those members of staff held for the operators:

It was clear at both settings that the CML operators and early years staff co-operate well and have a good working relationship. Staff consulted the operators for suggestions of books for the current topic which the operators then recommended, selected and supplied (Observation 7).

The teacher said that the staff were so helpful that she could borrow books herself and sometimes did when she needed something special for a topic...

...She would tell Amy, the driver, what the topic was, and the operators would find books for them describing the relationship as "a two way thing" (Observation 20).

The teachers recognised that, although they had chosen certain teaching themes, CML operators had a greater knowledge than the teachers of the books available to fit those themes. At a one authority, the operator was a qualified librarian and his skills were used and appreciated by a member of staff who was attempting to increase the literacy of the boys in her school:

The support worker praised Graham and his ability to recommend books for the children, his knowledge of the stock for instance. He had helped her set up a small library in the school, recommended some people to help her choose the books and suggested face-on shelving (Observation 11).

The operator in that library service also had a secondary role across the service to increase literacy.

On the vehicles that worked with parents, operators were consulted by the parents on all manner of topics. For instance the operator Usha advised a parent about the Bookstart scheme:

Usha talked to the mother about libraries, they visited a number in the city, and then the conversation passed to Bookstart and whether the little girl had her Bookstart books yet. It appeared that she hadn't. The conversation flowed between an Asian language and English, so I did not understand all the words, but the overall meaning was how to get the year two book bag (Observation 16).

A conversation between a grandparent and operator was overheard about the best way to potty-train the grandchild:

I later overheard her talking to the operator, Amy, (who is also a grandmother) discussing potty

training. Amy thinks that it is good that she is of the older generation, because it gives her a link with the grandparents who come on board and who look after their grandchildren during the day (Observation 20).

Amy considers that her expertise is sought and trusted by the older carers because she is of a similar age. Amy's manager values her storytelling expertise and that of her fellow CML operators because they train children's centre staff in the art of storytelling and model reading aloud to parents:

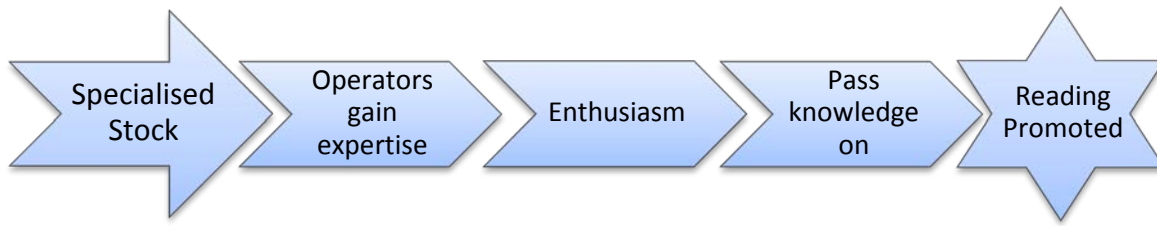
Much of their work involves modelling storytelling for parents, so that they can do it with their children at home. The team also train SureStart staff who have little confidence in storytelling (Observation 20).

Lyman (1977 p26) believes that libraries are able to increase literacy not only by providing access to a broad range of reading materials, but also by the knowledge that the library worker has "of their materials and their skills in selecting them and interpreting them for the teacher and the client or student". It can therefore be argued that children's mobile library operators increase literacy by their knowledge, selection, and interpretation of resources for children, teachers, and parents.

Handy (1999) suggests that individuals fit into roles defined for them by a specific job because of the expectations others have of people who fill such a role. The operators are perceived by children, carers and parents as having an expert knowledge of children's books and all matters surrounding them, therefore, the operators fill the role of someone who knows about children's books. In contrast to ideas expressed in the literature about children's librarianship, staff who work on CMLs understand the reading needs of their customers although they are not trained children's librarians. It appears that, despite few operators holding relevant formal qualifications, most operators learn the skills associated with the post of children's mobile library operator by doing the job itself and slip into the role of expert because they are expected to be such. Generally, operators are chosen for their post with the potential to acquire the knowledge and with the enthusiasm to promote reading and therefore enhance literacy.

Figure 25 (below) outlines the process by which operators who worked regularly or exclusively on a CML promoted reading by developing a thorough knowledge of their stock and children's literature. The operators learnt details about the stock from constant exposure to the goods on their vehicle, then passed that expert knowledge to children and adults. Their advice, coupled with their enthusiasm, helped to promote reading.



**Figure 25: Operator assimilation of expertise**

The guidelines discussed in section 3.5.1.2 (above) state that children's librarians should be enthusiastic, be in a position to evaluate user needs, be able to advise parents and have a good working knowledge of their stock. These are all attributes that also describe CML operators. Therefore, although they have not had extensive training, in general, CML operators function as children's librarians.

#### 4.4.5 Summary

CMLs are a valuable resource to educational settings, communities, and children because they are an important source of a broad selection of children's materials which include books in more than one language. The specialist nature of the stock means that CMLs are used by educational staff to support their teaching and enhance their children's learning. CML operators become experts in their stock and because of that expertise are able to help children with reading choices and aid parents and educators with advice and book selection.

### 4.5 Effect on the child

#### 4.5.1 Learning environment

*A children's mobile library provides a learning environment where interactions between social actors promote reading skills.*

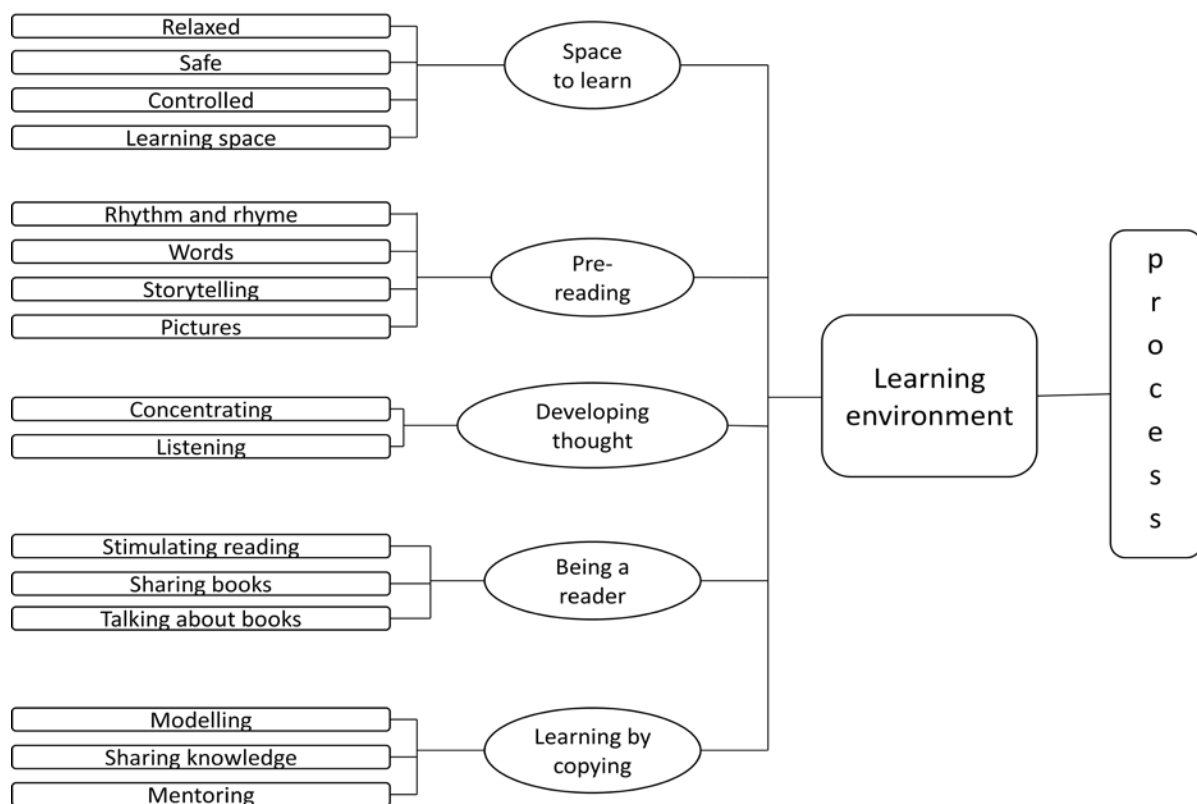
The above theory contains two themes: the interactions between people who visit a CML (section 4.4.1 above) and the environment of a CML. This section focuses on the learning environment that is found in a CML. Figure 26 (below) shows the grouping of initial codes that picked out all incidents that were observed, which contribute to a child's learning. Five sub-categories were developed, as follows:

- Space to learn
- Pre-reading
- Developing thought

- Being a reader
- Learning by copying

These sub-categories were then combined under the main category of “learning environment”, which became part of the theory of “process” because the development of a learning environment is dependent on the processes that happen within such a space. It was found that the space in and around a CML provided an environment where learning took place because a CML drew together factors that develop reading skills and gave individuals the opportunity to learn from each other and from expert readers.

**Figure 26: Hierarchy of codes leading to the category of learning environment**



#### 4.5.2 Space to learn

The study found that a CML becomes a learning environment because the space is managed in a way that facilitates learning. It was generally observed that the process of control over the space started before customers boarded the vehicles. Operators would ensure that the space inside a CML was ready for their visit. This could be the display of books and other items appropriate for the group which visited, such as Paul’s display of “Maisy” books ready for a pre-school:

The book display had changed again to reflect the age group of the children that were visiting (2 ½ to 3 ½ years old). The main shelves seen from the story seats had a selection of “Maisy books” (Observation 3).

Paul had chosen a “Maisy” book to use at story time, showing advanced thought and preparation. Operators also prepared craft activities for special events, such as a visit to a community festival. For example, William had photocopied a large quantity of animal faces, laid out a selection of clip-boards, crayons and pencils and prepared sticks, tape and scissors for children to make masks while his partner Usha had selected her story books and chalked up the times of storytelling on a board outside the CML:

Usha and William invited children to do some colouring or read a book. There was a large selection of colouring sheets and a pile of clip boards and pencils and crayons outside and inside. When the picture was coloured in, Usha, William, or the child, cut out the image and stuck a rolled up sheet of paper on the back to act as a stick (Observation 16).

The interior fixtures of certain CMLs could be moved around, and some operators changed the space in preparation of the group boarding the vehicle. Helen set out small mats on the floor (observation 9) and Liz rearranged stools so that children would be sitting where the operators wanted them (observation 7).

Control was exerted by the operators as soon as children entered the vehicle, by greeting children and telling them their next action. For example, Paul relaxed the children by greeting them as they entered the vehicle then playing a game. The door closed as if by “magic” when they said a certain rhyme (observation 1). Operators in each service which offered story-times, asked children to sit in a certain place:

When Jill was ready, she arranged the eight children where she wanted them (Observation 7).

William was at the head of the steps and as the children came on he told them where to sit “On their bottoms” (Observation 13).

When the first group came on board, Paul welcomed them and he and the staff concentrated on getting them seated... ..The children were seated along a long seat at the side of the bus. They could see the books on shelves in front of them and to the side (Observation 1).

The operators exercised control over children's actions by placing them in the seating position that the operator chose. In being instructed where to sit, the children were immediately given a cue of their expected behaviour and it was made clear to them that the operator was in charge. Each CML observed was tidied after each visit, leaving the space ready for the next set of customers.

The operators had a well adhered to and regular system of actions that children and staff followed when they visited. Table 10 (below), shows the pattern of activities seen during the observations. Each system of actions contains the same or similar elements performed in different orders, depending on the vehicle and on the situation.

**Table 10: Order of activities on CMLs observed**

Vehicle	Observations	Order of activity
A	1,2,3	Welcome, seat, introduction, interactive activity, story and song, concluding remarks, exit
B	4,6	Welcome, return books, browse, seat, story, borrow, exit
C	5	Welcome, return books, introduction, seat, story, browse, borrow, exit
D	7,8	Welcome, seat, introduction, story, one-to-one reading, return books, browse, borrow, exit
E	9	Welcome, seat, introduction, story, rhyme, browse, return books, borrow, exit
F	10,11,12	Enter, (Welcome), return books, browse, borrow, exit
G	13	Welcome, seat, introduction, story, rhyme, exit
G	15	Welcome, return books, browse, borrow, exit
G	16	Welcome, craft activity, browse, story, exit
H	14	Welcome, return books, seat, introduction, story, browse, borrow, seat, rhyme, exit
I	17	Welcome, return books, seat, introduction, browse, borrow, exit
J	18	Welcome, return books, browse, borrow, exit
K	19	Welcome, return books, browse, borrow, exit
L	20	Welcome, return books, story, rhymes, browse, borrow, exit

At a school or playgroup it was common for the group to enter the vehicle, be welcomed, have borrowed books collected, and be told where to sit for a story. The story was read, with some rhymes, and then children were allowed to choose books, exploring them by sitting on the floor, then borrowing the ones they want:

Bill explained that he usually let the children come on, settle down to looking at books and things, and then offer them a story (Observation 4)

There are some local variations on that theme, and not all services offer stories, however, each operator has a system known and understood by their visitors.

They did not have stories, but Lillian got them to sit or stand still first, while she told them about the latest competition she is running... ..The books are taken off the children as they come through the door, they select books, Lillian said they have two books, one had to be a story book, but I observed a flexible approach to the idea of story. They sit down on benches or on the floor to look at the books, either before or after having them checked out (Observation 17).

Parents or grandparents who are able to use a CML service also understand the routine of entering the vehicle, returning borrowed books, and taking time to look at books with the children before the newly chosen books are issued:

The boy's Nan gave his book bag to Amy to return the books while she went with him to select his new ones (Observation 20).

Lindgren (1967) states that, to manage a learning situation, setting a structure and a routine provides cues to learners to follow an appropriate action. Brophy (1988, p4) considers that set rules and procedures "simplify the complexities of life" because such structures "make events more predictable". Therefore, it can be argued that operators are controlling the environment in order to provide a predictable situation that enables children to focus on the activities offered to them.

The predictability of procedures allows operators to identify and respond to unforeseen circumstances which threaten the control of the environment. Operators who participated showed the ability to diffuse difficult situations when they arose. One example was seen at the end of a story about finding treasure, during observation 3, with a group of pre-school children, as Paul dealt with a child who grabbed too many chocolate coins:

There was a scrabbling round with each child finding one coin, apart from one who collected up a handful. Paul dealt with it by asking the child to give a coin to each of the adults. There were just enough for one for each adult and one left over for the child (Observation 3).

The potential for disruption was that other children with only one coin would get upset, or the child with too many would be unwilling to share with the children. Giving a coin to each adult allowed the child to demonstrate benevolence. Adult customers also attempted to cause a disruption, for instance, a parent, acting in a loud and aggressive manner, stated categorically that the family had lost a number of books during a house move, despite her children saying "but mum, they are at home":

The mother had gone to the counter and said that they had moved and couldn't find the books to bring back. Jenny told me afterwards that the children had said "But Mum, they are at home".

Jenny dealt with the situation by not returning aggression, appeared to take the parents word, and marked the books as "Lost" on the system, asking her to bring them back if they turned up (Observation 14).

By appearing to take the parent's word, rather than that of the children, Jenny diffused a possible confrontation and presented the mother with a solution: the books could be "found" and returned on another occasion.

Therefore, the research found that operators control space by advanced preparation of display and activities, by welcoming children and exerting authority over the space, by implementing and adhering to a system of procedures and by taking charge of difficult situations. Such a series of actions are the same techniques that teachers use to control

children's behaviour, in order to keep an environment safe, welcoming, and conducive to learning. Brophy (1988) instructs teachers in the methods of keeping order in a classroom so that children are given the physical and mental space of a learning environment. A restricted area which is used by numerous children within a time-limit must be controlled in order to support learning. The space should be prepared, house rules and procedures must be laid down, and the situation should be monitored to ensure children's engagement with the task in hand. Brophy (1988, p3) also recommends that "an appropriate student seating pattern" makes control over the situation easier. Brophy (1988) explains that experienced teachers are able to identify aspects of behaviour that are likely to lead to a disruptive situation and are then able to intervene effectively before the disruption happens. The study demonstrates that experienced operators also have that ability. Therefore a CML becomes an environment conducive to learning because operators show ownership of the space and control of situations.

It was found that children appeared generally to be at ease on board a CML. As the environment was controlled, they were able to relax. An extreme example of this was noted at a Saturday morning stop when a CML stopped close to the homes of a group of regular customers. The children were so relaxed and at ease with the operators that they visited the CML in their nightwear:

The older girls were wearing pyjama bottoms and one was wearing slippers. There was an easy friendliness between the girls and the operators (Observation 19).

Children and operators consider that the environment of a CML is informal, despite the regularity of procedures. This level of a perceived informality is only possible because children trust the operators, as noted in section 4.4.1.3 (above) and feel safe, knowing that the operators can keep the environment free from incidents which would be stressful. William attributed the informality of his CML to its success in inspiring children to read.

I asked William about the aims of their service and how they measured its success. He replied that the informality of the vehicle was its strength, that for some children the formal approach of learning to read in school does not work. In his opinion, the informality of the bookbus means that some children can "engage" with reading (Observation 14).

Faragher (2009) states that putting children at their ease enables learning. Therefore the children who are at their ease in the informal situation of a CML are in a psychological state that is open to learning and thereby enhancing their literacy. Children need to be relaxed in order to learn to read so that the relevant part of their brain functions. Caine and Caine (1991) explain that when the brain feels it is under threat it ceases to use its flexible

memory system, known as “locale memory” and uses only the “taxon memory” where well established behaviour patterns are stored. That is, a brain under stress does not absorb information. Novice readers are faced with new vocabulary and grammatical structure which they must learn to interpret. For example, Krashen (2004, p30) explains that, when people trying to learn a language are put under stress, an “affective filter” screens the information and it “may be understood, but it will not reach those parts of the brain that are responsible for language acquisition”.

In an educational sense, when a child becomes anxious, their brain becomes inflexible and reverts to previously learned behaviours finding it difficult to absorb new information (Caine and Caine 1991). The children observed showed that they were relaxed on a CML by confidently boarding the vehicles, knowing the routine and by using the space without being self-conscious as in this incident:

I spotted a small girl quietly sitting in the corner, turning the pages of a board book and making up a story to herself. It had a plastic squeaker in the pages, and she squeaked it with her finger, and then squeaked it with her nose (Observation 5).

Caine and Caine (1991) use the phrase “safe risk taking” to mean the state in which a child feels sufficiently at ease to experiment with learning new skills and to convey their definition of relaxation:

*To maximise learning, we need to establish an environment that allows for safe risk taking. In essence, we need to eliminate pervasive or continuous threat. That sense of safety that welcomes appropriate risks is one part of what we mean by relaxation (Caine and Caine 1991, p131)*

The girl who squeaked the book with her nose was not only unselfconsciously experimenting with the physical attributes of the book, she was also experimenting with the concept of reading, turning the pages and telling a story of her own making.

A CML is perceived by operators as a place free from certain risks that a child may face during their educational life. On a CML children do not have to pass exams, reach a certain level, or have their abilities judged in any way. During observation 11 the operator, Adam, expressed the thought that “The BookBus is a space where children can feel safe from the stresses of other people’s expectations”. Baechtald and McKinney (1983) believe that a library is a place where a child is safe from failure. It was noted during several observations that some children borrowed books of a lower reading level or of a subject not appearing to be at the same expected level of a child’s chronological age. For example, two older boys

selected young picture books:

At the last stop two boys came on with their older brother. He is 16 years and they are 11 and 12 years. The bookbus stops in their street and they have been customers for about four years. They think that it has really helped them with their reading skills... ..The youngest one reads the book with his father. I asked them what they had chosen and they showed me some picture books (Observation14).

The operators explained that both boys have reading difficulties. It appears that, to those boys, the CML is a place where they can safely borrow books that they are able to read without the fear of being stigmatised.

As discussed previously, boys' educational achievement is a topic of concern to many educators. It is reported that their achievement is below that of girls at entry to secondary school, particularly in the subject of English (Ofsted 2003). The study found that the environment of a CML provides the elements that make a learning space to which boys respond well. It has already been noted in section 4.4.1.1 (above) that a cordial relationship with operators, friendly but supportive rivalry with peers and the attraction of humour are factors that help boys learn. The report "Boys' achievement in secondary schools" includes the following recommendation:

*Boys often respond better to lessons that have a clear structure and a variety of activities, including practical and activity-based learning, applications to real-life situations, and an element of fun and competition. (Ofsted 2003, p4).*

It has already been established that activities on a CML follow a clear structure (Table 10 above) and a visit to a CML is a practical real-life situation. "Well managed behaviour" was also identified by Ofsted (2003) as a factor in creating the general atmosphere of a "positive learning environment" which can increase boys' achievement and it has been noted that operators take control of behaviour on a CML. It can therefore be concluded that CMLs match the criteria that have been identified for stimulating boys' literacy and therefore be a means of changing the gender differences in reading discussed in section 3.4.3 (above).

The environment inside a CML does not change as the vehicle moves from place to place, although the activities inside may vary and the outside environment may change considerably. The contrast between the inside and outside of the CML was highlighted during observation 16, which was conducted at an inner-city community event. The "inside" of the vehicle, on that occasion, encroached on the outside:



The festival is a community event in the centre of the city... ...The book bus was parked up when I found it. The awning was out at the side, and under it was laid four large storytelling mats that had colourful images of elephants or rockets; designs aimed for children. Two of the mats were draped over boxes to form seats. There were four crates of picture books laid outside. There was a display about the summer reading challenge and a sign giving times that stories would be read (Observation 16).

The event was notable because people boarded the CML to achieve something that could not be carried out at any other space at that event; they sat, thought and read quietly in a book and word filled environment. The CML attended the event over a weekend, which allowed parents to take part in activities with their children. For instance, a young boy and his father took the opportunity to look at a picture book together:

A father sat inside with his three year old son sitting snuggled next to him. He was reading a picture book to the boy; the boy sat and looked at the pictures as his father read (Observation 16).

The operators offered other activities, such as word-search and colouring work sheets, which also encouraged many children to spend time concentrating quietly:

Everywhere there seemed to be children colouring, inside and out, children looking at books, mothers lying down on the rugs in the sunshine, and at one point a family picnicking on a corner of the rug. Their children had been on the vehicle for some time, colouring (Observation 16).

