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A user survey of the Northamptonshire Business and European Information Centre

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A User Survey of the Northamptonshire Business and European Information Centre.

by

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A Master's Dissertation, submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the Master of Science degree of the
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ABSTRACT

The aims and objectives of the research are outlined first. These are to identify specific groups of users and non-users of the Northamptonshire Business and European Information Centre (NBEIC), to establish user behaviour patterns and to assess levels of customer satisfaction. The recent growth in the demand for business and European information is then discussed, followed by an explanation of why a user survey of NBEIC is necessary. The methodology is then presented, stating that three questionnaires were administered: one to personal visitors; one to telephone users; one to assumed non-users of NBEIC. An indication of how effectively NBEIC is operating is obtained from the results of the survey. Users' opinions provide an insight into how valuable NBEIC is to the local community and how well the Centre is catering for the needs of its customers. Areas where improvements could be made are suggested, namely by enlarging the floor-space of the Centre and by investing in a publicity campaign. Results from the non-users' questionnaire show that there are potential customers within the local business community to whom the services of NBEIC could be marketed.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH

1.1 Statement of Purpose

The aim of this research is to identify specific user groups and to investigate areas of use and non-use of the Northamptonshire Business and European Information Centre (NBEIC). By obtaining the opinions of users of NBEIC the research also aims to assess levels of customer satisfaction.

1.2 Objectives

In order to achieve the above aims, the following objectives are to be met:-

- To establish who is/is not using the Centre.
- To establish the purpose of use, whether for business or personal reasons.
- To discover what type of materials and services have the highest/lowest rate of use.
- To identify customers' awareness of specific services.
- To obtain users' opinions of services offered.
- To establish the extent to which the Centre satisfies users' needs/enquiries.

- To identify non-users, and their information needs, as potential customers to whom the services of NBEIC could be marketed.

1.3 Limitations to Research

NBEIC operates on a 'reference only' basis, and so there is no formal record of who uses the Centre as no material is actually borrowed. This means that no sampling frame exists from which a representative sample of the population (total users of NBEIC) can be drawn. The user survey will, therefore, be restricted to people who actually make an enquiry by telephone or who physically enter the Centre.

Due to the timing of this study, implemented during June and July, it is assumed that the student population is significantly under-represented. However, NBEIC are already aware that a large proportion of their users are students. They are particularly interested in learning more about the "other" groups of users, especially those groups belonging to the business community. It must, then, be acknowledged that whilst the lack of a sampling frame and the timing of the study impose limitations on the accurate representation of the total population, the research will provide beneficial information on the needs of users from the business community, who will (probably) be over-represented in this survey.

1.4 Background to Research

In order to place the purpose of this research into context, it is necessary to discuss the origins of NBEIC and the types of service provided by the Centre. Prior to this, a brief explanation of why there has been a rapid increase of late in supply of and demand for business and European information will be provided. This will help to indicate why it is important for this research to be undertaken. For NBEIC to operate effectively it has to be able to identify its customers because different types of people have different needs.

1.4.1 Demand for Business and European Information

During the past ten years there has been a substantial growth in the recognition of the value of information. This is most significant within the fields of business and commerce. Demand for business information, whether *for* business or *about* business, is increasing from both the business community and the public [1].

In the context of the business community, business information is, in essence, any information that the business man or woman needs to further his or her business objectives [2]. The recession of the 1990s has made commercial competition fierce. All sizes of business have realised that in order to succeed they need to be well informed about their competitors, their market, and the business environment as a whole. This is reinforced by Don Kennington who stresses the importance of the link between access to, and availability of, relevant and timely business information and the

successful business [3].

The public's demand for business information is also increasing for a number of reasons. Employment opportunities are less abundant as a result of the recession, hence, business information is required by those people wanting to gain the competitive edge at interviews, or establishing their own business. Alongside the growth in demand for business information is a rise in the number of business and management courses on offer in Britain. In turn, these courses are producing an expanding student community requiring current, accurate business information.

The arrival of the Single Market in Europe in 1992 has caused an explosion in European business information and a matching increase in demand. European Community policies and legislation affect both the economic climate within which industry operates and the conduct of specific business activities [4]. In order to trade with European counterparts or compete against European rivals, British companies have to be aware of, amongst other things, business procedures, European legislation and potential customers or partners.

In order to meet this growing demand for European information, a unique network of European Information Centres (EICs) has been established throughout Britain and across the whole of the rest of the European Community (EC). EICs were originally set up by and partly funded by the European Commission. There are in excess of 200 throughout Europe, over 20 of which are located in Britain.

The Single Market has increased interaction between EC member countries which assists the free-flow of business information. This has been further encouraged by the EIC network which aims to improve co-operation between businesses within the Community.

The expanding demand for business information coupled with the explosion in interest in Europe has culminated in the EIC network which attempts to offer as comprehensive a European business information service as possible [5]. The key role of EICs is to provide businesses, particularly small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), with information. SMEs are usually not equipped with their own European business information service as they do not have the resources or need to monitor EC developments on a continuous basis [6]. Therefore, when the need does arise they are able to turn to the EIC network for the information they require. Tanya Wood has defined six areas of European information that are requested most frequently by business people:

- a. Information about legislation and standards
- b. Statistics
- c. Market and company information
- d. Information about funding
- e. Information about how to make contact with firms in other countries
- f. Current awareness [7].

The other core EIC services are the provision of practical assistance and advice about the Single Market; dissemination of information

about the Community to help promote various EC initiatives; and feedback to the Commission regarding the concerns and views of the local business community.

The EIC network is very different to the European Documentation Centres which are located in academic libraries and aimed at catering for students' needs. EICs have been developed as an interactive network which means that no centre operates in isolation. This is the main strength of the EICs. The wide network decentralizes information ensuring that current information is made readily available to the business community. Many of the EICs in Britain have links with public libraries and are often the result of a collaboration between a number of organisations. Their existence is therefore not for the exclusive use of businesses, but also as a source of European information for the public. This applies in the case of NBEIC.

1.4.2 Origins and Development of Northamptonshire Business and European Information Centre (NBEIC)

NBEIC was established in November 1991 in response to an increase in demand for business information and in anticipation of the fast approaching Single Market and 1992. The Centre is an associate member of the official European Commission EIC Network [8] and is also a partnership between five local organisations:

- Northamptonshire County Council
- Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Northamptonshire Enterprise Agency
- Northamptonshire Training and Enterprise Council
- Nene College

The Centre is able to draw upon the expertise of all these organisations which means its information resources are wide and varied and not merely restricted to the actual physical materials situated within the building. Most of the hard-copy sources that make up the stock in the Centre were transferred from the reference section of the Central Library, and so customers who would previously have used the business directories in the reference section can now consult these and many more sources within a centre that caters specifically for the business and European information user.

Company information on a local, national and international scale forms a considerable amount of the stock in the Centre. NBEIC holds all of the *Kompass* directories in hard-copy, except that of Portugal, but this is accessible online. Accuracy and timeliness are important to all users of business information. The online search service is therefore a vital asset for ensuring the retrieval of the most recent data. However, as is occurring in many public business libraries, the Centre charges for use of their online service.

Based in the public library and offering its facilities to anyone requiring business and European information, NBEIC attracts a

wide audience. The Centre receives an average of 250 enquiries per week, 120 of which are personal visits [9]. Jo Haythornthwaite states that much of the enquiry work done in a public business library is of a quick reference nature and a great deal of it relates to company information [10]. There are however still a number of enquiries that are more complex which require expert help from qualified staff. This leads to two distinct levels of service being provided by business libraries: a general quick reference service, and a more specialised service covering subjects of particular interest to business. The importance of current information means the whole emphasis of a business library is on contemporary conditions [11], which NBEIC are able to provide via recent journals, European documentation and their online facilities.

NBEIC keep monthly statistics of how many enquiries they receive and the type of information requested. These statistics must, by the nature of the data, only include telephone enquiries and people who have asked for help. People who were familiar with the Centre and able to satisfy their own information needs, or people who were reluctant to consult members of staff would not register as having made use of the Centre or of having an enquiry. This would mean that their patronage of the Centre would have gone unrecorded, as would details of their information requirements.

While monthly statistics are a useful indicator of how much the Centre is being used, they are not able to provide any information on *who* is using the Centre, *why* they are using it, or whether the Centre and its facilities fully meet the customers' requirements.

Monthly 'use statistics' are also incapable of recording non-use of the Centre. It is therefore necessary to undertake a detailed user survey to identify who the customers of NBEIC are and to establish their information needs.

1.5 Why a User Survey?

Before any service can meet the needs of the customer it must firstly be able to define who the customer is, and secondly be able to establish what the customer requires. Only then can the service be tailored to meet customers' specific needs in as effective a way as possible. In a discussion of library user studies Busha and Harter state that:

Among the questions that librarians have a distinct obligation to pose and attempt to answer are those relating to library effectiveness, including such factors as the choice and suitability of library materials; the nature of library collections in relation to needs of clientele; the use and nonuse of library materials and services; the degree of awareness about library collections and services among clientele or potential clientele of libraries; the efficiency with which information in libraries is stored, retrieved, and utilized; and user satisfaction or dissatisfaction with libraries. [12]

The Consultancy and Research Unit at the University of Sheffield (formerly the Centre for Research on User Studies), have defined occasions when it is appropriate to undertake a user study by

surveying the users of the service. Direct contact with individuals is necessary if you want to discover people's:

- Information needs
- Unmet information needs
- Attitudes
- Opinions
- Preferences
- Evaluations [13].

The nature of this research, into the use and non-use of NBEIC, requires the sort of information listed above in order to assess levels of customer satisfaction and gain an insight into the effectiveness of the Centre and its services. In this case, the implementation of a user survey is both necessary and appropriate.

1.5.1 Quantitative or Qualitative Approach?

The element of measurement associated with surveys will allow for objective, quantitative data to be collected and analysed. Figures obtained, such as user satisfaction rates, can then be translated to indicate levels of effectiveness within a given service, or the Centre as a whole. A strength of survey research is the flexibility to incorporate a more subjective qualitative strategy to explore further the results obtained from the quantitative approach. The qualitative element of a survey allows people's attitudes and opinions of the service to be recorded. It is, however, important to bear in mind that when measuring personal opinions and individual's views on

the value of a service, people's standards and levels of expectation will vary. Maurice B. Line states:

You cannot truly measure the value of a library to its community. You can measure the use made of it, the community's attitude to it, even to some extent the economic contribution it makes to the community. All or any of these may help greatly in judging the value of the library, but in the last resort this must be a value judgement. [14]

Line goes on to say:

That people's standards of adequacy or quality of a library differ does not matter, so long as it is clearly realized that it is their *attitudes* that are being measured, not the adequacy or quality of the library. [15]

Qualitative data is, then, highly subjective and should be treated with caution. But, despite the limitations of qualitative assessment when measuring value and quality of a service, it can still provide beneficial information to indicate areas requiring further investigation. When used in conjunction with quantitative data, qualitative data can help to influence future decision-making regarding the types of service required and how best to provide them.

If structured well, the survey format can elicit a wide range of facts which, when examined in relation to one another, can create a

valuable resource of management information. Both quantitative and qualitative assessment can be incorporated into a user survey. A user survey can be designed to measure quantities of use and also to measure, in the opinion of the user, the significance of and the value of that which is being used. Results obtained from surveys can, therefore, be of both a descriptive and an analytical nature. Basic facts and figures can describe what is happening, such as the amount of use of British company directories. Then, when viewed alongside other factors, an analysis of why that type of information is in demand, what it is being used for and by whom, can occur.

It is because of the versatility of a user survey to record both quantitative and qualitative data that it has been selected as the vehicle of this research. It is an appropriate format which will facilitate the fulfilling of the objectives of this research. The answering of fundamental 'usage' questions will also result in NBEIC having a store of factual data upon which future decisions about the Centre can be made.

1.6 Review of Literature

Much has been written on the construction and implementation of surveys, particularly in the field of social science. A survey of library use incorporates many of the social science research techniques. Hence, when it was decided that a user survey was to be undertaken at NBEIC, it was necessary to obtain an insight into how surveys should be designed and the most appropriate survey methods to adopt. Of particular interest to anyone about to

undertake a survey of any kind is the work of Earl R. Babbie. His book, *The practice of social research* [16], provides comprehensive coverage of research techniques, and the whole of chapter 12 is concerned with survey research.

When designing a survey with a library and its users in mind, M.B.Line's *Library surveys* [17] is an informative source, and gives useful examples of research problems and how best to deal with them. While there are many more texts offering guidance and instruction on undertaking library surveys and research, two other notable sources are *Research methods in library and information studies* [18] edited by Margaret Slater, and Busha and Harter's *Research methods in librarianship: techniques and interpretation* [19]. Although both texts are general overviews of research methods they can help the researcher to decide which method is the most appropriate for the task in hand, be it a survey or another technique.

Once the survey method had been selected for investigating the use and users of NBEIC, the *CRUS* guides [20], produced by the Centre for Research on User Studies at the University of Sheffield, provided all the necessary information on undertaking a user survey. Each guide covers a different aspect of user study research, and they proved to be an indispensable resource when it came to deciding on the technique to be employed and developing the structure of the survey.

This research is aimed at assessing how the resources of NBEIC are

being used and by whom, and the extent to which users of the Centre are satisfied with the service they receive. Therefore, familiarisation with previous business information surveys was required. As stated earlier, the demand and supply of business and European information has rapidly increased over recent years. It follows, then, that during the same period there has been a significant number of surveys on libraries providing this kind of information and of the various groups who use them.

