A user study of the Information in Business service based at Leicester Polytechnic

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by

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Abstract

This is a user study of the Information in Business service to business and industry at Leicester Polytechnic. The service has been in operation since March 1990 and is a joint venture between Leicester Polytechnic and Leicestershire County Council.

This project aims to discover if there is a 'typical user' of such a service, why clients use the service regularly, whether Information in Business are reaching potential customers, and whether changes to the existing service might be necessary.The Leicestershire business environment is examined in some detail.

The user study is based on data collected by Information in Business during the first year of operation and a customer satisfaction survey carried out in June 1991.

User study of the Information in Business service based at
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Chapter 1   Introduction

1.1 Aims and objectives

This is a user study of the Information in Business service to business and industry based at Leicester Polytechnic's Kimberlin Library.   The service has been in operation since March 1990 and is a unique joint venture governed by a five year   contract   between   Leicester   Polytechnic   and Leicestershire County Council.

The aims and objectives of this dissertation are as follows:-

1) To discover if there is a "typical user" of Information in Business

2) To discover what makes individuals or companies use the service, and why they come back

3) To examine the marketing policy of the service to discover whether Information in Business are reaching potential customers

4) To consider future developments in the service

1.2 The role of academic libraries in providing external services

Stringent cuts in university and polytechnic funding continue to limit the purchasing power of academic libraries at a time when the revolution in electronic transmission of data and information retrieval threatens the very existence of libraries.

Line (1986) agrees that "academic libraries are in a crisis of funding ... they cannot solve the problem in isolation from their institutions, but they can do a great deal to alleviate it ... the outcome of a radical scrutiny could not be worse than uncontrolled decline, and could be a service that was actually substantially better than the present one."(1)

Provision of external services to the local community is seen by some academic libraries as a way of heightening the library profile within the academic institution itself whilst improving its image in the commmunity. "If you can prove it's worth it - it will be seen as essential." (2)

According to Brenda White (1987) in her report on external services in academic libraries "income generation is in no case the primary motivation for introducing external

services". (3) She gives three other reasons for academic libraries embarking on the provision of external services, "to meet an expressed, or a perceived need, to make better or more cost-effective use of existing resources" and " as part of a wider institutional commitment".

A business information service based in an academic institution has many advantages. It has access to trained professional searchers and subject specialists, to on-line searching facilities and to a large collection of journals, books and government publications. Since polytechnics have traditionally gained their expertise in technology and engineering they have concentrated on developing their links with business and industry in various ways such as consultancy, holding conferences, day schools etc., testing of materials and components, arranging student placements, training and by offering a wide variety of courses. When discussing the survival of academic libraries Line (1986) agrees that "the climate for entrepreneurial activity is obviously more favourable in institutions that have deliberately developed relationships with industry, whether by creation of 'science parks', or in other ways." (4)

Brenda White is convinced that "if a collection exists, assembled at public expense, and if it can be exploited in

greater depth and made more widely available through joint enterprises with the private sector or by using it as a base for value-added services, then it makes sense to pursue such courses, particularly if the revenue earned through exploitation can be used to cross-subsidise basic services, or if there are spin-off benefits for the library in, for example, additional staff, enhanced expertise." (5)

Few academic libraries have so far, however, embarked on providing external services to business and industry because "They see their first responsibility as the provision of basic services to ... their primary clients...the staff and students of their institutions ... and would not permit external activities or joint ventures to impinge on, or detract from, the quality of the primary service." (6) Stock, staff and space are usually already fully utilised and further pressure from external users would adversely affect primary library users.

The well-documented HERTIS service based at Hatfield Polytechnic, and the University of Warwick's Business Information Service, generally regarded as the major source of statistical information in the UK, are perhaps two of the best known examples of such services.

1.3 Determining a pricing structure

Margery Hyde (1988) carried out a major study of levels of service, related costs and charging systems. Most respondents to her questionnaire were not hostile to the idea of charges but preferred the "pay as you go" method of payment. "This was mainly because respondents were cautious about committing themselves to a largely unknown concept." (7) If there is seen to be a market for "value added" services to the local business community then a suitable scale of charges must be worked out to recover the costs of these services, and wherever possible to generate some surplus income for the library. Any costing of a business information service would include the following:-

a) visible costs such as fax, postage, photocopying, courier, or on-line searches

b) standard time-per-task costs , for example interlibrary loans

c) overheads such as heating and lighting

d) staff time spent on answering enquiries

Gambles and McGuire (1990) mention the difficulty of pitching charges for business information at an appropriate level, as these "often bear no relation whatsoever to the value of the information to the purchaser" (8) and "the market on occasions cannot or does not associate any specific monetary value with the desired product or service."

1.4 Evaluation of business information services

How do library staff find meaningful ways of measuring the quality or cost-effectiveness of their work ? Shedlock (1988) claims that "the problem for many professionals engaged in human service is not a question of delivering quality but rather knowing how to define it" (9) and that "in the absence of more sophisticated measures there is a temptation for managers and funders of information services simply to divide the costs of the service by the number of enquiries, and to use cost per enquiry as a measure of value for money."(10)

Gann (1990) admits that "while our annual enquiry figures have been an important management tool they only provide part of the picture. They give an indication of the "busyness" (sic!) of the service ... but they give no real

indication of whether the service is providing value for money or whether our customers are satisfied."(11) He goes on to say that " an enquiry is not a quantifiable, measurable unit." It may take only a couple of minutes to find out the address of a company in Belgium but several hours to search for some statistics on fish sold in the UK in 1988. In fact the company address may be of far more benefit to the end user than the statistics, but the library has no way of measuring this. Stacey (1980) writes " Though we are not supposed to question the reader's purpose, librarians sometimes wonder why people come into the library and use the material they do" (12) and staff of business information services must often wonder exactly what the user will be doing with the requested information. "In the words of one doctor speaking about the provision of health education leaflets to elderly people, we need to know which pieces of information change lives and which line the cat's box." (13)

External library services should be continuously monitored to see whether the service actually matches users' requirements. Statistics collected can be used to convince the institution of the effectiveness of the service and to support any case for extra funding and resources if required.

Hernon (1987) lists four different criteria on which evaluating a reference service could be based:

"Extensiveness, or how much of a service is provided.

Effectiveness, or the extent to which a program or service meets the goals and objectives set by the library.

Cost-effectiveness, or the operating efficiency of the organization.

Cost-benefit, or determining whether the expense of providing a service or program is justified by the benefits deriving from it." (14)

This breakdown, however, does not include any evaluation of the goals of the user, and whether their information needs are being met.

" Basically quality reference service depends on three critical elements; the *answer* ... accurate, correct and truthful information ... the *process* ... the way in which information is found on behalf of the user ... characterized by efficiency and timeliness ... and the *delivery* ... the style in which an answer is communicated to a user."(15) (The italics are mine) Shedlock is aware that "too often

quality becomes confused with quantity" but "defining quality still comes down to an expression of individual beliefs, based on an understanding of the profession and carried out consistently in everyday activity. Quality remains something that a professional wants to do more than something that has to be done."(16)

1.5 What is business information and how is it acquired ?

Kennington (1990) defines business information as "that information required by a commercial firm which assists it to carry on its business."(17)

Dare (1984) highlights the problem by saying that "we do not know what business information is until we use it." Business information is "an amorphous collection of individuals, organisations and experiences, with no two situations identical, calling upon a multi-disciplinary approach."(18)

The concept of information also means different things to individuals even within the same company, and the same piece of information can be used in many different ways and for many different reasons.

Kennington (1990) observed that " A company that is aware of and able to use information is more likely to be profitable

and expanding." He is concerned, however, that not enough research has yet been done on relating resources deployed to actual needs of companies, and to evaluate the link between the provision of "relevant and timely business information and the successful business."(19)

Roberts and Clarke (1988) when observing the information practices in environments familiar to businessmen found that

" - Information searching activities are rarely executed on a systematic basis. The level of information skills is low. Knowledge of information sources is minimal.

- There is a willingness to "make do" with easily accessible data and information.

- Only rarely will the quality of printed information sources be questioned.

- Library staff find it difficult to translate expressed business "problems" into information-seeking actions. Business enquirers do not always make their needs clear.

- Firms, even when they perceive a need for information, invest relatively little time and money upon the information acquisition exercise." (20)

Noon (1987) observes that "commercial organisations sub-optimise when it comes to information gathering either from ignorance of the sources available, from a dissatisfaction with them or for other reasons." (21)

Kennington (1990) found that the information needs of small firms were closely related to day-to-day problems. "Small firms work in hours and days; large firms in weeks and months." (22)

Don White (1985) investigated the information needs of manufacturing firms. He discovered that "information in business is about prediction and control," and that the "marketing function of the organisation is the most concerned with the use of external information." Most managers did not consider that they had an information problem, and the " general attitude to information was that it was usually available somewhere, but it was merely a question of knowing where to go and where there was a reliable source. There was "little evidence of the use or formation of any coherent information policies" and " some indication of an under-use of existing resources within firms, and an apparent lack of awareness of what publicly available services might offer." White found " a marked preference for the use of personal contacts" as a means of seeking information and found little indication of

"systematic use of the types of business information sources which those of us working in, or familiar with, library-based provision are most aware of." White concludes by saying that "any provision of information must take into account the cultural/communication patterns of business users."(23)

1.6 Marketing a business information service

Marketing a business information service involves:-

a) developing a business strategy, preparing a mission statement, and analysing aims and objectives

b) defining the potential clientele and selecting target markets

c) assessing information requirements of users and potential users and providing the necessary resources

d) determining a pricing structure based on levels of service provided, true cost of providing service and marketplace

e) promoting service through regularly updated publicity material, economical use of the relevant media such as trade

journals, local radio, public speaking engagements, exhibitions, and in other ways

f) maintaining current awareness in the field of business information and information retrieval including sources of information

g) devising satisfactory measures for regular evaluation of the service

h) modifying the service after evaluation and feedback

Regular customer surveys and interviews are necessary to continue matching services offered to users' actual requirements. A business information service responsive to the needs of its users will encourage enquiries, complaints and suggestions, and act on them wherever possible.

A business information service must make a throrough study of its marketplace, and determine the size and characteristics of each potential market segment. The information-seeking behaviour of each segment must also be considered.

When researching the attitudes of managers towards information in 1985 Don White found that "the nature of the firm and the types of markets in which it is dealing has some effect on attitudes toward information," (24) and that "it is in marketing that the regular use of libraries, of published statistics, of research and trade associations and any other useful bodies is to be found as a vital activity." Robinson (1990) found that "there was a massive re-education process to be undertaken.Our new found clients did not know what we were capable of or the full scope of our services. One of the first tasks was to ask them how they had gathered their information up until now and to find our their real information needs." (25)

Different market segments attract different kinds of promotional activity, and a programme must be worked out to determine which segments of the market to target first.