The CML in that instance was being used as a place of rest and calm as a contrast to the noisy, busy stalls at the rest of the event. The same effect was noticed by an operator of a geographically different CML at the events he attended in his part of the UK. Alan remarked that he liked to keep the inside of his CML “uncluttered” during community events because children come onto the CML to “sit at the back reading”. He stated that he considers it:

...important for them to have a space where they can sit in peace and quiet. There are few spaces left for children these days where they can choose what they want to do (Observation 11).

It appears, therefore, that CMLs are considered to be safe havens by operators, children and parents, where reading is socially acceptable, and as an area where adults and children can spend time participating in reading activities without distraction from events that occur outside the vehicle.

#### **4.5.3 Pre-reading**

The activities that took place when early years and primary age children visited the CMLs in the study were those that are believed to aid the acquisition and development of reading for pleasure (section 3.7.1.8) and visual literacy. The experience on a CML allowed children the opportunity to hear words and nursery rhymes different from those heard in their home, early years setting, or classroom and listen to new stories and investigate illustrations. Such

experience is considered to increase a child's vocabulary, and to develop their cognitive, narrative and sequencing skills and their phonemic awareness.

#### 4.5.3.1 *Rhymes*

The singing or saying of rhymes and the emphasis of rhythmic phrases was observed to occur only on CMLs that specialised in serving children under the age of five years, which equated to half the total number of vehicles observed. The term "rhyme" is used in this study to denote either a traditional or modern nursery rhyme, or a poem, or a story written with meter and rhythm, rather than rhyming words. The operators used rhymes that were familiar to children, encouraging them to join in and taught new rhymes. For example, Brenda first performed a traditional rhyme with a class and then sang one that she had previously taught them, which their teachers did not know:

She asked who would like to choose a rhyme, a girl chose "Baa Baa black sheep". They then sang one about a frog that I don't know which involves the frog squeezing his eyes tight, sticking out his tongue and going "grrrr", with actions. The children know this well and sang it and did all the actions (Observation 20).

Paul composed new rhymes to teach the children who visited his CML:

He says he knows a rhyme about spiders, and some children shout out "Incey Wincey". He reads a poem that he has written which then flows into Incey Wincey, which he recites, not sings, while doing the actions. Everyone joins in (Observation 1).

Listening to rhymes is important for young children in order to develop their ability to differentiate component sounds in speech (Gibson and Levin 1975). Brock and Rankin (2008) consider that singing and rhymes are a valuable method of teaching sounds and syllables because language is split into its component parts as a rhyme is sung or said.

Combining the rhythm of rhymes with actions, as did Brenda and Paul in the examples discussed above, allows a child to become fully involved with the activity and physically experience the rhythm of language. While Helen read the chorus of a story while emphasising the rhythm, she asked the children to stamp out the rhythm:

She read a book about a train ride, but getting the children to stamp their feet in rhythm to the words, as if it is a train running along the tracks (Observation 9).

On another CML a child loudly kicked his seat to the rhythm of the words in a rhyme:

Alison        What noise does the grass make? Swishy swashy, [bump] swishy swashy [bump] swishy swashy [bump]. (Transcription, observation 20).

Unfortunately his teacher just thought he was noisy and did not identify that he was bumping rhythmically to punctuate the sounds he heard:

Teacher No, not banging, stop banging Luke [indistinct sounds]

(Transcription, observation 20).

The children were able to participate and gain understanding of the underlying pattern of sound, although they did not previously know the rhyme, or understand all the words.

The rhythm of rhymes teaches children the cadence of speech, and the meaning of the words is irrelevant. It is by experimentation with sound patterns that children learn to emphasise syllables in the correct way for their mother tongue (Meek 1982). Meek (1991, p47) describes the state of “metalinguistic awareness” as “the feeling of the words in the mouth” and states that it is developed by children before learning to read as they play sound games with words. Children need to understand that sounds create words and words create language, but that only some words form a specific language. Such word and sound play was noted as a brother and sister played with the sound of the words “decking” and “pub”:

Corrine said that they had been talking about the world cup, and grandmother asked the children where they would watch it, on the decking or in the pub, the two children then alternated saying “decking” “pub” “decking” “pub” “decking” “pub”, in a singing, amused way (Observation 19).

It could be argued that the above example is a poor indicator of the work of a CML as the brother and sister did not need to be on a CML as they played with the words. However, the conversation had been instigated by the operator (Corinne) and the children were freely allowed to experiment with the words.

#### 4.5.3.2 *Vocabulary*

Children were given the opportunity to experiment on a CML through saying new words and as they learn new rhymes and join in stories. The transcription of a story telling session illustrates the manner in which a group of children between the ages of four and five years tentatively join in chanting a rhyme:

Child1	Arghh [indistinct sounds]
Brenda	WHAT a beautiful day
Both	We're not scared
Brenda	Oh a river, a deep cold river
Child 1	[starts speaking, words indistinct]
Teacher	Shhshhhhhh
Brenda	We can't go over it, we can't go under it.
Teacher	Anthony
Brenda	Oh! No! We've got to go through it! Splash Splush, Splash Splush, Splash Splush.
Teacher	Jansen
Brenda	We're...
All	Going on a bear hunt. We're going to catch a big one. WHAT a beautiful day.

	We're not scared.
Brenda	OH Mud, thick oozy mud, we can't go over it, we can't go under it [sing-song]
Brenda and child1	Oh no we've got to go through it.
Brenda	What noise does the mud make? Squelch, squerch, squelch
Both	squerch, squelch squerch
Brenda	We're going on a bear hunt, we're going to catch a big one. What a beautiful day
Child 2	day
Brenda	We're not scared, oh! Oh! What this now? A Forest!
Child	[giggling]
Brenda	A big dark forest
Child	[giggling]
Brenda	we can't go
Both	over it, we can't go under it, oh we've got to go through it
Brenda	Stumble trip, Stumble trip [singing the words]
Both	Stumble trip, stumble trip
Brenda	We're going on a bear hunt
Child 2	hunt (Observation 20)

The transcription starts at the end of the second repeat of the chorus as one child joined in for the first time, with the phrase "We're not scared". The children all joined in the third repeat of the chorus, but only the single child attempted to say the onomatopoeic "nonsense" words that described the sounds of squelching through mud and the phrase "Stumble trip". A second child also tried to join in, but only managed to repeat the last word of each sentence, "day" and "hunt". They listened carefully and then experimented with the sounds.

From attempting to join in that rhyme, the children may have experienced new words such as "Stumble". The words "Splush" and "Squerch" are abstract, describing a sound, and without the context of the rest of the sentence, including the words "Splash" and "Squelch" which they may have known, the children would not have readily comprehended the words. Meek (1991) relates that uncommon words or those that have abstract meanings, are learnt by children through hearing them read aloud from children's literature, rather than through daily speech. Children with developing speech only talk about the things that they know exist (Gibson and Levin 1975).

In many of the observations, operators explained what unusual words meant, or checked with children that they understood the meaning of the words. For instance, Paul, in telling a traditional Aboriginal tale, explored the children's knowledge and explained a number of words that they did not know:

At this point Paul asked the children "What do Kangaroos have on their front?" and one child replied that he couldn't remember what it was called, but it was what they carried babies in. Paul

asked “Who knows what a baby kangaroo is called?” One child thought it was a wallaby. Paul explained that a wallaby is a small type of kangaroo and a kangaroo baby was called a joey, he didn’t know what a baby wallaby was called. Another child replied that what kangaroos have on their front is like a purse, and Paul said, “It is like a purse, it’s called a pouch”. Then he went back to telling the story, “Kanga produce a boomerang from his pouch”. Paul asked the children if they knew what a boomerang was, and they all did (Observation 2).

Although Paul broke off from the main telling of the story, he entered into a valuable discussion with the children, accepting their attempts to find the right word, “purse” for “pouch” and “wallaby” for “joey”. Paul showed the children that he understood their replies, but extended their vocabulary by giving the correct words. When Paul resumed telling the story, he checked that they all understood the meaning of “boomerang” before carrying on.

A second example was transcribed as Jill improvised a story to the illustrations of a large picture book.

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| Children | stripy, stripes   |
| Jill     | That’s right; he could choose a stripy one. He’s just having a little go with one with stars [indistinct]. And then he sees on the shelf some of these and he thinks they’d be good fun! Clockwork..., Oh, LOTS of clockwork mice. Clockwork means that you’ve got a little key, you wind it up, really tight, you put it on the floor, and then it runs off on its own!!! [Indistinct]That would be a good present! Then he sees a box on the shelf [slow] and inside is...? |
| Child    | A drum. (Observation 7)   |

In that example, Jill assumes that children will not have encountered an old fashioned clockwork mouse, explains the word and conveys the fun of playing with such a toy. (Krashen 2004) argues that children’s vocabulary increases by listening to stories and rhymes that are read aloud and which contain unfamiliar words. Children need to hear new words spoken in context to be able to increase their vocabulary and understand the written word when they are faced with the task of de-coding text (Goodman 1968). As someone reads, their eyes scan ahead, to predict the next word, based on their current knowledge. A child cannot “guess” correctly if the text they are attempting to decode includes many words that they do not know (Goodman 1968). It follows that, by hearing a greater variety of stories, children’s vocabulary must increase further (Foy and Mann 2003). Encountering new words in the stories read on CMLs, coupled with the explanations given by operators and the context of the story therefore increases a child’s vocabulary.

#### 4.5.3.3 *Stories*

Stories were not told on every CML, or even at every venue, however, the reading or telling

of stories to groups of children was an activity that occurred on participating CMLs. Table 11 (below) shows that stories were read aloud or told by operators in the majority of services to children in schools and early years settings.

**Table 11: Instances of storytelling or story reading observed on CMLs**

Service code	Observation number	Location	Age-groups (in years)	Story read or told (each incident denoted by "✓")
A	1	Nursery "S"	3-4	✓ ✓
	2	School "AF"	3-4, 4-5, 5-6, 6-7	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
	3	Playgroup "W"	2-4	✓ ✓
B	4	Playgroup "T"	Mixed	✓
		Summer play-scheme "L"	Mixed	✓
	5	Preschool "M"	3-4	✓ ✓
		Preschool "T"		
		Preschool "E"	3-4	✓
	6	School "M"		No customers
		School "N"	5-6	x
		School "W"	mixed	x
C	7	Nursery "LO"	3-4	✓ ✓
		Preschool "SR"	3-4	✓ ✓
		Nursery "WC"	2-3, 3-4	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
	8	Preschool "FV"	3-4	✓
		Preschool "LR"	3-4	✓ ✓
		Preschool "SM"	3-4	✓
	9	Playschool "SS"	3-4	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
		Preschool "B"	3-4	✓ ✓
D	10	Nursery "RBS"	3-4	x
		Family centre "VP"	2+	x
		School "PP"	11+	x
	11	School "WS"	11+	x
		School "H"	11+	x
		School "SK"	11+	x
	12	Family centre "GD"	2+	x
		Nursery "BH"	3-4	x
		School "B"	5-6	x
E	13	School "WB"	5+	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
	14	City estates	mixed	x
	15	Parent and toddlers "BM"		No customers
		Playgroup "SP"	3-4	✓
		School "AA"	3-4	✓
		School "M"	2-3, 3-4	✓ ✓
	16	Community event	mixed	✓ ✓
F	17	School "RP"	9-10	x
G	18	Village "F"	0-4	✓
		Children's centre "H"	1-4	✓
I	19	Site "T"	mixed	x
		Site "F"	mixed	x
J	20	City play area	3-4	✓
		School "CG"	3-4	✓
		SureStart centre "A"	2-3, 3-4	✓

It can be seen in Table 11 (above) that, in some venues, the operator told or read stories a number of times. The frequency of stories told depended on the number of groups that

visited the CML at that stop and the duration of the visit by the CML. The rationale of reading or telling stories to children in all public libraries, including CMLs, is to enhance children's literacy and show that it is fun (MacLean 2008).

When operators read stories from books, or used a book as a "prop" for a story, they held up the books in such a way that the children could see the book clearly. For instance, in observation 13, Adam at first attracted the children's attention by holding the open book vertically above his head:

He held the book above his head and without looking at the pictures pointed to main characters in turn. "This is a story about Mr Pod and Mr Piccalilli" (Observation 13)

After reading the first few pages, Adam lowered the book to a position beneath his head. The most common position that operators used was holding the book open in one hand, with the pages facing the children, at around chest level, as shown in Figure 27 (below). Such a position allows the operator to draw the children's attention to words and pictures and turn the pages of the books with ease thereby modelling the functions of a book as Bill did during observation 4:

He read clearly and fairly expressively holding the book with one hand so that the children could see the pictures and follow the words (Observation 4).

**Figure 27: Operator reading a story**



Fleet (1973) recommends that picture books are held to face children so that they are able to follow the story by looking at the pictures.

Watching a story being read aloud conveys to a child that the book is a carrier of a message,

that the symbols inside can be interpreted into sounds and that there is a system to the way the symbols are laid out. That is, books have fronts and backs and pages have to be turned in sequence. MacLean (2008) states that stories develop print motivation (the fun of reading) print awareness (recognition of print) and understanding how a book works. The children's active involvement in turning pages or lifting flaps on the pages was sometimes sought:

He then took the book to the seated children for them to open flaps on consequent pages...  
(Observation 3)

She read a lift the flap version of "Where is Spot" and asked a child in turn (remembering their names) to open the flap (Observation 7)

Hearing a story read aloud exposes a child to the various ways in which words may be spoken; with differing intonation and velocity (Jackson 2007). It was noted during observation 7 that Liz changed the tone and pace of her voice while reading a repeated phrase to convey the emotions of the young owls in the story:

Liz read with a good modulation of her voice and changes in tone and pace. Little owl's cry of "I want my mummy" became increasingly distressed (Observation 7).

Moyle (1972) believes that an expressive and dramatic use of the voice in storytelling gives children a better understanding of the words they hear. Educators realise the importance of vocal expression in language acquisition because The National Curriculum<sup>19</sup> requires that children are taught how speech varies (QCDA 2011). Exposing children to the variety of tone, pitch and intonation used by CML operators when telling stories not only complies with a national curriculum requirement, but increases children's opportunity to understand variance of speech because an operator speaks in a different way to their teachers.

It has been argued that hearing books read aloud gives children the chance to absorb the rhythms and structures of written sentences (Meek 1991). Gibson and Levin (1975) note that people do not speak in full sentences, but books are written with correct sentence construction therefore listening to stories read aloud gives children a sense of grammatical structure, an idea which is corroborated by Brock and Rankin (2008). An example of the sentence construction of a children's story book to illustrate that point was transcribed from a voice recording of Shula reading a book to a group of children:

Shula            The mud was too sloppy and it went into his eyes and went into his ears and his itch was worse than ever before. "It might be the thing for a hog" said big gorilla "but it is

---

<sup>19</sup> At the time of writing in March 2011



definitely not for me". Then in the tree he saw a lion and the lion said "I know what you have to do, you should try rolling in the grass" (Observation 15).

The passage has been written as grammatically correct sentences, even Big Gorilla's statement has no abbreviations, for example, "it is", not "it's".

Reading aloud to children allows them to hear stories that are above their reading ability, and encourages them to become readers (Chambers 1991) because it increases their desire to read the book for themselves (Moyle 1972). Such a desire was observed on the CMLs studied. For example, one child wanted to listen to a book that had just been read aloud to a group:

After the second reading, one child picked up the book and wanted it read to him, personally, again (Observation 9)

Similarly a child rejected three books his mother suggested that he borrowed in favour of one that the operator had just read to him:

Mum found another number jacks book, I think it was the number 2, and suggested that one but he said "No". He collected the number jacks book "4" that he had looked at with Tess, and said "I want that one", so that was put on the pile (Observation 18).

Chambers (1991) considers that children "form their understanding of what successful readers do" (p54) by wanting to handle and examine a book that has just been read to them.

The group reading sessions that were observed on CMLs were mainly performed for children under the age of five years, few of whom could read already. It can be seen in Table 11 (above) that children of the ages of three years or under who would have had no formal reading lessons, were part of the groups that listened to the stories. The stories read to them included a rich and varied vocabulary, which the children would not have been able to read themselves. Being read to "provides the best opportunity for discovering that books have something interesting to say" (Gibson and Levin 1975, p553). Children come to understand that books are "Carriers of Messages" and they discover what is inside the pages of a book (Meek 1991, p194). A CML gives that opportunity to children who may not otherwise discover what is inside books. For instance, a teacher remarked that the children in her class, who were severely disabled and had no home experience of stories, still needed to understand that books and print convey meaning:

A teacher told me that many of the children were not capable of reading, but she felt that it is important for them to choose books and know that the printed symbols inside them convey meaning. Just like a toddler learns and finds out. Some of their children will not have had the

opportunity to do that, and some of them will take a long time, if ever, to learn to read, but books are still important and they need to know that (Observation 10)

Through looking at books and being shown books by adults, children discover that books are fun, pleasurable and escapist.

Many of the children observed showed a strong desire to have stories read to them. There were numerous incidents recorded of children handing books to the researcher to be read aloud, as in this example:

The next group came on and a boy picked up a book and put it in my hands. I started talking about the cover then he asked "Can you read it to me?" so I did. I gathered a little audience, and another boy gave me a book and asked me to read it. They listened well but when I tried to skip a few pages because I could see that it was time for them to go, the boy insisted that I went back and read them properly (Observation 12).

Chambers (1991) considers that being read to should not be limited to children under the age of five years, but should be performed through all the school years. It lowers the stress of the child who has difficulties with reading because they can enjoy a story without feeling threatened, become engrossed in the text and do not have to worry about decoding the print. Children develop at different rates; some children may learn to read before attending school, whereas others do not achieve it until they are adult (Meek 1982).

Pre-reading skills therefore still need to be developed irrespective of school year groups. The vehicles of Service A and Service E visit primary schools for sufficient time for every class, no matter what age or ability, to participate in a story session on the CML. The value of the story sessions was expressed by a teacher at one of the schools:

I asked what she thought the benefit of the bookbus visiting and she thought it was good for the children to hear stories because they do not always have time to tell the children stories and if they do it is at the end of the day, when the teachers are tired themselves, so cannot put over the story as well as the bookbus storytellers (Observation 13).

In those cases older children were given the opportunity to hear stories which they might not have had in other circumstances.

Operators used tale telling techniques which encourage the development of narrative and sequencing skills which are important for children to learn to be able to predict the flow of a story and anticipate which words, action or context will appear next when they start reading themselves (Chambers 1991). The cumulative build-up of related episodes in a story (Meek 1991) encourages anticipation, prediction, and sequencing skills (Brock and Rankin 2008).

Such techniques and build-up of anticipation were recorded as Shula read the story about a gorilla with an itchy back as can be seen in the following transcribed extract:

- Shula           ...First he wandered off to find a tree. He wriggled and he rubbed and he scritchd and he scratched but... [quietly] didn't it work? Do you think it helped?
- Children       [quietly] no
- Shula           Did he get rid of the itch?
- Children       [quietly] no
- Shula           Oh dear the tree was all gummy and stuck to his fur and the itch was worse than ever before. Oh dear it's like chewing gum [indistinct] er... how do you think he going to get that off? How is he going to get it off? Eeh it's all sticky [indistinct]. "I know" said the warthog "you should wallow in mud! It's just the thing for a hog with an itch". And big gorilla found some mud and he wallowed and squelched and he scritchd and he scratched, but ...it didn't work.
- Children       Ahh
- Shula           it didn't get rid of the itch
- Children       Ahh, Ow (Transcription, observation 16)

Shula first asks the children to predict if the scratching on the tree helped the gorilla ease his itch. She stops reading the words at a second point to ask how the gorilla will remove the gum from his back, which not only prompts a prediction, but also builds up tension and anticipation leaving the question unanswered; the children want to know what the gorilla will do. The children express their disappointment by saying "Ahh" when they discover that the gorilla still itches. The tale unfolds as a sequence of events, first the gorilla tried a tree, and then he tried wallowing in mud, and the story progresses with the gorilla finding many ways to cure his itch.

Operators frequently pointed to the illustrations which they used to talk about the story or as a point of discussion with the children. The following field-note extract shows Jill using the frontispiece of the story book to talk to the children about emotion and using a conversation with the children to show insight into the character of the farmer:

- Jill pointed out the picture at the front of the book and said that the scene was in winter, and it looked cold and miserable, which was just how the duck felt...
- ...there is a picture of the farmer lying in bed with an open box of chocolates and when she asked "What is the Farmer eating?" one child replied "Cakes" she said "It could be little cakes, what do you think he is eating, Daisy?" Daisy replied "Sweeties and chocolates". Jill said "I think he is eating sweets and chocolates" (Observation 7).

There is no mention of the farmer eating chocolates in bed in the text of the book, the child looked at the illustration and interpreted what she saw as "cakes". The text does not tell the

entire story, sometimes picture have to be read as well.

Looking at the illustrations while an adult reads a story develops a child's ability to "read" pictures. Visual literacy is as important as reading literacy; indeed, Meek (1982 p134) calls visual literacy "a skilled form of literacy". The ability to understand pictures facilitates literacy because linking words to pictures aids vocabulary and the understanding of the context of a word or sentence (Brock and Rankin 2008). Developing visual literacy not only aids the reading of texts, but it will enable children, as they grow up, to understand the wealth of visual literature that is currently being published for adults and other types of visual communication prevalent in the modern world (Meek 1991).

Operators used storytelling techniques that stimulated the children's imagination. For instance, during World Book Day, the children of two early years' settings re-enacted the story "Bear Hunt" with their staff while the CLM operators read the story aloud (appendix 6). One early years worker commented in observation 8 that hearing the operators tell stories brought the stories to life for the children, they "can be part of the story." On another CML, Adam used mime to engage the children with a story. He pretended to make a cake and the children had to give him the ingredients:

At this point Adam stands up and announces that he is going to make a cake. He will use his big bowl, it's a pretend bowl. He mimes the bowl with his hands. He asks "What do you need to make a cake?" "Eggs" the children reply. Adam says "Right I need you to shout the eggs into the bowl and I will catch them." The children shout "Eggs" and he moves the imaginary bowl around as though he is catching the eggs in it. He repeats this for flour, butter and sugar. In-between each ingredient a child is asked to stir the mixture, which they do enthusiastically (Observation 13).

Stories that stimulate the imagination encourage a child's creativity and develop their socialisation because listening to stories and dramatic play gives children a sense of how other people feel (Azar 2002).