1.6.1 Business Information Surveys

Before commencing this research project, perusal of a range of business library surveys demonstrated ways in which other researchers have tackled similar user studies to that required by NBEIC. The most relevant study to this research is *Uses and users of public sector business libraries: a study based on Birmingham, Manchester and Nottingham libraries* [21], undertaken by members of CRUS at the University of Sheffield. The study presents the general characteristics of business library use, puts forward users' perceptions of services, and indicates their assessments of the value of business libraries [22] in a succinct manner. The CRUS study does, therefore, explore similar areas to those defined in the aims and objectives of this survey of use of NBEIC.

There are two principal organisations in the field of research into business information provision and utilisation that should be mentioned: the Association for Information Management, better known as ASLIB, and the work of Capital Planning Information

(CPI) and its managing director Don Kennington. Of the many CPI publications two are of particular interest to this project. They are *Qualitative assessment of public reference services* [23], and *The information needs of the smaller business: proceedings of a seminar...* [24]. Both publications are concerned with users' needs and levels of satisfaction with public business information services.

One final notable source of relevance to this survey of NBEIC use is the ASLIB publication *Business information in London* [25]. It is an analytical survey of academic, private and public libraries, and provides detailed data on users' demands for information, the stock and facilities available to users. By including opinions of staff working in the libraries, this report presents not only what users actually want, but also what the providers of the service understand them to want. Although published in 1976 the findings relating to the views of the staff are still applicable today, particularly those stating that business information users require, above all, a speedy yet accurate service.

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CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

2.1 Scope of Research

The survey of use of NBEIC and its users was conducted during the end of June and the beginning of July 1993. The population of the survey were the users, both personal visitors and telephone enquirers, of NBEIC, and a further population of local businesses were the focus of the non-users' survey.

When selecting a sample for the user survey, as stated in Chapter 1, no formal list of NBEIC users existed and so there was no adequate sampling frame from which to draw a random sample. For this reason non-probability haphazard sampling was used, as it does not rely on a sampling frame. The advantages of this sampling technique are that it is inexpensive to carry out and allows for the study of the most available people. The disadvantage is that the sample may not be truly representative of the whole population and so may affect the accuracy of the results.

The sample for the non-user survey was selected by the staff of NBEIC from a local business directory. The figure of 100 businesses was decided upon as the sample for the non-user survey. For the personal visitors' survey 200 people were approached, and for the telephone users' survey 100 enquirers made up the sample. The sizes of the samples were arbitrarily determined by the

manager of NBEIC based upon personal experience of the amount of enquiries received each week. For the non-users' survey, the figure of 100 businesses was decided upon to ensure the inclusion of a wide and varied cross-section of the local business community.

2.2 Which Survey Method?

The reasons for selecting the survey technique have already been discussed in Chapter 1. However, a survey can take the form of either a questionnaire, interviews, observation, diaries or a combination of these methods. In order to achieve the objectives of this research it was decided that a questionnaire was the most appropriate method to adopt.

A self-completed questionnaire was decided upon as the main method of enquiry for the following reasons: it allowed for a large number of people to be questioned and their opinions to be collected; it was a relatively cheap method of data collection; being self-completed meant that respondents filled the questionnaires in and so the survey was less time consuming.

2.3 Questionnaire Design

The aim of this research is to investigate areas of use *and* non-use of NBEIC. In order to do this three questionnaires were needed. The first one was designed to survey personal visitors of the Centre; the second one was mailed to people making telephone enquiries who agreed to take part in the survey; and the third questionnaire,

of non-use, was sent out to businesses within Northamptonshire who may or may not have used NBEIC. The list for the non-users' survey was drawn up by the staff of NBEIC, and the questionnaires were posted to the selected companies.

The personal visitors' and telephone users' questionnaires were each constructed of 19 questions and divided into two sections (see Appendices I and II). The first 13 questions were concerned with use of the services and sources, and users' opinions of the Centre. The final six questions were of a personal nature including a subsection on companies aimed at those people who were managers or employees. The structure of these two questionnaires followed the same pattern, but certain questions had to be worded differently on the telephone users' questionnaire in order to read correctly for that particular type of user.

The questions included in the users' survey were mainly of a quantitative nature. However, one of the aims of this research is to assess levels of customer satisfaction and in order to do this a qualitative angle had to be incorporated into the questionnaire. The questionnaires directed at personal visitors and telephone users, then, adopted a mixed research strategy. Questions of fact and questions of opinion facilitated the recording of both quantitative and qualitative data.

A combination of closed (structured) and open-ended (unstructured) questions formed the content of the users' survey questionnaires. The open-ended questions were all concerned with attitudes and

opinions of users, while the closed questions, offering a choice of response categories, covered aspects such as user behaviour, purpose of visit/enquiry and personal details. Some of the closed questions required respondents to select one category, while other questions asked for all applicable options to be ticked. When designing the questionnaire it was decided that certain questions, such as the purpose of visit/enquiry, and customers' occupational status should be constructed as mixed questions containing an "other" category to ensure that all eventualities were catered for.

As none of the questions dealt with the facilities available to users, the final question of the personal visitors' and telephone enquirers' questionnaires was designed as an open-ended question, encouraging people to comment on any aspect of NBEIC of significance to them. This enabled people to raise points relating to facilities, such as seating arrangements, floor space and opening hours, coverage of which was otherwise omitted from the main body of the questionnaire.

The non-users' questionnaire (see Appendix III) was kept short and simple as people are more reluctant to complete long, time consuming questionnaires from which they benefit nothing. As many business people are busy people, a brief yet sufficiently probing questionnaire was designed in the hope that it would generate a high response rate and also raise awareness of the existence of NBEIC within the business community. Keeping to one side of A4 paper, five questions were devised to investigate the following areas:-

- how many of the 100 businesses constituting the sample had or had not already heard of NBEIC
- what information needs existed within the business community
- levels of interest in services offered by NBEIC
- preferred methods of contact with NBEIC
- how many of the 100 businesses constituting the sample had other sources of business and European information available to them.

All of the questions were of a closed nature, and the respondent was simply required to tick the appropriate categories.

Time constraints dictated that piloting of the questionnaires was impractical. However, it was decided that it was not absolutely necessary to undertake a pilot study as all three questionnaires contained straightforward questions, mainly of a closed nature to make analysis easier. The questionnaires were shown to NBEIC members of staff to check for any obvious errors in category divisions, and the provision of an "other" category in six of the 19 questions in the personal visitors' and telephone users' questionnaires ensured that every possible answer that could be given by respondents could be included within the questionnaires.

2.3.1 Category Divisions

An explanation of the reasoning behind the category divisions of some of the questions should be provided. The response categories

of question 1 in the user survey differ between the questionnaire aimed at personal visitors and the questionnaire aimed at telephone enquirers (see Appendices I and II). It was decided that the category of "First visit to NBEIC", included in the personal visitors' questionnaire, should be omitted from the telephone users' questionnaire. This was because the wording was inapplicable to telephone enquirers. Even if the wording was changed to "First telephone call to NBEIC", this may still have caused confusion as the respondent would be completing the questionnaire retrospectively, unlike personal visitors to the Centre who completed their questionnaires at the time of their visit.

The age group categories in question 15 (see Appendices I and II) are not divided equally. The age group divisions were intended to relate to the occupational status categories listed in question 16. The six categories in question 15 were broken down to represent the following:

- school-children (15 and under)
- 'A' Level students/new employees (16 - 18)
- higher education students/established employees (19 - 24)
- new managers/well established employees (25 - 34)
- established managers (35 - 49)
- well established managers/retired persons (50 and over)

Of course, almost all of the occupations could be connected to a respondent of any age, but the above reasoning was the underlying theory upon which the age category divisions were based.

Finally, the category divisions of question 17 in the users' questionnaire (see Appendices I and II) need explaining. The figures used to define whether a company was small, medium or large were obtained from the Northamptonshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). Although these figures may conflict with other organisations' definitions of company size, they were deemed appropriate for this particular survey, especially as a key role of EICs is to cater for the information needs of SMEs.

All of the category divisions in the non-users' questionnaire (see Appendix III) are self-explanatory and, therefore, require no further comment at this stage.

2.4 Response Rate

For each of the three types of questionnaire the response rate was as follows:

Of the personal visitors' questionnaire a total of 178 were collected, although the original figure of a sample of 200 was decided upon, 22 of the questionnaire schedules remained uncompleted. Out of the 178 responses collected, 11 people refused to take part in the survey as they were either too busy to spare the time or saw no point in providing information which they felt would not be acted upon. A further 5 respondents only managed to complete the first section of the questionnaire relating to the Centre and its services, and failed to supply any personal details. However, as the first section was completed by these 5 respondents they have been

included in the analysis, resulting in the gathering of a final total of 167 responses (83.5% of the sample).

The telephone enquirers' postal questionnaire was sent out to those people who agreed to participate in the survey. However, the response rate for this questionnaire was low. A total of 31 responses out of the 100 distributed questionnaires were received, two of which were returned blank with both respondents saying they had never used NBEIC. This resulted in a 29% completion rate. Yet, despite the dissatisfying response rate, this figure had to be settled for as time constraints meant that it was not possible for a reminder to be sent out to non-respondents.

The third questionnaire, aimed at suspected non-users of the Centre who could be potential customers, was also distributed by post. Again, 100 people were selected as the sample size. Out of these, 33 respondents returned their questionnaire sheets, one of which was not filled in but had been "returned to sender" by the Post Office with a message that the addressee had "gone away". Therefore, a completion rate of 32% was attained from the non-users' questionnaire. As before, time restrictions meant that non-response could not be followed up.

2.5 Method of Data Analysis

When all three sets of questionnaires had been collected, the data was prepared for analysis using summary sheets. These allowed for all the closed-question responses to be recorded. Once the data had

been transferred to the summary sheets it was not necessary to consult the completed questionnaires again, although they were retained just in case further scrutiny of the original data was required.

Occasionally respondents gave multiple responses to questions requiring only one response. After much deliberation it was decided that if the results were to be representative of the whole population, then a multiple response must be regarded as an invalid response. However, the figures for the amount of multiple response answers to a single response question are provided in the analysis of the data. This acts as an indicator of the number of respondents who found it impossible to choose between categories, or to give preference to one category over another where two or more categories were of equal significance to the respondent.

Recording of open-ended responses was done by noting each individual comment. This meant that a representative selection of these comments and opinions could then be duplicated in the findings of the research (Chapter 3).

The personal visitors' and telephone enquirers' questionnaires required those respondents who categorised themselves as "manager" or "employee" to answer two further questions relating to the company they worked for. However, a number of respondents classifying themselves as "self-employed" also completed the questions about their company's size and location. For the purpose of this survey "self-employed" was interpreted as

being one individual working for their own business in a small scale venture. However, one respondent did in fact comment that self-employed does not necessarily mean a one man band operation. Still, as the original decision was not to obtain company information from self-employed people, any answers provided in this section by self-employed respondents were disregarded.

The data was analysed manually. As the three questionnaires were comprised mainly of structured questions, this facilitated manual analysis. This method was also the most suitable for analysis of open-ended questions. A diverse array of opinions was expressed by respondents, and these needed to be analysed carefully to ensure that the resulting comments included in the findings in Chapter 3 were representative. Due to the reasonably small sample to whom the personal visitors' questionnaire was administered, and the low response rates of the two postal questionnaires, manual analysis using summary sheets was deemed the most appropriate method. This was because the total number of responses were not considered great enough to justify the time and effort that would have been incurred inputting the data into a computer for analysis by a statistics package.

CHAPTER 3

FINDINGS OF RESEARCH

3.1 Order of Presentation of Results

The following chapter presents the findings of the survey research. Analysis of each of the three questionnaires - the personal visitors', the telephone users' and the non-users' - has been undertaken separately, producing three distinct sets of results. Therefore, in order to maintain clarity and consistency, the findings first of all concentrate on presenting the results of the personal visitors' questionnaire, followed by the results of the telephone users' questionnaire. A representative selection of opinions and comments given by both user groups are also included in the findings. Finally, the results obtained from the non-users' questionnaire are presented.

3.2 Personal Visitors' Questionnaire

The data contained in this section has been gathered from the largest survey group, the personal visitors of NBEIC. As stated in Chapter 2, section 2.3, the questionnaire was divided into two parts (see Appendix I). The first part dealt with the services and sources, and users' opinions of the Centre, while the second part concentrated on learning more about the users themselves. In presenting the findings obtained from analysis of the questionnaire the most logical approach has been adopted. Beginning with the

first section that deals with services, sources and users' opinions, the results of each questionnaire are systematically discussed, interspersed with a series of results from cross-analysis of various questions. The results obtained from the second section of the questionnaire concerning personal details are then presented. Finally, a representative selection of the comments provided under question 19 are quoted.

3.2.1 Frequency of Use and Type of Use of NBEIC

The data to indicate how often personal visitors used NBEIC was gathered from the responses to question 1. Of the 167 respondents 65 (38.9%) were first time visitors to the Centre and 49 (29.3%) visited the Centre less than once a month. Nine people (5.4%) visited more than once a week, 13 (7.8%) visited once a week, 16 (9.6%) visited once a fortnight and 15 (9.0%) visited once a month.

When asked 'was your visit here today for personal or business use?', 89 respondents (53.3%) indicated they were visiting NBEIC to use it for business reasons, 72 (43.1%) were visiting for personal reasons, 5 (3.0%) were visiting on both a business and personal basis and 1 person (0.6%) did not respond.