" An eye-catching poster is no substitute for a marketing plan." (26)

Kotler defined marketing as " the effective management by an organization of its exchange relations with its various publics." (27) The market for a business information service is never static. The needs of individual customers are always changing, as are the customers themselves. During a

recession many businesses may close down or dismiss staff, or make savings in other ways, whereas the opening of a new shopping centre, industrial estate or business park may suddenly provide a new target market.

Jenkins and Lowe (1985) warn of the "credibility gap" (28)between explaining the potential of a business information service and remaining credible. Although many of the decision makers in companies nowadays appreciate the importance of accurate and up-to-date information they were educated and trained in the 1950s and 1960s, and may find it difficult to grasp the whole concept of computer based information retrieval.

Information Direct in Birmingham identified a niche of about 1,000 firms out of roughly 10,000 trading in Birmingham which consisted mainly of companies which were information intermediaries of various kinds (accountants, management consultants) or which were large enough to incorporate marketing or market research departments. They found that " in practice the client base has supported the accuracy of the marketing strategy."(29) As a result of their findings they embarked on a mailshot to the marketing departments of the larger manufacturing companies in the West Midlands and surrounding countries.

-15-

Care must also be taken to keep promotional material up to date. Any change in policy, pricing structure, location, or any extension to the service provides new opportunities for promoting the service and re-designing publicity material. The currency of publicity material is also a good indication to users and potential users of the efficiency of the business information service.

1.7 The future of business information services in academic libraries

Information technology is rapidly changing the whole concept of libraries and the provision of information. Electronic transmission of data means that a library service is no longer confined to a collection of books and periodicals housed in a library building. Accurate and up-to-date data from all over the world can now be searched electronically, and a print-out or fax of the relevant information obtained within seconds. Librarians are suffering an identity crisis as traditional professional boundaries are being breached by manipulators or brokers of information of all kinds.

Computer literacy of employees at all levels of business, industry and commerce has increased dramatically in recent years. The expectations and information requirements of

business end users are becoming ever more sophisticated. Users expect accurate and up-to-date information and should be prepared to pay realistic rates for it. Many companies will soon be able to request and receive materials electronically from remote libraries and the distinction between borrowing and owning will become blurred.

" The individual business in an East Anglian market town or in the Highlands of Scotland has just the same potential requirements as one in Sheffield or Hackney." (30) Tele-borrowing from a "super-league" of regional libraries will eliminate the "information poverty trap" especially in rural areas.

As personal access to electronic sources in academic departments increases, academic librarians may begin to fear that their traditional print-on-paper stocks may become largely redundant. The increasing cost of installing, running, maintaining and replacing automated library housekeeping systems has led to a reduction in the number of professional posts in academic libraries.

Brenda White (1987) feels that any joint ventures entered into or external services provided by academic libraries are "certainly conditioned by the social and economic factors of the geographical area in which the institution is located."

She warns of the danger "that librarians will try to re-invent the wheel in their external services" and feels that "there is surely ... a developing role for academic librarians in providing intermediary services" which could give advice, provide training, signpost new services ... The opportunites are there, if they can be seen and grasped, for them to serve the wider community by building on and extending their role as professional experts in an increasingly information-conscious world." (31)

The Library Association hope that a more effective networking of libraries will assist people to gain access in future to " the increasing flood of information ... without well-trained intermediaries, users will continue to be frustrated by the difficulty of getting at the information they require in timely fashion." (32)

Gann (1990) warns that "the growing information overload of everyday life can actually be counter-productive and lead to inertia, apathy and frustration."(33) As Taylor puts it "We've got information coming out of our ears and what we need now is some way to make sense of it."(34) Any business information service of the future must ensure that it is able to offer the expertise and necessary to assist its users in evaluating requested information and ensuring quality control.

Chapter 2 Leicestershire's business environment

2.1 Historical background

Leicestershire lies right in the heart of England and has excellent road, rail and air links. The county has an area of 986 square miles, which includes the former county of Rutland. The population of Leicestershire is about 900,000, of whom one third live in the city of Leicester. Ethnic minorities from Pakistan, India and the West Indies now constitute about 25% of the county's population.

"Leicestershire is not a county of extremes. It has industry - coal, iron, cement - but not much of it, and not enough to influence the appearance of the land to any great extent. Leicestershire's industries are clean and quiet." (1)

Local deposits of coal and lower labour costs attracted industry to the area in the nineteenth century. The Taylor Bell Foundry in Loughborough dates from 1840. Hosiery manufacture began with frame-knitters in cottage workshops, moving later to the red brick steam-operated factories or mills. Thomas Crick's invention for riveting uppers to soles revolutionized the manufacture of footwear, and shoe

manufacturers in the Leicester area began to specialise in the production of ladies' and childrens' shoes.

After the rapid growth of the railway network engineering works were set up in the county, providing at first the machinery needed by the local textile and footwear companies. One of the largest engineering concerns is Brush Electrical at Loughborough.

" The Brush company was formed in the middle of the last century to manufacture horse-drawn trams. By 1900 it was producing electric trams, generators and steam locomotives. Today the main products are diesel electric locomotives, electric generators, transformers and other power station equipment."(2) In 1989 Brush won a major contract worth £75 million to construct 40 high speed locomotives for the Eurotunnel shuttle service.

It was in Leicestershire fifty years ago that the first jet engine was designed and developed by Sir Frank Whittle.

After the Second World War new industries were established in the county, such as rubber and plastics, and electrical and electronic engineering. There are now over 150

companies listed in the Leicester Promnotion Campaign's Electronics Directory of Leicester and Leicestershire.

Leicester is now a thriving service sector city. Some of the established companies came to Leicester over a century ago to support the original textile industry. Refurbishment of existing buildings is encouraged and many former factory buildings are being converted into office accommodation. Leicester has over 30,000 small businesses, often family-owned, in a wide range of industries and services.

Leicester is an important sub-regional shopping centre with new area shopping facilities at Beaumont Leys and Hamilton, and many new retail warehouses on the city outskirts selling mostly DIY and other durable goods. The Belgrave Road district to the north east of Leicester city centre is an important shopping centre for the Asian community of Leicestershire. In recent years some streets in Leicester have been made into pedestrian preference areas and several new shopping centres, such as St. Martin's and the Shires have been built.

Leicestershire's excellent communications situation, close to Birmingham and East Midlands airports, and with four motorways serving the county, has encouraged many well-known

companies, such as Toyota, to set up distribution centres in the area.

Despite the impact of coal mining and other extractive industries nearly 80% of the county is still rural , although less than 5% of the workforce is in agriculture.

2.2 Employment situation in Leicestershire in 1991

The county of Leicestershire has a population of around 900,000 with approximately 280,000 people living in the city of Leicester. Traditional manufacturing industries such as clothing, footwear and engineering still employ about 35 % of the region's workforce, but there are also large numbers of people employed in food-processing, electronics, and design and printing.

The service sector in Leicester "became the main source of employment in 1984".(3) 40 % of the workforce are now employed in service industries such as banking, insurance, education and public administration with Leicestershire County Council as the largest single employer in the county.

With two international airports less than an hour's drive from Leicester, excellent motorway and rail connections, and substantial investment in new business parks, big international companies, such as Toyota (UK) Ltd., Phoenix Electric Co (UK) Ltd., and British Gas have been attracted to the area, and nearly 20 % of the workforce are now employed in the distribution sector.

Over 13,000 jobs in the county are directly or indirectly supported by the tourism industry. Leicestershire County Council therefore hopes that its unique multicultural blend of "festivals, cuisine, architecture and shopping experiences" (4) will encourage people not just to visit Leicestershire but also to live and work in the area.

In April 1991 unemployment in Leicestershire was at its highest level for three years. In Leicester there were nearly 19,000 people unemployed, or 6.3 % of the working population, compared with 5.7 % in the county as a whole. More than a third of businesses reported a reduction in staff in the six months up to April 1991 and an average of " 34 applicants are chasing each job." (5) Throughout April 1991 the Leicester Mercury reported collapses of local firms

or substantial redundancies, even at such well-established firms as Pedigree Petfoods in Melton Mowbray, who won a Queen's Award for Export Achievement in 1990.

The 1990/91 recession has hit Leicestershire's traditional industries exceptionally hard. " More than 5,000 Leicester-shire hosiery and knitwear jobs have been lost over the past two years" and "redundancies from small firms often go unreported." (6)

On April 2nd 1991 the Leicester Mercury reported that a CBI survey had concluded that the East Midlands had the highest rate of business failures in Britain with nearly 500 in the first quarter of 1991, compared to nearly 8,000 nationwide. On the same day the Financial Times reported on its front page that "the recession is close to reaching a trough" although "business confidence remains extremely weak." By early July, however, there was talk of a 'double dip recession' (BBC Radio 4 Today programme, Monday 7th July 1991). On 13th April 1991 the traditional manufacturing industries in Leicestershire were told by the Employment Minister, Robert Jackson, that they "must sort out their own problems." (7)

Speaking out when yet another knitwear firm was forced to close down at the beginning of April, a past president of the Leicester and District Knitting Association rebuked the government for not assisting local knitwear companies. "They have not the slightest interest in the textile industry" he said. "If we had half the protection there is in France, we would be OK." (8)

On April 11th 1991 the chief executive of Qazar 7, a newly established information broker, warned that "Leicestershire companies could be left behind by competitors in developing countries if they do not get to grips with new technology." He continued by saying that "the East Midlands invests less in technology than other regions and has a correspondingly low level of wages coupled with a high level of failures in the current recession." (9)

In one of their 'Key Facts about Leicester' fact sheets Leicester City Council admit that "The growth of new industries and product sectors has not adequately replaced the loss of employment from the older declining industries." (Key Facts No 3)

In 1986 in their Labour Market Trends publication covering

the Midlands region the Manpower Services Commission noted
that "one feature of the region is the number of small
companies set up in new industrial accommodation, often
employing less than ten workers, and created by engineers
investing their redundancy money. These firms are aided by
larger employers sub-contracting out specialised components
or (to them) expensive operations ... Nearly all local
authorities in the Region have plans for more small
industrial estates, "nursery units" and other premises into
which new and expanding companies can move."(10)

The Springboard Centre in Coalville is a good example of one
of Leicestershire's managed workspaces, as is the Belgrave
Business Enterprise Centre in Leicester.