#### 4.5.3.4 *Developing thought*

Stories help children to develop their thought processes and increase listening and concentration skills. Chambers (1991) explains that stories develop a child's cognitive ability because they give children a set of mental images which enable them to perceive, feel and think. Development of this kind is facilitated if children can relate to the stories as something meaningful in their own lives (Gibson and Levin, 1975). Jackson (2007) states that we make sense of our lives by using stories to explain and remember the events. A conversation with

an early years worker during observation 15 revealed that the playgroup staff used books borrowed from the CML as a springboard for children to talk about their daily lives:

They also used the books in playgroup quite a lot, looking at the pictures and discussing them with the children who often equated what they saw to things from their own experience, such as, "Maisy is going shopping, and I went shopping with my mum", or "I have dress like that" (Observation 15). O'Hagan (1999) states that, children learn basic concepts through their perception of the world and Brock and Rankin (2008) consider that stories help children to develop concepts through plots and character.

#### 4.5.3.5 *Listening*

Meek (1991) believes that sitting still while listening to a story is a mark of a child's literacy competency. It was found that, generally, CMLs are a place where children listen, the phrase "the children sat and listened" was written many times in the field-notes. During observation 20, the children of the youngest group from a SureStart nursery sat to listen to a story, which they apparently will not do inside the nursery:

This is a toddler group... ...The operator said that they would not have a story, just rhymes.

However, after the first few rhymes (Wind the bobbin up, wheels on the bus,) they sat so still that she decided to read them a story after all...

...I asked the early year's worker why she brought the children out to the StoryBus, and she replied that it was a change, the children would come and sit for "the girls" [the operators], but because they see their childcare workers every day they do not sit so well for them. The toddlers certainly were sitting very quietly and although some were looking in various places when the rhymes were done, and the story was read, they were still and quiet (Observation 20).

Older children also listened to stories attentively, for instance four year olds in observation 7 and five to six year olds in observation 13:

The children listened to the story intently answering Jill's questions (Observation 7).

...They were fascinated and although there were moments of noise, there were moments of silence as they drank the story in (Observation 13).

The ability to listen is an important factor in the development of a child's literacy, not only because it helps to identify and respond to sound patterns in language, but also in order to sustain concentration and hear and understand other people's intentions (QCDA 2011).

Moyle (1972) notes that listening is "the ability to understand what is said, to interpret the usage of words, phrases and intonation so that the both the content and intention of what is related is appreciated" (p131). The only story-time that was observed where children did not listen was at a pre-school where few children spoke English therefore the operator struggled

to retain the children's attention as she read a book and asked questions in English:

About half of the children paid attention and two or three in particular answered the questions.

Other children were too interested in the sounds that Derek was making returning their books, or were fidgeting, trying to climb on the benches or push each other around...

...Some of the children looked vacant, although they were sitting still. I suspect many of them were not following the language (English). The majority of the children were Asian and all the playgroup workers were. They spoke to the children in English, but occasionally spoke to one or other child in the child's domestic language (Observation 15).

Those children heard the sounds of the English tongue, but could not interpret the meaning of the sounds until their carers spoke in their native language, therefore they did not listen.

#### 4.5.3.6 *Concentration*

A reasonable attention span is required to learn and develop fluency in reading (Moyle 1972). Chambers (1991) considers that an environment that encourages concentration is the best place to read and it was found that CMLs provided such an environment. Many individual older participating children showed their ability to sit and concentrate because they ignored the world around them as they were fully absorbed by the book they were reading. For instance, a boy concentrated on a non-fiction book while a story was read:

Bill offered a story again, and they sat at his feet again while he read "Farmer Ham Too". Again the children did not appreciate the puns, but the staff did. The boy sat behind them reading his book on chemistry (Observation 4).

Even younger children were able to concentrate on looking at books which interested them such as a four year old child in observation 12.

A girl sat on the back bench looking at a paperback, that had some pictures in and she spent a long time turning the pages and looking (Observation 12).

Building up a child's concentration skills is important because children need to be able to concentrate to learn effectively. Adults should praise and encourage a child to keep their attention and interest on a task (O'Hagan 1999), because young children find "sustained concentration demanding" (Chambers 1991, p12). An "enabling adult" can help a child build up their concentration for reading (Chambers 1991, p90) and many instances of operators, parents or carers focusing children's attention on books were observed. A good example of both child and parent in deep concentration was noted during a noisy community event as a father and son sat on a rug under the awning of a CML:

The boy was on his father's knee, and the book in front of both of them. The man held the book with both hands and as he read, the boy was scanning the pages with his eyes. They were concentrating (Observation 16).

Such a state of deep concentration results in a feeling of pleasure, which Csikszentmihalyi (2002) terms "Flow". The concept of flow is based on the state people achieve when they are "so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter", a state that Csikszentmihalyi (2002) links to happiness (p4). It could therefore be argued that CMLs are places where children may experience the levels of concentration required to become a reader and experience happiness.

#### **4.5.4 Being a reader**

Meek (1982 p25) uses the phrase "behaving like a reader" to describe the actions of a child who may or may not have any reading proficiency, yet mimics the actions of a person who is an enthusiastic reader. A "reader" in the context of this research is someone who enjoys reading and does so regularly, irrespective of their skill level or the type of text that they read. It was found that CMLs are a place where any child can safely "behave like a reader" because even the smallest child is able to pick up and explore suitable books; other people are also behaving like readers and will share their experience. It is a place where children can experiment with reading, from first "pretend" reading, to trying out different genres and subjects to discover what type of books they like.

Many young children were seen intently looking at books on their own, and turning the pages as they silently examined the pictures:

The girl told me she was six now, and could read so no-one read to her. She was sitting on the floor looking at one of the books she had just borrowed. She had however chosen picture books and appeared to be concentrating on the pictures, not the words (Observation 4).

He had chosen a lot of picture books and was now looking at the "quick grab" boy's paperbacks that include a lot of text as well as pictures. He sat on the floor and was turning over the pages looking at the pictures; I saw his eyes tracking over them (Observation 19).

The girl believed that she was a reader and therefore behaved as one, silently "reading" the story through its pictures. The boy may have chosen to take picture books home, but in the CML he experimented with being a reader by studying a book which was above his reading ability, yet he was taking in the illustrations. Chambers (1991) considers that this behaviour demonstrates an understanding of literacy and a successful step towards becoming a reader.

Children were also observed "reading" aloud. For instance, a four year old girl was seen reciting the words of a board book from memory:

I became conscious of the girl sitting on the side bench, reading a board book aloud to herself. It was a “That’s not my ...” book about a puppy. She knew this book and I could tell she was remembering the words because her eyes were fixed on the pictures, and the words did not quite match what she said. At the end she showed me the right puppy and let me stroke its furry coat (Observation 12).

Meek (1991) considers that it is more important for a child to know what reading is, rather than the mechanics of how to do it, and the child above understood that reading is finding a story inside a book. Older children who had limited reading skills were also seen trying to act as readers. After the operator had read a story aloud two girls copied what she had done:

They opened the books and pretended in loud voices to talk about the stories inside. These children must have been between the ages of 9 and 11 years. They did not read the real words. One spotted that the story was about a boy called Henry. Another did start reading the words, but she was a bit hesitant and couldn’t manage all of them. They were holding the books to the “Audience”, which was mainly me, to show the pictures (Observation 16).

By behaving as readers, these children are serving an apprenticeship, building up their tacit skills and understanding what it feels like to be a reader (Meek 1982).

Some of the older children, who spoke during the observations, thought that their visits to a CML helped them with their reading. For instance, a vociferous girl volunteered the information that she loved reading and ascribed the improvement of her skills to visiting the CML:

A girl sought me out and told me in no uncertain terms how good the bookbus was, how she enjoyed visiting it and how her reading had improved since she started coming. She loves reading. She thinks that the bookbus is good “for the children to improve reading” (Observation 14).

Similarly, on another occasion, children commented that their reading had been helped by visiting their CML because they could read books with longer stories, they could find books that they liked and they had improved their writing skills:

These are the things that children told me. They think that the library helps them with their reading because

- “I used to read thin books and now I read thick ones”
- “I like chapter books, and the library has helped me because it has chapter books”
- “It has such a large selection of books”
- “It has all the books that I like, I like history books”
- “Oh yes”, said a boy, with emphasis, it has helped me with my reading, and his friend said, “it has helped me with my writing, more about situations” (Observation 17).

It appears that children identify visits to CMLs with their reading ability and are willing to state the fact in front of their peers.



A CML is a place where individuals share books. The observations demonstrated that children on CMLs look at books with other children or with adults. Section 4.4.1.8 showed that older children discussed books with each other, and supported each other as they selected books. The peer consent indicated that reading was considered socially acceptable among those groups, and therefore the children perceived themselves as readers. A more valuable aspect of a CML appears to be that it is a place where it is easy for an enabling adult to mediate a child's experience of a book. Young children frequently picked up a book off a shelf or from a kinder box, examined it, then spontaneously showed it to any available adult, including the researcher:

The children also went straight to the shelves. One boy came to me and showed me a car board book. I asked him if he liked cars and he said that he did (Observation 5).

After the story, many children came to me with books to be read. The first boy sat by me and handed me "The fish who could wish" (Observation 6).

Carers and operators were seen sharing the books with children, for instance, after each story session on vehicle V4, every adult sat with the children to look at books with them:

All around there were children with books listening to them being read. It was very busy and noisy. Some were in groups and some were talking about the books (Observation 7).

The operator Harry spent considerable time mingling with the children on his CML looking at the books they had picked:

...he walked around with the children talking to them about their book choices. He bent down to their level and discussed the pictures, words, and content of the books. He was asking them about their favourites (Observation 5).

Similarly, the staff of a summer play-scheme discussed books with their children:

The other workers sat with some of the other children, face to face on the floor, talking through the books the children had found. Staff were asking positive questions about pictures, helping with reading the words and discussing the content of the books (Observation 4).

During observations where parents accompanied their children, they also sat together looking through and reading books. Observation 16 took place on a CML that attended a weekend community event which meant that many families visited the vehicle. Parents were observed reading to variously aged children as they sat close, or on parents' knees:

A boy and his mother came in and the boy picked off the shelf a "Horrid Henry" book. They sat down together and the boy said "Oh, this is a good one; I've got this at home"... ...The boy read us some bits out of the book...

A father sat inside with his 3 year old son sitting snuggled next to him. He was reading a picture book to the boy. The boy looked at the pictures as his father read (Observation 16).

The adults in all these observations are helping the children to learn to read and become readers by doing what Bruner terms "Scaffolding" (Wood et al. 1976) and by what Vygotsky terms the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky 1978).

"Scaffolding" a child's learning happens when an experienced person fills in the gaps of a child's knowledge, or their physical ability, in such a way that facilitates the child completing a task that they could not have achieved individually. The staff in observation 4 and the father in observation 16 are scaffolding the children's learning by supplying the words of the stories that the children cannot read. The theory of scaffolding can also apply to the storytimes that take place on CMLs, by listening to stories being read or told children learn tales, grammar, and vocabulary that is beyond their individual capabilities. Therefore, the operator Harry was facilitating children's reading as he discussed the pictures, words and content of the children's books.

Many of the children observed showed that they understood their own reading capabilities and that they took these into account when selecting a book. For example, a boy picked up a book because he recognised the illustrations on the cover, but then rejected it when he discovered that it was all text with no illustrations:

One child selected a paperback in a spinner. His friend said to him "That's a big boy's book". "It's not, it's Turtles". The friend told their early years worker that the boy had chosen a "big boy's book" and she asked the boy if she could see it. She asked "Can you read it? Oh look it has no pictures, it's all writing, although it is a good book, perhaps you should find another one". The boy looked at the inside of the book and stood in thought for a while, but returned the book and picked up another (Observation 12).

A girl in observation 19 did not need prompting by an adult to select books on the basis of her reading skills. She carefully examined the content of books before making her final decision:

She took a Doctor Who book off the shelf and said "Oh Doctor Who, I like him"... ...She sat down at the back again to look through it, and then rejected it because she said it "had too many words". She looked at another Doctor Who book, but put that one back, then decided to choose one about dragons (Observation 19).

Both of these children showed that they had already become readers and by being able to reflect on their skills, were learning by experience (Kolb 1984).

#### **4.5.5 Tacit learning**

It was found that a considerable amount of the learning that occurred on a CML was through acquiring tacit skills, either by copying the actions of other people, or assimilating

knowledge by continually performing the same task. The processes of becoming a reader by practising the skill as an individual and by mentoring from a more experienced reader were discussed in the previous section 4.5.4 (above). The children observed on CMLs were learning a literate behaviour by watching other children or adults read, tell stories and handle books. Bandura (1974) states that learning a new skill is achieved not only through instruction but also by watching other people. An operator, Helen, believed that since she started visiting a certain playgroup, the children had learnt how to handle books:

[The children] simply did not know what to do with a book. No idea of how to hold one or open one. Since visiting the setting, the children can handle books correctly and know what is held inside them. She considers that she has seen a marked difference in their literate behaviour (Observation 9).

The children of that playgroup were observed as they listened to Helen tell a story and then took books off the shelves to look at on their own, or to share with Helen or with an early years worker. The children were watching Helen and then practised the skill of handling the books for themselves.

Parents and carers were also able to learn by watching CML operators modelling literate behaviour. The operators Tess and Lydia spoke of their specific remit to work with parents and with that remit in mind, acted in a way that modelled good parenting and literacy skills. For example, Tess was observed sitting on the floor of her vehicle playing with a toddler at his mother's feet and later reading a board book to a young boy, as his mother drank a cup of tea and listened:

Tess said to him. "Come and read with me, then mummy can drink her tea" and she sat next to the boy looking at a book with him. Tess pointed to the pictures and asked Henry questions about things (Observation18).

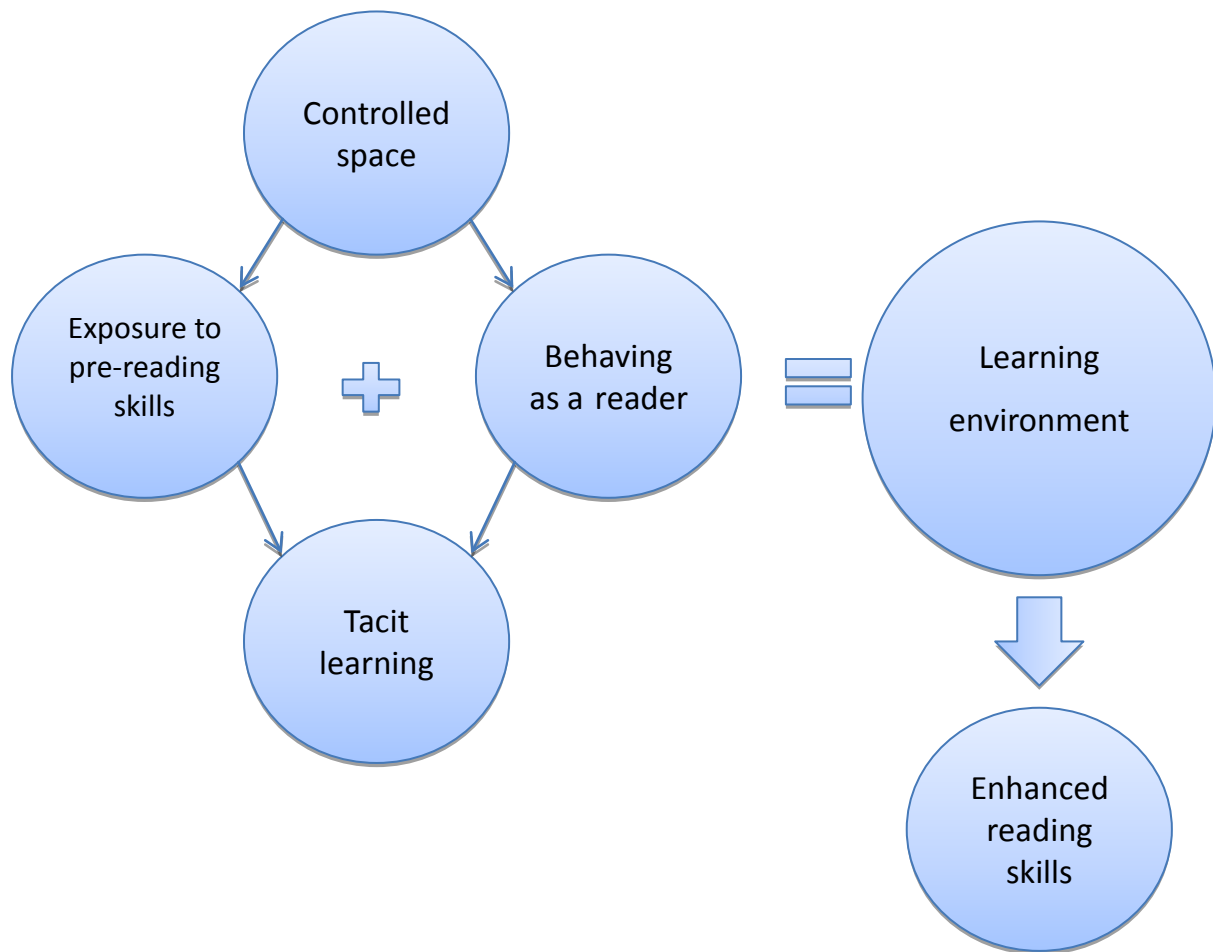
Tess was working with the boy in his zone of proximal development by asking him questions, listening to his replies, then by adding extra information she was helping him extend his knowledge and at the same time demonstrating a new technique to the watching mother. It could be argued that the mother would not necessarily copy the technique of questioning her son, and will not have learnt anything. However, Tess was aware that she was actively showing the mother a useful skill. Bandura (1974) claims that a person conceptualises the observed actions of others and recalls them at a later point when that action is needed. It is possible that in the future the mother will recall Tess talking to her son and then try asking him questions in the same way.

Ramachandran (2006) provides a neurological reason for the likelihood of recalling and imitating the actions of others, by his theory of "imitation learning". Neuroscientists are currently investigating the effect of "mirror neurons", neurons in a certain area of the brain that fire when someone is watching another's actions as if the watching individual is also performing that action. Ramachandran (2006) believes that a sophisticated mirror neuron system in the human brain is responsible for the development of language empathy and culture in the species and the ability for "goal directed" imitation. This would suggest that individuals who are immersed in a reading environment when all around are behaving as readers will be influenced by the actions that they see which will not only cause them to act as a reader, but will activate the neurons that they use for reading skills.

Figure 28 (below), shows four factors that combine in CMLs to produce a learning environment. A CML is a controlled space, actions by visitors that take place in and around a CML are controlled by operators establishing a tacit code of expected and permitted behaviour. Because the space of the CML is controlled it is perceived to be a safe, relaxed area by adults and children. It is a place where one can think without disruption and a relaxed mental state allows humans to acquire new skills. A CML exposes children to pre-reading skills such as rhymes, stories and experimenting with books because activities are focused to stimulate literacy and encourage reading. A CML is also a safe place to behave like a reader, because other children and adults are behaving in the same manner. Children tacitly learn about reading and being a reader by watching other people read and use books. The four factors make a CML a mobile learning environment, which can enhance children's reading skills.

#### **4.5.6 Summary**

A CML was perceived by adults and children to be a non-threatening environment where reading skills were accepted, shared, fostered, and developed. Operators ensured that the environment is well ordered with no conflict; provided activities which developed literacy; nurtured a space that acted as a catalyst to learning between adults and children: and encouraged children to develop reading skills by demonstrating that reading is fun.

**Figure 28: Factors that make CMLs a learning environment**

#### 4.5.7 Well-being

*The feeling of well-being that is stimulated by children's own actions on a children's mobile library reinforces their desire to read.*

The above theory emerged from consideration of the attitudes that children presented as they browsed or selected books to borrow. This was in relation to the attitudes of adults around the children and the considered effect of the children's choice on their self-esteem. Figure 29 (below), shows the levels of coding used to form the theory of "well-being". The codes were derived from the following occurrences that were recorded in the field-notes:

- Actions of children as they browsed amongst the books on CMLs
- Reactions of supervision adults and operators to the child's choice of book
- Reasons that children attributed to their choice of book

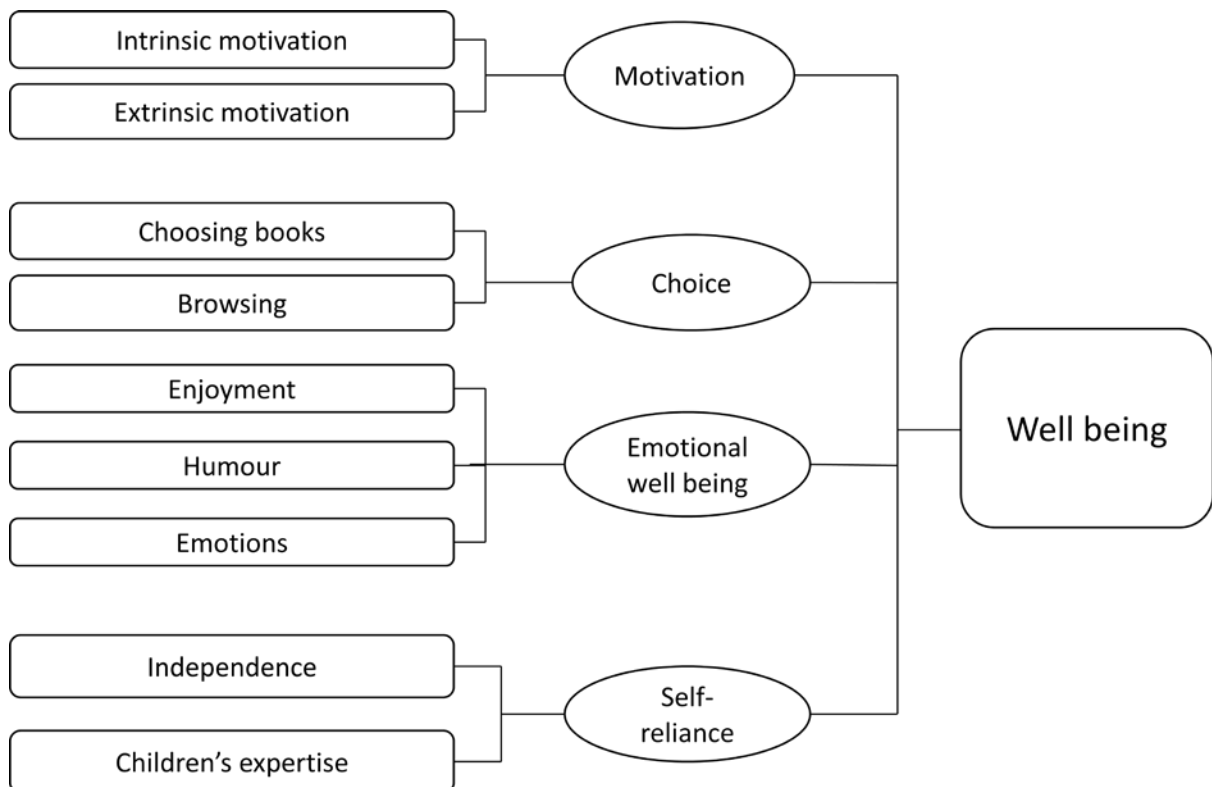
- Incentives to encourage reading that were used by the library services which were visited
- Use of CMLs by unaccompanied children
- Children's responses to operator questions
- Emotional body language of the children that were observed
- Themes discussed by children and operators during story sessions

The initial codes were combined and then sorted into the sub-categories of:

- Motivation
- Choice
- Emotional well-being
- Self-reliance

The four subcategories were then clustered to form the overall category of well-being.