By analysing the frequency of use against the type of use, the results obtained showed that of the 89 people using NBEIC for business reasons 66 (74.1%) visited the Centre once a month or less frequently, or were visiting for the first time. This result supports the theory stated in Chapter 1 that companies, in particular SMEs,

use business information centres as and when the need arises. Out of the 72 people using NBEIC for personal reasons 60 (83.3%) visited the Centre once a month or less frequently, or were visiting for the first time (see Figure 1).

3.2.2 Purpose of Visit and Satisfaction Levels

When asked about the purpose of their visit respondents were required to tick all of the applicable categories. The results shown in Figure 2 indicate the number of respondents who selected each category, and 68 out of 167 respondents (40.7%) had more than one purpose to their visit. As was expected, the most common purpose of visit was to locate a company's name or address as specified by 95 out of 167 respondents (56.9%). The least selected purpose of visit category was to obtain information on EC law, with 2 out of 167 respondents (1.2%) selecting this category. Sixteen respondents specified an "other" purpose to their visit. These included the researching of companies in preparation for job interviews; obtaining information on specific subjects such as contracts of employment, emigration and export documentation; and also to use services offered by NBEIC such as Extel Cards and British Standards.

Of the 95 respondents whose purpose of visit was, amongst other things, to locate a company name or address, 56 people (58.9%) required the information for business use, while 35 people (36.8%) required the information for personal use. A total of 3 people

Figure 1: Frequency of use and type of use.

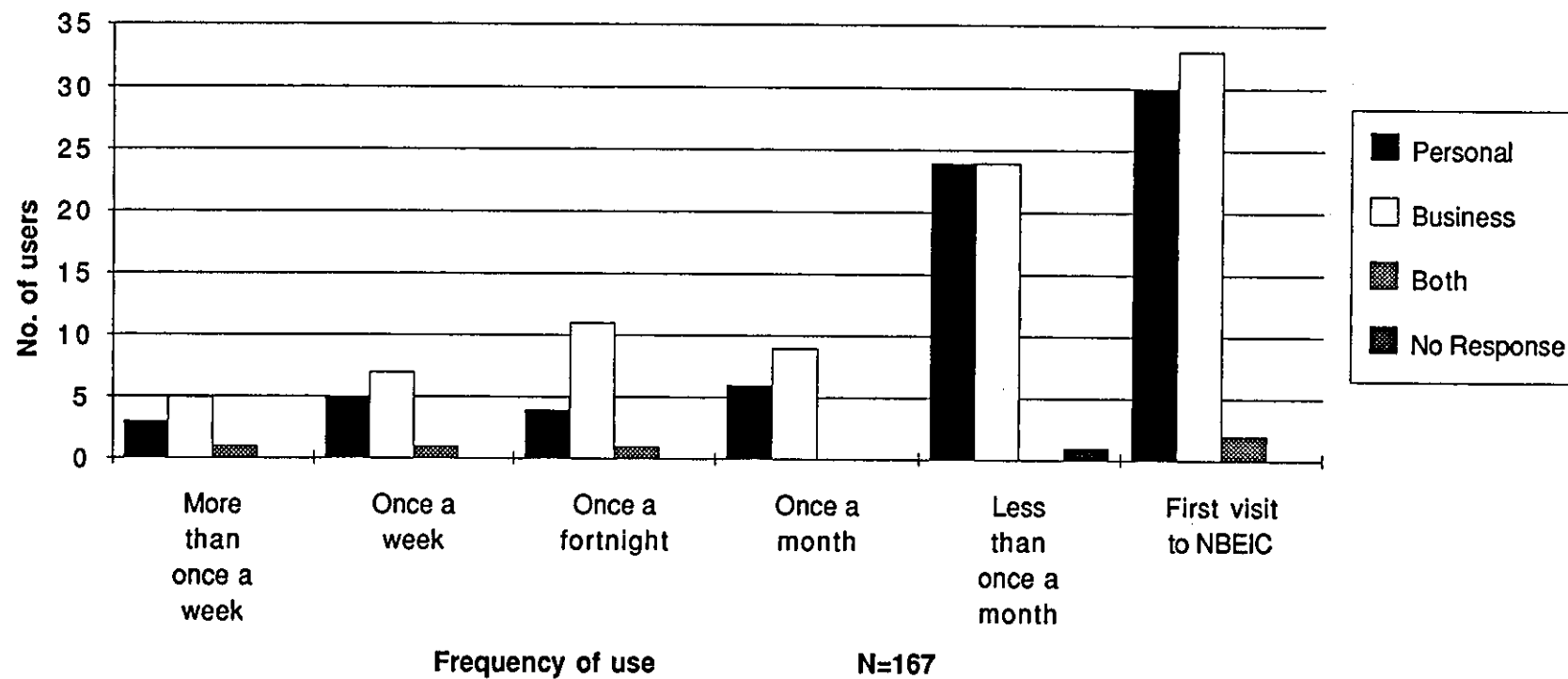
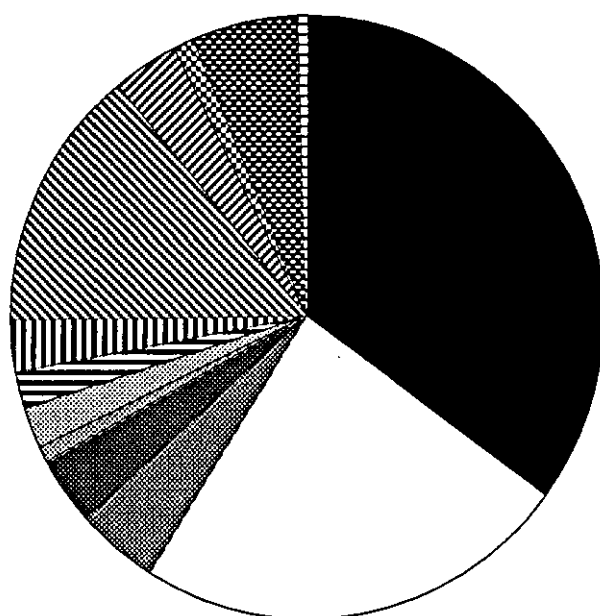


Figure 2: Purpose of visit to NBEIC.



- Locate company name/address
- Consult British company directories
- ▤ Consult European directories
- ▥ Consult non-Euro. company directories
- ▦ Information on EC law
- ▧ Information on setting up a company
- ▨ Information on funding
- ▩ Information on contacting companies abroad
- Undertake research for a project
- Consult library staff
- ▬ Use fax facilities
- ▭ Other
- ▮ No response

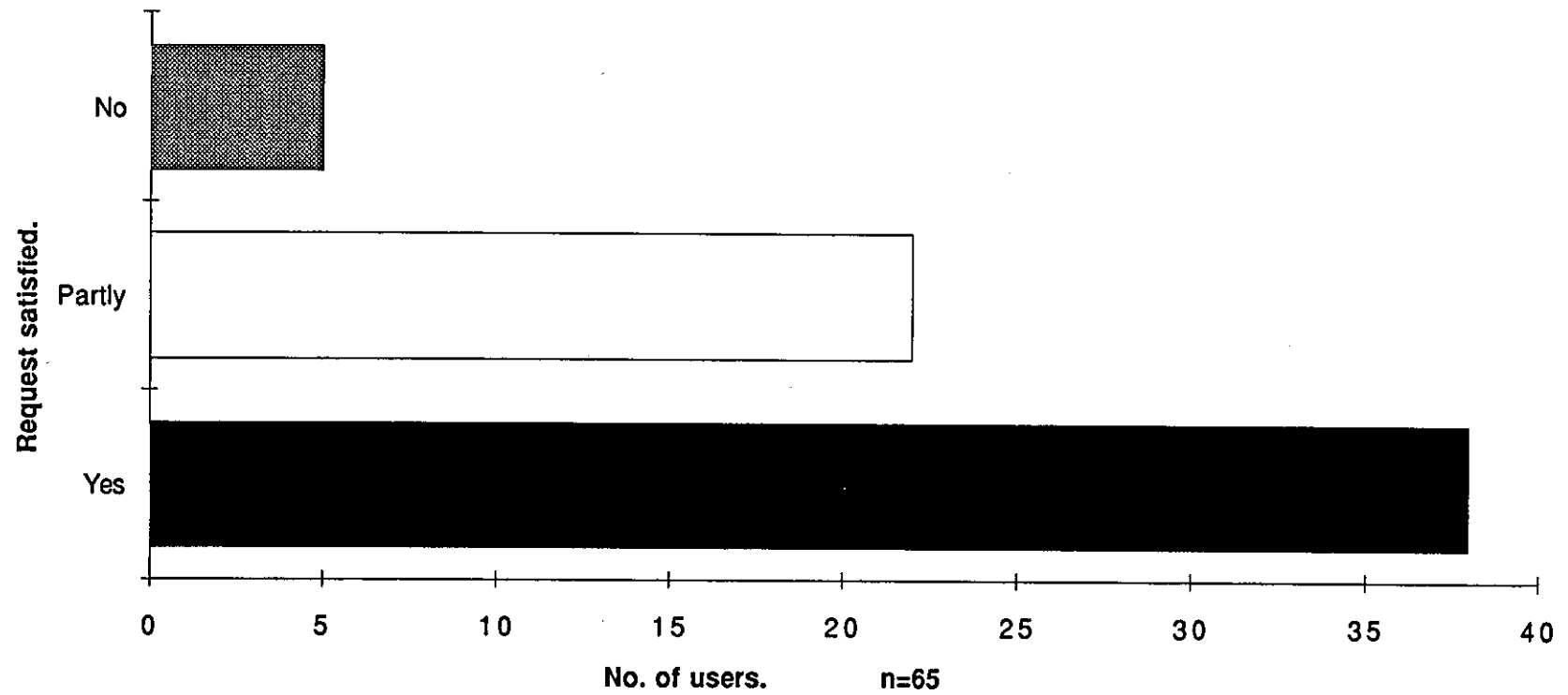
(3.2%) required this type of information for both business and personal use, and 1 person (1.1%) did not state the type of use.

In order to assess levels of customer satisfaction, respondents whose purpose of visit was to find some information were asked if they had found what they wanted. As two people had come to NBEIC to use the fax facilities only, the total number of respondents answering question 4 was 165. The amount of people who answered "yes" they had found the information they wanted totalled 109 (66.1%). Those people who stated they had "partly" found the information they wanted totalled 47 (28.5%), and 7 people (4.2%) replied "no" they had not found what they wanted. Two respondents (1.2%) failed to complete question 4. Although the number of respondents whose information needs were totally satisfied equated to two thirds of the sample, a total of 156 people out of 165 (94.6%) left the Centre with at least *some* of the information they required.

Due to the large number of personal visitors being first time users of NBEIC it was considered important to measure how many of these new customers left the Centre with their information requirements satisfied. Figure 3 shows that out of the 65 respondents in this group 38 (58.5%) found the information they wanted, 22 (33.8%) partly found the information they wanted and 5 (7.7%) had not found what they came for.

To establish why customers did not find, or only partly found, the information they were looking for, the 54 respondents whose

Figure 3: Satisfaction of requests made by first time visitors.

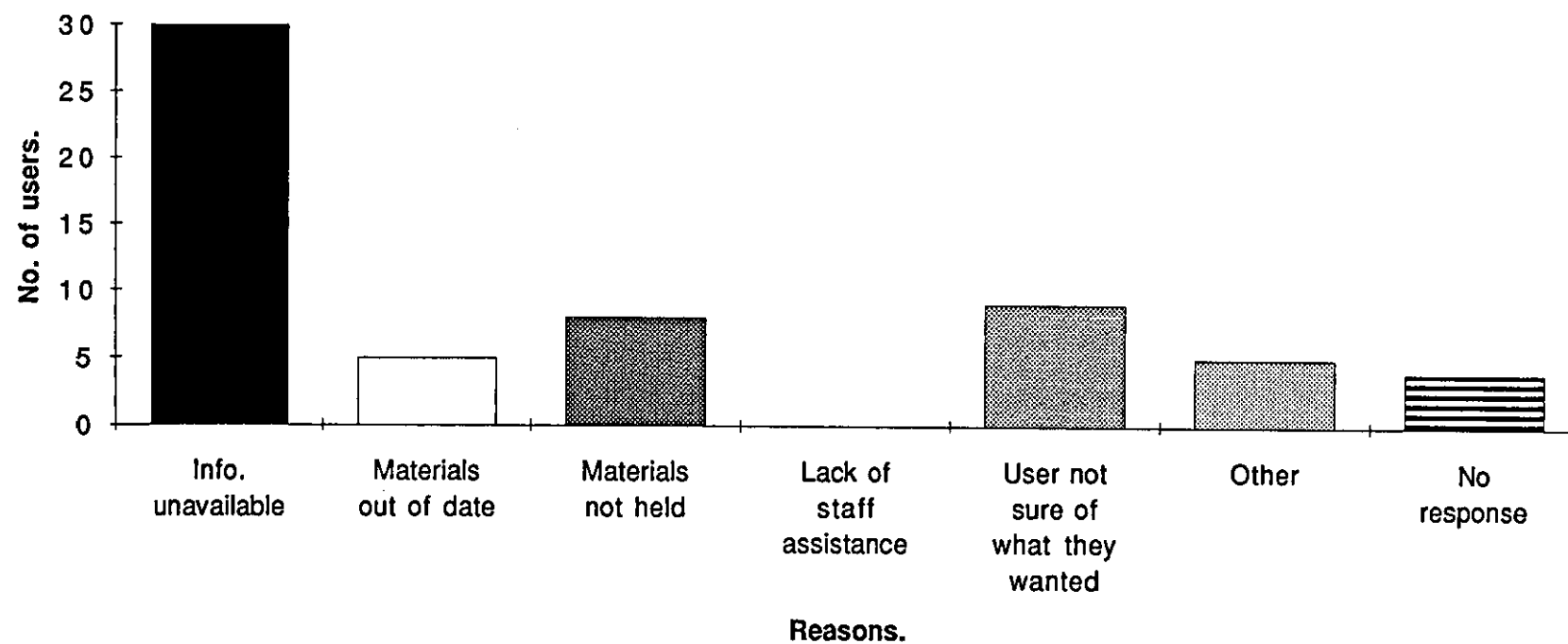


information needs were not fully satisfied were asked to answer a question on reasons for non-satisfaction by ticking all of the applicable categories. Interestingly, the main reason given for non-satisfaction of information needs was that the information was unavailable, with 30 out of the 54 people (55.5%) listing this reason. However, it may be that people interpreted this category of "information unavailable" to mean information not available within NBEIC (which was included as a separate category), rather than that the information was not published in Britain, or was classified data not made available to the public, which was what the category of "information unavailable" was intended to mean. The total dispersion of responses to this question are shown in Figure 4.