In 1991, according to Mr Russell Bott of the Small Firms
Service in Leicester, there are still skilled people willing
to leave secure positions in well-established companies "for
the troughs and peaks of owning your own business." (11)

Martin Gagen, local director of 3i, the venture capital
group in Leicester commented in the summer of 1990 that
"Leicestershire has a high proportion of small often
family-owned businesses in a wide range of industries. These

are historically rapid-growth, high profit businesses and
their investment plans can be significant -they are gearing
up for expansion based on higher productivity and rigorous
control of labour and other costs." (12)

In contrast to the last recession in the early 1980s,in 1990
small businesses were the first to feel the effects when the
banks started calling in their loans. Leicester has
traditionally been a city of small firms," with a formation
rate 50 % above the national average", (13) and
"self-employment is still a very popular option in
Leicestershire" (14) despite increasing bankruptcies.

In April 1991 3i was still urging Leicestershire firms to
expand, despite the recession, by launching a 35 million
pound growth capital fund. This fund was aimed at local
businesses wanting to expand, whether into new markets,
investing into new plant and equipment, or by acquisition.
3i's director claimed that "falling interest rates and lower
inflation are clear indicators that the recession is
bottoming out. By expanding now many firms could gain an
advantage over their competitors." (15)

In the Spring 1991 edition of Leicestershire Business Today Leicestershire business men and women were being warned to "be aware of your market - someone else's failure in a recession could be your success." To survive, companies must "move with or ahead of the times." (16) Although "Public relations is one of the least favoured marketing tools of Leicestershire companies" it was considered "essential for companies fighting their way out of a recession." (17)

Although the service sector also suffered in the 1990/91 recession there was still a demand for high quality office accommodation, especially in the centre of Leicester. Through the introduction of a new Business Use Class B1 areas previously identified for industrial use in Local Plans can now be used for offices, and many former mill and factory buildings, such as the Corah knitting factory, are being converted.

According to paragraph 6.3 of the Employment section of the Draft Explanatory Memorandum of its Leicestershire Structure Plan "The County Council has adopted a strategy which seeks to diversify the economy whilst supporting traditional industries wherever possible." The East Midlands is seen in paragraph 6.9 as "an area of great potential."

Despite the recession there were still new opportunities for work in the area. The new Shires shopping centre in Leicester has provided jobs for 1,500 people, and the British Gas Research Centre is under construction in Loughborough. Through its co-ordinated planning of business and science and technology parks, such as the high-tech Meridian Business Park three miles from Leicester city centre, Leicestershire County Council aim to attract more inward investment and to assist local firms wishing to expand or centralise operations in the county.

2.3 Incentive and promotional schemes in Leicestershire

There are several local award and incentive schemes which aim to encourage the setting-up and development of Leicestershire businesses.

The East Midlands Region of British Coal Enterprise Ltd has helped in providing new job opportunities in the former coal mining areas of North West Leicestershire by opening Job Shops and arranging five year loans at preferential interest rates.

The Business Development Grant Scheme is run jointly by Leicestershire County Council and North West Leicestershire District Council. It offers discretionary grants to businesses undertaking identifiable projects located in certain parts of North West Leicestershire which will lead to the creation of a minimum of ten new jobs within a two year period. Marketing grants are also available to small businesses in the same area to assist them in carrying out their marketing plans.

The MIDAS scheme sponsored by local businesses and local authorities was set up ten years ago to foster business development and employment in Melton Mowbray. It now funds four annual award categories for independent businesses based anywhere in Leicestershire. There is a total of £27,000 to be won in 1991 for MIDAS awards. Over 50 smaller companies have so far benefited from this annual competition.

Into Business administers an Enterprise Planning Fund which provided over £50,000 in grant aid in 1991/92.

The Leicestershire Business Excellence Award, launched in

March 1990, sought the county's most outstanding home-grown company. Sponsored by local businesses the first award was given to Colorgraphic PLC of Leicester.

Leicestershire County Council operate a Small Firms Support Scheme to assist genuinely new and independent manufacturing enterprises.

Leicester and County Co-operative Development Agency or LCCDA offers start-up grants for pre-operational costs to groups of people committed to working in a co-operative. There are now over 25 registered co-operatives in Leicestershire in such varied fields as shoe production, catering and organic farming.

The DTI also operate regional schemes for financial assistance in the Uppingham and Hinckley areas. Six Leicestershire companies also won Department of Trade and Industry SMART Stage 1 awards in 1990.

2.4 Promotion campaigns and initiatives in Leicestershire

Leicestershire County Council's Economic Development Unit advertises Leicestershire as "the smart move" (18) and

Leicester City Council also encourages everyone to "invest in Leicester." (19) Both authorities are active in promoting every aspect of Leicester and Leicestershire to the business world and provide a dynamic environment for the various promotion campaigns and initiatives, several of which are described in more detail below.

Leicester was launched as the Environment City in May 1991. This national initiative aims to make Leicester the first "green" centre of environmental excellence within the context of urban life. The director of Environment City, Mr Ian Roberts, says that "environmentally sound practice is now being recognised as a major way of achieving public awareness and approval." He aims to help 'green' companies as much as possible - acting as a bridge builder between the private, public and voluntary sectors." (20) Leicester businesses are being encouraged to play an active role in the initiative's future development.

Early in 1991 East Midlands International Airport launched their "The Sky's the Limit" campaign to attract more European scheduled airlines to the airport. Their literature, backed by detailed statistics, highlights the dynamic growth of the East Midlands region.

"Making the right connections" was the title of an eye-catching brochure produced by North West Leicestershire District Council. Their Economic Development Department has been encouraging firms to move to the area by promoting the excellent transport infrastructure, especially the M42 corridor, Leicestershire's new link between the M5/M6 and the M1, completed in the spring of 1991. The Whitwick Business Park in Coalville, built on the site of a former colliery, is already playing a vital role in the area's regeneration now that all the coal mines have closed.

Leicester Tourism Development Ltd has created a new image for the city in the 1990s. The new logo is a 'Leicester lady' in carnival mood wearing a 'world of a difference' dress, which combines the city's fashion industry with her multicultural community. At the 1990 World Travel Market the Leicestershire stand promoted Leicester as the birthplace of tourism. Thomas Cook ran his first excursion from Leicester to Loughborough in July 1841 and 150 yeras of popular tourism were celebrated in Leicester in July 1991 by a Thomas Cook Festival. Leicestershire County Council has recently published its draft Tourism Strategy to ensure that Leicestershire captures its share of a growing but very competitive market by means of a carefully planned tourism

framework. According to an article in Leicestershire Business Today "some 7,250 jobs in the county are supported directly by the tourism industry" and approximately "one and a half million tourist visit Leicestershire each year." (21) so detailed forward planning is essential.

After a six-month research project investigating the region's economic background and its growth potential the East Midlands Awareness Campaign was renamed the East Midlands Investment Campaign. It aims to work alongside current promotion campaigns to promote the East Midlands as an attractive location for new investment, both by British companies and inward investors from overseas. They also hope to encourage more private and public sector investment in the infrastructure.

2.5 Advice centres for business and industry in Leicestershire

There is a wide range of information services available in Leicester, from the Consumer Advice Centre in Granby Street to the TAPs or Training Access Points funded by the Manpower Services Commission. Many of these services also provide

different kinds of information relevant to business and industry. The Business Advice Centre situated at 30, New Walk is funded by Leicestershire County Council, and supported by Leicester City Council and the private sector. It was the first centre of its kind in the country. Organisations housed at the centre include Leicestershire Small Firms Centre, the Leicestershire Business Venture Ltd, the European Information Centre and Into Business.

Into Business is one of the newest advice services in Leicester which opened in the spring of 1991. It provides an entirely free service for members of the Asian or Afro-Caribbean communities to help them plan or establish new businesses or to develop existing ones. They also adminster an Enterprise Planning Fund. The manager, Mr Ismail Patel, has confirmed that Into Business "can provide advice and information on all areas of business." (22)

Leicestershire County Council's Economic Development Unit at the Department of Planning and Transportation in Leicester also offer a very comprehensive package of information on all aspects of business and businesses in Leicestershire. They publish a quarterly newsletter, a monthly industrial property bulletin and an annual industrial directory based

on local information stored in the Leicestershire Company Database. They also publish "Who's who in Leicestershire", a mini guide to all the public and private sector agencies who can provide advice and information to businesses in Leicestershire.

According to one of its recent brochures Leicester Polytechnic "is at the centre of business activity."(23) It has obtained the highest levels of external funding of any polytechnic in recent years." Since its restructuring in 1989 the polytechnic has started several new ventures aimed at overcoming the "culture differences between academics and business people." (24) The Leicester Expertise project begun in 1991 offers a consultancy service to all companies covering a broad range of subjects from areas as diverse as robotics and accident analysis.

Qazar 7 is a newly established information supply company based in Leicester. It offers access to the Helpnet technical enquiry service, and "a signposting service to help companies find the person or source who can best help them." (25) Qazar 7 aims to serve the whole of the East Midlands and produces a newsletter called Technique. They hope to improve technology transfer in the region and to

help companies use available technology. There is an access fee of five hundred pounds.

Summary

Since the decline of coal mining and traditional industries such as knitwear many creative re-development schemes or managed workspaces have been established in Leicestershire to attract new businesses to the area and to encourage and support those wishing to set up small businesses. There are also special schemes to assist Asian and Afro-Caribbean businesses.

The 1990/91 recession hit Leicestershire's traditional industries exceptionally hard but there were many redundancies in the service sector as well. Despite the recession Leicestershire still has a dynamic business environment with new shopping centres and business parks, and many former mill and factory buildings are being converted into modern office accommodation. Promotion campaigns have been successful in attracting people to come and live or work in Leicestershire.

There are already a wide range of advice agencies in Leicestershire, mostly based in the city of Leicester, which offer information to business and industry.

Information in Business is operating in a geographical area with an interesting mixture of old traditional industries and newer high-tech business parks. The retail and distribution sector is also important due to Leicestershire's central location and excellent communications network. There are many market segments at which to target a business information service, including a large Asian and Afro-Caribbean community.

Chapter 3 Information in Business

3.1 History

Information in Business is based at the Leicester Polytechnic Information Centre on Level 2 of the Kimberlin Library in Mill Lane. It is a unique joint venture governed by a five year contract between Leicester Polytechnic and Leicestershire County Council. The most comprehensive collection of commercial information available in Leicestershire has been brought together under one roof to serve the information needs of the local business and industrial community.

The idea of a co-operative scheme for providing an information service to industry in Leicestershire is not new. In the 1960s there was an earlier scheme to provide a technical information service based at Loughborough University library. The university convened a meeting of representatives of all local authorities in Leicestershire late in 1966. A graded voluntary subscription scheme was proposed based on the size of a firm. A technical officer was appointed with effect from 1st January 1968 and an advisory committee was set up. The Leicestershire technical Information Service or LETIS was financed by Loughborough

University of Technology, the Education and Finance Committees of Leicestershire County Council, and the Library Committees of Hinckley, Loughborough , Melton Mowbray and Oadby. Despite an extensive publicity campaign, which included planning an "Information on a shoestring" course intended for industrial personnel concerned with the use of information, and imaginative use of a mobile technical library, only 22 firms, mostly with over 200 employees, had actually become subscribers by December 1969.