**Figure 29: Hierarchy of codes that contribute to the theory of well-being**



On the CMLs observed, children were given control over their choice of books and their decision was supported by a trusted adult. Such actions lead to a feeling of success which can increase a child's faith in their own reading ability. In consequence the children

continued making their own decisions to support the selection of reading matter of personal interest which further stimulated their motivation to read. Such achievement can increase reading skills and promote well-being.

#### **4.5.8 Motivation**

It was found that CMLs stimulated and reinforced a child's desire to read both by providing concrete rewards for reading (extrinsic motivation) and by encouraging the child's internal desire to read (intrinsic motivation). Motivation is the driving force behind the decisions and actions taken by humans. People prefer to perform actions that give them pleasure and avoid actions that give them pain (Bozarth 1994). The children observed showed that they read because they enjoyed specific books or that they enjoyed collecting rewards such as participation in a reading challenge or obtaining a certificate. It could be argued, therefore, that they showed a pleasure in reading.

##### *4.5.8.1 Extrinsic Motivation*

The period of observations encompassed two examples of the Reading Agency's "Summer Reading Challenge": for the years 2009 and 2010 (the Reading Agency nd). The Summer Reading Challenge (see section 3.6 above) was popular with children on the CMLs who were seen to participate. For instance, two boys commented that they had joined the library service in order to take part in the 2009 Summer Reading Challenge. The first boy had previously been a library member, but his membership had lapsed:

I asked him if he went to a static library and he replied that he used to but his mother had lost his ticket... .. because he was borrowing books I asked if he had re-joined to complete the challenge, and he said that he had, and if he would go the static libraries again. He said he would but they were not as good as the CML (Observation 4).

The second boy had not been a member of a library until the CML visited his summer play scheme. The play-workers reported that their children were all enthusiastic about completing the challenge so that they could obtain the bag that was the final reward in that year:

He has joined the library to complete the library challenge and was very keen to get his stickers.

Playgroup staff said that all the children were keen to do the challenge. The bag at the end was a huge motivation (Observation 4).

Observation 19 occurred one year later than observation 4, and operators Laura and Corinne were observed talking to children about the 2010 Summer Reading Challenge, and enrolling them onto the scheme:

Laura asked the girls if they wanted to join the summer reading scheme and explained what the prizes were this year. The youngest girl was very eager to enrol. One of the older girls chose not to join, but the other two did... ..Laura asked if he wanted to do the reading challenge, and he said enthusiastically, that he had done it. Laura asked if he did it last year, and he said yes, she asked if he wanted to do it again this year, and he replied that he did. She sorted out the details with him, and then explained to the girls when the CML would be visiting in the holidays, and how they would have two books stamped off each time they came. They would win a medal and a certificate at the end. They appeared to be pleased with that idea (Observation 19).

The children responded to the incentive of a reward for reading up to six books. In both observations 4 and 19 the CMLs were visiting places where children did not have easy access to a static library therefore the encouragement they received by CML operators to join the reading challenge was not likely to have been found elsewhere.

Enrolment in the Summer Reading Challenge is not permitted for children below the age of 5 years, but many of the CMLs observed used the Bookstart sticker and certificate scheme as a reward for their younger readers. This scheme has the advantage of being available all year round (Bookstart 2009). It was noted that a young customer received a certificate because he had completed a sticker card onto which he had gathered a sticker after each visit to the CML:

The boy had completed his Bookstart sticker card, so Tom, the operator, took the folder to him so that he could choose a certificate. They went through the folder together discussing which certificates he had already (Observation 20).

Similarly, the operators Lydia and Tess explained the system to a child during observation 18:

Lydia told the girl about the card, and stickers and Tess showed her the certificates that can be collected. The girl and her mum then chose four books from the large pile she had gathered (Observation 18).

The incentives are designed to stimulate the child's extrinsic motivation. Gibson and Levin (1975) explain that, according to a behaviourist view, an external incentive of a tangible award that a child can see, feel and hold, reinforces that child's desire to read. Studies have shown that rewards can keep a child on task but Gibson and Levine (1971) voice caution. They consider that the excessive use of extrinsic motivation could undermine intrinsic motivation when a child already has the desire to read and learn. Caine and Caine (1994) agree and believe that a system of rewards and punishments leads to fixed thinking and a diminution of intrinsic motivation due to the repression of creativity. However, the observation of children on CMLs, suggested that the rewards gained did not diminish their enthusiasm for books, stories, and reading.



#### 4.5.8.2 *Intrinsic motivation*

Most of the participating children who spoke expressed a liking for books. Only two children stated that they did not like books: one of them commented that he preferred films, as he selected a book from the shelf, and the other was actively engaged in wrenching a book away from another child as he answered:

I asked one boy if he liked books, and he said “not really”. He had been browsing at the nonfiction section with his library ticket in his hand. I asked if he was there because he wanted to choose a book or if he was made to pick one by his teacher. He replied that he wanted a book, but he really preferred films (Observation 6).

Most of the children told me they liked books. One said that he didn’t. He was tussling with a boy over a book at the time (Observation 4).

It could be argued that children who like reading are the ones that choose to use a CML, which may be true for the children who visit CMLs during their own time at neighbourhood stops. However, many of the venues visited by CMLs during observations did not give children the possibility of not visiting a CML as entire classes and groups were brought on board. Table 12 (below) shows that more children visited a CML as part of their class, with no option to stay in the class-room, than children who were allowed the personal choice. Despite this enforced attendance on CMLs no children were seen to be distressed because 39 passages in the field-notes were coded as “Enjoyment” and 25 passages were coded as “Excitement”.

The children showed that they appreciated books and had the internal desire to become readers and self-motivated learners. For instance, a boy expressed his love of science books and gave an example of what he had learnt:

He told me that he had borrowed science books. He said that he learnt what the noble gases were, gave me their names, and then said that radon was radioactive (Observation 4).

The boy had not chosen the books to complete science homework, but to pursue his own interest. Similarly, during observation 17 another child commented that he liked the library because it helped him acquire knowledge. Some children preferred fiction and displayed the urge to complete all the books of a particular series or certain author:

A boy of around 8 showed me the beast quest books he had borrowed previously, and the ones that he was going to choose this time (Observation 4).

The boy grabbed a “Mr Gum” book and really wanted to take it out... ..the boy told his mother that it was the second book in the series and he had read the first. She asked him where did he read it, and he replied “At school”. She commented to me “He is such a good reader, he is only 6 and he is

an avid reader" (Observation 16).

I was asked several times if I knew where books were, such as Jacqueline Wilson, "Horrid Henry" and Roald Dahl. A number of children chose the Roald Dahl books (Observation 7).

**Table 12: Individual or group visits to CMLs**

Service code	Observation number	Location	Class or group visit	Individuals visit
A	1	Nursery "S"	✓	x
	2	School "AF"	✓	x
	3	Playgroup "W"	✓	x
B	4	Playgroup "T"	✓	x
		Summer play-scheme "L"	✓	✓
		Preschool "M"	✓	x
	5	Preschool "T"	No children visited	
		Preschool "E"	✓	x
		School "M"	No children visited	
	6	School "N"	✓	x
		School "W"	✓	x
C	7	Nursery "LO"	✓	x
		Preschool "SR"	✓	x
		Nursery "WC"	✓	x
	8	Preschool "FV"	✓	x
		Preschool "LR"	✓	x
		Preschool "SM"	✓	x
	9	Playschool "SS"	✓	x
		Preschool "B"	✓	x
D	10	Nursery "RBS"	✓	x
		Family centre "VP"	x	✓
		School "PP"	✓	x
	11	School "WS"	x	✓
		School "H"	x	✓
		School "SK"	No children visited	
	12	Family centre "GD"	x	✓
		Nursery "BH"	✓	x
E	13	School "WB"	✓	x
	14	City estates	x	✓
	15	Parent and toddlers "BM"	No children visited	
		Playgroup "SP"	✓	x
		School "AA"	✓	x
		School "M"	✓	x
F	16	Community event	x	✓
	17	School "RP"	✓	x
G	18	Village "F"	x	✓
		Children's centre "H"	x	✓
I	19	Site "T"	x	✓
		Site "F"	x	✓
J	20	City play area	x	✓
		School "CG"	✓	x
		SureStart centre "A"	✓	x

The children in those observations were decisive and motivated to read books that they enjoyed. Dan recounted in interview (vi) that he has worked with many of his customers to identify which genre or author they favour to enable them to reach the understanding of their own tastes:

They now know what book or author they like and they look through all the books on the shelves to find them (interview (vi)).

The children's intrinsic motivation was stimulated by being allowed to browse and select whichever books they chose. Gibson and Levine (1975, p265) describe intrinsic motivation as "a spontaneous motivation for learning"; it is the innate human need "to find things out" which has no need for reward other than the acquisition of the skill or knowledge. Caine and Caine (1994, p100) explain that the human brain constantly seeks connections and meaning in the world and because of this "we are born to learn". The cognitive system is primed to create meaning from the messages sent by the senses, therefore Caine and Caine (1994) imply that human individuals have an innate urge to extract meaning from a text, consequently there is an intrinsic motivation to learn to read.

Such motivation can be stifled however, through a perceived lack of success and by negative feedback (Gibson and Levin 1975). A group of boys who were persuaded to visit a CML by their teacher, displayed negative behaviour as they entered a CML:

As each boy entered the bus, the operator said "Hello" to them. He introduced me by name and told them I was looking at the book bus. Most of them were not very talkative. They entered the bus and stood away from the shelves, looking at a distance, not touching them. If they had a book to return they handed it to Graham, tentatively (Observation 11).

One of the boys displayed behaviour that suggested that he had no place in his life for reading or any incentive to read. He had not visited the CML previously and acted defensively as he entered, announcing loudly that he was not a reader:

Another boy, who was quite new to the school and who had not been on before, came on and said that he didn't read. He then said that he had only read one book in his life and that was "Twocking" (Observation 11).

Meek (1981, p171) states that the poor readers that she encountered at the start of secondary school did not lack the ability to read but they have no incentive to read; they lack "desire, confidence and reward". As mentioned in section 4.5.8.1 (above), there are concerns voiced about the extent to which extrinsic motivation (working for a concrete reward) can damage an individual's self-motivation. For intrinsic motivation to thrive a child requires reinforcement of self-made decisions by visible success and active encouragement from trusted adults (Clark et al. 2008). Positive reinforcement is found on CMLs because children are allowed to make choices which are mentored, supported, and praised, leading to a feeling of success. Of course, children who visit CMLs may not all respond to such encouragement, but their attendance increases their options.

#### 4.5.9 Success

The children on CMLs were given the chance to feel successful by browsing and selecting books and by being allowed to demonstrate independence of thought and action with the reinforcement of their actions by a trusted adult. Such reinforcement of their choice would have indicated success to the child thereby increasing their self-esteem.

##### 4.5.9.1 *Browsing*

Generally, children of all ages were encouraged to browse unrestrictedly through the bookshelves on the CMLs visited. Even the group of youngest children that were observed were given the opportunity to take books off the shelves to examine:

The operator encouraged them to have a look at some of the books. A few did (Observation 20). Those children were able to pick up a book at random and treat it as an object to be explored, felt its weight and size and looked at the pictures and text to form an opinion of the book.

A group of children of the age of four years showed their browsing expertise as they scanned the bookshelves for books on subjects in which they were interested:

The children also went to the shelves and picked up some books. One boy showed me a car board-book. I asked him if he liked cars, and he said he did. He was overheard by another boy who told me he liked racing cars. The racing car enthusiast was the 4 year old. He then spotted a book with a picture of a steam train on the cover and said “OOOH” enthusiastically as he took it off the shelf. I asked him what it was a picture of, to which he replied “It’s a steam train” (Observation 5).

The children in observation 4 were regular customers of that CML and had already developed a preference for certain types of book. Other children in that group identified and picked up books about well-known characters, such as “Louis”, selecting favourites that they knew that they liked. Older children took more time over their browsing as illustrated by this child from a group of children aged between 9-11 years:

Some take a long time to choose, others know what they want immediately. I asked one boy why he took so long to look through the books and he said it was difficult to choose from so many (Observation 17).

The children in observation 17 appeared to be divided by two types of book selection strategy: the decisive children who knew what they liked, and the browsers, with broader interests, who found it difficult to prioritise which book should be borrowed on that occasion.

The group of boys from observation 11, that were previously mentioned in section 4.5.9.1, above, were reluctant to physically sort through books on shelves, despite encouragement

from operators:

Graham asked them what sort of books they liked then he and their teacher rummaged around on the shelves to look for ones to suggest. She told them that this was a good opportunity for them to choose something that they liked (Observation 11).

The boys' ages were not revealed, but they were of secondary school age, probably between the ages of 13 – 16 years, and their reluctance to select and hold books suggested that they had had little previous experience with them. One of the boys, however, did pick up three books to inspect thoroughly before deciding which to borrow:

Boy three picked up one about football, carefully looked through the pages, and rejected it.

Graham noticed that he had picked up a football book, and suggested one that was written about football teams and their managers. Boy three looked at it in the same way, flicking intently through the pages before rejecting that. He then picked up another Barrington Stoke book about football, studied the pages carefully. It was one of the easier reads with cream paper and larger font. He decided on that one (Observation 11).

Boy three was learning that to find a book which suited his personality and ability, he should pick it up and inspect it thoroughly before making the choice.

The only vehicle where any restriction was imposed on children's browsing was one of the under fives CMLs, where a selection of board books were shelved at a low height, with picture books shelved spine-on above them. The reason given to the children for the restriction was that the picture books were so tightly packed on certain shelves that pulling them out could hurt the children's fingers:

The operator explained that they were only allowed to take books from certain places. The books are shelved spine on, and the children were told that they could not take those books; they were too close together and would trap their fingers. The books on those shelves were for adults to get only...

... however, there were plenty of picture books in the kinder boxes around the edge of the walls and some racks of books at one side. These racks, however, were not easy to reach because the kinder boxes and the benches were in the way. They were allowed to choose some board books from the shelves, and these were the ones that they chose the most (Observation 7).

The children in observation 7 may have selected the board books because they were the most accessible, or the operators may have arranged the books so that the most popular choices became accessible. Although the overall choice in that vehicle was restricted, the children still experienced the examination of books in order to discover the contents and to form an opinion.

Chambers (1991) considers that browsing is an activity through which children can become familiar with handling books, particularly if they have not had such experience at home, and can learn the discernment to select items that suit their taste. Browsing through books allows children to experiment with ideas, discover ranges of genre and understand their likes and dislikes in order to choose books that suit their own personality and ability. All the children observed were given the free choice to examine whichever genre, subject, or author they wished and many more books were browsed that were eventually selected for loan. Chambers (1991 p34) believes that "We cheerfully become willing readers when following our own interests and tastes". Therefore a CML helps children to identify their taste in books and become willing readers.

#### 4.5.9.2 *Choice*

It was noted during observations that, generally, children were allowed free choice of books to borrow even when the books were not going into their individual homes but were to be used as a classroom resource for all children to read, such as during observation 10:

The nursery nurse was taking books from the kinderboxes, and showing some of them to the children. She discussed with them which ones to borrow. She reminded them their current topic was "animals or spring"... ... she thought the book bus was useful to let the children "choose books for their friends". She considered that it gave them a sense of responsibility. The books were put on a shelf in the nursery, although the nursery had its own books, and were used during storytimes and looked at by the children (Observation 10).

The nursery nurse demonstrated to the children that their opinions are valued; the books taken into the nursery were chosen by the children, rather than the adults, which allowed the children to feel ownership of the decision. A similar event was witnessed at another nursery during observation 12:

The first staff member told me that the staff are interested in the bookbus because it gives children a good experience of choosing books that they want. The books stay in the nursery, but they have noticed that the books the children use the most are the ones that they have chosen from the bookbus (Observation 12).

Control over choice of book benefits a child's self-esteem defined as the discrepancy between self-image and an ideal self (Lawrence 1996). If the discrepancy is great, a person has low self-esteem and if small, they have high self-esteem. Lawrence (1996) considers that, should self-esteem be overly low, a child will not achieve well educationally. They will not attempt tasks for fear of failure, which means that they have little intrinsic motivation. Self-esteem is a personal perception which is affected by a child's interaction with other people and in order for it to increase a child needs to feel valued. Through being given the responsibility of choosing books "for their friends", and through the choice being valued by

those friends and supported by the nursery workers, the children's self-esteem will rise, along with their intrinsic motivation and children will trust their own judgement sufficiently to attempt new tasks and reach their learning potential.

Over all the observations only three incidents were recorded when a child's choice was denied. For example, an early years worker would not let a child borrow a book because the group was just about to leave the vehicle:

It was then time for them to go, but a girl in a pink dress wanted to borrow a certain book. Her worker told her to put it back. She asked "Can I borrow this one?" and she was told no and it was taken off her and put back into the kinderbox (Observation 12).

A mother vetoed a boy's choice of a board book during observation 18 because she said that it was "too babyish", a sentiment which was duplicated by another child's teacher:

...a boy had picked up a pepper pig board book and his teacher said "oh no, that is too babyish for you". I said "I like pepper pig" which amused another of the girls. The teacher said that he was a reader and his dad wanted him to have story books (Observation 10).

Meek (1991) explains that children who have an understanding of books enjoy reading at three levels of competency. They read books that they can read fluently as reading for pleasure, they read their school books at the "correct" reading level, and they attempt books that are "stretching" because they are interested and curious about the book's content. The children who wanted to borrow "babyish" books were doing so not to test their reading ability, but because they wanted to enjoy the story and pictures of that particular book. A child finds security and reassurance in reading books that are easy (Meek 1982).

Individual free choice was generally supported by all operators and they were displeased when a parent or carer overruled a child's selection, for instance the operator Harry stated in conversation that...

... He considered it important for children to choose books that were "Stretching". He disliked it when nursery staff forced choices onto children (Observation 5).

Harry was observed talking to many children about the books they selected and supporting their choice. The operator Jill also put forward her views:

Jill said the bookbus was all about choice. It is very important that the child chooses a book themselves and it doesn't matter how many times a child has chosen a book, or whether it is good or bad, if they show an interest they should be able to look at it (Observation 7).

On two occasions it was observed that a child's choices were queried by an operator on the basis of age appropriateness or ability. For example, Phil asked a teacher if a younger boy should borrow a certain adult graphic novel, and the teacher confirmed the choice because

he knew that the boy's parents would not mind:

He found the graphic novel that he liked, but as it was an adult one Phil checked with the teacher if it was appropriate. The teacher said that it was fine and the boy's parents allowed him to have those sorts of books (Observation 10).

When serving a regular customer, one operator, Laura, suggested that the girl changed a particular book because she knew that the child's reading ability would not cope with the challenge:

She also chose another book, which was long with dense text. Laura said to her that it looked too old for her, would she like to choose something else? One of the older girls, who could have been her sister, said "Have one of these books; (indicating the easy grab girls' books) you like ones about fairies don't you?"

The girl found an alternative with which she appeared to be satisfied. Children who choose their own reading material will learn to become discriminating readers (Chambers 1991) and will retain the content of the book (Krashen 2004). Krashen (2004) asserts that "Free reading", children choosing their own books to read, develops literacy, enjoyment and self-esteem all of which contribute to a child's well-being.

#### 4.5.9.3 *Mentoring*

Operators often acted as mentors to aid the child's choice, or were used by children to approve their choice. For example, during observation 17, the operator Lillian walked around the interior of the CML while the children were selecting books and commented on their choice of book, while her colleague, Trudi, talked to the children about the books as she checked the books out on loan:

They show the books to their teacher, or Lillian, who spends a lot of time with children examining the books and talking to them about their choices...

... Lillian's assistant today is Trudi. Although she took a bit of a back seat, mainly driving and processing books, she chatted to the children as she issued their books (Observation 17).

It was noted that operators frequently offered their approbation of selected books, for instance Bill was heard to praise children's choice of books (observation 4) as he issued them. When interviewed, the operator Nathan commented on the importance of a CML as a place where children could choose books unhindered by the opinions of teachers or parents:

Nathan said that children who come on to the vehicle can choose books independently from teachers and parents. He tends to think that if parents were involved, things would be more complicated (Interview (v)).

Such an opinion could be true about other library services, for instance Pahl and Allen (2011) worked with unaccompanied children for their research in a community library.



Nathan stated that he talked to the children about their choice of book and had learnt their tastes so well that he could recommend new books and authors to them:

He has a good rapport with the customers, knows a number of them very well and knows their tastes. When serving them he can recommend books they will like, and talks to them about what they have chosen (Interview (v)).

Operators were noticed seeking to understand their customers' tastes in books. For instance, when Graham asked each child which type of book they liked before helping them find the right book. He had also put aside books that he knew certain children would want to read:

Then a boy came on. Graham had a proof copy for him too, the latest Darren Shan, new series.

He looked pleased to be able to read the book before someone else (observation 11).

In interview (vi) Dan explained that he not only understood which genre his customers liked, but he also encouraged them to expand their tastes:

He said that he talks about books with the children when they return them. Many of the boys that visit the library have poor reading skills and he tells them that books are for people, for the subject you like; there are not "Boys books" and "Girls books". He said that he was trying to introduce different things because he feels that some children are too "Blinkered in their choice". He feels that they "Do listen" to him and his advice (Interview (vi)).