3.2.3 Most Important Factor When Using NBEIC

Personal visitors were asked to indicate from a list of categories which *one* was *most* important to them when using NBEIC. Of the 167 respondents, 26 (15.5%) selected more than one category. As stated in Chapter 2, a multiple response answer to a single response question was decided to be considered an invalid response. However, it may be that those 26 people were unable to distinguish one specific category as being of more importance to them than another. Two further respondents (1.2%) failed to provide an answer, leaving a total of 139 (83.2%) valid responses. The category which bore the highest response rate as the most important factor to people using NBEIC was that of up-to-date information, with a total of 75 out of the 167 respondents (44.9%) ticking this response. This result coincides with the earlier statement that

Figure 4: Reasons for non-satisfaction of information needs.



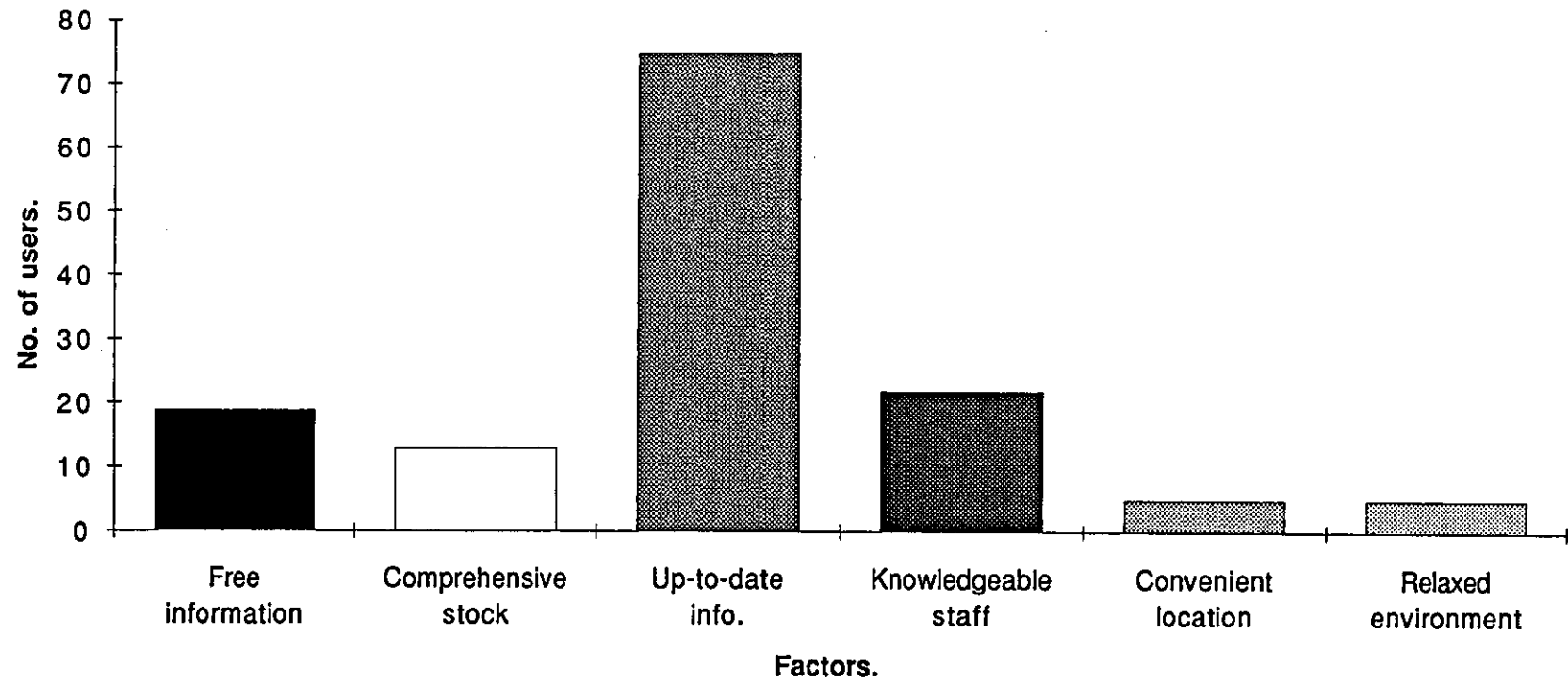
business information users require, above all, current and accurate information. The other categories did not manage to achieve a third of the number of responses assigned to the highest rating category, which shows that up-to-date information is by far the most important factor to users of NBEIC (see Figure 5).

When the type of use made of the Centre was viewed alongside the number of respondents who selected up-to-date information as the most important factor to them, the dispersion of responses between personal and business use was almost equal. Out of 72 people using NBEIC for personal reasons, 33 (45.8%) specified up-to-date information as the most important factor to them. Similarly, 39 out of 89 people (43.8%) who were using NBEIC for business reasons also selected this category. Timely information is, then, important regardless of the type of use for which it is required.

3.2.4 How Users Became Aware of NBEIC and Their Preferred Method of Contact

The most common way in which personal visitors of NBEIC became aware of the Centre is indisputably that of having noticed it when in the main library. A total of 104 out of the 167 respondents (62.3%) selected this category. The next most popular way that users had heard of NBEIC was by word of mouth, with 23 people (13.7%) learning of the Centre in this way. Fourteen people (8.4%) had heard of NBEIC from their work place or college, 9 people (5.4%) had noticed it via publicity such as leaflets or posters, and 17 people (10.2%) gave another informer or source

Figure 5: Most important factor when using NBEIC.



that had alerted them to the existence of NBEIC. These included organisations, such as the Job Centre, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and a Chamber of Commerce (it was not specified which particular one). Another way people had heard of NBEIC was through using or having used the reference section which was located upstairs in the main library. One person had been told about NBEIC by Corby Library, and another person came to be using NBEIC by enquiring about British Standards in the main library. One respondent became aware of NBEIC by expecting the library to hold the required information and being directed towards the Centre by library staff, while another person stated:

I wasn't aware of the section but knew
the library would hold this information.

These results indicate that advertising and promotion of NBEIC has not been altogether successful as this accounts for only 5.4% of the responses given by respondents on how they heard of the Centre. The remaining respondents (94.6%) had either stumbled across the Centre during a visit to the main library or had been notified of the existence of NBEIC by a third party.

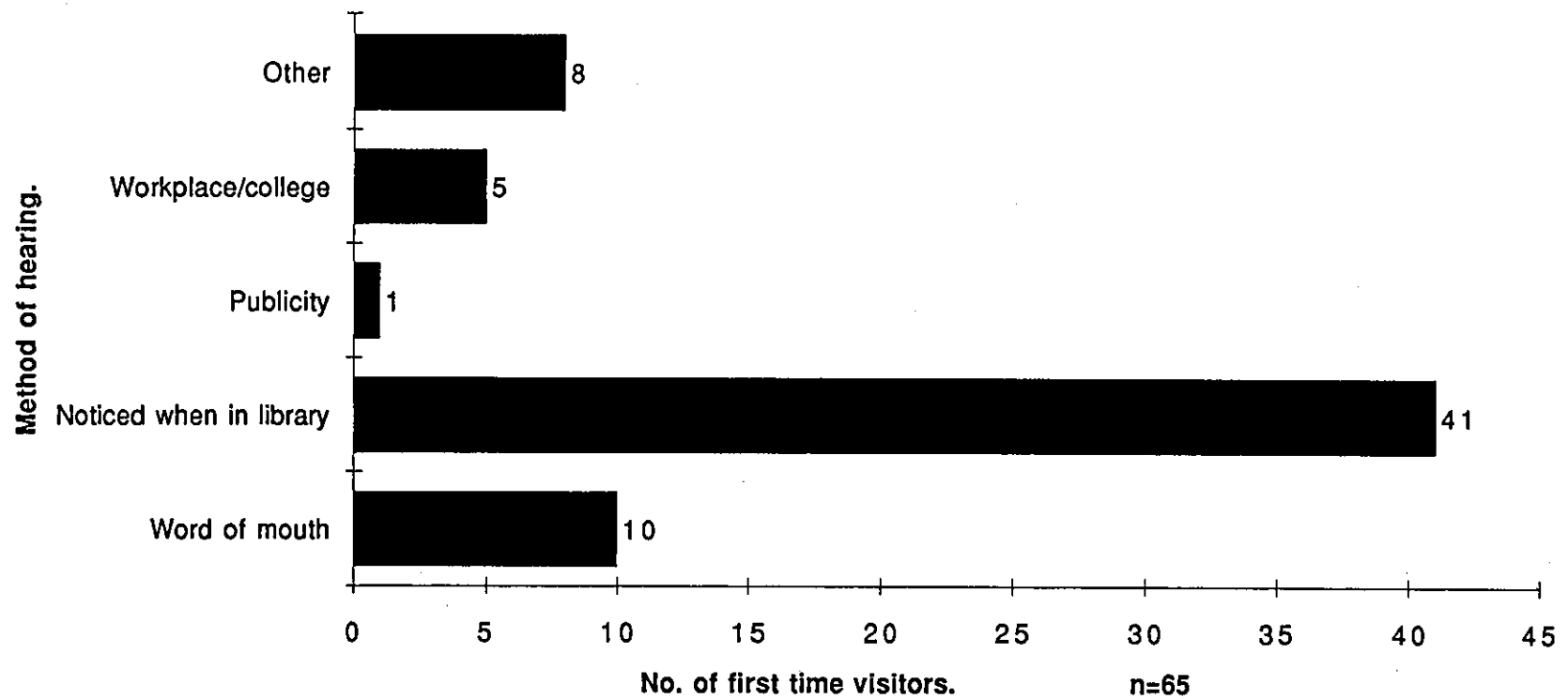
As first time visitors to the Centre were a significantly large group, totalling 65 out of the 167 respondents, it seemed appropriate to analyse how these new customers had heard of the Centre. In relative terms the percentage of first time visitors who had heard of NBEIC by noticing it when in the main library was slightly higher than the result obtained by analysing the responses given in this

category by all of the respondents - for the first time visitors the figure was 63% (41 out of 65) as opposed to 63.2% of all respondents. The percentage of first time visitors who learned of NBEIC via publicity is, however, substantially lower in relative terms than the result obtained from all of the respondents. A figure of 1.6% of first time visitors (1 out of 65) had heard of NBEIC via publicity, as opposed to 5.4% of all 167 respondents hearing of NBEIC in the same way. The full set of responses given by first time visitors on how they became aware of NBEIC can be seen in Figure 6.

By asking people how they preferred to contact NBEIC it was hoped that the results would provide an insight into users' information seeking behaviour and would also indicate the types of demand encountered by NBEIC, be it upon the telephone enquiry service, the physical space of the Centre, the staff or the printed sources. The level of demand upon these services, sources and facilities undeniably depends upon how people prefer to contact the Centre.

While all of the respondents who answered this questionnaire were personal visitors of the Centre, it did not necessarily follow that this was the method of contact they usually adhered to or preferred to use. However, there was an overwhelming majority of 91.6% of respondents (153 out of 167), who indicated that their preferred method of contact with NBEIC was a personal visit. Of the other 14 respondents (8.4%), 4 (2.4%) preferred to contact NBEIC by letter, 2 (1.2%) preferred to use the telephone, 1 (0.6%) preferred

Figure 6: How first time visitors heard of NBEIC.



to fax NBEIC, 4 others (2.4%) gave a multiple response and were unable to select one preferred method of contact and 3 respondents (1.8%) gave no response. From these results it can be assumed that people usually contact the Centre in the way they prefer. This does imply regularity in the way people contact NBEIC, in that those people who personally visit the Centre are likely to always contact the Centre by a personal visit. Therefore the influx of personal visitors and demands placed upon the physical space of NBEIC will, under normal circumstances, be relatively stable.

Another way of phrasing this analysis is to say that due to the majority of people contacting NBEIC in the way most preferable to them, in this case by a personal visit, the Centre would not have 167 people visiting in person one week, only to find that the next week the same group of people were using the telephone to contact the Centre, and the week after that were contacting the Centre by fax. If there was no uniformity to the method of contact this would mean that it would be impossible to predict which facilities would be used most heavily from one week to the next and it would be difficult to decide which resources to invest in.