In 1971 A M Rowley, while investigating local information services for industry in the East Midlands, felt that this was "probably because LETIS is in advance of its time: firms in Leicestershire do not yet feel a need for a technical information service of this kind."(1) She also felt that "the reluctance of Leicestershire firms to use the service is probanbly simply a local manifestation of a national problem; small and medium sized industry just does not associate published information with increased profits." Interestingly, in an article in Library World in March 1970 L J Livesey, an Assistant County Librarian, and K John Bladen, the Technical Information Officer for LETIS, describe the mobile technical library experiment as a "great success"() and felt that "this is the only way to contact firms - no doubt about it."(2)

Membership of the service continued to increase and enquiries were being received from an increasing number of different organisations. The majority of the enquiries were in the fields of science, engineering or building construction.

By 1974, however, the funding was not sufficient to cover the increasing costs of the service. LETIS sought financial support from local companies and organisations but met with little success. The service was therefore closed down early in 1976.

In 1987 Patrick Noon, a librarian at Leicester Polytechnic, published a paper on "Local Business as a source of income generation for libraries: A study of Leicestershire and Leicester Polytechnic," in which he recommended that further research be carried out to assess the actual information needs of local businesses. In the Library and Information Plan for Leicestershire 1988 -1993 (1988) it was a matter of some concern that Leicestershire had no "technical information service ... through which such material as patents, standards, specifications and trade literature can be made available and better co-ordination between services aimed at the business community generally." (3) It was noted that Leicester Polytechnic Library wished "to participate in

-41-

co-operative technical information services for industry"(4)

A further impetus was the Leicestershire County Council's Service Priority Review in 1986 in which a number of the recommendations focussed on business information. Negotiation of the contract began in the autumn of 1988.

On 1st April 1989 the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council came into operation. Leicester Polytechnic became a Higher education Corporation which would no longer be funded by Leicestershire County Council but by a central government body, the PCFC. The 24 teaching schools were reorganised into ten profit centres or schools each with its own general manager who have "clear portfolios with functional and line responsibilities." Heads of departments within schools were given "the clear task of promoting and sustaining academic and professional excellence in their disciplinary area."(5)

Leicester Polytechnic has a total student polytechnic population of about 9,000 of whom 5,000 are studying for a first degree. The Business School includes the Departments of Accounting and Finance, Economics, Human Resource Management, Marketing and Business Policy, Public Policy and Managerial Studies.

Information in Business became fully operative on 26th March 1990. The service was originally housed in a classroom on Level 3 of the Kimberlin Library and was moved to its current premises on Level 2 in July 1990. An Advisory Committee has been set up and met for the first time in February 1991.

In September 1990 the Information in Business service was officially launched at a joint ceremony held with the European Information Centre at the Grand Hotel in Leicester. The launch was well attended by local businesses and advice agencies but there has been little obvious response following this event.

A leaflet has been produced emphasising the link with the EIC which will be distributed with the EIC's own publicity material.

The EIC is a non-profit making organisation, with a public service function of providing general business information on Europe free of charge, particularly for small and medium sized enterprises. It aims to become self-financing through sponsorship by local firms or by a scheme of Associate membership for those businesses wishing to receive information on a regular basis. Charges are made on an ad

hoc basis to cover handling costs.

3.2 Aims and Objectives

1. To provide information services for business and industry to meet the needs of commerce, industry, government, education, the professions and individuals.

2. To develop an effective information service for business and industry relevant to their expressed needs, and to ensure that such a service will be responsive to future demands.

3. To provide information services to business and industry in support of the corporate strategy of Leicester Polytechnic Higher Education Corporation.

4. To provide information services to business and industry to meet the needs of Leicestershire County Council in support of business development.

5. To provide access to the information services for business and industry at Leicester Polytechnic Library and via the network of Leicestershire Libraries and Information Service service points.

6. To ensure the effective promotion of the value of information and information services to business and industry.

7. To ensure there is close liaison with other agencies and information providers within the context of the Library Information Plan for Leicestershire.

3.3 Staff

Jan Haines (Academic Librarian: Business) is responsible for the management and development of Information in Business. The service is staffed by two full-time Information Officers, and a part-time library assistant. In addition to this core staffing, input to the service is made by all members of the Business and Law academic team in Leicester Polytechnic Library. Information in Business is also able to draw on the expertise of staff in other academic teams within the Kimberlin Library such as IT and Computing, or Building and Construction.

3.4 Access

Enquiries can be networked via the county-wide LLIS service points at public libraries, such as Loughborough and Hinckley by telephone and fax machines. There is a direct telephone link with the Leicester Information Centre in Bishop Street. There are also plans for a network of terminals linked to the county council mainframe computer. This will give the Information in Business team direct access to the Leicestershire Company Database and allow them to communicate with the rest of the Leicestershire Libraries and Information Service via electronic mail, as stipulated in the joint contract. Information in Business operates its core enquiry service on Mondays to Fridays from 9.00 till 5.30, but fax and answerphone facilities are available twenty-four hours a day. Enquiries are normally processed immediately on receipt, but staff respond the next working day to any enquiries networked outside core enquiry hours. Information in Business can be accessed directly by business users and individuals either in person or by letter, telephone, fax or BT Gold, an electronic mail service.

3.5   Outline of Service offered

Information in Business staff select and use the most appropriate print-based and computerised sources to provide essential data covering a whole spectrum of commercial topics including information on the effective planning and running of a company/partnership, company and product information, marketing information, European Community information, technical information, current awareness services and information to assist research and development.

Information in Business has access to a wide range of current commercial and industrial directories, business, trade and professional journals, specialist books, reports, statistics, standards, legislation and a broad spectrum of international on-line databases.

Drawing on their collection of market research reports, statistical publications and online databases staff are able to provide data to support a wide range of business information problems . In particular Information in Business can help clients to target specific markets and supply customised mailing lists by geographical location, industrial sector, company size , turnover or number of employees.   The results   may be printed onto labels,

downloaded on to disc or simply presented as a list.

Information in Business offer value added services in the
preparation of client proposals, presentations and long-term
project research. They offer to supply specific facts and
figures, an overview of essential background information and
regular monitoring and updating on developments in
particular fields as requested The contract between
Leicester Polytechnic and Leicestershire County Council also
requires that all information services governed by the
contract should be in accordance with the County Council's
policy statements on standards access, tourism, minority
ethnic business development, and economy and employment.

Pricing structure

Information in Business is funded primarily from three
sources, a business budget assigned to Leicester Polytechnic
Library, an annual amount provided under contract by
Leicestershire Library and Information Service, and charges.
There are two rates of charges at present. Firms of more
than 20 employees and/or with a turnover of more than two
million pounds pay £245 p.a. exclusive of VAT. This entitles
them to membership of Leicester Polytechnic Library for up
to five named members of staff and five hours staff research

time. Subsequent staff time will be charged at the discount rate of of £35 per hour. Firms with less than 20 employees and a turnover of up to two million pounds pay £90 p.a. This entitles them to library membership for one named member of staff and two hours of staff research time. Subsequent staff time will be charged at the discount rate of £35 per hour.

Enquiries requiring less than 30 minutes of staff time are free. Staff time on the pay-as-you-go scheme is charged at £50 per hour (minimum charge £15) plus cost of materials and other expenses incurred. Staff discuss with clients the likely costs of an information search at the briefing stage and keep them informed of actual charges as the search progresses. For long-term research projects and consultancy services a daily staff rate is negotiable.

Reference access for visitors to Information in Business is available free of charge.

Photocopying is charged at twenty pence a page with a minimum charge of £2.50. Fax transmissions are charged at £1.50 for the first page and £1 for each subsequent page with a minimum charge of £3.50. Other charges levied relate to additional costs incurred. For example if an online

database search is carried out Information in Business pass
on the charges in full.

Keeping records of use

Information in Business use three types of forms to monitor
and log different types of enquiries and the action taken.

1)Quick Enquiry Log (See Appendix 1)

This form is used to monitor brief enquiries such as asking
about opening hours or other details about the Information
in Business service. Checking whether specific items are in
stock is also recorded on these forms, as are requests for
company addresses and phone numbers which can be answered
using the C R O microfiche which is kept by the telephone
for easy access.

After the European Information Centre was opened in October
the number of calls from there have also been recorded.

2)Enquiry Log (See Appendix 2)

This form monitors details of enquiries, contact records, sources checked, outcome of enquiries, time taken and costs incurred.

3)Monitoring Form (See Appendix 3)

This form monitors the method of receipt of an enquiry, category of user, if the enquiry is completely or partially answered, or whether it is referred elsewhere. Time taken, resources used and document supply are also recorded.

Personal Callers

At present there is no effective monitoring mechanism in place with which to analyse use of the service by personal callers which would provide a more complete picture of overall usage of the service. Anyone entering the Kimberlin Library may go to the reference section, and there is a high screen dividing this area from the Information in Business staff working area so it is impossible to take note of everyone using the sources. It would in any case be very difficult to distinguish between members of the public and

authorised Polytechnic library users, whether staff or students. In May 1990 while the Information in Business service was still operating on Level 3 of the Kimberlin Library an attempt was made to monitor external enquiries on separate forms but the practice was discontinued when Information in Business moved downstairs to Level 2.

3.6 Marketing Information in Business

Business strategy at Information in Business

The business strategy for any business information service must reflect the goals and objectives of the academic institution and its library. Information in Business have two main strategies for the development of value added services. The first involves the provision of in-depth enquiry work over and above the basic free 30-minute service. The second strategy involves the tailoring of the service to clients' needs. In the approach to clients' needs Information in Business is developing a highly personalised service, and initial feedback has shown that this approach is highly valued.

The business strategy for the next year or so is :-

1) to get more company subscribers

2) to encourage a high level of repeat patronage through prompt delivery of results and a personal and confidential service

3) to begin to attract use from non-users of information services in the local business community

4) to develop at least one awareness service for purchase both by local businesses and throughout the United Kingdom

Marketing Information in Business

Information in Business provides a service for people who live, work and study in the county of Leicestershire through the county-wide network of LLIS service points. During the first year about 5 % of enquiries came from outside the county, but 70 % emanated from within a five-mile radius of Leicester city centre.

Information in Business has sent brochures to local estate agents, accountants and solicitors, as listed in the Leicestershire Industrial Directory. Publicity material is gradually being sent to all companies listed in the above directory.