Krashen (2004) states that the amount children read increases when children's borrowing is mediated by a librarian, as compared to selecting books from a central source of books which has no custodian. It can therefore be argued that children who choose books from a CML with the help of an operator will read more than they would from a deposit collection in their school or early years setting. This means that deposit collections placed into settings, as considered in section 4.4.3.5 , may not be as efficient at promoting reading as CMLs.

Chambers (1991, p15) writes of the "enabling adult" - a key person who is a "trusted experienced adult reader" and who can facilitate the reading process for children, at any stage of development, because that adult has experienced learning to read with pleasure.

The enabling adult does not instruct the child, but supports children to make their own decisions and introduces them to topics that will develop the child's skills and interest. Many of the operators acted as such an "enabling adult" for the children they served on CMLs.

Some of the participating operators were not so forthright in their interaction with children; they did not mingle with children as they chose books. However, those operators did demonstrate their love of reading by reading a book as they sat at the counter of a CML. For instance, the operator Alan read a newspaper and a biography while his partner Graham talked to the children:

Alan spent most of his time behind the counter reading first a newspaper and then a book, in view of the children (Observation 11).

Similarly, the operator Jenny read until children were ready to borrow their books:

The operator mainly sat behind the counter and read her own book, chatted to children and issued books (Observation 14).

It could be argued that those operators showed children that the activity of reading is pleasurable and an accepted part of society; the operators were acting as role models.

Gibson and Levine (1975) state that, although learning to read requires an innate need in a child, for the need to be realised the child needs a role model to demonstrate the use of the skill and to help and encourage their progress. Clark et al (2009) state that family members are the main reading role model for most children, but also suggest that children who enjoy reading are influenced by other adults that they know.

#### 4.5.9.4 *Independence*

Section 4.5.9.2 (above) showed that children are allowed independence of thought and freedom of choice on CMLs. Section 4.5.9.3 (above) discussed the role of the “enabling adult” who mentors children to become independent readers, and the adoption of that role by CMLs operators. Children on CMLs therefore gain an opportunity to take control over a small part of their lives. CMLs not only enable independence by advocating responsibility for the selection of books of their own choice, but also by being accessible to children with no accompanying adult.

Although many vehicles visit early years settings and schools, where adults do accompany the children, certain vehicles stop in places where unaccompanied children are able to visit:

The book bus stops at nine places in outer city estates for between 15 to 30 minutes at each stop. Parents came on with their children at three of the stops, but mainly children came on by themselves and with brothers, sisters or friends (Observation 14).

The ages of the unaccompanied children accessing the CMLs ranged from around 6 years to 12 years of age. The children aged 12 years may be deemed sufficiently responsible to travel to a static library, but the younger children would not have had that opportunity. They were able to access a library that arrived at their doorstep:

Four children came on as soon as the vehicle had parked at the gate to the site. Two dogs nearly joined them, but stayed outside waiting for the girls. It could not go into the site because of a low barrier. Two children were 9 years and the other two were around 11 or 12 years (Observation 19).

When we parked up at that one, Laura, the operator went to knock on the door of two children who like to come on board, a boy of 6 years and his sister of 7 years. They turned up with a lot of books

to return...

...The children left, and a few minutes later, two little voices were heard outside and two more young girls appeared (observation 19).

One girl explained her preference for using the CML on her own over going to a static library with her mother, she thought that she needed her mother's library card:

One girl commented that if she did not borrow books from the bookbus she would either get books from school or the library if her mother "remembered to take her card". She referred disparagingly to her mother's card. She said that she loves reading (Observation 14).

For that child the CML signified her independence from her mother and allowed her to pursue her love of reading with responsibility and control over her own literacy and literary development. Section 4.4.1.7 (above) dealt with the importance of working with parents to enhance children's reading skills, therefore a dichotomy arises between a CML giving children independence, and helping parents to stimulate reading. Such a dichotomy will not exist if parents are shown how to mentor the child's reading decisions and how to show their child that reading is a joy, not a task.

The perception of control over a portion of their lives contributes to the physical and mental well-being of a child. Prilleltensky et al (2001, p146) state that recreational facilities feature among places where individuals are able to show "self-determination" and make "meaningful choices" and that there are few establishments where children are encouraged to exercise such power. It can be assumed that in this case that a CML is a "recreational facility", therefore a CML is a place where self-determination is encouraged and where children feel they have some control of their own lives.

#### **4.5.10 Reinforcement**

Reading was stimulated on the CMLs that hosted observations, because operators encouraged children to acknowledge their own innate literacy. Such encouragement was achieved by operators allowing children to show off their knowledge of facts, reading or visual literacy, during story sessions or when sharing a book together, by having conversations with children about the books that they had chosen and by treating each child as a reader. Other adults also took the opportunity to talk to the children about books and children talked about books amongst their peers (as noted in section 4.4.1.8. above)

The operator Adam showed the children that he was impressed by their knowledge of how to bake a cake:

He asks “What do you need to make a cake?” “Eggs” the children reply...

...He tells the children that he is surprised that they know all these ingredients without prompting, and says that children in other schools don't know how to make a cake. Adam asks the teacher if she has done cookery with them, but she denies it (Observation 13).

An incident occurred when a younger child started reading and singing rhymes to her mother. The other children and parents and operators on the CML stopped what they were doing, listened to her and clapped when she finished:

The girl found a book of rhymes and her mother read “It's raining its pouring”, saying afterwards that she [the mother] didn't know that rhyme. Mother then spotted “Twinkle twinkle little star” and said to the girl “oh look, Twinkle, Twinkle, you know that one. You do that with granny. Go on, sing twinkle, twinkle” so the girl shyly started singing it. Girl 2 and her mum stopped reading and listened, Tess and Lydia the operators listened. When she finished we clapped and praised her. Girl 1's mum found some more rhymes she knew, and pointed to them. Girl 1 sang and everyone listened, sometimes joining in. She sang about five, and eventually gave up on one because she could not remember all the words (Observation 18).

During a story session one girl suddenly interrupted the operator, Jill, as the story was being told because she had seen an image that she recognised:

The children listened to the story intently answering Jill's questions. On some pages, there are sequences of pictures outlining the story of the overworked duck. After Jill turned a page, one girl homed in on the picture of the duck doing the ironing, out of sequence to the story, and shouted “Over there, he is doing the ironing”. Jill agreed with her, told her she was right, and went back to the story, to the sequence of other pictures (Observation 7).

Jill did not stifle the girl's outcry, or tell her not to interrupt or even ignore the child. Jill corroborated that the girl's interpretation of the picture was true. Another operator, Bill, was overheard giving children praise for reading the books that they had returned to the CML:

He certainly had an easy attitude with them, admiring a shark on a t-shirt, and praising them for having read the books (Observation 4).

The examples above illustrate that operators showed approval of the children's actions and communicated to the children that they had succeeded in knowing a recipe, remembering rhymes, interpreting an image and reading a book. Chambers (1991) states that the confirmation of success is the best way to help apprentice learners; the operators were therefore enhancing the learning process for those children by confirming their success.

It has already been shown that children talked to the operators about the books that they chose (section 4.5.9.3). The children were also observed in discussion with other adults, such as play-workers, which is illustrated by observation 4.

The other workers sat with some of the other children, face to face on the floor, talking through the books the children had found. Staff were asking positive questions about pictures, helping with

reading the words and discussing the content of the books (Observation 4).

Children talked together about books as noted in section 4.4.1.8 thereby supporting each other's choices of book and discovering new ideas for books they might try. Chambers (1991) considers that discussing books together allow children to articulate their thoughts and feelings about the book and to develop their understanding and discrimination of a good or a poor book. The discussion of books aids communication and reasoning skills and reinforces a child's self-determination.

One operator, Paul, showed his understanding of the need to encourage a child's innate literacy ability. He asked children where the words in his CML were as he welcomed them aboard. His introduction to a group that visited his vehicle was recorded in the field-notes of observation 1:

"Where are the words? Do you think?" He then sits down. A child shouts out "There" and points to a poster. "Yes, there are words on the posters, where else are there words?" "In the books" shouts a child. "That's right," said Paul (Observation 1).

Paul corroborated the children's answers, as many operators were seen to do, but he varied his response to the group of children who followed:

Paul varied the "Where do we find words speech?" by adding the phrase "The most important words are inside you" (Observation 1).

The significance of the phrase "the most important words are inside you" is that it sums up the apparent attitude of CML operators as they treat children as individual readers, with valued and valid opinion. The children observed believed that their visits to a CML improved their reading skills, as discussed in section 4.5.4 above.

A child who visits a CML will emerge from the visit with a perception that they are able to successfully answer questions, make remarks about books and select the reading matter that is personally meaningful. Bandura (1977) states that, the perception of succeeding in an action imbues a feeling of self-efficacy, which is the state of self-belief that motivates an individual to repeat tasks. Prilleltensky et al (2001) consider that a child's self-efficacy and self-esteem are important psychological components which contribute to their well-being. A visit to a CML therefore reinforces a child's self-determination, emergent literacy, and personal achievement, which leads to improved well-being. Figure 30 (below), shows the way that well-being is linked to success in reading which then increases motivation, as derived from the findings of this study. Children are motivated to read because they either want to find out information about something that interests them, or they enjoy stories, or

they will acquire a certificate. If they are given free choice of reading matter, reading becomes relevant to them and they are more likely to enjoy the experience, even though they may not have read or understood every word. When that choice has been corroborated by an enabling adult, children perceive that they are successful. The perception of success makes them feel like a reader, which gives a feeling of personal achievement and well-being, which is pleasurable. Humans enjoy feeling of pleasure and will repeat actions that give them pleasure, so when a child gains a sense of well-being from reading, they are motivated to read again.

**Figure 30: The reading motivational cycle**



#### 4.5.11 Summary

The activities that were observed on CMLs were found to contribute to the general well-being of children. The children observed were motivated to read and discover information with those who required mediation being mentored by an enabling adult. Self-esteem was sustained by the facility of a CML to permit and encourage children to have personal control of their choice. Children gained a feeling of success because they were allowed to develop as a discerning reader with support and encouragement of reading and learning by CML.

operators. The acquisition of competency of a task such as choosing the book they want leads to self-efficacy, which means that children will want to repeat the experience. Consequently, children's motivation for reading is increased as well as their well-being.

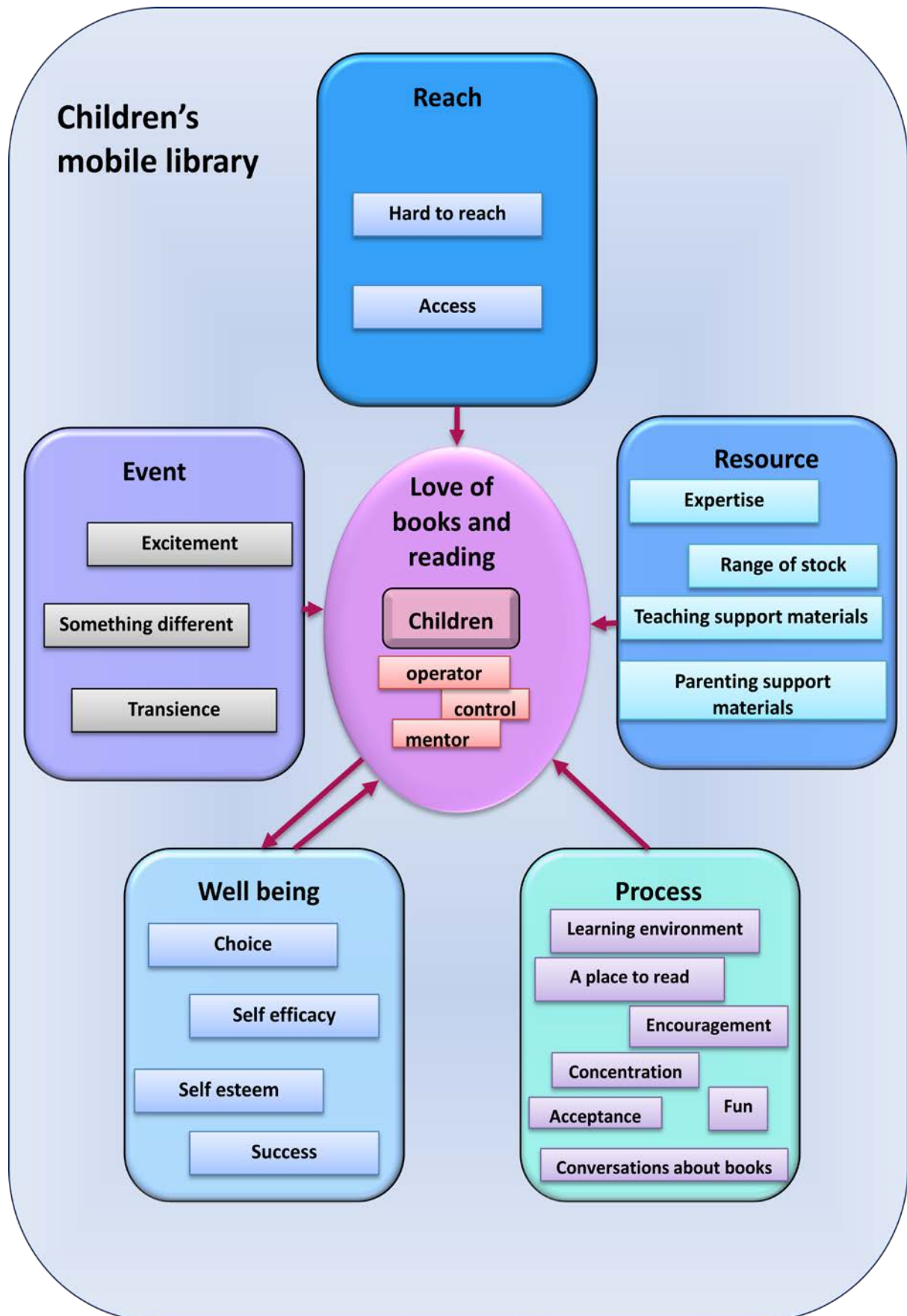
#### **4.6 The operation of CML and its effect on children's reading**

This evaluation of CMLs in the UK has found that their operation aids the development of reading skills, builds a reading culture and promotes children's reading in the communities where they operate. The effectiveness of a CML is based on its capacity to travel in order to provide accessible library services to children who would not otherwise visit a library. Such effectiveness is dependent on CML operators to drive the vehicle and take charge of proceedings inside the vehicle. Model B (Figure 31 below) shows the interactions, processes and resources found within a CML that sum up the reasons for its effectiveness. Within a CML children are able to discover a love of reading and books through: the excitement of the visit to a CML; the resources available on a CML, for them and their adult carers; the processes found on a CML; and by the feeling of well-being that is generated and reinforced by visits to a CML.

Children are placed at the heart of the model together with the operators that control a learning environment and mentor children's attempts to behave as a reader. The love of reading is fostered by five aspects of a CML service. It is an event, it can reach children, it is a resource filled with words and experiences that enable literacy, and visits to a CML stimulate a sense of well-being. The transience of the vehicle and sense of excitement that it stimulates enhances children's learning because it is a space where they can find different stories, rhymes and people. A CML can reach children because it goes to places where they can access the vehicle and its informality is attractive to people who may not use the services on offer to them. The vehicle contains a resource of teaching and parenting support materials, a range of high quality stock and the expertise of the operators. The processes that children find in its learning environment include encouragement and space to read, acceptance as a reader, discovering that reading is fun, the space to concentrate or talk about books. Children can gain well-being through the support of operators who reinforce their reading decisions which develops self-esteem and self-efficacy and leads to a feeling of success, reinforcing their love of books and reading. The model is transferable and could be tested against other children's libraries and be used to investigate other similar processes, such as other forms of children's library, or other mobile provision.

**Figure 31: Model B the operation of CML and its effect on children's reading**





The fourth objective of this current research is to identify and report examples of best

practice found during the study of CMLs. Some interesting issues were spontaneously raised by CML operators and these issues will be discussed in the next chapter together with effective operational procedures which were observed.

## **Chapter 5: Examples of good practice**

The comparisons made between the different operational practices across the vehicles and children's mobile library services which took part in the research showed that certain ways of working were particularly effective in supporting the breaking down of barriers to library membership and the promotion of reading. The relationship between operators and their managers, consistency of staffing, decisions about stock management, team working with other agencies and working closely with parents and carers proved to be important factors in the service offered to customers in CMLs. To further preserve the anonymity of individuals neither operator names nor pseudonyms will be used in this chapter.

### **5.1 Relationships between managers and operators**

As in any workplace, the working relationships between staff of library services vary according to personality and management style. A general topic of conversation by participating CML operators concerned their relationships with their management. The study presented an opportunity to examine the relationships from both sides. On some occasions operators were interviewed or observed working together with their managers which showed the nature of their working relationship. At other times, managers were interviewed separately from operators.

On the examination and subsequent coding of interviews and observations, it became apparent that issues of mutual trust and communication affected the cohesiveness of a service team, the effort that operators put into their role, and their ability to work towards the goals of their CML service. The trust between the operator and manager was evident in certain library authorities, from the quantity of operational decisions that operators were encouraged to make. As an example, an operator and his line manager, from service G, vehicle V13 were interviewed together and jointly outlined plans for the development of the service, as equal members of a team. The operator was involved with scheduling and developing ideas for on-board activities:

They explained that they timetable to a three weekly cycle, but are currently so busy that they are reviewing the situation and may change to a four weekly cycle so that the staff get "some breathing time" and can do more activities with the children such as storytimes with reception classes. The operator stated he would also like to do more library skills with the children. The ideas were put jointly to me by both the operator and his line manager (Interview (ii)).

The manager had also incorporated many features for the specification of the new vehicle that were suggested by the operator. The manager commented on the importance of

working with his frontline staff and allowing them to make decisions; he remarked that he “wouldn’t have it any other way” (interview (ii)) because they are in direct contact with the customers and understand their requirements. The manager’s trust in his workforce allowed the service to expand and develop.

Similarly, (as well as being a participant in observation 17) the operator of vehicle V9, was interviewed with her line manager (a development librarian) and it was made clear during the interview that she was delegated to perform all CML operational tasks by her line manager. This included writing justification and performance reports for upper management and elected members of the local authority:

The development librarian commented that the operator spends a lot of time writing reports about the activities and events, monthly council briefings, and a yearly report about the schools and their uptake of the service. Both said that they believe that it is crucial in these times that what is done on the CML is seen to be of value to the council taxpayer (Interview (i)).

During the interview the operator explained that she made decisions with the reassurance that they were backed by her manager. She considered that this has contributed to the success of the service:

She said that she feels that she is part of a team, backed up by a supportive management team. She announced, first of all, that the success of the service is because she is given free rein to do what she wants (Interview (i)).

The manager’s trust in the operator’s abilities resulted in the operator undertaking tasks beyond those expected for her post.

Both the above examples show that trust between operator and manager results in cohesive team work and therefore good communication, such as the sharing of development ideas for service G. It was found that lack of communication between the more senior managers of a service and CML operators resulted in a breakdown of trust and a situation where operators limited their roles. Examples were found in two services: D and E. The operators of Service D stated that their library authority managers had introduced the CML as an addition to the general mobile library service without sufficiently consulting the existing staff, although they were expected to take on the roles of CML operators:

The operator told me of the tension between the mobile operators and the management. He stated that the CML was a management idea and it was foisted onto the workers (Observation 12).

From the viewpoint of the operators it appeared that the change had not been handled sympathetically, as one operator explained:

The operator said that many of the operators had been employed in the first instance to drive trucks that pulled trailer libraries. He explained that the expectations of the job had changed but no-one had re-trained the staff. This was why there was no storytelling going on in the vehicle (Observation 10).

Their role had changed over the years, but the operators felt that they had not been given the necessary training to cope with the changes. Another operator in the same service described how she felt that she was “put on the spot” when unexpectedly faced with the situation of reading to severely disabled children. She said that would have felt more capable of doing that task if forewarned:

The operator agreed with her colleague that there should be more communication between management and the workers. She stated that she did not mind doing storytelling, but liked to be prepared for it. She quoted a situation that she had been put in early in the service. The bookbus visited a special school where the children were so severely disabled that they could not come on board the vehicle. She explained that she was asked to go into the setting and tell a story, which she did, but she was not emotionally prepared for the severity of disability... She stated that she should have been prepared for that situation. The bookbus does not visit there anymore (Observation 10).

The consequence of such lack of communication in this example was loss of a resource to a disadvantaged group and of a storyteller for the vehicle. Three observations were carried out in that service over three consecutive days. Each day a different pair of operators worked on the vehicle so six operators were observed in the one CML. Five of the operators had little contact with the children, whereas the sixth operator encouraged children's reading. This was due to his overall, developmental role in the library service, because of which he only worked on the CML for one day each week. None of the operators read stories although the CML visited many early years groups. It could be argued that the operators had lost trust in their management and therefore did not work with the management's objectives for the service, limiting their roles to the dispensing of books.

Similarly, an operator in service E had lost trust in his managers because he had experienced considerable change in the service and he felt that his ideas for service improvement were not supported by his line manager. The operator had worked in the service for over twenty years and seen its expansion. At the time of the observation, that operator was witnessing the contraction and change of the CML service, for example, the range of places to visit had diminished:

The bookbus used to do street stops, the operator explained, but they stopped once a certain area was deemed not to be disadvantaged any more (Observation 14).

The vehicle, V8, was new, but the operator felt that suggestions he had made for the design

of its livery and the interior had been ignored, as had his recommendations of CML manufacturers. He considered that his line manager had not supported his expertise and therefore felt let down:

The operator expressed his unhappiness about the design of the new vehicle and claims that although he gave many recommendations on the design, his suggestions were ignored. He said that he thought his suggestions had not been championed by his manager in opposition to the fleet manager (Observation 14).

At the time of data collection, Service E was facing potential job losses in frontline staff which affected another operator:

The operator stated that she is disillusioned because she is being threatened with fewer work hours. She explained that all the posts like hers are under review across the library service (Observation 14).

Since she did not yet know the outcome of any management decision the operator felt under threat, which can lead to a loss of morale (Handy, 1993). The operator summed up her feelings and those of her colleague by stating that they were treating their posts as "just a job" (observation 14). That is to say, those two operators felt they had no control over their situation and therefore did not put any more effort into their work than necessary.