3.2.5 Awareness and Usage of Services Offered

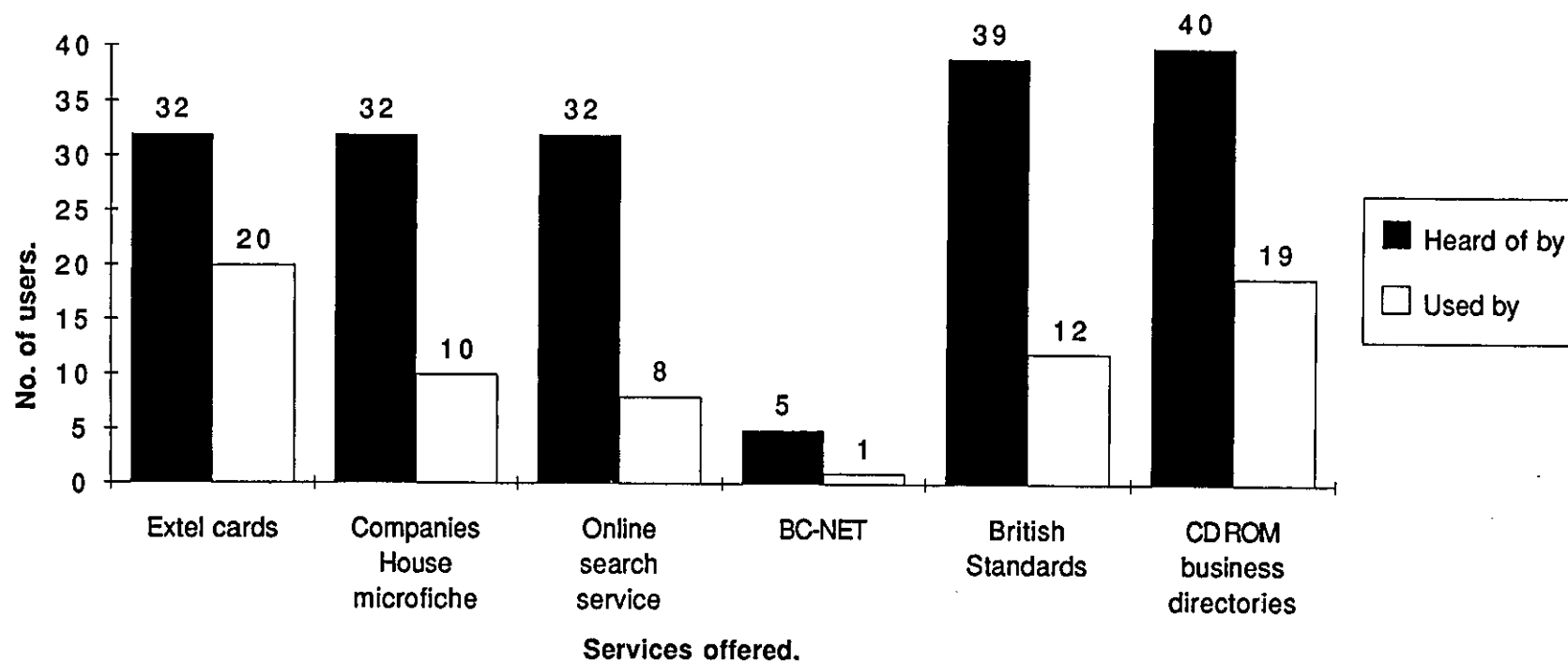
In order to establish customer awareness of services offered by NBEIC and the extent to which these services were being used, questions 9 and 10 asked respondents to indicate all of the services they had heard of and all of the services they had used. The results of these two questions proved to be most informative. It became

apparent that awareness of services offered was limited, with 77 out of 167 respondents (46.1%) ticking none of the categories, which implied they had heard of none of the services. Ninety respondents (53.9%) had heard of at least one service, yet 39 out of these 90 people (43.3%) had not used any of the services. Figure 7 shows the number of respondents out of 167 who had *heard* of each service and the number of respondents out of 167 who had actually *used* each service. The total number of people who had used at least one of the services was 51 out of 167 (30.5%).

3.2.6 The Value of NBEIC's Role in the Local Community

People's opinions of the value of NBEIC's role as a provider of business and European information to the local community were explored through a scaled response question. By providing categories, people were encouraged to select the option nearest to their own opinion of the value of the Centre. As stated in Chapter 1, attitudes and values are difficult to measure and must remain personal judgements. With this in mind, the level of value category selected by each respondent was analysed in relation to whether or not they had access to another provider of business and European information. It was assumed that those people who had access to another source would select a lower value category than those respondents who had no other source of information, as these people would not be solely reliant upon NBEIC for the information they required.

Figure 7: Services offered by NBEIC - levels of awareness and use.



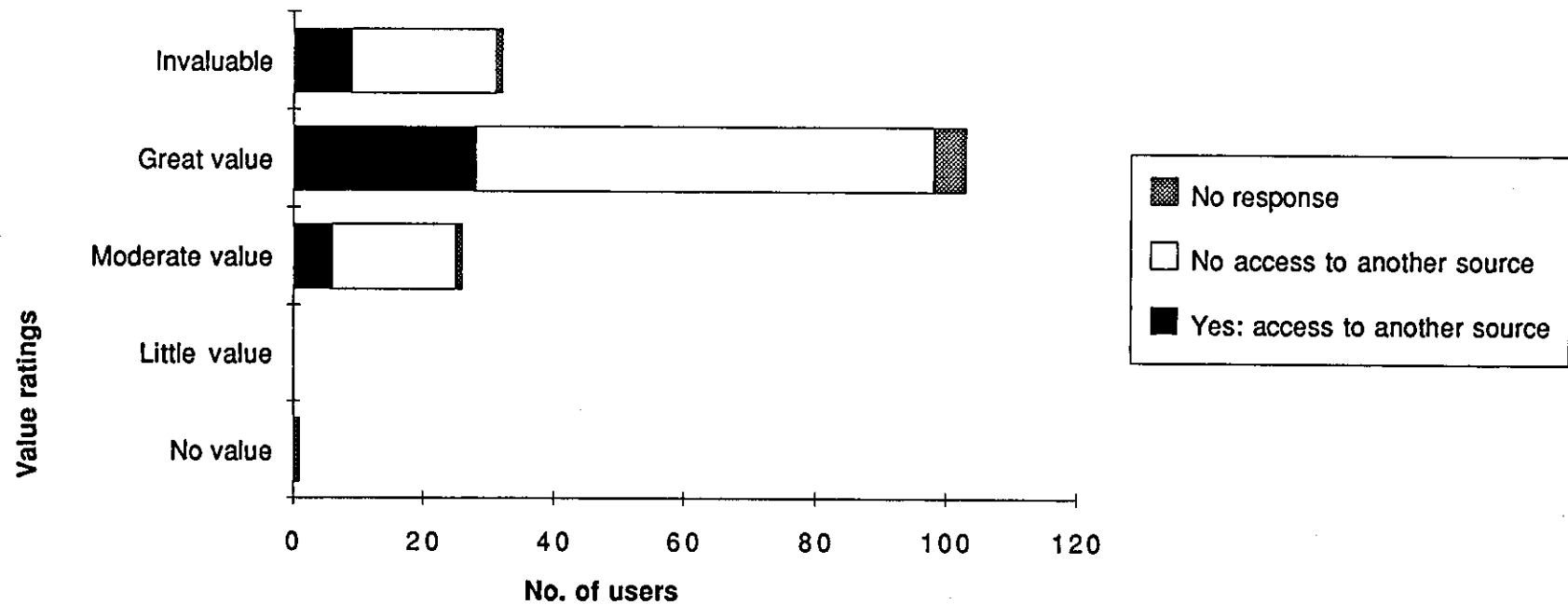
Of the 167 respondents, one person (0.6%) felt that NBEIC's role in providing business and European information to the local community was of 'no value', zero respondents felt it was of 'little value', 26 (15.5%) felt it was of 'moderate value', 103 (61.7%) felt it was of 'great value', 32 (19.2%) felt it was 'invaluable' and 5 respondents (3.0%) gave no response. When these results were viewed in relation to people's access to other providers of information the assumption that those with access to another source would give a lower value rating proved to be wrong (see Figure 8). The respondent who felt the Centre was of 'no value' did not answer the question on access to other information providers. However, of the 26 who felt NBEIC was of 'moderate value' to the local community, 6 out of 26 (23%) did have access to another provider of information, 19 out of 26 (73%) did not have access to another source and one respondent (4%) gave no response.

This result does, then, support the notion that people's value judgements are personal, and so, when analysing them, no rational logic or generalisation can be applied.

3.2.7 Experiences of Excellent or Poor Service

People were given the opportunity to provide examples of excellent or poor service experienced by themselves at NBEIC. Seventy-nine out of 167 respondents (47.3%) made a comment under this question. However, the majority of responses were general comments about the Centre, the staff or the range of information available. Despite the bulk of comments being of a general nature,

Figure 8: NBEIC's value to local community compared with personal visitor's access to other providers of information.



a small number of respondents were able to provide specific examples of experiences.

There were very few examples given of poor service. Those responses that were concerned with experiences of poor service, rather than comments on out-of-date materials or a source not being in stock, came to a total of one. This respondent made the following comments:

1. Sending fax - it is not needed to add the NBEIC's covering letter to a fax. This increases *your* costs and therefore the user's cost. It also adds nothing to the service.
2. When I asked the Reference Library (first floor) regarding OIL, there, research came to nothing. They did not refer me to either the NBEIC, or to the section on petroleum (which includes oil).

The second part of this response does relate an example of poor service, but this was through no fault of NBEIC.

Most people praised the Centre and stated how helpful the staff were. There were also a few respondents who gave specific examples of excellent service experienced by themselves, and these are quoted below:

Phone enquiries are *always* responded to (ie. calling back with required data) within 30 minutes.

The sourcing of a product which was only known by trademark opening negotiations with German company leading to invaluable sales.

Excellent help and instruction from staff on use of CD ROM discs.

When looking for information, staff asked me if I required help and provided information I wouldn't otherwise have found.

Have experienced, on at least half a dozen occasions, an excellent 'phone service by staff at NBEIC which has enabled me to gain information when unable to visit.

Obtained listing of specific engineering manufacturers, exactly according to request within 2 hours of asking.

The staff helped me to locate silk weaving in the UK.

Help from staff in locating unusual sources of information and recommending further contact points.

Staff directed me immediately to the directory most suitable for my needs - saved time looking.

These examples of excellent service have three underlying themes: the satisfying of requests; a quick response; and the saving of the

customer's time, all of which are important for providing an effective service that caters for the needs of the customer.

Other ideas raised in the general comments provided under this question were that the service was good or excellent, with 16 of the respondents briefly mentioning this. That staff were helpful or knowledgeable was commented upon by 39 people. Two of the respondents stated that the information was up-to-date, four others said the range of information was good, one person raised the idea that the Centre was convenient and another stated that it was valuable to them.

There were also a small number of people whose comments were negative. Three people commented that the information was limited in certain areas, one person felt that some information was out-of-date and one other raised the issue that the Centre was crowded.

More of these positive and negative general comments were provided under question 19 which specifically asked for them, the results of which are discussed later in this chapter.

3.2.8 Access to Other Providers of Business and European Information

NBEIC appears to be the only place from where the majority of the respondents can obtain the business and European information they require. 114 out of 167 people (68.3%) did not have access to another information provider, 44 (26.3%) did have access to another

source and 9 people (5.4%) did not respond to the question. The high proportion of respondents with no access to another information provider implies an almost captive audience who are reliant upon NBEIC to satisfy their needs.

Various providers of information were named by those respondents who did have access to another source. College and university libraries were mentioned by 13 people, 10 people listed other EICs and libraries as sources of information available to them. Trade associations and specialist organisations were mentioned by 7 people, while Chambers of Commerce (in Northamptonshire and elsewhere) were used by 6 of the respondents. Other sources given were people's place of work, TEC, DTI and stock brokers.

3.3 Questions of a Personal Nature

The following results were obtained from questions aimed at finding out more about who the customers of NBEIC are. Respondents were asked to provide details of their gender, age and occupational status. Two further questions, directed at managers and employees, were included. These were concerned with the size of the respondent's company and the location of their branch or office. These two questions were designed to provide an indication of the extent to which NBEIC had penetrated the local business community.

3.3.1 Gender and Age

Of the 167 respondents taking part in the survey 121 (72.5%) were male, 41 (24.5%) were female and 5 (3.0%) did not specify their gender. The ratio of male users to female users of NBEIC was slightly less than three to one.

A large proportion of respondents were aged between 35 and 49, as indicated by 56 people (33.5%), while 51 people (30.5%) fell into the age category of 25 to 34. Although the age group 35 to 49 gathered the most responses it was also the largest age range spanning 15 years. The total distribution of ages can be seen in Figure 9. The age category '15 and under' achieved zero responses and 7 of the respondents did not provide details of their age.