A programme of direct mail shots, followed by telephone contact has been initiated at Information in Business. Brochures are sent to

a) known users of the LLIS service

b) telephone enquirers

c) selected groups of local service industries such as estate agents, accountancy practices and solicitors

d) Leicestershire companies quoted on the Stock Exchange using the Key British Enterprise rankings list for Leicestershire.

After about three weeks the company contact is telephoned and asked whether they are interested in what Information in Business has to offer and whether they might be interested

in coming to see the stock for themselves, or to discuss their information needs. Staff from some of the larger firms in the area have been to visit the library.

A business information service responsive to the needs of its users will encourage enquiries, complaints and suggestions, and act on them wherever possible. If there is a lot of "dead" or underused stock then the offering mix must be revised or adjusted.

A detailed study of the resources used to answer enquiries at Information in Business is outside the scope of this report. Monitoring forms for March 1991 were , however, examined to see what resources were used. A number of different sources were usually used to answer each enquiry. The seven sources which were consulted the most were the CRO microfiche, Kompass directories, Key British Enterprise volumes, McCarthy's, Sell's, Extel and the Directory of British Associations.

Prior to the opening of the Information in Business service in March 1990 seminars were staged to market and explain the new service both to staff of LLIS service points and to staff at Leicester Polytechnic library. These seminars are

still continuing twice a year for new members of staff and also for outlining any changes to the service to existing staff.

A short presentation was given to librarians from Colleges of Further Education in September 1990 outlining services available, to students. Visits have been made by students from Loughborough College and the East Midlands Regional Management Centre, and by students on Restart programmes.

On 30th May 1991 Kaye Smith, the Information Officer at Information in Business, gave a talk entitled "The academic library in partnership" at the Scottish Academic Libraries Co-operative Training Group conference in Edinburgh.

A display stand has been developed jointly with LLIS to market both aspects of the Information in Business servie - free and fee. It has been used at Business Advice Days at Loughborough Library and Loughborough University. A product file has also been produced, outlining the main services offered by Information in Business for visitors to browse through at their leisure. This is normally kept in the reception area of Information in Business at the Kimberlin Library.

included in the 1991 editions.

Information in Business is mentioned in the 1991 Thompson's directory but not in the Leicester telephone directory or East Midlands Business Pages.

Information in Business has been mentioned in the BBC guide for help for small businesses. It will also be entered in the next Kompass Regional Sales Guide.

Information about Information in Business has been included in the county Viewdata system being piloted in North West Leicestershire libraries.

Links with other services in Leicestershire

Literature on Information in Business has been widely distributed amongst local advice, information and business agencies. Representatives of many local agencies such as the Business Advice Centre and the Chamber of Commerce have visited the Information in Business service at the Kimberlin library.

Regular liaison meetings take place between Information in

Business staff, the Leicestershire Libraries and Information
Service, and Leicester County Council's Department of
Planning and Transportation. Matters are discussed relating
to information systems and services, economic policies and
developments, publications and local initiatives.

At the liaison meeting held in July 1991 it was agreed that
attendance at both Business Advice days in Loughborough had
been disappointing, and that it would seem that such Advice
days were not an effective way of reaching the local
business community.

Business Information Boards, an initiative of the Department
of Planning and Transportation, are available in most of
the major libraries in Leicestershire. They are areas
designated solely for notices, posters and leaflets relating
to services and events of interest to the business
community. Free copies of Leicestershire Business Today are
provided for take away via libraries and at Information in
Business. An Information in Business poster has been
designed for display on these noticeboards or at other
suitable locations throughout the county.

Chapter 4 - Users of Information in Business

4.1 Types of user

The daily enquiry logs and monitoring forms collected during the first year of operation were examined to discover the type of company or organisation most likely to use the business information service, and to determine the potential catchment area of the service. An attempt was also made to find out who else uses the service e.g. job applicants, students.

The forms were divided into four groups - companies and organisations, individuals, referrals from other libraries and "Don't knows."

The total of 1779 enquiries were categorised as follows:-

Companies & organisations   32.0 %

Individuals   27.8 %

Referrals   6.7 %

Don't know   33.5 %

Companies and organisations

Lists of users were compiled listing the name of the company
or organisation, its product or service, area, number of
employees, and the frequency of contact with Information in
Business. To trace all the companies and collect the
relevant information the Leicestershire Industrial
Directory, the local Leicester & District telephone
directory, the East Midlands Business Pages 1991, Kompass UK
1990/91 Vol II Company Information and Key British
Enterprises 1990 British Business Rankings were used.

About twenty companies were not traceable. Others were
listed in the telephone directory but no other information
was available. The Leicestershire Industrial Directory
provides an indication of company size, and details of the
main company product or service, but inclusion in this
directory is voluntary. It is compiled annually from
questionnaires sent out by the Economic Development Unit
based at County Hall, Glenfield, in Leicester. It does not,
therefore, provide a complete list of companies in
Leicestershire.

Individuals

An entry was listed as 'individual' if the only information entered on the forms was a person's name, even though many telephone numbers supplied included extension numbers, which would indicate that the caller was phoning from a company or organisation. If an individual specifically stated that they needed company information to prepare for a job interview, or were students working on a particular project, this was noted on the forms. Some individual callers voluntarily gave their addresses and also a reason for needing the requested information for example " interested in setting up a new business".

Referrals

Most of these entries were from individual callers, but were listed separately to give some indication of the number of calls referred from other LLIS service points.

Don't knows

This group includes all the forms where there was no information at all to identify the caller. Occasionally

someone had written "individual" or "company" on the forms but these have also been included in the "Don't know" category. Unfortunately as many as one third of the enquiries logged were "don't knows", but the confidential nature of the service means that callers are not obliged to say who they are, or where they work, if they do not wish to do so.

4.2 Location of users

Where do users of Information in Business come from ?

Individual enquirers to Information in Business were distributed around the area in similar proportions to callers from companies and organisations. The 570 enquiries recorded from companies and organisations came from the following areas, calculated in miles distant from Leicester's main railway station.

-63-

Distance from city centre	No of enquiries	%
0 - 5 miles	395	69.3
5 - 10 "	26	4.5
10 - 15 "	79	13.9
15 - 20 "	5	0.1
20 + "	27	4.7
Untraced	38	6.6
Total	570	100.0

About 7 % of the client base sample was untraceable, either because no trace of the company was found, or because it was not possible to pinpoint the exact location from the information available.

Up to five miles from the city centre

Nearly 70 % of all enquiries came from this area which includes the whole city of Leicester, and many of the industrial and business parks on the outskirts such as at Beaumont Leys, Hamilton and the industrial development area at the junction of the M1/M69 just to the south west of Leicester. Also included within a five mile radius of Leicester city centre are the areas of Anstey, Groby, Braunstone, Thurcaston, Syston, Thurmaston, Oadby, Wigston, Blaby, Glen Parva, Aylestone, Whetstone and Glenfield, where the headquarters of Leicestershire County Council are situated.

Five to ten miles from the city centre

There are few towns of any size in this area, which may account for the low percentage of enquiries (4.5 %) This area does, however, include many of the villages where the knitting industry began, such as Mountsorrel, Barrow upon Soar and Sileby. There are also extractive industries at Croft and Mountsorrel.

Ten to fifteen miles from the city centre

This area includes the towns of Loughborough, Melton Mowbray, Market Harborough, Lutterworth, Hinckley and Coalville. Nearly 14 % of all enquiries came from this area. No one industry predominates but the traditional industries are well represented, as are newer industries such as electronics and pharmaceuticals. This area also includes most of the former mining district of North West Leicestershire.

Fifteen to twenty miles from Leicester city centre

Only a handful of enquiries emanated from this area which includes the towns of Corby (just over the county boundary in Northamptonshire), Uppingham and Ashby-de-la-Zouch.

Over twenty miles from Leicester

Just under 5 % of all enquiries came from beyond a 20 mile radius of Leicester city centre. There were about ten calls from London as well as a few from the neighbouring counties of Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Northamptonshire. Three firms in Lancashire, Shropshire and Hertfordshire have used Information in Business on more than one occasion and there

have been several calls from Bedfordshire. Other isolated enquiries have come from places as far apart as Edinburgh, Bristol, Norwich and Clwyd.

When Alec Gallimore did a survey of Manchester Commercial Library in 1986 he found that " 60 % of telephone enquirers were calling from outside the city of Manchester." (1)

The CRUS survey, which also included Manchester, found that "an average 25 % of work-related users came from outside the local authority area providing the library service." (2)

4.3 Users categorised by product or service

Product or service	No	%
1) Design/display/marketing	91	17.4
2) Local and central government	90	17.2
3) Services incl. financial	58	11.0
4) Manufacturing/eng/electr	49	9.3

5) Fashion/textiles	36	6.8
6) Academic	28	5.3
7) Transport/distribution	21	4.0
8) Builders/materials	21	4.0
9) Pharmaceuticals	9	1.7
10) Plastics	8	1.5
11) Food/catering	4	1.0
12) Other	38	7.3
13) Don't know	71	13.5
Total	524	100.0

<u>Notes</u>

1) Design, display and marketing

This group has been listed separately from the other service industries because of its frequent use of the service.

2) Local and central government

This category includes most of the advice centres in Leicestershire which are funded by either local or central government. Also included are two enquiries from prisons and a local police station.

3) Services including financial services

This category includes essential services such as gas and water supply, telephones, estate agents, employment agencies, accountants, building societies, banks, solicitors and architects.

4) Manufacturing, engineering and electrical or electronic engineering or services

It was extremely difficult to distinguish on occasion

between manufacturing and engineering companies, or between firms specialising in either electronics or electrical goods or services. This category therefore includes companies which specialise in welding, manufacturers of lifts, fire escapes, precision instruments and machine tools.

5) Fashion and textiles

This category includes fashion shops, knitwear and hosiery factories, other clothing and footwear manufacturers, yarn, braiding and elastic manufacturers, manufacturers of knitting machinery and a textile waste disposal service as well as a manufacturer of disposable hygienic clothing.

6) Academic

Included here are universities, polytechnics, colleges and schools.

7) Pharmaceuticals

All enquiries recorded were from the same regular user.

11) Don't know

Some enquirers were traced to the Leicester area but there

was no other clue to what product or service they were offering. Unfortunately the Yellow pages directory and the East Midlands Business Directory list by service and product or alphabetically, but in the alphabetical list there is no cross reference stating which product or service a company offers.

Two other surveys which attempt a product or service breakdown of user categories were operating under very different circumstances to those possible when examining Information in Business service.