The effect of the tension between the operators and their managers on both vehicles appeared to correlate with the low attendance of scheduled groups. Table 13 (below) shows the pattern of customer visits to CMLs during the study: whether an ad hoc customer that was just passing, or regular customer or a pre-arranged scheduled group. It can be seen that most visits were by scheduled groups who attended at the times they were planned. However, Table 13 shows that vehicles V3, V6, and V8 had scheduled group visits that did not appear. The groups that did not visit V6 and V8 had not given prior notification to the operators and the operators did not collect or deliver books. Such a situation may have been due to lack of communication between the other agency and the CML operators or their managers, or from lack of communication between the CML management and the operators. As the incidents were not investigated in any great depth the reasons for poor attendance can only be speculated. However it appeared to be symptomatic of lack of commitment to the CML service by all parties involved.

**Table 13: Customer attendance of vehicles observed**

Service code	Vehicle No	Observation number	Location	Customer attendance
A	V1	1	Nursery "S"	Scheduled group attended
		2	School "AF"	Scheduled group attended
		3	Playgroup "W"	Scheduled group attended
B	V2	4	Playgroup "T"	Scheduled group attended
			Summer play-scheme "L"	Scheduled group attended and ad hoc customer
	V3	5	Preschool "M"	Scheduled group attended
			Preschool "T"	Operator visited setting
			Preschool "E"	Scheduled group attended
	V2	6	School "M"	Scheduled group attended
			School "N"	Scheduled group attended
			School "W"	Scheduled group attended
C	V4	7	Nursery "LO"	Scheduled group attended
			Preschool "SR"	Scheduled group attended
			Nursery "WC"	Scheduled group attended
	V4	8	Preschool "FV"	Scheduled group attended
			Preschool "LR"	Scheduled group attended
			Preschool "SM"	Scheduled group attended
	V5	9	Playschool "SS"	Scheduled group attended
			Preschool "B"	Scheduled group attended
D	V6	10	Nursery "RBS"	Scheduled group attended
			Family centre "VP"	Scheduled group did not visit, but an ad hoc customer did
			School "PP"	Scheduled group attended
	V6	11	School "WS"	Scheduled group attended
			School "H"	Scheduled group attended
			School "SK"	Scheduled group did not visit
	V6	12	Family centre "GD"	Scheduled group attended
			Nursery "BH"	Scheduled group attended
			School "B"	Scheduled group did not visit, but an ad hoc customer did
E	V7	13	School "WB"	Scheduled group attended
	V7	14	City estates	Regular and ad hoc customers visited. No groups were scheduled
	V8	15	Parent and toddlers "BM"	Scheduled group did not visit
			Playgroup "SP"	Scheduled group attended
			School "AA"	Scheduled group attended
			School "M"	Scheduled group attended
	V7	16	Community event	Regular and ad hoc customers visited. No groups were scheduled
F	V9	17	School "RP"	Scheduled group attended
G	V10	18	Village "F"	Regular and ad hoc customers visited. No groups were scheduled
			Children's centre "H"	Regular and ad hoc customers visited. No groups were scheduled
I	V11	19	Site "T"	Regular customers visited. No groups were scheduled
			Site "F"	Regular and ad hoc customers visited. No groups were scheduled
J	V12	20	City play area	Regular customers visited. No groups were scheduled
			Nursery "CG"	Scheduled group attended
			SureStart centre "A"	Scheduled group attended

The relationship of CML operators with their immediate line managers directly affected the service given to customers, and therefore the way that reading was promoted in the different vehicles that were studied. Team work, where each team member is seen to have equal participation and there is open communication and trust, leads to “a shared sense of purpose and clear goals and objectives” (Morris 1996). As the team work between CML operators and their managers became more cohesive, the better the service developed. It could therefore be argued that to run an effective CML service which achieves the goals of breaking barriers and promoting reading, open management, mutual trust, good communication and a cohesive team are necessary.

## **5.2 Consistency of staffing**

The ways in which CMLs are staffed differ greatly from service to service. Many services employ at least one operator who is contracted to work daily in the CML. Table 14 (below) shows the way that operators were scheduled in all the services that were studied. It can be seen that there are four different approaches to the staffing. Four vehicles are staffed by one operator only, who undertakes all the duties of the CML. Seven vehicles are staffed by two operators allocated permanently to the CML. Two vehicles are staffed by one permanently allocated operator and the role of the second operator is distributed amongst a number of other staff on a rota, such as a driver pool or library assistants. Two services, both of which operated a fleet of mobile libraries, chose to rotate all operators around each vehicle irrespective of the vehicle specialism; children, older people, home visits or generic mobile “branch” library.

Considerations of the cost of staffing as well as lone working practices affect decisions relating to staff allocation. However, this study found two further criteria which should be taken into account when planning staffing rotas: children's need for consistency and the development of operator skills. Children are better able to assimilate a learning experience when they feel secure, and a consistent relationship with a trusted adult contributes to such learning (Howes et al. 2000). It has already been shown that a member of library staff who works consistently on a CML can gain the trust of their customers (section 4.4.1.3 above). This study also found that the children who were observed responded better to the operators that they knew rather than those who were unfamiliar to them. This is consistent with remarks made by Fleet (1973) who believed that children responded positively to a consistent member of staff.



**Table 14: Scheduling of operators on all services studied**

Service code of all services studied	Number of CMLs in service	Operators also scheduled to work on other generic mobile libraries in service?	Consistent lone operator	Two consistent operators	One consistent operator, one variable operator	Two variable operators
A	1	no	✓			
B	5	yes				✓
C	2	No, but lone operator does other outreach work	✓	✓		
D	1	yes				✓
E	2	No, but variable operators also work in static libraries			✓	
F	1	no		✓		
G	3	Only to cover staff absence		✓		
H	1	no	✓			
I	1	Only variable operator			✓	
J	1	No, but also do other outreach work		✓		
K	No longer operational					✓
L	No longer operational			✓		
M	1	Yes, but only 2 vehicles in fleet	✓			
N	2	no		✓		
O	1	no		✓		

The importance for children of a relationship with a consistent operator was illustrated in Service E by their regular customers. During observation 14 two children separately commented that they liked the CML because of good books and also because the operators were “friendly” and “very helpful”. Both of those children had shown the extent of their acquaintance with the operators when they came on board and chatted with them. At another location, a group of other children apologised to the operators for not having visited for a while, and chatted about their recent experiences:

She said that she thinks that the bookbus is good “for the children to improve reading” and that the “staff are very helpful”. ...Some of the girls had not visited for a few weeks, and apologised to the operators because they had been busy over Easter. They were chatting to the operators like old friends... (Observation 14).

These children were not accompanied by teachers or parents and chose to visit the vehicle weekly of their own accord.

Operators in Services F and I stated the importance of being a consistent adult in children's lives:

The operator said that she strongly believes that children need encouragement and enthusiasm, and someone who is "not their parent or teacher, taking an interest in them" (Observation 17).

The operator explained that she feels there is more to their service than just giving out books; part of it is being a role model and another caring adult in the children's lives (Observation 19).

In other services, the operators felt that they did not have a chance to build up a relationship with the customers due to their service routines. For instance, operators from Service D recognised the service and customer benefits from the consistent staffing of a CML.

Both the operators told me that they think that the CML should be staffed by the same people all the time instead of a rota system, because it develops a relationship with the customers. One of the operators explained that he, personally, likes the variety of working over different vehicles, but sees that the service would benefit from having one set of staff for the CML, and perhaps one set for the home book service (observation 12).

The deficiency of the timetabling was recognised by the service management and improved, to a certain extent, by the scheduling of one consistent operator on one day each week:

He told me that [xxxx] is there as the stable factor, the person who can get a rapport with the children and the one they see each visit, because of the constantly changing schedule (Observation 11).

However, that CML operated on five days of the week, therefore the children who visited on the other four days did not benefit from building a relationship with an operator who understood their reading tastes and abilities.

Erratic timetabling also affects the operators' ability to perform their job efficiently and gain the expertise that is valued by customers. The frequency of handling children's resources and carrying out tasks such as reading aloud and working with children develops the operators' competency in such a role (as noted in section 4.4.4 above). An operator observed on vehicle V3 stated his dislike of having to work on so many mobile libraries, because he could not memorise the outlay of the stock:

The operator said that he feels that the shift system is too complex, that having to swap around so frequently means that you never get to know where the stock is (Observation 5).

The operator of a CML becomes a key person in the promotion of reading on a CML. They act as mentors to children, supporting reading choices and encouraging children to discover the content of books. They are an interface between information, books and reading skills on the one hand, and child and adult customers on the other. Therefore, when an operator

can build up knowledge of the resources available on the CML where they work and also acquire an understanding of their customer needs, they can then match the resource to the customer, develop an ongoing relationship between the customer and libraries and consequently promote reading.

### 5.3 Stock management

It was noted during the observations that the library service stock selection policies affected the availability of children's first choice of books. Items of stock found on CMLs may have been chosen either by the CML operators' line managers, or by a selection panel made up of the children's librarians across a library service, or even through selection made by a supplier from a book warehouse. It appeared from the observations that, in the majority of services, the staff who selected new library stock took into account recommendations from CML operators concerning the type of books that their customers enjoyed reading. For example, an operator from service C explained that, although books are purchased centrally by a selection team she is able to supplement the basic choice by asking them to buy books she knows her customers will want to borrow:

She said that stock is purchased centrally, she is sent the books and then will request certain others that she wants and they are bought for her (Observation 9).

Similarly, the children's librarian team associated with service F select books in consultation with the CML operator.

The operator reported that the stock is bought by the children's librarians, but she has input into what is bought. She said that she creates a "wish list" which is influenced by the comments, trends, likes and dislikes of the customers (Observation 17).

However, in two services, D and E, the operators' suggestions were not taken into account when stock was purchased and the observations showed that children could not find books that they wanted to borrow. Most children who were seen borrowing books during the observations selected and borrowed books and were apparently satisfied with their selection because they voiced no concern about it. Nevertheless, one boy was observed searching the non-fiction section (Figure 32 below) for a book about dinosaurs, but none was found. He ultimately settled for some storybooks that his mother had chosen for him:

The mother left the books at the counter while she collected her son from school, then returned with him. He looked at a few books and wanted to take one about dinosaurs but couldn't find any. He let his mother choose for him (Observation 14).

The non-fiction section of that CML comprised three small shelves of books above a

cupboard (Figure 32 below). This is a small number of books and the unavailability of a dinosaur book that day appeared to corroborate the suggestion that the non-fiction section was not sufficient to supply customer needs, particularly those of boys. A survey conducted for the National Literacy Trust found that boys like reading information, for example, newspapers and instruction manuals (Clark, Osbourne and Akerman 2008). Limiting the number of non-fiction (information) books on a CML reduces choice for boys.

**Figure 32: Non-fiction section on Vehicle V7, Service E**



The collection of non-fiction books on vehicle V7 is small when contrasted with the large number of non-fiction books on vehicle V2, Service B, where one entire side of a CML was allocated to non-fiction, as can be seen in Figure 33 (below).

**Figure 33: Non-fiction section on vehicle V2, Service B**



During an observation that took place on vehicle V2 an operator helped a boy select a book on Chemistry from many that were on the shelf.

Later I saw the boy with the operator looking for books on Chemistry. The operator was pulling books off the shelf and the boy was looking at them with a thoughtful expression... (Observation 4).

The observations that were conducted in Vehicle V6, Service D, illustrated another consequence of not purchasing the type of stock suggested by operators. The stock for that CML was selected by the managers of the mobile fleet, all other vehicles being generic mobile libraries. It appeared that operator recommendations were not implemented for vehicle V6 because it was observed that seven request forms to obtain books from other libraries in the authority, for specific book titles, authors or subjects were filled in on that vehicle as opposed to zero requests during all other observations in every other authority. For instance, during observation 10, a child who was a regular horse rider asked for any book about horses, but there was no book available on the shelf:

Another girl liked horse books. She went riding regularly. The operator looked for some horse books but there were not any so she filled in a request form (Observation 10).

Similarly, during observation 11, it was noticed that the stock did not appeal to the older boys who were visiting the vehicle, therefore the operator needed to make numerous alternative suggestions and make several requests:

If there was not the right book for the boys, which happened a lot, the operator suggested a substitute and wrote a request for the right book... (Observation 11)

The operator commented on the poor selection of books in the vehicle:

The operator said that he considers that the bookbus doesn't stock the right things. It certainly doesn't have what these children want. It is noticeable from yesterday and today the amount of requests that are done. I asked who is actually responsible for choosing the stock that goes on the bookbus, and the operator said that it is the access team that decide. There is no team of children's librarians in that authority (Observation 11).

When the stock was examined it appeared to be biased towards fiction books that were targeted towards younger girls:

From my examination of the stock there is little new teenage stock, there are few non-fiction books and there is a large selection of pink, flowery, girly books (Observation 10).

In that specific case, the vehicle did not provide a sufficient selection of books for all the customers to choose the book that they wanted to read.

It has already been shown in section 4.5.9.2 (above), that personal choice of reading is important to children's self-efficacy and their reading development and that operators understand their customers likes and dislikes (section 4.4.4 above). Therefore operators should be able to inform purchasing personnel on the correct books to suit the customers of their CML. As noted by Eyre (1996), it is important to have an understanding of children's current reading habits, and their preferences, to be able to provide an efficient service, especially in times of financial difficulties. Budgets should be controlled effectively to buy the

stock that will be read. It can therefore be argued that acting on the recommendations of operators in the selection of children's resources not only improves children's reading skills and aids the promotion of reading, but also ensures the efficiency of the service. This finding adds weight to the debate about stock selection mentioned in section 3.5.1.5 (above) and demonstrates that frontline staff know more about their customer reading needs than other library service staff.

## **5.4 Working with other agencies**

The importance of a good working relationship in the smooth running of a CML service has already been explored in section 4.4.1.6 (above). A CML gathers the majority of its customers by going "Where children are" (operator, observation 17), such as schools, early years settings, and childcare facilities. Therefore, the workers in those establishments, as the children's gatekeepers, need to appreciate the importance of visiting a library to allow the children to access the CML. Many in house concerns can prevent that access, such as meetings, tests or lack of sufficient staff.

Certain CML services work to lift the barriers by using various strategies. For instance services B and C, allow operators to go into the establishment to read stories and collect and deliver books if the children are not able to come to the vehicle:

This was the pre-school where staff did not want children to come out on this occasion due to some behaviour issues. It was not explained what these were... ... the operator said that often staff go into that preschool to tell stories (Observation 5).

We all went into the playgroup, (I was introduced) where all the children were sitting waiting. The operator read the story... (Observation 8).

Other services do not implement such a policy, which leads to a situation where children cannot visit a CML which is parked outside their school or under fives setting because the establishment does not have sufficient staff that day to supervise the children as they leave their building. This was illustrated by an incident during observation 10:

The early years worker explained to me that today they did not have sufficient staff, or adults to bring the children out. She recounted that there is supposed to be two children per adult for out of setting visits, which the visit to the CML is classed. In the setting it can be five children to one adult. They are currently having a staffing problem (Observation 10).

If the staff were able to go into the setting with a selection of books, although the experience for the children would not be quite the same, then children would gain the

continuity of a relationship with operators and a chance to browse through books.

Services G and J attempted to remove the barrier to access completely through the establishment by CML operators and their managers of close working partnerships with other children's agencies which partially fund a vehicle at each service. Service C has a similar arrangement, sharing a vehicle with another children's agency, but operating separately. The operators of service G were observed planning a joint approach to on-board sessions with a children's centre manager:

... a centre worker came across with two parents and three children. They were followed by the centre manager, so I introduced myself and told her about the study... ..She spent some time talking to one of the operators. Afterwards, that operator told us that the manager had had a suggestion for encouraging the parents to come on board... The other operator said that she thought that was a good idea (Observation 18).

One operator in service C and two in service J were also Bookstart co-ordinators with a responsibility to take Bookstart packs into clinics and Early Years settings:

The operator remarked that the three days that she is not on the vehicle, she spends as a Bookstart person, sometimes going out with health visitors, and visiting community groups (Observation 9)

The manager told me that two of the operators also deliver Bookstart books, tell stories in clinics and work with parents and children (Observation 20).

Service J also has a deeper involvement with the staff of children's centres and Early Years settings. The CML operators train the staff to read aloud and how to conduct storytimes, as part of their role:

The team also train Sure Start workers who have little confidence in storytelling (Observation 20). The CML services discussed above have integrated their library service and the operator expertise with other agencies that work towards the development of children and their literacy. Such partnership working was recommended by the report "Start with the Child" as a means of "promoting book ownership and use" (CILIP 2002b, p11). It can therefore be argued that close working with other agencies is desirable to ensure that children have access to the facility of a CML, and as part of a combined approach to promoting reading to children and their parents and carers.

## **5.5 Working with parents and carers**

When children were asked the question "Who reads to you?" during the observations, 16 replied that their "mum" read to them, seven children were read to by their "dad" and five

children were read to by other family members. Only three children replied that no-one read to them; the majority of children did not reply. The children, who did answer, replied instantly, without considered thought and accompanying teachers, classroom assistants or other carers had to remind the children that they also read to them:

When I asked who read to them two boys said that their mums and dads did. The teaching assistant reminded them that they also had stories in class (Observation 6).

This is significant because it shows the importance of a close family member to children's development of literacy and love of reading; although a professional carer may have read to a child, it was the time spent with a parent or other close family member that was recalled by children.

Most CMLs visit children at their school or early years setting, therefore may only interact with parents during school holidays or after school time. Seven of the 12 vehicles that hosted observations were visited by parents at some time during an operational year and were only observed on four occasions during the data collection period. Although the operators of these vehicles built up a relationship with the parents, it was only on two vehicles that the operators were actively aware that they could help a parent develop their literacy skills. These were the two services, G and J, which also had a close partnership with other agencies.

The operators who worked in service G, which had only been in operation for six weeks when it was observed, stated that they were building up a relationship with the parents and children who visited the vehicle such that they could develop the parents' skills and abilities:

The operators said that the service is so new that they are still building up a clientele. They commented that they are still at the stage of trying to establish a rapport and trust with parents. They said that they realise that, for some, it is a huge step simply to come on to the vehicle. When they have established trust, they explained, they can do activities to model good parenting and good literacy skills to parents (Observation 18).

In contrast, Service J had been in operation for 9 years and has become a feature of its community. One of the operators considered that the service is effective at breaking down barriers of access because it provides an informal environment that is easy for parents and carers to use.

The operator said that she thinks it does the community good; the community stops are usually very busy with parents and grandparents bringing their children and grandchildren on. She recounted that since [the male operator] started, he has attracted on-board more fathers with children. She stated that she thinks that the community stops work so well because the CML is in



their “comfort zone”. She said that it is easy to come on board a vehicle that is in your street, it is not a formal building, and the staff are not authoritarian, so people come to it instead of a static library (Observation 20).

Therefore, the service has established a trusting relationship with many people in its community with whom the operators can work to help them develop the literacy of their children or grandchildren. The manager of the service outlined some of the work undertaken by the operators:

Much of their work, she said, involves modelling storytelling for parents, so that they can do it with their children at home (Observation 20).

The influence of parents on children’s reading skills has been researched and documented for many years (as discussed in section 3.6 above) and has been found to be the most significant factor in the development of literacy and children’s future learning (Clark and Rumbold 2006). Intervention projects for raising literacy recognise the value of teaching the parent how to facilitate their child’s literacy (and numeracy) development (PEEP 2009). It can therefore be argued that a children’s mobile library provides an opportunity for parents to be mentored to develop their own literacy skills so that they can help their children’s reading. It was stated in section 4.5.9.4 (above) that CMLs are a place where children can be independent, and the concept of working closely with parents appears to contradict this idea. However, if parents are told the reasons why children should be allowed their independence of choice and the parent is encouraged to support their child as opposed to dominate, then the child is further empowered.

## **5.6 Summary**

To operate an efficient and effective CML service the following good working practices have been shown to contribute to breaking down the barriers to using libraries, the promotion of reading and the development of reading skills:

- The development of trust between operators and their managers
- Consistent staffing schedules
- Operator recommendations for stock
- Working closely with other agencies, and parents and carers.

A good working relationship between operators and managers must be established with open management, mutual trust and good communication to form a cohesive team that can provide customers with a developing service that is tailored to their community needs.

Staffing rotas should be scheduled to ensure that customers are served by the same operator on each visit. Consistency of scheduling engenders mutual trust between operators

and customers, allowing matches between available resources and customer requirements and bridges to be built between library services and communities.

Stock purchasing decisions that correspond to children's reading habits should be informed by CML operators' customer knowledge, thereby providing an efficient service and promoting reading. CML teams should work closely with other local agencies that are involved with children's literacy and education in order that as many children as possible are given the opportunity to experience a library and reading environment, within the service area.

Working with parents on a CML, as well as with their children, can develop the parent's own literacy and allows parents to find out how to enhance and encourage the literacy of their children.