3.3.2 Occupational Status

When asked to answer a question about their occupational status 158 out of 167 respondents (94.6%) did so. The distribution of responses was spread quite evenly throughout five of the seven categories. The option which was selected most was that of 'manager', obtaining 43 responses (25.7%). Following closely behind this result were the categories of 'job-seeker' gaining 38 responses (22.7%) and self-employed people of which there were 32 (19.2%). Of the rest, 19 people (11.4%) indicated they were 'employees', 15 (9.0%) were 'students', 2 (1.2%) were 'retired' and a further 9 people (5.4%) classified themselves as having an occupational status 'other' to those listed (see Figure 10). These

Figure 9: Ages of personal visitors to NBEIC.

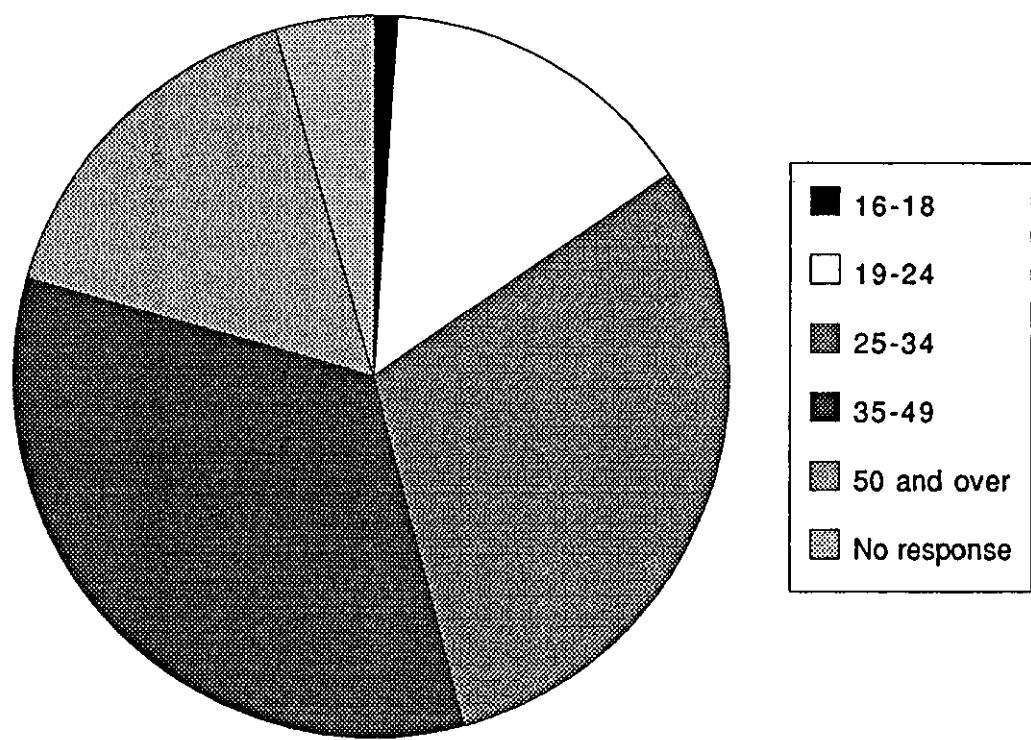
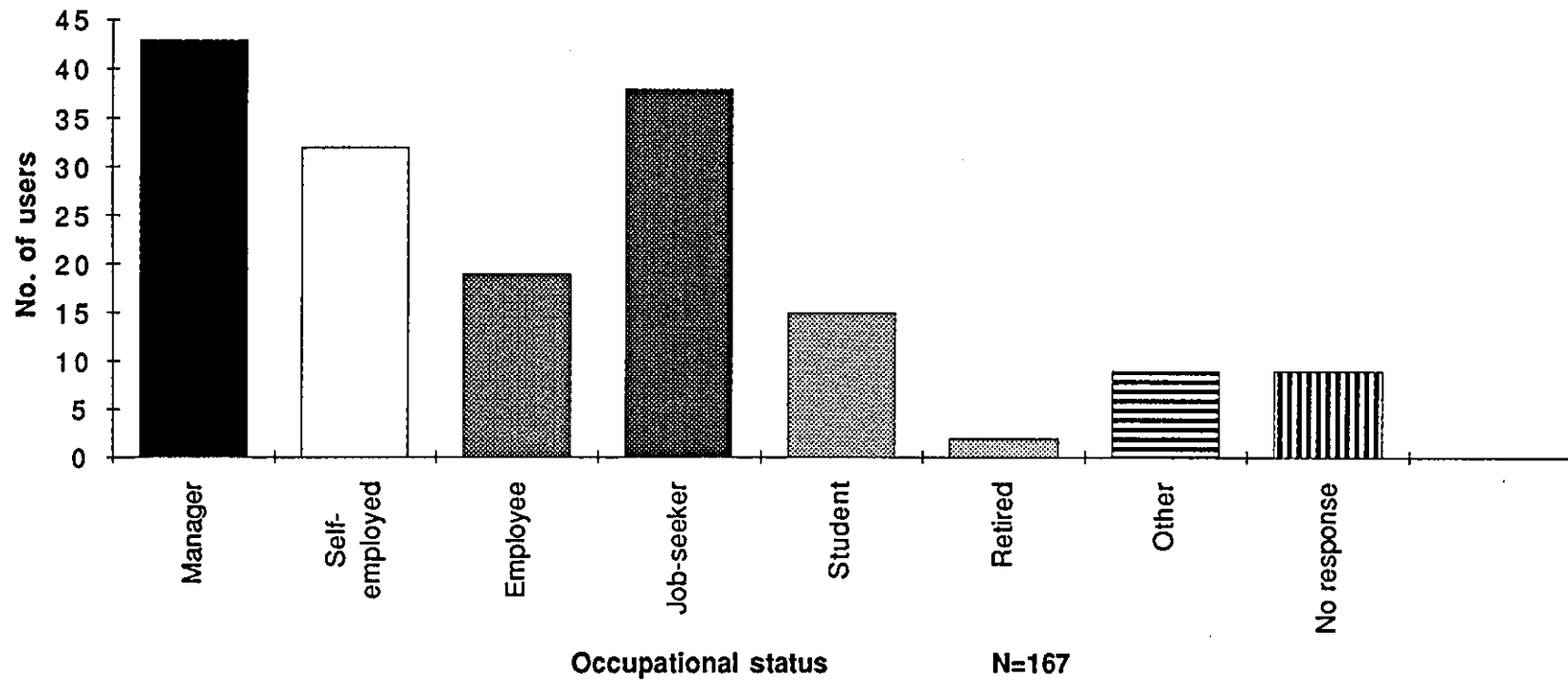


Figure 10: Occupational status of personal visitors.



'others' included directors, partners, housewives, a graduate, an unemployed person and a voluntary worker.

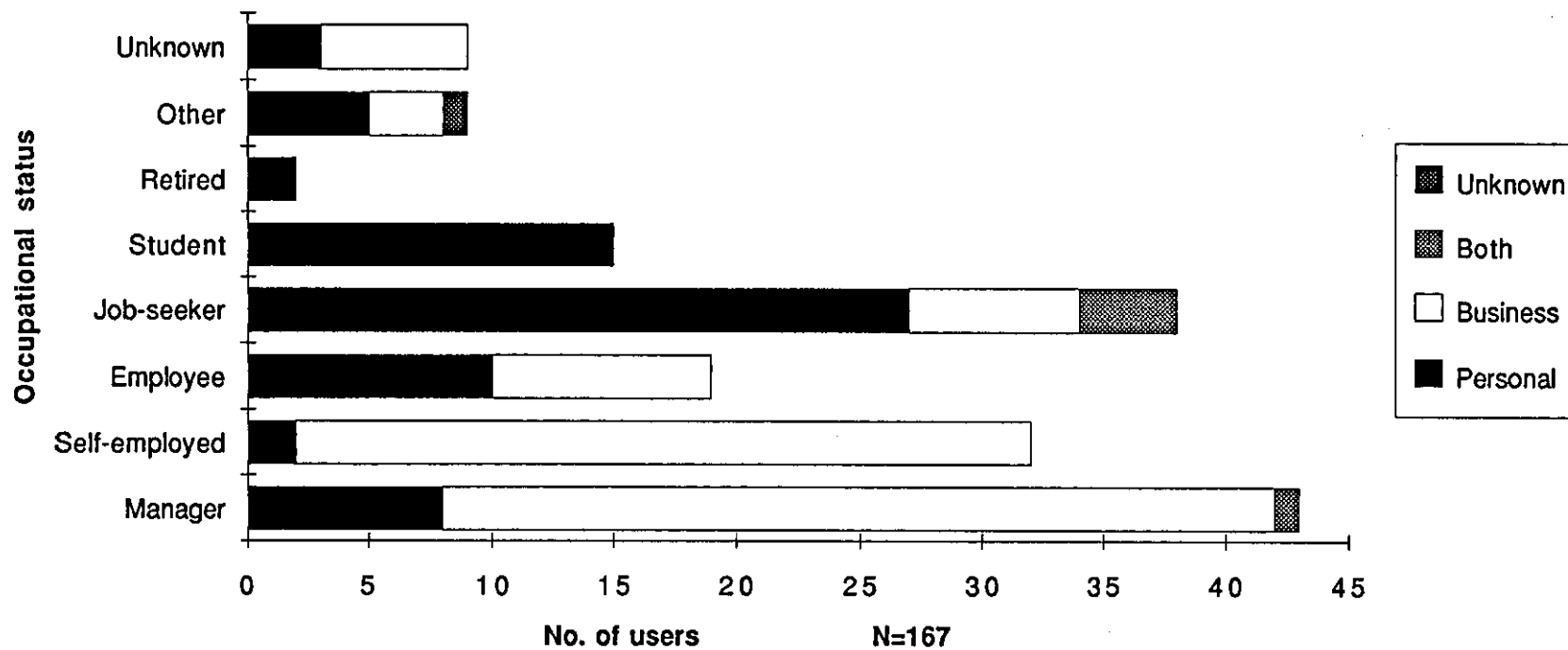
The responses given to the occupational status question were examined in relation to the reason why people were using NBEIC, whether for personal or business use, or both. Of the 43 managers, 34 (79.1%) were using NBEIC for business reasons, 8 (18.6%) wanted information for personal use and 1 manager (2.3%) was using the Centre for both reasons. An even higher proportion of self-employed people were using the Centre for business reasons, with a total of 30 out of 32 (93.8%). The remaining two self-employed respondents (6.2%) required information for personal use (see Figure 11).

3.3.3 Company Size and Location

The results obtained from the question on occupational status revealed that 62 out of 167 respondents (37.1%) were either managers or employees. In order to try and learn more about the organisations whose workforce were using NBEIC, managers and employees were asked to complete two further questions. These dealt with company size and the location of the particular branch or office of the company where the respondent worked.

The responses to the question of company size totalled 59 out of 62. The three respondents (4.8%) who failed to supply details were all employees. Twenty-eight out of 62 respondents (45.2%) worked for a large company (125 employees or more), 23 out of 62

Figure 11: Occupational status and type of use made of NBEIC.



(37.1%) worked for a small company (49 employees or less) and 8 out of 62 (12.9%) worked for a medium-sized company (50 - 124 employees). As a single category, that of the large company was the dominant one obtaining the highest response rate. However, when the results from the categories of the SMEs are combined they do slightly outweigh the number of responses allocated to the large company category. It should be noted though, that because SMEs usually require information on an irregular basis, their utilisation of the Centre is likely to be more sporadic than that of a large company.

When asked to provide details on the location of the branch or office where they worked 59 out of 62 respondents did so. Again, the same three employees did not respond to this question. The largest number of responses, 21 out of 62 (33.9%), fell within the category stating that the branch or office was located in a county other than Northamptonshire. A variety of locations were specified and included the following:

Bedfordshire
Buckinghamshire
Cambridgeshire
Cheshire
County Durham
Dorset
Greater Manchester
Leicestershire
London

Oxfordshire
Warwickshire
West Midlands.

One manager stated that his branch was located in the USA. This extreme response pointed out the fact that although the branch of the company may be located in another county (or country), the respondent may actually live in Northamptonshire and commute to their place of work (or spend time overseas) which would make NBEIC their local and most convenient source of business and European information. However, it is doubtful that respondents would commute daily to some of the locations listed above. Despite the conflict between where the respondent actually lives and where their place of work is located, 79% of managers using NBEIC did so for business reasons suggesting that NBEIC is catering for a business community whose boundaries extend beyond that of the county border.

Of the other responses, 14 out of 62 people (22.6%) indicated that their branch or office was located in 'Northampton town centre (postcode NN1)', 18 out of 62 (29.0%) gave the response of 'elsewhere in the town of Northampton' and 6 out of 62 (9.7%) said their branch or office was located 'elsewhere in the county of Northamptonshire'.