Patrick Noon (1987) sent out questionnaires to 150 selected companies representative of the industries and services in the Leicestershire area. This indicated a much higher bias in the sample towards the traditional local sectors of clothing and footwear (27 %) and engineering (20 %). Companies involved in processing food and drink accounted for a much larger percentage than in the current survey. (1%)

When Roberts et al carried out their survey at business libraries in Nottingham, Birmingham and Manchester in 1987 personal callers to the library were interviewed at the

point of enquiry which enabled a more accurate picture of
the range of commercial, professional and industrial
interests represented by work-related respondents.
Manufacturing/production (21 %), retail/distributive (16 %)
and finance/insurance/ accounting (16 %) emerged as the
three main categories. The CRUS survey also attempted to
establish the personal status of users of business
libraries. The largest single group (20 %) were
sales/marketing managers. The status of users is also an
important factor to consider when targetting different
markets.

4.4 Size of organisations using the service

Data was collected on the sizes of companies and
organisations using Information in Business . The
Leicestershire Industrial Directory divides companies into
the following categories and an approximate percentage is
given below for those companies for which data was
available. (23 %)

No of employees	%
1 - 25	42.0
26 - 100	16.5
101 - 250	24.5
251 - 500	7.5
500 +	9.5
Total	100.0

The data collected was rather patchy but these statistics still have important implications for marketing the service. The largest group of users is to be found among smaller businesses with less than 25 employees, which includes mainly small manufacturing companies and service industries, and are indicative of the large number of small businesses active in Leicestershire.

Larger often nationally-known companies with over 100 employees also make regular use of the service, though some of them have their own libraries or information departments.

Summary

The confidential nature of Information in Business is an obvious barrier when attempting to discover if there is a 'typical user' of such a service. The identity of the user was not recorded on approximately one third of all the daily enquiry log forms collected. The name of the user is also not recorded on the quick enquiry log forms.

Two thirds of enquiries come from within a five- mile radius of Leicester city centre. 14 % of the enquiries come from the other large towns in Leicestershire such as Loughborough, Melton Mowbray and Coalville, and the former mining area of North West Leicestershire.

The most regular clients of Information in Business are firms of design or marketing consultants, other advice agencies, a local newspaper and departments of Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council. Local

offices of central government departments also make regular use of the service.

Not surprisingly various departments of Leicester Polytechnic use the Information in Business fairly regularly, but there is little use recorded by other colleges and universities.

All enquiries recorded from pharmaceutical companies were from the same regular user.

About forty per cent of Leicestershire's workforce are employed in service industries and public administration. (Section 2.2) and about forty five per cent of users of Information in Business are from this sector. This figure does not, however, include the retail trade, whose use of the service would appear to be neglible.

Use of the service by the transport and distribution sector is also much lower (4 %) than might be expected since twenty per cent of the workforce in Leicestershire are employed in this sector. (Section 2.2)

Only 15 % of enquiries have been received from the traditional industrial sectors in Leicestershire such as footwear, knitwear and engineering. The recession may account to some extent for this smaller percentage but over 30 % of the workforce are still employed in this sector. (Section 2.2) The 1990/91 recession also affected the building industry. Only four per cent of enquiries were received from this sector.

Few enquiries (4 %) were received from the plastics, food-processing, pharmaceutical or printing sectors although considerable number of people are employed in these industries in Leicestershire.

Although 13,000 jobs in the county are directly or indirectly related to tourism (Section 2.2) there is little obvious indication of use by this sector, although some users might be included in the service sector. The group classified as "other" is one of the most interesting as it includes a variety of users who do not fit easily uinto any other category. Local media use the service regularly. Other enquirers include a theatre in Edinburgh, a national charity, a Derbyshire market trader, a video company, a model shop, a message service in London, a gift shop, an

organisation specialising in accident analysis, a hotel and
an arts project.

Ethnic minorities now account for twenty five per cent of
the population (Section 2.1) but little use of Information
in Business by Asian and Afro-Caribbean businesses has been
recorded.

Chapter 5 Effectiveness of Information in Business

By means of a customer satisfaction survey carried out in June 1991 it was hoped to discover why clients use the Information in Business, why they come back, whether they were satisfied with the service, and how they found out about it.(Section 5.1)

Monitoring forms for March 1991 were examined to see what percentage of enquiries were completely answered, partially answered or not answered at all. It was felt that the correct answer fill rate would be a good indication of customer satisfaction with the service.(Section 5.2)

Enquiries recorded on the enquiry log forms for the first year were categorised to determine how the service was used. (Section 5.3)

5.1 Customer satisfaction survey

Since most of the users of Information in Business contact them by telephone, and because of the limited time available, it was felt that a telephone log survey would be more productive than a questionnaire sent out to selected

companies. Of the 150 questionnaires which Patrick Noon sent out to Leicestershire companies in 1987 63 were returned, a response rate of 42 %. (p64) Margery Hyde obtained only a 32 % response rate as part of a study on levels of service, related costs and charging systems. (p16)

Since the service is confidential it was not thought advisable to send out questionnaires to those firms known to be users of the Information in Business service.Names and addresses of many of the users of Information in Business were not available in any case.

The Information in Business staff were willing to carry out the survey for one week if the telephone log form was designed for them. It was decided to carry out the survey in the week beginning June 17th 1991.

5.1.2 The questionnaire (Appendix 4)

The design of the questionnaire was discussed with Information in Business staff. It was designed to be as short as possible as the questions were being asked on the telephone. This was also to assist the staff carrying out the survey as they already fill out one or two forms per enquiry. It was not felt necessary to include the company address and telephone number as these would be entered on

the usual enquiry log forms.

The first draft of the questionnaire included two questions:-

a) What did you like about the service ?
b) What did you not like about the service ?

It was felt that by wording the questions in this way they were less likely to receive yes/no answers. Asking for the best or worst features of the service might perhaps have been more acceptable. Information in Business staff were, however, rather concerned about the negative question so it was decided to substitute the question "Were you satisfied with our service ?" instead. As this question was more likely to receive a yes/no response respondents were asked in Question 8 if they had any comments to make about the service.

5.1.3 Preliminaries

A sheet of instructions explaining why the survey was being carried out, and thanking the staff for their co-operation was handed out to all members of staff.

Since the survey was in fact being carried out at the user's expense (they were paying for the telephone call) the caller was first asked if they would be willing to assist Information in Business in its customer satisfaction survey, and were reassured that it would take only a couple of minutes.

Staff were asked to note down the time of the enquiry.

Day of week	9 - 1	1 - 5	Not recorded	Total
Monday	5	5	4	14
Tuesday	9	4	3	16
Wednesday	5	5	1	11
Thursday	5	4	1	10
Friday	2	1	2	5
Total	26	19	11	56

5.1.4 Results of survey

56 telephone log forms were completed. According to Information in Business staff it was a relatively quiet

week, and approximately 70 - 80% of users were asked to take part in the survey.

Question 1

Have you answered these questions already ?

As the survey was not controlled, in that it was not possible to know who the next caller would be, and different members of staff were manning the telephone at different times of the day, some regular callers were asked the question several times, whereas three individuals from the same company all answered questionnaires independently. There was some doubt among Information in Business staff whether or not the questionnaire applied to CRO microfiche enquiries. As a consequence some of these enquirers were asked to take part in the survey and others were not. The original intention had been to include all callers that week in the survey regardless of type of enquiry.

Question 2

What products or services do you supply ?

Product or service	Number	%
Design/display/marketing	7	19.0
Local & central government	2	5.0
Services/financial	9	23.0
Manufacturing/eng/electr	9	23.0
Fashion/textiles	3	7.5
Academic	2	5.0
Transport/distribution	2	5.0
Builders/materials	1	2.5
Other	4	10.0
Total	39	100.0

As can be seen use by the product and service categories vary considerably from those presented in Section 4.3 . All the more regular users of Information in Business telephoned the service during that week, and the range of companies and organisations in the survey represented a typical cross-section of the business community which Information in Business seeks to serve.

Among the users recorded that week were a manufacturer of work uniforms, a haulage contractor, a company who design cars, a distributor of PVC and artificial leather, and a manufacturer of fire detectors.

Individual users

During the week of the survey there were 17 individual callers, of whom five were women. Of those callers who volunteered any extra information about themselves one was a private consultant, one a job applicant, and one was a self-employed man dealing in fishing tackle.

Question 3

Respondents were offered four alternatives.

How would you rate the size of your company ?

Size of company	Number	%
1 - 20	25	64.3
20 - 50	5	12.8
50 - 100	3	7.6
100 +	5	12.8
Don't know	1	2.5
Total	39	100.0

Question 4

Have you used Information in Business before ?

Type of enquirer	Yes	No	Total
Companies	15	24	39
Individuals	3	14	17
Total	18	38	56

Ten companies who replied that they had used the service before were not among those recorded on the enquiry log forms during the first year. One company had been sent Information in Business publicity material but the caller claimed to have found out about the service from the Information Centre in Bishop Street.

Three other callers, two from the same small company, replied that they had not personally used Information in Business before, but that someone in their company or organisation had.

-86-

Question 5

If so, were you satisfied with our service ?

There was no reply to this question recorded on forty one per cent of the questionnaires. Of these three had used the service before. It was not expected that those callers who had not used the service before would answer Question 5 but ten respondents replied that they were satisfied with it. Of those who had used the service before 23 respondents were satisfied.

There were no negative responses.

Some respondents qualified their replies with remarks such as :-

"Better than Birmingham"

"More than satisfied"

"Yes - thank you!"

"Satisfied so far"

Question 6

How did you hear about us ?

Respondents were offered five choices - personal contact, direct mailing, other publicity, another library, or any other route.

Method	Total replies	%
Personal contact	9	18.0
Direct mailing	1	1.8
Other publicity	1	1.8
Other library	30	56.6
Other	11	20.0
Don't know	1	1.8
Total	53	100.0

Of those respondents who found out about Information in Business from other Leicestershire libraries, that two-thirds had contacted the Information Centre in Bishop Street, which used to hold the county's main collection of business information material until 1990.

Other ways of hearing about Information in Business included two recruitment agencies, five other advice centres, an office circular, Companies house, and two were former students of Leicester Polytechnic.

Question 7

Will you use us again ?

There were no negative responses.

Staff at Information in Business felt that answers to Question 7 could be influenced by the immediate success or failure of the service to provide the exact information required. They also felt that the survey did not give any indication of the usefulness of the information acquired. They acknowledged, however, that this would be difficult to

evaluate as users cannot always assess the usefulness of the information before using it or placing it 'in context'.

One respondent's reply that they would have let us know when we have tackled the question, would seem to confirm their opinion.

One respondent qualified his reply by saying "it saves going to Bishop Street" but gave no reason for his preference.

Question 8

Are there any comments you would like to add ?