## **5.7 Recommendations for best practice**

The following recommendations should be adopted by CML services in order to achieve good working practices and an effective service:

### **5.7.1 Effective management practices**

- Communication between CML operators and their managers should be open, honest and ongoing
  - Service goals should be clearly stated and understood
  - Role expectations should be made explicit
  - Training requirements for operators should be negotiated and fulfilled
- Managers should trust the judgement of frontline staff to inform operational, policy and procurement decisions
  - The skills and competencies of operators should be recognised and used to the benefit of customers
  - Operators' suggestions for vehicle specifications should be accepted, within reasonable limits of cost and function
  - Operators' opinion and advice on service development should be sought and integrated into development plans
  - Managers should understand and sensitively apply principles of change management
- Operators and managers should be encouraged to form a cohesive team
  - Team building exercises and events should be undertaken together

### **5.7.2 Appropriate staffing issues**

- CMLs should be staffed by operators specifically allocated to a certain vehicle
  - Operators should be encouraged to develop an understanding of the reading tastes of customers
  - Operators should be encouraged to develop ways of supporting children's reading through general encouragement and enthusiasm
  - Operators should develop rapport, establish trust, demonstrate value and celebrate achievement with their customers
  - Consistency of staffing allows operators to build up expertise and perform their job efficiently
- Staffing rotas and vehicle schedules should support customer and operator working relationships
  - Customers need at least one operator to serve them consistently at each visit
  - CMLs should be scheduled to visit venues regularly and frequently, for example once a fortnight or three weeks
  - Venues should be appropriately scheduled to times and places when and where children are available
- Staff appointed to work as CML operators should be enthusiastic about working with children
  - CML operators should feel empowered to control children's on-board behaviour and activities
  - Operators should be encouraged to communicate with children through humour and develop a sense of reading being fun
- Operators should be encouraged to take ownership of the interior of CMLs by creating and arranging appropriate displays of books or children's work

### **5.7.3 Stock management procedures**

- CML stock should be provided to cater for the tastes and requirements of customers for all the communities that they serve
  - Centrally purchased basic stock should be supplemented with appropriate items
  - Staff purchasing stock should be informed of customer needs by CML operators
  - The range of immediately available items should be chosen carefully as choice and variety attracts customers, fosters reading skills and promotes

literacy

- A broad range of both fiction and non-fiction books for pre-readers and advanced readers should be stocked on each CML

#### **5.7.4 Partnerships with other agencies**

- The value of CML visits to educational establishments should be made explicit to staff and managers of such organisations
  - Staff of schools and early years settings should be made aware of the contribution of CMLs to the development of children's reading skills
  - CML service managers and operators should understand the curriculum needs and service targets of schools and early years settings
  - Events at schools and early years setting that affect the normal CML visit schedule should be communicated and flexibility of both parties demonstrated
- Other agencies and operators should be encouraged to plan events together
  - Time for joint planning meetings should be scheduled
- CML operators should pass on their skills, such as storytelling and reading aloud, to the staff of other agencies
  - Joint training sessions should be planned
  - Staff from other agencies should be encouraged to visit CMLs and observe operators
- Reading interventions schemes, for example Bookstart, should work in close partnership with a CML
  - Arrangements should be made for reading intervention scheme staff to spend time working on CMLs

#### **5.7.5 Working together with parents**

- CML services should develop and increase work with parents and children
  - CMLs should attend community events to allow families to visit
  - Relationships with Children's Centres and SureStart Centres should be developed and visits scheduled at times that both parents and children are available
  - Operators should understand the value of modelling reading skills to parents
  - Operators should inform parents of informal ways to support their children's literacy

The following chapter will reflect on the problems that were faced to ensure the validity of data and safeguard against bias, and areas of the research that could be pursued further.

## **Chapter 6: Reflections**

### **6.1 Contribution to knowledge**

This study was conducted to examine the validity of the assertions made by library services that CMLs break down barriers of library membership and spread the love of reading. In order to conduct the study, an inventory of all local authorities that operated CMLs needed to be compiled because there was no other record of the extent of CMLs in use across the UK. Similarly, there was no previous definition for a CML therefore the definition devised and presented in this document is unique.

This evaluation of the CML services, their staff and CML operators has verified the assumption that taking a library vehicle into the community increases reading promotion and literacy skills. The research, which was based on empirical data, drew together knowledge and understanding from the disciplines of neuroscience, education, psychology, information science and library studies to provide supporting evidence for the resulting theories. Therefore, not only did this study show that CMLs were effective in breaking down barriers to library membership and increasing children's literacy but also recorded and explored the underpinning reasons for such effectiveness.

There is comparatively little published academic research and literature about children's library services, and even less investigation into the value of libraries to children's development and literacy skills. This study has therefore been an important contribution to that area of knowledge. The reporting, listing and evaluation of best practice in the operation of CMLs and the modelling of the operation and its effect on children's reading (Figure 31 above), provides a benchmark against which children's library services can be measured. Therefore the contribution to knowledge from this study is: a definitive document of characteristics of a CML; a record of CMLs operating across the UK at the time of writing; a greater understanding of the processes and interactions on CMLs between operators and customers that contribute to increasing children's literacy and an authoritative account of the value of CMLs and children's libraries to children's lives.

### **6.2 Limitations of research**

Research that studies the behaviour of people in their own environment, as in this current

study, can be open to many factors that could influence the results. This section examines the factors faced during the study and discusses solutions to the problem of keeping the data valid. According to Pickard (2007) the validity of qualitative research can be judged by its credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

Credibility can be established through the gathering of data over a long period of time, from a variety of methods or from a variety of sources. Time was a limiting factor for the current research which made it difficult to assess the long term effect of the children's mobile library. This meant that each child was only observed once and their attitudes and reactions were noted only for a short space of time. The level of influence that a CML had on their reading ability was deduced from the children's immediate responses to the CML experience, and from their conversations with the researcher. Each observation became a snapshot of time. However, the data were not only gathered from observing children, but also by talking to the children's parents, carers and CML staff. There were 20 observations involving 710 children in total which meant that the individual snapshots could be built up to show a pattern of influence.

Dependability of data is provided by collecting concrete evidence during the research process and through providing an audit trail so that the process can be examined by another person. The current study used a field note diary to record the data, which was then coded and analysed using grounded theory techniques. Two problems were encountered in the recording and analysis of data. The first problem was the researcher's memory. Field notes were written up after observations because it was impractical to write notes during the participant observations. On many occasions the researcher was able to write notes almost immediately, but at other times they were written hours, or days, after the event, because of travel or other commitments. Some of the participants' actions, words, and phrases were inevitably forgotten. This deficiency was compensated for by the large volume of rich data that was collected and did not have a detrimental effect on the research as a whole.

The second problem may have been more damaging. The researcher used a qualitative software package called "Qualrus" which was purchased under an individual licence and installed on the researcher's laptop computer. The coded field notes were therefore not backed up on any other system. Unfortunately, the laptop developed software problems and the coded field notes were lost. Fortunately, the extensive set of initial codes and the uncoded field notes were saved to allow the rest of the analysis to be completed. There is therefore a small break in the audit trail because there is no longer a record of the initial

codes alongside the words and passages that prompted their use. The problem was overcome because in order to provide evidence for the research findings, the researcher traced back the thoughts and concepts which prompted the initial codes and matched them to relevant passages in the field notes. The lesson learnt in this case is to use more commonly available software.

Confirmability relates to researcher bias and subjectivity. The current study was conducted through a constructivist philosophy using ethnographic data collection techniques to examine participants' perceptions of their world. An ethnographic researcher is advised to enter the field with an open mind, not an empty head (Fetterman 2010). This means the skills, knowledge and understanding that a researcher already has is a valuable tool in understanding the research setting as long as the researcher does not judge the setting with preconceptions or prejudices. As the researcher was already knowledgeable about children's literacy, anticipated outcomes had to be set aside during the data gathering process. The researcher's prior knowledge became useful during analysis, in order to understand the interactions which were observed, and to appreciate what further information and knowledge was needed to interpret the results. For example, the researcher knew that children learn better when they are relaxed, but needed to find the empirical research to explain why they learn better in a relaxed state.

Ethnographers are also aware that a researcher placed into an environment can affect the outcome of the research because of the effect they have on the participants. Participant observations held on CMLs during their daily or regular operations were chosen for this study to minimise any effect and allow the researcher to blend in. However, there were instances where the presence of the researcher may have unwittingly affected the data gathered. During the participant observations, children were asked if they thought that a CML helped their reading. Those who replied to that question were emphatic that it did. It is possible that those children were answering in a positive way to please the researcher, but as the conversations were informal and the children who expressed that opinion were the most articulate, there is little doubt that they perceived that their visits to CMLs help them with their reading skills.

Transferability of research means that the findings from one study can be transferred to another context. In this case, a model of the operation of a CML was developed which can be adapted for use in analysing similar situations, for example storytimes in a children's

library (Figure 31 page 199 above). Overall, all efforts were made to limit the factors that could have influenced the results of this current research.

### **6.3 Recommendations of further work**

The grounded theory strategy used as a method of research opens up a new field and finds more questions about that field which can be answered in one project. The study of children's mobile libraries raised some questions that merit further research. The topics include:

- The promotional properties of the livery and interior design of a CML
- A study of children's and young people's experiences with books
- The long term influence of a CML

#### **6.3.1 The promotional properties of the livery and interior design of a CML**

The current research found that children seemed unaware of colourful CML livery or the provision of special seating and shelving in a CML. The children showed more interest in the selection of books available to them. This raises an issue of unnecessary expense for library authorities, who believe that a bright exterior and comfortable interior promote the service to children. Building and decorating a customised CML requires a large budget and in times of constraint, financial savings are attractive to local authorities. It could be the case that the colourful livery and children's book designs indicate to adults that the vehicle is for children, and act as a prompt for them to take their children onto the vehicle. It is also possible that CML livery that stands out in a community acts as a visible advertisement for local authority services and therefore considered worth the investment.

The aim of the proposed study would be to investigate the promotional benefits of a highly decorated vehicle against that of a similarly stocked plain vehicle. There is a body of literature which discusses the promotion of libraries which includes the use of marketing theories. Work on library design would also be consulted and the findings of the study compared with the literature. The reactions to each vehicle from children and their local community would be gathered by interviews and questionnaires, and then case studies of each vehicle could be compared. Library authorities could use the resulting information when designing their vehicles.



### **6.3.2 A study of children's and young people's early experiences of books**

A group of older boys were encountered in observation 11 who showed a reluctance to touch and hold books. The scope of the current research did not allow their background to be investigated or further questioning to find out what experience the boys had had with books in their early lives. The topic of boys' reading has been of concern to educators for some time, prompting many strategies to inspire boys and their fathers to read more. The literature that was read for the current study gave conflicting arguments for the reasons why boys are not considered to be interested in reading. Further research into the topic could examine the arguments and add to the discussion.

The proposed study would probe into the boys' past to discover how much contact they had with books in the past, in what context, whether at home or school, and if any experiences led them to be reluctant to handle and browse through books. The aim of the study would be to understand how early experiences influence boys' feelings about books and reading. The methodology would be qualitative in nature using in depth interviews to understand the boys' thoughts about books. The co-operation of the boys and their carers would be essential for a valid study. The findings could be compared with the present conflicting arguments in order to identify issues and possibly the correct solution. The result could provide insight into the issue of a gender-gap between male and female readers and the provision of books in certain households.

### **6.3.3 The long term influence of a CML**

CML operators who participated in the current research believed that they had changed children's lives through encouraging the children's reading skills. The operators' perception was influenced by the development of individual children's literacy throughout the time that they regularly visited their CML. It has been noted in this research that children's literacy is affected by so many factors that isolating one outstanding influence is very difficult. Discovering the perceptions of adults who were CML visitors in their childhood to find out whether they thought that the CML helped their reading skills is possible. The survey of CMLs that operate in the UK identified at least two services which had been operational for over 28 years. The long term influence of a CML could be discovered through a study of past customers of the long lived services. The aim of the study would be to discover whether the adults thought that the course of their lives may have been different should they not have had access to a CML service.

In order to interpret the adults' perceptions, theories relating to social and psychological development would need to be consulted. Data could be gathered either through conducting interviews or questionnaires with past CML customers and the findings used to form a hypothesis that explains whether children's lives have been changed to some degree by visits to a CML. The drawback to this study is the possible difficulty of contacting adults who used CMLs in their childhood.

In the next chapter the research objectives are discussed and the conclusions of the study are presented.

## Chapter 7: Conclusions

The aim of this study was to evaluate whether children's mobile libraries in the United Kingdom aid the development of reading skills, help build a reading culture and promote children's reading in the communities in which they operate. At the time of writing 16 local authorities of a total of 228 operate 26 children's mobile libraries in a range of geographic locations (see appendix 1), which means that only a small proportion of children are served by CMLs in the UK. During the course of the current study it was found that no two services operate in exactly the same way. This was a contributory factor for the use of grounded theory as a research strategy, in order to compare the similarities and differences of each service.

The analysis of library service websites and unpublished reports revealed a common thread in the aims of each CML service. Each service aimed to achieve: the promotion of "reading as fun", the need for "accessing new audiences", and the aspiration of "making a difference" (section 3.7.1.6, above). The study evaluated the extent to which all services fulfilled the above aims. The evaluation was achieved by the examination of interactions between the social actors and the identification of processes used to encourage reading. The influence of regular visits to CMLs on children was queried in order to find out whether children thought that reading was fun; whether they would not otherwise have used a library; and, whether the experience of visiting CMLs actually made some difference to their lives.

Four objectives were set in order to achieve the aim of the study. The first was to investigate whether there were well founded reasons for taking a children's library into the community to promote a reading culture. The second was to find out whether the interactions between children and CML operators promoted reading to the children. The third was to discover whether visits to CMLs influenced children's reading and finally, the fourth, to record and list examples of best practice in CMLs which led to the promotion of reading skills and literacy. The following sections discuss the extent to which each objective has been reached.

### 6.4 Objective 1

*To investigate and analyse the reasons for taking a children's mobile library into the community to promote a reading culture.*

The study concluded that CMLs are mobile learning environments that actively promote

literacy which is the reason to them to be taken into communities. The research found that the vehicle itself acts as a conduit to learning in that it is a mobile learning environment that not only carries the inert stock of the printed word, but also transports a vibrant atmosphere of "something different" into any community. The combination of child specific stock, a word rich environment and operators who are enthusiastic about books, forms an on-board reading culture which is transferred from place to place irrespective of the outside community's attitude to reading. The observations undertaken in the study showed that, when a CML arrives at a designated stop in a community, the children are stimulated into the state that Caine and Caine (1991) term "active attentiveness" because of the excitement that they displayed. The children enter the reading culture to become part of it because the CML is a place where reading and looking at books is an acceptable activity. By entering the CML, they become "readers"; their level of reading skill is immaterial. The departure of the vehicle and the children's exit allows a time for reflection which fixes the children's experiences into their memory.

The research showed that it is the transient nature of CMLs that attracts visitors because the ongoing cycle of CML visits is perceived by customers as a continuum of story and literature. This phenomenon of story, literature, and information may be sampled briefly by visitors while at a point of rest before the CML moves on. The visitor then feels a sense of release from their daily routine. Many of the participating parents or carers who spoke during the observations used such phrases as "something different" or "a nice trip out" to describe their reason for bringing children to visit to a CML. Participants showed feelings of enjoyment and excitement while visiting CMLs, stimulating a sense of "well-being" which makes the visitor want to repeat the experience. The effect of "catching" a CML at a stop before it moves away is so strong to some people that they travel to the CML to experience the "event". The vehicle attracts visitors because it is not always present in that community, a library that is always there would not have the same effect. Therefore it can be concluded that the attraction of a CML is that it comes and goes.

The study found that CMLs can serve children wherever they are. CMLs not only attract children who would not normally visit a library to come to the vehicle, but CMLs also go children who may live in a geographically remote area, who may not have an adult to escort them to a static library, who may dislike a static library, or have lack of mobility due to their health or because of incarceration. It was found in conclusion that CMLs take the library service to children that are hard to reach.

The research showed that CMLs are inclusive and available to children of all needs and abilities. Children who visit CMLs represent a full range of reading ability, from those who do not read to those with very advanced reading skills. Children from all areas of population and socio-economic backgrounds visit CMLs and borrow library books irrespective of the number of books to which they may otherwise have access, either at home or at school. Each child gains the opportunity to enhance the skills that they possess. Such blanket coverage reaches children who have not had the opportunity to explore books and those who have rejected the concept of reading for pleasure. The relaxed environment of a CML allows children to give themselves permission to enjoy reading and in that way it can stimulate children who have not responded to other reading programmes where they may feel at risk of failure. At the opposite end of the spectrum the CML is a rich and varied resource that is exploited by enthusiastic children to nurture their intellectual needs. In conclusion CMLs are inclusive because they cater for everyone.

The study revealed that children also indirectly benefit from the CML coming into their community, because it is accessed by adults, as well as children, who would otherwise find it difficult to obtain a free, specialist service. Schools, nurseries and other early years childcare settings are communities as well as the streets, houses and flats where children live. Teachers, carers and parents use the child focused resource of a CML to enhance their own reading skills, to acquire the information that they need in order to parent, teach or guide children and also to borrow resources to use with children in their home, classroom or nursery. Schools in certain authorities may be able to use a school library service to provide books and teaching materials, and advice from children's librarians. To access the school library service, however, the school has to pay an annual subscription and a fee for the resources that are borrowed. Although some school library services also operate a mobile library, they do not visit schools as frequently as a CML operated by a public library authority. The study found that a CML, in contrast, provides the service frequently, regularly, and with no cost to the school. It was therefore concluded that a CML is an educational resource that is free at the point of delivery.

Parents may be able to visit children's centres for help and advice with parenting skills, and many static libraries hold story sessions and rhyme times for children who are not of school age. The study found that CMLs offer these opportunities in places where there is no children's centre and no static library. CML services aspire to making a difference to children's lives, meaning that they hope that CML service will improve the future life of

children because a CML, as a library, is a gateway to the pleasures of learning and reading. It is therefore concluded that CMLs change the life that children are living. The arrival of a CML into a community changes the life of a visiting child for the duration of time that it is present in that community. Without that visit the child would not experience a learning environment so focused on books and reading skills. Whether the child uses that experience to steer the course of their future is unknown, and the long term effect of visits to a CML could be investigated through further research.

At the time of writing, local governments in England are facing spending cuts and many are considering whether to stop funding children's centres (Richardson 2011) and libraries with the result that many face closure (Page 2011). During the period of this study no CMLs have been withdrawn from service. On the contrary, three new services have started which appears to indicate that certain local authorities recognise their potential. This can be seen in the following extract from an email sent to the researcher:

*You may be aware that we are consulting on the viability of some of our libraries in xxxxxxxxxx at the moment, and if we do lose any of the static service points, the mobiles, and particularly this vehicle, will be key in ensuring that we continue to provide a service right across the city.*

*We plan to visit early years settings and primary schools, bringing library services into the heart of communities. It's really difficult to bring a whole class of small children to a branch library, even if it's quite close, but with the mobile we can pull up on their door step. Because of issues around deprivation, literacy and poor English skills in xxxxxxxxxx, we think it's incredibly important to reach out to communities and make our services as easy as possible to access.*

*We're piloting the mobile for three days a week at the moment, and the response has been tremendous. Lots of new joiners, which means that we're catching some children who may not ever have come to a library otherwise.*<sup>20</sup>

In conclusion, there are many valid reasons to take a CML into a community. CMLs attract children by being an exciting, transient event which is different from their daily routine. The study identified that CMLs contain a reading culture that can be accessed by children no

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<sup>20</sup> Development librarian to Marianne Bamkin, 22.10.2010

matter what place reading has in their home background because children of all socio-economic groups and reading abilities visit CMLs. It was also found that CMLs offer a free, accessible resource to adults that care for children that not only enhances the teaching and learning of children, but also, increases the knowledge of the adults. Therefore, “new audiences” are reached and CMLs do “make a difference” to children’s lives because they add an extra experience to the present life of the child. CMLs do promote reading.

## **6.5 Objective 2**

*To identify which actions taken by children's mobile library operators promote reading and stimulate reading skills.*

The conclusion was drawn from the research that CML operators have a freedom to influence children’s literacy development through humour, encouragement, reinforcement and their own literate behaviour. Unlike a classroom teacher who is required to teach to a curriculum and to achieve set targets, a CML operator has the freedom to accept a child’s reading ability, and to inspire the love of reading in an informal manner, without putting a child into a situation where they may consider that their skills are not up to the standard expected of a child of their age.

The research identified that operators were able to show children that reading is fun through establishing a friendly relationship and developing a mutual trust. During the study, operators were seen to demonstrate that reading is pleasurable, it is “fun”, and anyone can enjoy a book that suits them. Individual operators do this by different means; for some it is apparently easy to sit in front of an audience to read a book out loud and share their enthusiasm for the story. Other operators prefer to look at a book with an individual child and talk about its contents. Operators who work with older children talk about the books that children borrow, discussing the story and the child’s enjoyment of the book.

By sharing books with children, operators help children to unlock the content of a book. They facilitate the child’s interaction with the printed page and guide children through the story, or information held in the book by means of interpreting pictures and words. This is achieved by pointing to words and pictures as they are being read and by questioning the children about their understanding of the words and pictures. The operators’ positive responses to children’s answers help children to feel that they are acquiring the skill of

understanding a book. Operators encourage children's attempts at reading, at whatever level, even if it is the first "pretend" actions of looking at a book and making up a story. The operators reinforce children's self-esteem and self-efficacy by praising and encouraging children's choice of reading. They extend the reading range of children by suggesting similar authors or genre and, where possible, bringing new stock into the CML to fuel the child's interest. The positive reinforcement of children's reading habits by CML operators encourages children to read.

The research found that the operators' positive attitude to books models a type of behaviour to children that indicates that reading is a worthwhile activity that extends into adulthood. Again the influence of the operator does not stop at the child, they also model literate behaviour to parents, carers and educators who accompany children. The attitude of the operators also depends on their own perceptions of their personal achievement. Operators feel a sense of success and achievement as they see children's desire and ability for reading increase as the child grows and develops. Such a feeling increases the operator's well-being to produce job satisfaction, as discussed in section 4.4.4.2 (above) and reinforces working methods so that the operators continue to encourage and mediate children's reading. It is concluded that the actions used by CML operators to promote reading and stimulate reading skills are: revealing their personal enthusiasm for books; mentoring and modelling the process of literacy to children and adults; nurturing a child's innate literacy; and, behaving as readers themselves. It is also concluded that the operators attitude, their enthusiasm for their job, has an effect on their ability to influence children's literacy.

## 6.6 Objective 3

*To explore the influence on a child's reading of visits to a children's mobile library.*

The research revealed that the reading skills and habits of children are influenced by visits to CMLs because of the experiences they have while on the vehicles. The study found that CMLs provoke excitement, pleasure, enthusiasm and curiosity in children, feelings that stimulate well being and which humans like to repeat. Those feelings were directed at the contents of vehicles, namely the books. This means that children who visit CMLs associate the vehicles and books with pleasure. It can therefore be concluded that CMLs influence children's love of books.



The research showed that CMLs can develop children's concentration skills. A minority of children were restless and keen to physically explore vehicles as well as the books they contained but many more children, including a group of toddlers, showed great concentration while listening to stories. The toddlers' carers remarked that they would not sit that still inside their nursery. The visit to the CML had modified their behaviour and allowed them to experience concentration which is skill that contributes to an individual's ability to learn, and therefore their ability to learn to read. It can be concluded that the stimulation of concentration on CMLs influences children's reading skills.

The research showed that children were able to freely experiment with books and reading while visiting CLM's. Even the youngest children had no difficulty in handling books, taking from the shelves to explore and were often attracted to the book by a picture of their favourite superhero or a character from a television programme. Other children identified with pleasure, books that they already knew. Children of all ages quickly became immersed in a literate environment, albeit for a short space of time, and this was demonstrated by their eagerness to flick through pages of books, looking at the pictures, or reading passages to themselves or other children, accepting or rejecting their selection. By acting in such a way children were able to experiment with the content of a wide variety of books and to discover their personal preferences, behaviour that may not be so acceptable or easy to achieve in a bookshop or at a supermarket.