The results of the two questions about company size and location of branch or office were analysed in relation to one another. Of the 14 respondents whose branch was located in Northampton town

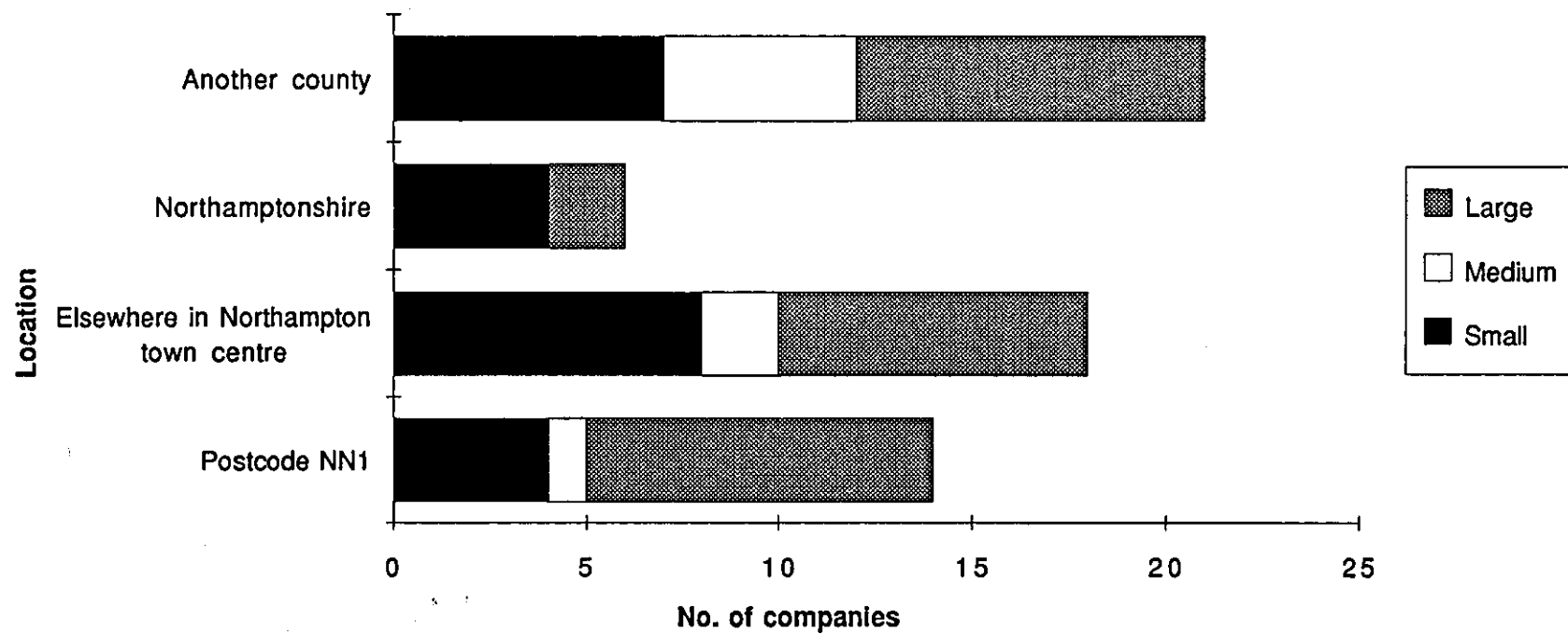
centre (postcode NN1), 9 were large companies and 5 were either small or medium-sized companies. This may be attributed to the fact that the rental for commercial property is higher in the town centre than elsewhere, making it less feasible for SMEs to be located here. When the same analysis was performed on the size of companies based elsewhere in the town of Northampton, of the 18 respondents who said their branch was located here 8 worked for large companies and 10 worked for small or medium-sized companies (see Figure 12).

3.4 Personal Visitors' Comments on NBEIC

The final question of the personal visitors' questionnaire (see Appendix I) gave people the opportunity to comment on any aspect of NBEIC. The question was open-ended, so it was hoped that there would be a large response rate as the respondents were free to raise any issue they wanted. However, the actual number of people who did make a comment was only 41 out of 167 (24.6%), meaning that 126 people (75.4%) had not made a comment. This may have been due to the fact that they had no relevant comment to make or that they wanted to complete the questionnaire as quickly as possible and did not feel it necessary to bother with this open question. Despite this, the 41 responses obtained made an interesting ending to the questionnaire. A wide range of subjects were covered, with an array of differing opinions expressed.

In order to ensure that each subject raised was included in the findings, the comments were divided up under relevant subject

Figure 12: Size of company in relation to location of branch or office.



headings. Although each respondent's opinion was as valid as the next, it was decided that only a few of the comments that were judged to be representative of each particular viewpoint were to be included in the presentation of results.

3.4.1 Physical Space

The floor space and desk space of NBEIC is rather limited and this was pointed out by 17 respondents. Typical comments were that NBEIC 'could use a larger floor area' and 'more desk space would be helpful'. One person made the suggestion that:

It would help if the area was made bigger or perhaps a 'special area' where you can sit down and make necessary notes.

This idea of users being uncomfortable in such a confined and crowded space was echoed in the following comment made by a person who had been using NBEIC for some time:

The NBEIC should move to larger premises in order to offer better facilities to users. I have noticed that the number of users has increased by approx. 300% since my first visit when the Centre had first opened.

Unfortunately the restrictions encountered by NBEIC have rendered it unable to supply an increase in physical space to match the growth in demand from personal visitors.

The conditions were expressed as 'cramped' and 'crowded' by several people, and one respondent stated that there was 'not enough room to sit down - six other people at time of my visit'. Similarly, another person commented that the 'area given over to this [NBEIC] does not accommodate everyone during busy periods'. One final comment made regarding physical space asked this question of NBEIC:

Could it be expanded?

This is a question which requires careful consideration if the future alienation of NBEIC customers is to be avoided.

3.4.2 Need for Publicity

The lack of publicity about NBEIC and the need to advertise the Centre more was commented on by six people. Single phrase responses that came straight to the point stated:

Could be more widely advertised

and

More publicity!!

The need for more publicity was also implied in comments made by two respondents. The first person stated that they were 'unaware that this service was available'. By checking some of the previous responses supplied by this person, it became apparent that this person was visiting NBEIC for the first time and had noticed the

Centre when in the main library. The other comment implying the need for more publicity asked:

Do local businesses know what you can provide for them?

A solution to this question of how to raise local businesses' awareness of NBEIC was put forward by another respondent, who commented:

A regular updated newsletter to businesses giving details of new information etc would be useful - including future developments of NBEIC.

It seems that without proper publicity and promotion NBEIC will be unable to realise its full potential as prospective customers will remain unaware of the existence of this expanding resource of information.

3.4.3 Materials Held by NBEIC

A number of positive and negative comments were made by respondents regarding the timeliness and comprehensiveness of the stock. One person stated there was 'excellent availability of up-to-date information' while another respondent, who although content with some aspects of NBEIC, was less satisfied with others:

I am quite happy with the level of service you provide for members of the public. However, I think some of the information available in this Centre is out-of-date.

A comment made by yet another respondent did acknowledge the fact that sometimes the provision of less than current information is beyond the control of the information provider:

Some publications which are titled for example '1993' etc, etc, are in fact hopelessly out-of-date! Something you could take up with publisher?

One final comment regarding up-to-date information expressed a lack of current information in a specific subject area, namely that of the USA and Canada. Following on from this, another respondent raised the point that the materials held by NBEIC were limited in a particular area of interest to them. This person commented that they would have liked to have found:

More information on taking up residencies in European countries - rules and regulations.

While predicting the information requirements of every customer, and thereby holding every possible source in stock, is inconceivable, as well as impractical, NBEIC do need to make sure that the sources of information they do hold in stock are the most current. This is a particularly relevant point, especially as a high proportion of users listed up-to-date information as the most important factor to them when using NBEIC. With such a high

demand for current information, the opportunity exists to increase the promotion of, and therefore awareness of, the online searching facility which could in turn result in further utilisation of the service.

3.4.4 Staff, Service and Facilities

A large number of comments focused upon aspects of the service, the staff and the facilities. The majority of respondents commenting on these subjects did so favourably. Typical comments given were that NBEIC was 'very helpful and useful' and an 'excellent facility in every way'. One person stated:

Although I haven't used the facility extensively, it certainly seems a valuable addition to the library services.

While another respondent said:

I hope NBEIC will be here to stay because it is really a very informative place to get information.

However, one person was less satisfied with the facilities and felt that the reference material was 'too spread out in the building' as some sources were located upstairs in the reference section. They went on to say that 'one centre is essential for efficient working' rather than having to divide their energies between two floors of the building.

Further responses relating to facilities raised a couple of points. The first point, expressed by two respondents, was that the opening hours should be extended. This would be particularly useful for business people who may only be able to visit the Centre outside of office hours. The second point of contention raised was that of inadequate parking facilities. One respondent mentioned that they had had problems parking. While it may be difficult for NBEIC to secure ample space in the town centre for customer parking, this would encourage people to use the Centre as it would make it more accessible to those travelling into Northampton by car. Although the above points have been raised by only one or two people it should be noted that had these issues been specifically addressed in the questionnaire then other people may have expressed similar opinions.

A couple of respondents commented on NBEIC services. The following statement is an example of the demand for services offered by NBEIC but also of the lack of awareness that they exist within the Centre:

It is delightful that when I am told that such things as Extel cards should be available from my local library - that they actually are!

In contrast to this favourable reaction, one respondent was unhappy about charges incurred when using NBEIC services:

The print charge of £2 for CD ROMs is OK for one or two sets of information but is disproportionate for longer outputs. Suggest a sliding scale.

Surprisingly, as charging for public library services is a controversial issue, this was the only time that charges made for services were mentioned under question 19.

Of the staff, all comments were of a praising nature, similar to those expressed under question 12 stating how helpful they were. One respondent's opinion was that:

Staff are very knowledgeable and incredibly helpful. If they don't have the information (which is rare) they will invariably obtain it.

This indicates that NBEIC staff appreciate the importance of customer care and are perseverant when trying to satisfy users' requests.

3.4.5 General Comments

The remaining comments were of a general nature and were all words of encouragement. One respondent said 'keep up the good work' and another wrote 'thanks for being here'. Two final comments to be included in these results are both in favour of NBEIC and recognise its significance for the local community. The first comment stated:

By its very presence, this facility encourages, for sure, a spirit of enterprise in our local community.

while another respondent said:

The best first stop for Europe we know - apparently under-used which is a sad comment on Northants business.

These two responses emphasise the fact that in order to encourage this spirit of enterprise in the local community, NBEIC must be better publicised to heighten awareness of its existence and of what it has to offer the local business community.

3.5 Telephone Users' Questionnaire

The number of valid responses collected from the telephone users' questionnaire were 29 out of 100. As the response rate was so low for this questionnaire it was decided to present only the basic figures obtained from the closed questions. This was because with such a small collection of responses any in-depth cross-analysis of results would not have been truly representative of the whole telephone user population of NBEIC. However, it was felt to be interesting to explore the experiences and opinions of the telephone users of NBEIC in more detail. For this reason, the findings will concentrate on the comments and opinions expressed under questions 12 and 19, as these will provide an insight into how telephone users' experiences and opinions of NBEIC are different or similar to those of the personal visitors. The order of

presentation of the results will first relate the findings from the first part of the questionnaire concerning user behaviour and the services and sources of NBEIC. This is followed by the results of the second section dealing with personal details (see Appendix II). The opinions expressed in questions 12 and 19 will follow in the same order as they are presented in the findings of the personal visitors' questionnaire.

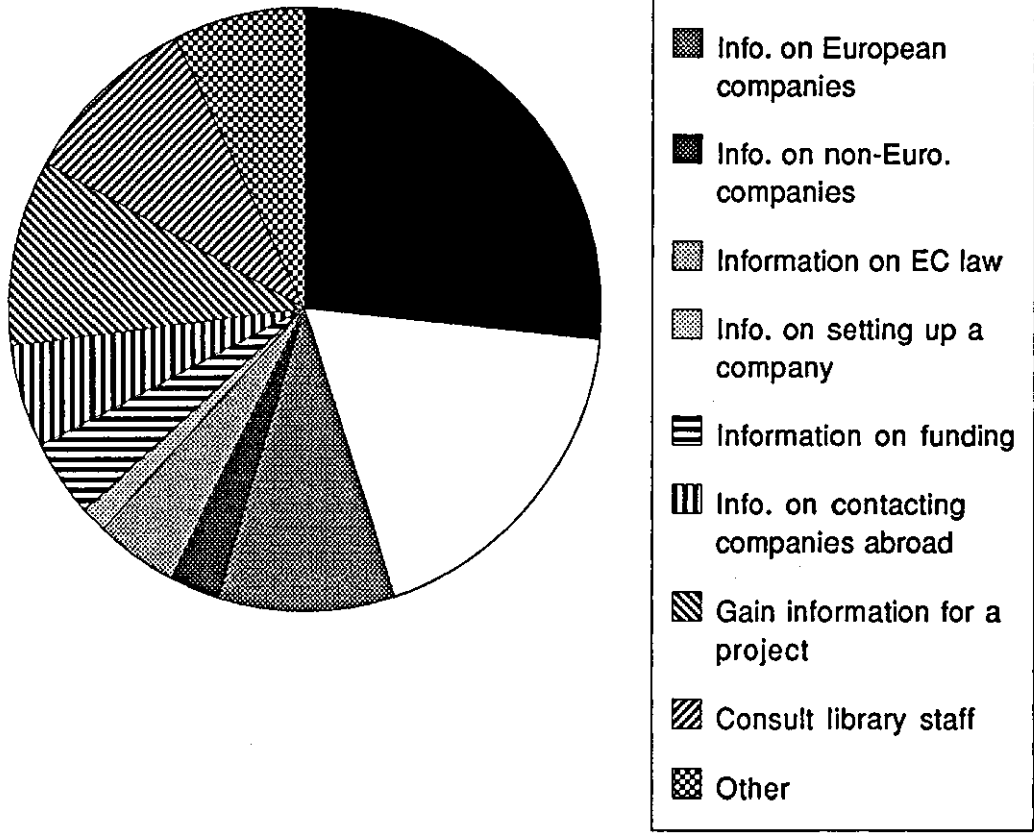
3.5.1 Results from Part One: User Behaviour, Services and Sources

In response to the question 'how often do you use NBEIC?', 4 out of 29 respondents (13.8%) answered more than once a week, one person (3.4%) said they used NBEIC once a week, one person (3.4%) used it once a fortnight, 8 people (27.6%) used it once a month and 15 out of 29, over half of the respondents, used NBEIC less than once a month.