There were several negative replies.

i.e.   " You're engaged quite a lot."
       " Parking problems"
       " Not enough people know about the service"

Many replies were of the "extremely good", "Very helpful", or "most useful" variety but others were more illuminating, including such comments as :-

"generous opening hours"

"fast, efficient, effective"

"quite happy to be able to pick up phone and just ask"

"keep service as it is "

"Only people who could help me"

"Going to come and have a look round"

"Very good for research purposes"

"Always point me in the right direction"

A personal accolade about one of the members of staff being a "viz-kid" (sic!) was also included.

5.2 Correct answer fill rate

The monitoring forms for March 1991 were examined to see what percentage of enquiries were completely answered, partially answered, or not answered at all.

Answer fill rate	Number	%
Completely answered	124	70.0
Partially answered		
a) specialist information elsewhere	16	9.0
b) lack of resources	9	5.0
c) customer opted not to do online search	7	4.5
Not answered	20	11.5
Total	176	100.0

This small sample reveals that over two-thirds of all enquiries at Information in Business are answered successfully. Further detailed examination of available data would determine exactly why up to thirty per cent of all enquiries are not answered completely, and to consider

implications for the pricing structure of the service, the suitability of the offering mix , and its relevance to the actual information requirements of users.

5.3 Duration of enquiries

Monitoring forms for the first nine months of Information in Business were examined to discover the time taken to answer enquiries.

Duration of enquiries

Minutes	No of enquiries	%
0 - 5	2305	66.8
6 - 10	514	14.9
11 - 15	251	7.3
16 - 20	180	5.2
21 - 25	59	1.7

26 – 30	99	2.8
31 +	43	1.3
Total	3451	100.0

Two-thirds of all enquiries are dealt with in under five minutes. Nearly all other enquiries are answered in less than 30 minutes with under two per cent lasting longer than an hour.

5.4 Categorisation of enquiries

5.4.1 Enquiry log forms

The "details of enquiry" field of each enquiry log form for the first 12 months of Information in Business were examined to discover how the service is used. To determine the effectiveness of the service this data would have to be compared with the correct answer fill rate for the whole year, and the sources used to answer each enquiry.

Types of enquiries received April 1990 - March 1991

Type	Total	%
1) Company information UK	854	48.0
2) Company information overseas	221	12.5
3) Job interviews	30	1.7
4) Legal information	30	1.7
5) Financial information	71	3.9
6) Standards	33	1.8
7) Codes	14	0.6
8) Statistics	41	2.3
9) Reports	20	1.1
10) Copies	22	1.2

11) Lists	186	10.5
12) Market research	46	2.9
13) Information about associations	57	3.2
14) Stock	29	1.6
15) General information	124	7.0
Total	1778	100.0

Notes

1) Company information UK

These figures do not include CRO microfiche enquiries which are listed separately in Section 5.4.2.

3) Job interviews

Included here are requests for details about companies

where the enquirer has specifically mentioned that he/she is a job applicant.

5) Financial information

Included here are not financial details of companies but requests for information such as bank base rates.

14) Stock

These figures do not include stock enquiries entered on quick enquiry log forms. (Section 5.4.2)

Summary

Nearly half the enquiries were for UK company information. Many users only required contact information such as correct addresses and telephone numbers of companies.

e.g. Names and addresses of the newly privatised water companies

Other users asked for names of managing directors, credit-

worthiness of companies, trade names, and what product service companies offer. Some users wished to know if certain companies were still in existence or whether they had been taken over by another company.

A wide variety of enquiries for company information from all the continents were received, although most enquiries were for the correct names and addresses of European companies, or telephone and fax numbers for U S companies.

Requests for legal information ranged from details of EEC directives to questions such as " Do you need a licence for car boot trading ?"

The types of statistics requested were very varied.

e.g. " How big is the Asian population in Spain ?"

" Can you tell me the total metric tonnes of fish sold through fish and chip shops in the UK in 1988 ?"

Information in Business are sometimes asked for copies of journal or newspaper articles or EEC directives.

Information in Business are often asked for lists of wholesalers, manufacturers or distributors of specific products either in the UK or overseas.

e.g. " List of the manufacturers of machinery for making wooden buttons"

" List of pastry companies in London"

" List of Syrian cable manufacturers"

General information includes all enquiries that do not fit easily into any other category.

e.g. "What is sludge-lancing ?"

" Are there any short courses in floristry ?"

5.4.2 Quick enquiry log forms

Types of enquiries were recorded on the quick enquiry log forms during the first year.

Type of enquiry	Number	%
C R O	2384	80.0
Service details (3)	154	5.0
Stock queries	424	14.0
E I C (2)	19	1.0
Total	2981	100.0

Notes

1) Quick enquiry log forms were not used in April 1990

2) The European Information Centre opened in October 1990.
   Calls from the EIC requesting information from Information
   in Business are recorded here

3) Service details were mostly enquiries about opening hours

Summary

If the different categories for company information are added to the CRO microfiche enquiries these account for over seventy per cent of all enquiries received. Other quick enquiries account for about thirteen per cent and requests for other types of information for about fourteen per cent.

Chapter 6   Marketing Information in Business

Information in Business deliberately paced its marketing activities slowly in its first year. Suitable staff had to be recruited and trained and transfer and integration of stock from other libraries took some time. In July 1990 the office was moved downstairs to a more accessible area of the building.

The early publicity material is rather bland and emphasises the "there is something for everyone" message.(1) It is not aimed at particular market segments, and details about the service are general in character.

Shapiro (1980) suggests that "each new library service goes through various stages in its development with each stage calling for different promotional approaches." (2)

The environment in which a B I S is operating is constantly changing and now that Information in Business is established it needs to regularly examine the image it presents to the local business community and to find new ways of promoting the service.

-102-

Most of the aims and objectives of the service were being met by the end of the first year. Local and central government agencies were making regular use of the service (17 %) and seven per cent of enquiries were being referrred from other LLIS service points. The customer satisfaction survey (Section 5.1) revealed that half of the users of Information in Business first heard about the service through other libraries. Two-thirds of these had contacted the Information Centre in Bishop Street.

Display material about Information in Business has been distributed to all the large Leicestershire libraries. There is a red display panel with photographs and leaflets in the Information Centre in Bishop Street but in August 1991 it was set up at the back of the building where few people go, and there were no Information in Business leaflets in the racks by the library entrance.

LLIS service points have now stopped noting when they refer enquiries to Information in Business.

Information in Business aims to develop a highly personalised service tailored to users' individual information requirements. During the first nine months,

however, less than two per cent of enquiries involved in-depth enquiry work over the basic free 30-minute service. Information in Business need perhaps to be more realistic when calculating the time taken to handle enquiries as much time can be wasted trying to contact users on the telephone. Users can be encouraged to ring back, or alternatively the free period offered could be reduced to 15 minutes.

At the end of its first year Information in Business had five corporate subscribers. The target for the second year of the service is 20 corporate subscribers. By August 1991 there were ten corporate subscribers with two other companies seriously thinking about joining. Four large and six smaller companies have become corporate members including a newspaper, two nationally known companies, a publisher, a training agency and several firms of consultants.

Hyde (1988) found that there was definite preference among users of business information services for "pay-as-you-go" but Business Information Services interviewed found it "administratively inconvenient and frequently involved them in estimating for jobs" (3) although some negotiated to work a set number of hours or to set financial limits,

after which users could be consulted for further instructions. Users of Information in Business would also seem to prefer this option.

During the current recession the advantages of corporate subscriptions could be promoted emphasising the "Can you afford not to ?" message. A combination of an annual subscription and " pay-as-you-go" facilities could be introduced offering membership of an "information club" with regular current awareness bulletins, user education sessions, and a voucher scheme offering perks such as discounts on on-line searches or a free consultation about information requirements.

The customer satisfaction survey revealed that most users are satisfied with the service but Information in Business needs to monitor user satisfaction regularly and do what it can to improve those negative aspects of the service which users mentioned. (Section 5.1.4) Regular users need to be kept informed of any changes, improvements or additions to the service and encouraged to discuss their information requirements with Information in Business staff.

"Reasons for non use are more to do with image and awareness than with quality of service." (4)

Of over 300 organisations sent or given publicity material during the first year under twenty per cent are known to have become users of Information in Business, although the percentage might be slightly higher if the large number of unidentified callers [33.5 %] is taken into consideration. Less than four per cent of the respondents in the customer satisfaction survey learned about the survey through direct mailing or other publicity.

Data analysed in Chapters 4 and 5 show that there are clearly defined market segments in Leicestershire and Information in Business publicity material needs to be targetted more specifically at some of these sectors.

The confidential nature of the service is an obvious barrier when collecting data for marketing purposes but most users of the service are willing to identify themselves, as long as the nature of their enquiry remains confidential. One third of all enquiry forms collected during the first year were not completed, but now that a database has been set up (Section 7.4) a more deliberate effort is being made by all

-106-

members of Information in Business staff to record as much detail as possible about each user of the service, and any comments they might make.

A third of enquiries handled during the first twelve months were from individual users from all over the county, some of whom were referred by other LLIS service points. Such a large group of users is an important market segment and a separate leaflet could be prepared for them to promote the "pay-as-you-go" aspect of the service. During the recession the relevance of the service to job applicants could be highlighted. Students also use the service regularly and former students of Leicester Polytechnic could provide useful personal contact for Information in Business if employed locally once they have finished their courses. A separate field could be included on monitoring forms in an attempt to discover for what purpose individual users need the requested facts or data. Most users are ready to volunteer such information which might prove useful for future publicity or for adjusting stock.

A third of enquiries during the first year came from these companies and organisations. Seventy per cent of whom are within a five-mile radius of Leicester city centre. This

is the market segment most likely to visit the library and separate publicity material promoting "open days" or user education sessions could be prepared for this sector.

Fourteen per cent of enquiries came from a distance of between 10 - 15 miles from Leicester. This area contains many of Leicestershire's larger towns such as Lougborough and Melton Mowbray, as well as the former coal mining district of North West Leicestershire. Some of these areas are attracting funding for re-development and job creation schemes (Section 2.3) and many new businesses are starting up. There is considerable potential for promoting Information in Business in these areas.

Although no exact comparisons can be drawn the weighting of enquiries from different product and service sectors differs considerably from Patrick Noon's industry profile compiled in 1987. Even allowing for the 1990/91 recession the engineering, electronic, food and drink, plastics, chemicals and fashion industries would seem to be under represented. Use of the service by the retail trade is neglible and transport and distribution account for only four per cent of enquiries. (Section 4.3) These sectors are important contributors to Leicestershire's economy and future

publicity could be targetted at companies in these
industries.