The only customers who showed reluctance and apprehension at handling books were teenage boys who attended a school for children with educational and behavioural difficulties. The boys were well behaved, but appeared to be uncertain of their relationship with books and found it difficult to touch them in order to select a book to borrow. However, the operators and their teacher helped and encouraged them to hold book and look at them in order to make a choice. The process of book experimentation on a CML also allowed parents and carers to share books and stories with their children while relaxed and at ease. Should the children not visit the CML, it is not known that that the time spent would be replaced by other deeply immersive activities related to reading experimentation. Schools and home cannot provide the same reading environment that is found on a CML with such a variety of books with which to experiment. Although a similar experience could be found in a static library it has already been established that CMLs provide a library service for children who may not visit a static library. It is therefore concluded that CMLs provide children with a unique opportunity to experiment with books.

The research revealed that children have a need and desire for books, and CMLs feed that desire. During the fieldwork for the study, when children were asked “What do you like about the vehicle?” that they replied that they liked the books, the variety and range. The defining concept of a children’s mobile library, in the perception of children, is the content, rather than the outer shell of the vessel, the colour or arrangement of the book shelves or whether there is comfortable seating. Certain articulate children described the value of a CML to them, using words such as “Fantastic” and “Brilliant”; it can therefore be concluded that CMLs fulfil children’s need for book. As Clark (2006) stated, reading for pleasure requires motivation and knowing that a CML contains the “books that they like” prompts children to borrow books and read them. In that respect it can also be concluded that CMLs motivate reading.

Therefore, as this study was undertaken with a constructivist philosophy, and the perceptions of children were recorded, it can be concluded that CMLs do help some children with the development of their reading because the children themselves believe it to be true. The children observed did not have sufficient meta-cognition to explain how or why the CML influenced their reading, apart from explaining that they “now read bigger books,” or that they find out “stuff they want to know” which encourages them to keep reading. As reading skills develop the more frequently they are used, it can be concluded that visits to a CML increases the frequency of children’s reading, because it is an extra stimulus over and above reading at home and school, and therefore a CML influences a child’s reading habits, skills and abilities.

## **6.7 Objective 4**

*To identify and report examples of best practice observed on CMLs.*

The best working practices that were observed during the study are:

- Working in close partnership with other agencies
- The development of a cohesive CML team
- Consistency in vehicle staffing
- Employment of enthusiastic staff
- Trust in the opinions of frontline staff

The current research revealed that CML service operational methods differed between each

authority and sometimes between each vehicle in an authority. The CML vehicles could be categorised in a number of ways: according to the target age group, or the type of venue, or the consistency of the staffing rota, or whether a service is shared with another agency. As in any evaluation, the study found that the differences in operation of each authority and each vehicle indicated that some are more effective than others. Working in partnership with other agencies, parents and carers and between CML operators and managers as a cohesive team, produces a service that is used well because it is focused on the needs of the customer. The research showed that CML services which ensure that customers are always served by one consistent operator are able to promote reading more effectively than those which are staffed by a random schedule. This is because trust and understanding can be developed between operator and customer or operator and the staff of other agencies. It was noticed during observations that operators who knew their regular customers were able to recommend suitable books but in CMLs with a random rota, the stock did not match the customers' requirements. Therefore, CML operators become the link between the customer and effective service, because they build a relationship with children, parents and carers, understanding children's literary preferences and the external pressures of each organisation. It can therefore be concluded that enthusiastic and dedicated operators who love books and understand that a CML is there to promote reading to children are key to the effectiveness of a CML service.

The literature that was reviewed in the theoretical framework suggested that operators should be trained in literacy and children's work therefore operators were asked about former jobs and qualifications. In reality, operators were selected from a wide range of backgrounds and experience. The study showed that by having a permanent job working on a CML vehicle, operators with the right personal qualities and level of enthusiasm, work out ways to encourage children to read. The research found that frontline staff who work on CMLs do not need previous library, literacy or child-care qualifications. Operators do not need to be adept at teaching children the mechanics of reading and, although a little child psychology would help with dealing with some children, most operators instinctively promote reading. The study found that two CML services use their operators to educate parents and carers in developing children's literacy, and should a service choose to extend in that way, operators may require some training to build their confidence. In conclusion, the best practice for a CML service manager is to employ an enthusiastic operator, dedicated to a specific vehicle who enjoys working with children and appreciates the value of reading and to manage the service through mutual communication with that operator.

## 6.8 Summary

The study gathered a large amount of rich data, using a quantitative methodology, from a field never previously analysed in depth. Comparisons of data between services from around the UK were generalised to discover the main aspects of CMLs, in order to open up the field for further investigation. Grounded theory analysis produced five theories of “event”, “reach”, “process”, “resource” and “well-being” which conceptualise the effectiveness of a CML.

These five theories are open to testing. Each of the four objectives were reached, concluding that: CMLs promote reading in diverse communities, CML operators encourage and develop children's reading skills, CMLs influence children's reading habits, skills and abilities, and examples of best practice were identified.

In conclusion, the study revealed that CMLs offer “something different”; a service different from that of a school library service mobile library. They foster a different and complementary approach to books and reading than schools and a different experience to that of static libraries. Children benefit from listening to different stories read by different adults and enjoy a range of different books. The use of children's mobile libraries to enhance reading can stimulate children who have become disillusioned with books and reach out to those who would not get books any other way. CMLs are part of a network of strategies employed to help children enjoy books, and they are effective because they are an event that can inclusively reach any community; and children like them.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

Local Authority	No vehicle found	Public Library Vehicle	Schools library service vehicle	Other mobile provision	notes
Aberdeen City	x				
Aberdeen shire	x				
Adur	x				
Angus	x				
Argyll and Bute	x				
Armagh	x				
Arun	x				
Blaenau Gwent	x				
Babergh	x				
Ballymoney	x				
Ballymena	x				
Barnet	x				
Barnsley Met	X				
Barrow in Furness	x				
Basildon	x				
Basingstoke	x				
Bath and NE Somerset				✓	In 2003 had under-fives sessions on the community bus.
Bedfordshire	x				
Belfast City	x				
Bexley		✓			
Birmingham City		✓			Called "Words on Wheels", can be booked for activities.
Blackburn	x				
Blackpool	x				
Bolton Met	x				
Boston	x				
Bournemouth	x				
Bracknell Forest	x				
Bradford Met	x				
Braintree	x				
Breckland	x				
Brent	x				
Brentwood	x				
Bridgend	x				
Bridgnorth	x				
Brighton and Hove	x				
Bristol City	x				
Broadland	x				
Bromley	x				
Bromsgrove	x				
Broxbourne	x				
Buckinghamshire	x				
Burnley	x				
Bury Met	x				
Cumbria	x				
Caerphilly	x				
Calderdale	x				
Cambridgeshire	x				
Camden	x				
Cardiff	x				
Camarthenshire	x				
Castletown	x				
Ceredigion	x				

# Appendices

Cheshire	x				
City of London	x				
Clackmannanshire	x				
Conway	x				
Cornwall	x				
Coventry	x				
Croydon	x				
Darlington	x				
Denbighshire	x				
Derby City	x				"Reading Rocket" in service from 2004 to 2008
Derbyshire	x				Normal service visits schools
Devon	x				
Doncaster			✓		30 minute sessions of story times. Book promotion.
Dorset	x				
Douglas	x				
Dudley	x				
Dumfries and Galloway	x				
Dundee	x				
Durham	x				
Ealing	x				
East Ayrshire	x				
East Dumbarton	x				
East Lothian	x				
East Renfrewshire	x				
East Riding	x				
East Sussex	x				
Edinburgh		✓			"Book bus", specialised provision, listed under "Access Services"
Enfield	x				
Essex	x				
Falkirk	x				
Fife	x				
Flintshire	x				
Gateshead	x				
Glasgow	x				
Gloucestershire	x				"Share-a-book", vehicle shared between public libraries and school library service. Service ceased 2011
Guernsey (G)	x				
Guernsey (P)	x				
Gwynedd	x				
Hackney	x				
Halton	x				
Hammersmith	x				
Hampshire		✓			
Haringey				✓	Two vehicles, Surestart toy and book bus, and an under fives "Baby Bus"
Harrow	x				
Hartlepool	x				
Havering	x				
Herefordshire			✓		Visits schools termly
Hertfordshire	x				
Highlands	x				
Hillingdon	x				
Hounslow	x				
Hull	x				
Inverclyde	x				
Isle of Wight			✓		Termly visits to schools
Islington	x				
Jersey	x				

# Appendices

Kensington and Chelsea	x				
Kent	x				
Kingston upon Thames	x				
Kirklees	x				Previously had service operated by children's librarians
Knowsley	x				
Lambeth	x				
Lancashire	x				
Leeds		✓			
Leicester City		✓			Have had a Children's mobile Library for the past 27 years, now have two vehicles, one specially for under fives.
Leicestershire	x				Had SLS mobile until recently, but now no mention of it on website.
Lewisham	x				
Lincolnshire		✓			Five vehicles, two for under fives and three for primary school age.
Liverpool	x				
Luton	x				
Manchester		✓			The "Reading Voyager".
Medway		✓			
Merthyr Tydfil				✓	Children use the main mobile library. Their use has been assessed. Vehicle visits schools on Mondays
Merton	x				
Middlesbrough	x				
Midlothian	x				
Milton Keynes	x				
Monmouthshire	x				
Moray	x				
Neath, Portlbot	x				
Newcastle	x				
Newham	x				
Newport	x				
Norfolk	x				
North Ayrshire	x				
NE Lincolnshire	x				
Northern Ireland, NE	x				
North Lanarkshire				✓	Normal mobile visits schools
North Lincolnshire	x				
North Somerset	x				
North Tyneside		✓			
North Yorks	x				
Nottingham City			✓		Shared with Notts county
Nottinghamshire			✓		Shared with Notts city
Northamptonshire	x				
Oldham	x				
Oncham	x				
Orkney	x				
Oxfordshire		✓			Three vehicles, one a mobile children's centre
Peel	x				
Pembrokeshire			✓	✓	Had summer holiday storytelling van in 2002, linked with sure start. In 2007, has school library service vehicle.
Perth and Kinross	x				
Peterborough	x				
Plymouth	x				
Poole	x				
Portsmouth		✓			
Powys			✓		The "Book runners". Two vehicles visits schools termly

# Appendices

Reading	x				
Redbridge	x				
Redcar and Cleveland					
Renfrewshire	x				
Rhonda Cynon Taff		✓			"Book bus"
Richmond on Thames	x				
Rochdale	x				
Rotherham	x				
Rutland	x				
St Helens	x				
Salford	x				
Sandwell	x				
Scottish borders	x				
Sefton	x				
Sheffield				✓	Bookstart bus for storytelling and distributing Bookstart packs
Shetland	x				
Shropshire	x				
Slough	x				
Solihull	x				
Somerset	x				
South Ayrshire	x				
Northern Ireland, SE	x				
South Gloucestershire	x				
South Lanarkshire					
South Tyneside	x				
Southampton		✓			"Book Plus" used for under fives during the day and adults after 4pm. Multi- lingual books.
Northern Ireland, S			✓		Visits school twice a year. Called an Exhibition Mobile.
Southwark	x				
Staffordshire	x				
Stirling	x				
Stockport		✓	✓		One sure start storybus for under 4's and one SLS one that visits schools twice a year.
Stockton on tees	x				
Stoke on Trent	x				
Suffolk			✓		Visits schools termly
Sunderland	x				
Sutton	x				
Swansea		✓			For 0-11 year olds
Swindon	x				
Thameside	x				
Telford and Wrekin	x				
Thurrock	x				
Torbay	x				
Torfaen	x				
Tower hamlets	x				
Trafford	x				
Upper Norwood	x				
Vale of Glamorgan	x				
Wakefield	x				
Walsall	x				
Waltham Forest	x				
Wandsworth	x				
Warrington	x				
Warwickshire	x				
West Berkshire	x				

# Appendices

West Dumbarton	x				
West Lothian	x				
West Sussex		✓	✓		Two vehicles, southern bookbus and northern bookbus, which is shared with children's centre services
Northern Ireland W	x				
Western Isles	x				
Westminster	x				
Wigan	x				
Wiltshire	x				
Windsor and Maidenhead	x				
Wirral	x				
Wokingham	x				
Wolverhampton	x				
Worcestershire	x				
Wrexham	x				
York	x				

## Appendix 2

### **Children's mobile libraries; expensive toys or investment in the future?**

#### **Participant Information Sheet**

**Marianne Bamkin,**

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#### **What is it all about?**

This study will look at all children's mobile libraries in Britain to find out

- What they do and how they do it
- If they help children to enjoy stories, books and reading
- How much money they cost to run

#### **Who is doing this research?**

Marianne Bamkin is carrying out the research on behalf of Loughborough University and to achieve a doctorate. Her supervisors are Dr Sally Maynard and Dr Anne Goulding.

#### **Do I have to do anything?**

The researcher will be observing the normal routine of the Mobile Library and may ask staff and customers questions about the Mobile library. Everyone has a right to refuse to take part at any point in the investigation. Notes and audio recordings will be taken only as a true record of events observed.

#### **What personal information do I have to give?**

Specific personal information is not needed, just opinions and information about literacy and mobile libraries. Everything observed or said will remain confidential. Notes and recordings will be kept for the duration of this study, then they will all be destroyed. They can be examined at any time.

#### **What will happen to the results of the study?**

The results will be used to find out the benefit of children's mobile libraries to the communities where they visit. Analysed results may be published.

#### **I have some more questions who should I contact?**

If you want to know more contact Marianne or Dr Goulding or Dr Maynard; details are above. If you are not happy with how the research was conducted then follow this link [http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/committees/ethical/Whistleblowing\(2\).htm](http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/committees/ethical/Whistleblowing(2).htm).

**Appendix 3**

**Children's mobile libraries; expensive toys or  
investment in the future?**

**JUNIOR INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

**(to be completed after Participant Information Sheet has been  
read)**

I know that this study is done with the approval of Loughborough University.

Marianne has explained why and how it is being done.

I have been allowed to ask questions about joining in.

I know I don't have to join in if I don't want to and I can stop at any time.

I understand that Marianne will not tell anyone my name, or tell anyone that I said the things I did, and she will not put my name on any notes or recordings of me.

I agree to participate in this study.

Name of child/children \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of carer \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of investigator \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix 4

### Children's Mobile libraries: Expensive Toys or Investment in the Future.

#### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

(To be completed after Participant Information Sheet has been read)

The purpose and details of this study have been explained to me. I understand that this study is designed to further scientific knowledge and that all procedures have been approved by the Loughborough University Ethical Advisory Committee.

I have read and understood the information sheet and this consent form.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in the study.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage for any reason, and that I will not be required to explain my reasons for withdrawing.

I understand that all the information I provide will be treated in strict confidence and will be kept anonymous and confidential to the researchers unless (under the statutory obligations of the agencies which the researchers are working with), it is judged that confidentiality will have to be breached for the safety of the participant or others.

I agree to participate in this study.

Your name \_\_\_\_\_

Your signature \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of investigator \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 5

### Extract from field note diary

...the grass, the river mat was pulled up beside it, we had to sit (or bend) down, and the setting staff flung a parachute over our heads for a duvet and all chanted "and we are never going on a bear hunt again".

We then went back inside, children's coats were taken off by pre-school staff and operators, but the children wanted to see the bear, which was a bit difficult as he was being dismembered in the kitchen. With a quick bit of distraction from staff gathering the children in the story room again, he put his costume back on, and made a farewell appearance, to say good bye. Several of the children got up and held his hand, or touched his considerable tummy.

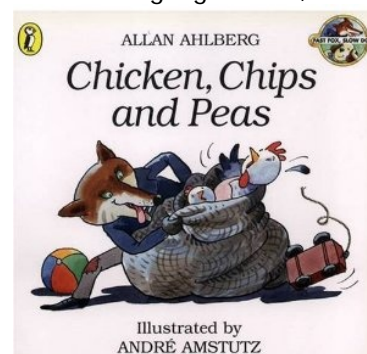


I asked a worker what was the benefit of the bookbus, and she thought it was good because it brought stories to life for the children. Her words were something like "they can be part of the story". She said that their children love stories; they have them in pre-school and on the bookbus. The book bus gives them a different experience. She said that some of the children go with their parents to visit the ordinary mobile library that visits the village. Before moving off to the next venue, a staff member chose books off the vehicle and returned the previous selection, I did not notice how many, or what the titles were.

#### Little Tykes Pre-school

This setting is in another church hall, in a street of terraced houses, near the centre of Worthing. The operators told me that this setting historically has children with low language levels and considerable developmental delay. Many of the children come from large families and as the bookbus has been visiting there for many years the operators know many of the brothers and sisters. The catchment area looks disadvantaged, quite close to the setting is a 1920's block of flats that is in a very run down state. They did not hold a World book day activity there; it was just a normal session. Two groups came on board. I tried to get many of the children to talk but there was little response. None of them gave me an answer when I asked about them having books at home. The most active and talkative child found it hard to sit still during the story (The Billy goats gruff). She told me her mother had broken a nail when I asked her about books. The other children sat and listened. At the individual choice session after the story many of the children chose the feely books. A girl pointed to a picture on the cover of a book, of a girl wearing a pink dress, and said "I got that at home" she was pointing to the dress. A boy picked up a "That's not my Tractor" book, but just held it and did not attempt to turn the pages or feel the feely bits, I took his finger and drew it gently over the corrugated cardboard insert show him what to do.

The operators had explained to me that the stock belongs to the book bus and interlibrary loans can be done. Sometimes, the operators "Borrow" books from the library in Chichester where the book bus is based. The only books that are frequently lent to other libraries are the dual language books, because the bookbus has the greatest selection collection. I read to the second group when they come on board. I chose a "Fast Fox, Slow Dog" story, because I thought it would be appropriate for the developmental level of the children. It contains few words that are repeated in a natural and amusing manner interspersed with more interesting vocabulary. They generally have a good story too. The children sat and listened. Some answered my questions about the characters and predicted the story from the pictures. I read the "Trailer" at the end of the book...



## Appendix 6

### Question framework with relationship to the research objectives

To mobile library staff

Question	Objective	reasoning	Questioning framework
If there are computers on board, what activities do the children usually do?	1	Activity should reflect the level of literacy.	Staff observation of children's activities and behaviour on the vehicle
Which books are chosen and read?	1	The books should indicate the level of literacy or interest in books.	
How flexible is the service?	2	Is the system flexible enough to reach odd pockets of disadvantage when they are discovered?	Service dynamics
What are the main criteria for the success of the library?	2	The staff understanding of the criteria of success will affect their behaviour.	
What experience have you had with children?	2	This will show if they have had training to improve literacy.	Staff competencies
What experience have you had to teach literacy?	2	This will demonstrate if they have skills to promote literate behaviour.	
What does a children's mobile library represent to you?	3	To give an indication of staff understanding of the effect of a children's mobile library.	Staff perceptions of social impact
What role do you think a mobile library has in a child's development?	3	To give an indication of staff understanding of the effect of a children's mobile library.	

To Teachers/carers/parents

What does the children's mobile library mean to you?	3	The adults approach to the vehicle will affect the understanding the child has of the vehicle.	Adult perceptions of social impact
Do you do follow up activities after story sessions?	1	This is a demonstration of modelling literate behaviour.	Children's behaviour with books, and words.
Do the children take books home or leave them in school?	1	A book at home is a good indicator that there is a parental interest with reading.	
Have you noticed more literate behaviour with the child/ren since visiting the CML?	1	To show how the vehicle affects their literacy skills	
How do the children's reading ages compare with their chronological age? (For teachers)	1	To show how the vehicle affects their literacy skills	Quantitative assessment

To children

Where is the best place for things to read?	3	Is the vehicle the place where they can get the best reading matter?	Children's experience with books
Do you like books?	1	This should lead to a discussion about books that will give an indication of the child's understanding of literacy.	
What do you like reading most? How old are you?	1	The subject matter will indicate if they are reading above or below their expected level	
What is your favourite story?	3	If it is a book in the vehicle it shows the impact that the vehicle is having.	Children's story listening experiences
Who reads it to you?	2 and 3	If it is library staff, it shows if they are having an impact on the child's literary life. If it is parent, perhaps the book has been borrowed from the library?	Role model interaction
Tell me about the ..... (CML)?	3	The tale the child will tell will inform you of the impact the vehicle has on them	Childs perception of social effect.

## Appendix 7

### Question framework, simplified for fieldwork

#### To mobile library staff

Question	Questioning framework
Computers?	Staff observation of children's activities and behaviour on the vehicle
Best books?	
Flexibility	Service dynamics
Success?	
Previous experience?	Staff competencies
Literacy training?	
What is a CML?	Staff perceptions of social impact
Effect on child development?	

#### To Teachers/carers/parents

What is a CML?	Adult perceptions of social impact
Follow up activities?	Children's behaviour with books, and words.
Books home or school?	
Effect on reading and books?	
How do the children's reading ages compare with their chronological age? (For teachers only)	Quantitative assessment

#### To children

Where do you get books from? Do you like books?	Children's experience with books
Where do you get books from?	
What do you like reading most? How old are you?	
What is your favourite story?	Children's story listening experiences
Who reads it to you?	Role model interaction
Tell me about the ..... (CML)?	Childs perception of social effect.

## Appendix 8

Theory code	Theory	Section	Page
Event	A visit to a CML arouses the brain into a state that facilitates learning because it is viewed by customers as a "event"	4.2 4.2.1 4.2.1.1 4.2.1.2 4.5.2  4.6	103 104 106 108 158 159 161 199-200
Reach	A CML has the potential to reach any child of any ability anywhere in the UK	4.3 4.3.1 4.3.2 4.4.3.5 4.4.5 4.5.8.2 4.6	111 113 115-119 142 177 185 199-200
Process	A CML provides a learning environment where interaction between social actors promote reading skills	4.2.1 4.4.1 4.5 4.5.9.3 4.5.10 4.6	105 119-134 153-181 192-194 195 199-200
Resource	A CML is a source of expertise that is drawn upon by children's educators and carers to enhance their own knowledge and skills and support their teaching	4.4.1.7 4.4.2 4.4.3 4.4.4 4.6	132 135 136-143 144-153 199-200
Well being	The feeling of well being that is stimulated by children's own actions on a CML reinforces their desire to read	4.4.1.2 4.5.7 4.6	125 181 199-200