There is little evidence so far that Asian or Afro-Caribbean
businesses in Leicestershire use Information in Business.
There is a separate industrial directory published annually
for this sector but a mailshot would be expensive and
time-consuming. More personal contact with ethnic minority
agencies such as Into Business, followed by an invitation to
visit the Kimberlin Library, could be a useful confidence-
building measure.

The size of companies and organisations is also an important
factor when considering ways of promoting a BIS. At
Information in Business the largest group of users are
smaller manufacturing companies and businesses in the
service sector with less than 25 employees. A separate
leaflet promoting the cheaper corporate subscription rate
for smaller businesses could be distributed to this
group.

Publicity material is expensive but plays a vital role in
increasing awareness of an information service and building
up a positive image within the business community. If there

are too many facts, however carefully arranged, squeezed onto one leaflet the message gets lost and it becomes difficult to "break the boredom barrier".(4) Information in Business needs to word its messages clearly and make them as short as possible. The message must also be of relevance to the person reading it and to be directed at specific market segments if it is to have any impact. The publicity must emphasise "what we do better than anyone else" (5) rather than describe the whole service in detail. Information in Business might consider designing a series of bookmarks for distribution to suitable outlets throughout the county, such as the Planning Department of Leicestershire County Council and the other advice agencies in New Walk.

Since some of the more regular users of Information in Business are firms of design and marketing consultants it might be possible to offer special terms to these firms in exchange for practical advice and assistance in promoting the service.

Little use has been made of the local media for promoting Information in Business in Leicestershire. No full-length feature article about the service has so far appeared in Leicestershire Business Today although the EIC has a regular

column in each issue. The link between the EIC and Information in Business (Section 7.2) could be featured. Many local business people listen to Radio Leicester either at work or in their vehicles and local personalities such as Ian Roberts (Section 2.4) have been interviewed. A regular radio or TV spot, or a weekly news item in the Business Section of the Leicester Mercury would heighten the profile of Information in Business within the business community and reach a far wider audience.

Kaye Smith's talk in Edinburgh about academic libraries in partnership was well received and it would make sense to follow this up as soon as possible with some articles or brief news items in appropriate publications.

Chapter 7   Future developments

Information in Business began operating in March 1990. During its first year it handled over 4,000 enquiries for business information of all kinds. In the summer of 1991 Information in Business was dealing with an average of 400 - 450 enquiries per month but July proved exceptionally busy with over 500 enquiries.

7.1   Making Information in Business more accessible

Most of the users of the service contact Information in Business by telephone but some are referred from LLIS service points.

The customer satisfaction survey (Section 5.1) highlights two areas of concern to users, problems of telephone access and parking problems.

Fax and answerphone facilities are available twenty four hours a day but the public telephone number for Information in Business is often engaged during core enquiry hours. There is a direct telephone link with the Information Centre in Bishop Street which is used for referral. There are two

telephones available for staff to make outgoing calls, or for internal access by Leicester Polytechnic staff.It is difficult to see how Information in Business could handle many more telephone enquiries with its present staff quota.

Attracting more personal visits to Information in Business might ease some of the pressure on the telephone service but Information in Business would have difficulty coping with an increase in the number of personal callers in its current premises.

At present the staff work area of Information in Business is hidden behind some brown screens and newcomers to the library might find this barrier rather intimidating. There is a miniscule reception area with two easy chairs squeezed in between some filing cabinets and lockers but no obvious first point of contact. Information in Business is, however, situated on the second level of the library near the main entrance and the enquiry desk. There are plans to extend Information in Business into the corner bay of the building, which would perhaps allow some space for a welcome area with an enquiry desk and somewhere comfortable to browse through reference material. The only other seats available at present are hard chairs placed at library tables which are

very heavily used, in what is often a very noisy area of the library.

Information in Business do not have their own photocopying facilities. Staff have to go down to the basement to use the staff photocopier which is in constant use.   Users of the service outside core hours have to join the often lengthy queue for the photocopiers with other library users.

There is unrestricted access to the reference areas of the library.   There are Kimberlin Library logo information signs at the end of each reference bay but it is not immediately obvious that these areas are also for use by users of Information in Business.

The "Handy Guide" to the Kimberlin Library is not particularly helpful to the users of Information in Business as it contains a lot of information irrelevant to them. A separate library leaflet for personal callers at Information in Business is being prepared.

Leicester Polytechnic's Kimberlin Library is not an ideal location for a business information service. The library is a good ten minutes walk from the centre of Leicester or from

the railway station. It is necessary to cross several busy roads to reach Mill Lane on foot, and by car the one-way system must be negotiated. There are no car parking facilities available for casual callers at the Kimberlin Library. This is mentioned in the Information in Business leaflet but if it was possible to reserve two parking spaces for the users of Information in Business this might encourage more personal callers.

One respondent in the customer satisfaction survey commented on the generous opening hours. During the summer term 1991 manning levels were increased so that more areas of the library could remain open on Saturday afternoons, but during vacation periods access to the library is more restricted.

7.2   Links with other agencies

From September 1991 the Law School at Leicester Polytechnic will be launching a scheme offering local law firms a package of benefits. For an annual subscription they will be offered a range of facilities at reduced rates including use of the Information in Business service. Information in Business will receive a predetermined proportion of the

subscription charges.

A contract between Information in Business and the European Information Centre is currently being negotiated. The EIC will pay for the services of a member of Information in Business staff to undertake more detailed enquiry work on their behalf.

Preparation of a current awareness bulletin has been postponed during these negotiations.

7.3   Stock

Information in Business have found that European telephone directories are underused, as is the Australian Extel material. The volume of enquiries asking for information about importers and exporters of particular products, both in the UK and overseas, increased considerably during the summer of 1991 and Information in Business has ordered more European and overseas trade directories, especially for Eastern Europe. They also intend to expand their collection of market research reports in time, but these are very expensive.

7.4 Promotion

In August Information in Business ran its first promotion of
specific features of the service, by sending two mailshots
to all companies on the database "Maillist" who had already
received Information in Business publicity. The first
promotion "Online in August" (Appendix 5) offered a 10 %
discount on all online searches conducted during August
1991. There was little take-up for on-line searches but some
interest was generated in the Information in Business
service. The second promotion was about the sixth edition of
the Leicestershire Industrial Directory. About ten copies
were sold.

A series of articles promoting different aspects of the
Information in Business service is now being prepared for
publication in the Leicester Mercury newspaper. The first
article about Quality Assurance appeared on 30th July 1991.
Possible future topics include researching a particular
market, patents and product information, employee rights and
Eastern Europe.

A database using DataEase software has now been programmed
to record details of users and to prepare mailshots. A

"Maillist" file has been opened which records company details, the status of the caller within his/her organisation and a publicity record for recording whether a leaflet or information pack has been sent, if a reply has been received, or whether the caller has visited the Kimberlin Library.

The two forms currently used for monitoring enquiries are being merged into one. Details from these forms are then transferred to the database as time permits. Retrospective records as from 1st April 1991, the beginning of the second year of the Information in Business service, will also be added. New fields included on the form are for deadlines and a success rating.

The database will facilitate evaluation of the Information in Business service on a monthly basis and assist in marketing the service.

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A P P E N D I C E S

Information Service
Business & Industry

QUICK ENQUIRY LOG

DATE...

Please keep details of enquiries (5 bar gate) under the following
categories:

CRO

Details of
Service

Check item(s)
in stock

ElC

INFORMATION IN BUSINESS: THE INFORMATION SERVICE

FOR BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

ENQUIRY LOG

Name

Company Name

Address

Telephone No.   Fax No.

Enquiry taken by

Enquiry handled by

Details of Enquiry

Contact Record

Sources Checked

Notes

Outcome of Enquiry

Time Taken   Chargeable Time

Costs Incurred (e.g. On-line search, telephone calls, photocopies, fax, etc.)

Invoice Details

INFORMATION IN BUSINESS: THE INFORMATION SERVICE FOR BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY
MONITORING FORM

e: _____   Enquiry received at: _____   Enquiry number: _____

NQUIRY CODE [_____]

IETHOD OF RECEIPT
Personal ☐
Telephone ☐
Fax ☐
Electronic mail ☐
Letter ☐
Referred from (if known) _____

3. CATEGORY OF USER
LP Personnel ☐
Individual ☐
Company ☐
Other organisation ☐
Specify _____

NSWERED/REFERRED
Extent to which answered
Completely answered ☐

Partially answered   **Not answered**
☐   lack of resources   ☐
☐   requires specialist input beyond 5 minutes   ☐
☐   specialist information available elsewhere   ☐
☐   customer opted not to proceed with charged search   ☐
☐   customer opted not to proceed with on-line search   ☐
☐   other   ☐
    specify: _____

Referral

	Referral of customer		Staff involvement in referral of enquiry			
	Directed	Pick-up phone line	Phone	Fax	E-mail	Post
Referred to LLIS	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Referred to LP	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Referred to other library/agency	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Indicate which: _____

TIME TAKEN
0- 5mins ☐
6-10mins ☐
11-15mins ☐
16-20mins ☐
21-25mins ☐
26- 30mins ☐
31 + mins ☐

6. RESOURCES USED
Stock ☐   total stock items [____]
On-line ☐
CD Rom/disc ☐
Leics. Comp database ☐
In house indexes ☐
External source ☐
Indicate which _____

DOCUMENT SUPPLY

Source of supply	Total items supplied/loaned		Total	Photocopies(pages)
Internal	[____]	BS	[____]	[____]
		Directories (superseded)	[____]	
LP obtain from LLIS	[____]			[____]
LLIS obtain from LP	[____]			[____]
Obtain via ILL	[____]			
Obtain from other library/agency:	[____]			
Extel	[____]			
CRO	[____]			
Overseas/international standards	[____]			
Other	[____]			

FAX   No. of pages faxed to customer   [____]

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Customer satisfaction survey

Telephone Log to be carried out 17th - 21st June 1991

Date.......................   Time................

Name.......................   Enquiry Number................

Company name...

Would you be willing to answer a few questions to assist us in our customer satisfaction survey. It will only take a few minutes.

1)   Have you answered these questions already ? Yes/No

2)   If a company or organisation, what products or services do you supply ?
     ....

3)   How would you rate the size of your company ?

     1 - 20   20 - 50   50 - 100   100+   employees

4)   Have you used Information in Business before ? Yes/No

5)   If so, were you satisfied with our service ?

     ....

     ....

6)   How did you hear about us ?

     Personal contact .....
     Direct mailing   .....
     Other publicity   .....
     Other library   .....
     Other   ....

7)   Will you use us again ? Yes/No

8)   Are there any comments you would like to add ?

     ....

Notes

     ....

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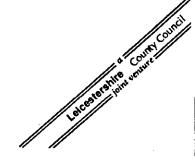
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