When contacting NBEIC 20 telephone enquirers (68.9%) did so for business use, 8 (27.6%) did so for personal use and one person (3.4%) contacted NBEIC for both types of use.

The most popular reasons given for contacting NBEIC were the same as those given by personal visitors using the Centre. These reasons were to locate a company's name or address and to obtain information on British companies (see Figure 13). Five respondents stated they were contacting NBEIC for a reason 'other' than those listed. These were to locate the nature of business addresses, to

Figure 13: Telephone users' reasons for contacting NBEIC.



obtain telephone numbers, to find out what the ECU-£1 exchange rate was, and to locate some information on local organisations. Twenty-two out of 29 respondents were contacting NBEIC for more than one reason.

Respondents were then asked if their last telephone enquiry was answered to their satisfaction. Twenty-eight people answered 'yes', one person answered 'partly' and zero people answered 'no'. This meant that 96.6% of all respondents' enquiries were satisfactorily answered and 100% of all respondents came away from their 'phone call with at least some of the information they were seeking. The one respondent whose enquiry was only partly satisfied gave the reason for this as due to the information being unavailable.

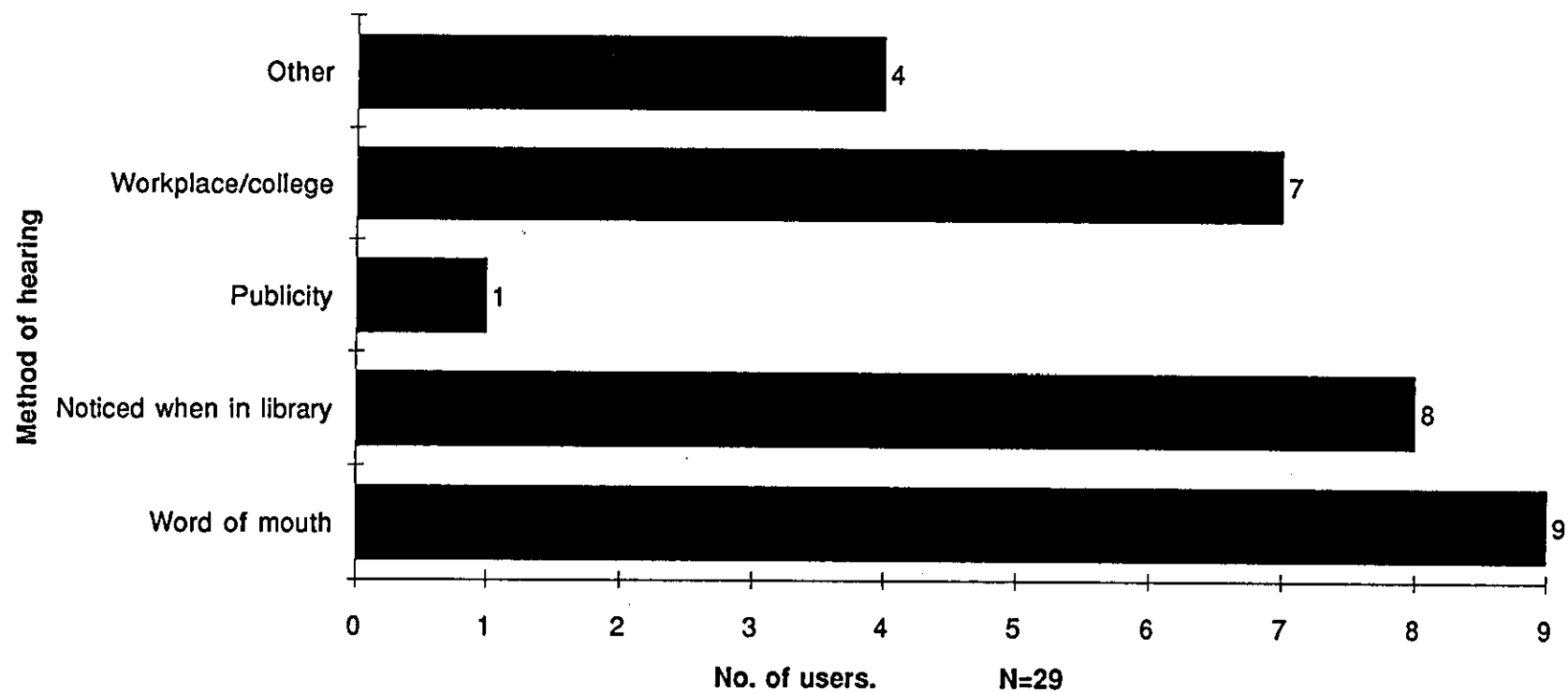
When using NBEIC the most important factor to the telephone enquirers was that of 'up-to-date information', as stated by 7 out of the 29 respondents (24.1%). This result echoes that obtained from the personal visitors' questionnaire. However, this result was closely followed by the category of 'convenience of the telephone enquiry service' which 6 respondents (20.7%) stated was the most important factor to them when using NBEIC. A total of 7 respondents gave multiple responses which were considered invalid as only one response was asked for. Of the remaining categories, 5 people (17.3%) stated that 'knowledgeable staff' were the most important factor to them and 4 people (13.8%) gave the 'provision of free business and European information' as the factor most important to them when using NBEIC. No respondents said that

'comprehensive stock' was most important to them, and no 'other' factors were mentioned.

Respondents were asked how they had heard of NBEIC. The responses were more evenly dispersed than those obtained from the personal visitors' questionnaire. However, the category with the lowest number of responses was, again, that of publicity, with one out of 29 respondents hearing of NBEIC in this way. The most popular way in which telephone enquirers had heard of NBEIC was by word of mouth, as indicated by 9 people (31.1%). Following this, 8 people (27.6%) noticed the Centre when in the main library, 7 people (24.1%) heard of it from their workplace or college and 4 people (13.8%) learnt of the existence of NBEIC in an 'other' way (see Figure 14). These 'other' ways mentioned were via a European member of Parliament, Kettering TEC, and Northampton DTI, for whom one person worked. The fourth respondent stated that they had been looking for NBEIC and had found it.

The results of the question on preferred method of contact with NBEIC followed the same pattern as those obtained from the personal visitors' questionnaire, in the way that the preferred method of contact for the majority of telephone enquirers was by telephone. Twenty-two out of 29 people (75.9%) gave this response. A personal visit was the preferred method of contact of 3 telephone enquirers (10.3%) and 4 people gave multiple responses that listed both a personal visit and the telephone as the methods of contact they preferred to use. No respondents selected the categories of fax or letter as their preferred method of contact.

Figure 14: How telephone users heard of NBEIC.

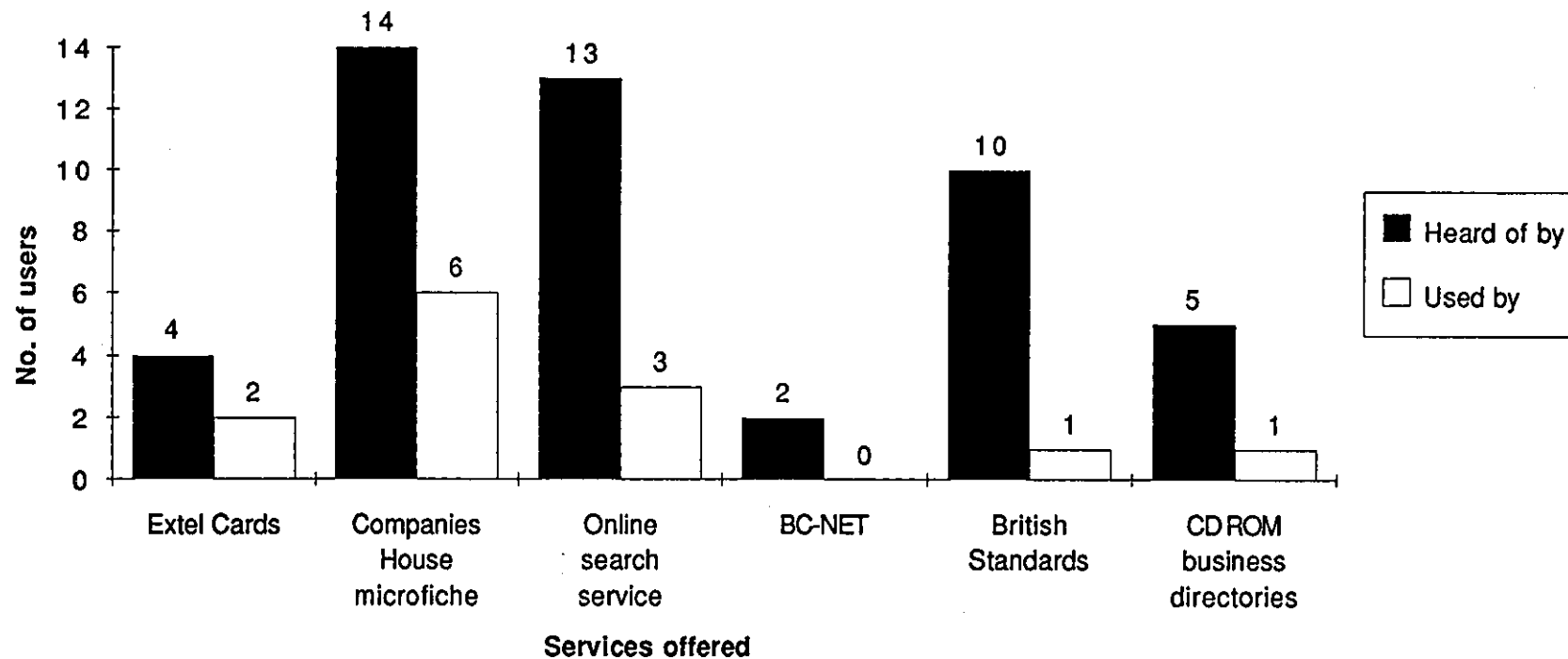


Respondents were asked to indicate which services offered by NBEIC they had heard of and which services they had used. Twenty-three out of 29 people (79.3%) had heard of at least one of the services offered, while 6 people (20.7%) indicated that they had heard of none of the services. Of the 23 people who had heard of at least one service, 10 (43.5%) had used at least one service, while 13 (56.5%) had never used any of the services. This meant that a total of 19 of the 29 respondents (65.5%) had never used any of the services offered by NBEIC. The actual number of respondents who had *heard* of each service and *used* each service can be seen in Figure 15.

Telephone enquirers were asked to indicate how valuable they felt NBEIC's role was in providing business and European information to the local community. The results of this question were similar to those gathered from the personal visitors' questionnaire. No respondents felt that NBEIC's role was of 'no value' or of 'little value'. The category of 'moderate value' was selected by 5 people (17.3%). Seventeen people (58.6%) chose the category of 'great value', which was also the category with the highest number of responses in the personal visitors' questionnaire. The remaining 7 respondents (24.1%) indicated that they felt NBEIC's role was 'invaluable'.

Under question 12, respondents were asked to comment on an example of excellent or poor service experienced by themselves at NBEIC. Nineteen out of 29 respondents (65.5%) provided a comment but, as happened in the personal visitors' questionnaire,

Figure 15: Services offered by NBEIC - Telephone users' levels of awareness and use.



many of these were of a general nature and did not relate specific experiences. These general comments were all encouraging remarks concerning helpful staff, a prompt telephone service and how excellent a facility NBEIC was. One respondent's appreciation of the service was expressed in the following way:

I normally use the service to find out about companies before attending interviews, it has always been helpful, efficient, informative and accurate.

There were seven people who commented on specific examples of service they had experienced. One person related an example of poor service which concerned the supplying of incorrect and incomplete information:

Sometimes the company name and address is given as the registered office which often turns out to be no good. Sometimes the company address is given but no 'phone number. What you really need is up-to-date 'phone numbers since I never write to companies only 'phone them.

The other six comments were all examples of excellent service and are quoted below:

Whenever I need a telephone number that is not obtainable through directory enquiries or any other means I always get my information from the above [NBEIC]. Service is always very good.

Telephone call giving briefest and sketchiest request met with polite, helpful *and* successful response.

When information is not directly available help is always given in supplying another source.

When researching data on component suppliers which are unknown and local BT telephone/Yellow Pages are no help, most efficient use of time is to make a telephone enquiry to NBEIC instead of losing 2-3 hours going into town.

Appreciated the service, basically because all other attempts of collating the information were fruitless.

My last enquiry involved staff finding Russian and Chinese contacts for me. They (well, she) did this extremely quickly and certainly went out of her way finding the Russian contacts by going into the music library and searching for contacts there. Excellent service. I have had no experience of poor service from NBEIC.

As with the responses provided by personal visitors, the examples listed above mention that enquiries were answered promptly and successfully, and also the telephone enquiry service saved the customer's time.

The number of telephone users who had access to another provider of business and European information totalled 9 out of 29 (31.0%). Those without access to another source were 20 out of 29 (69.0%),

a percentage that was slightly more than the 68.3% of personal visitors of NBEIC with no access to other providers of information. The sources specified by those respondents with access to other information providers included DTI, TEC, Leicester EIC, Chamber of Commerce, Milton Keynes Business Library, the MoD library, a school library and a European Member of Parliament.

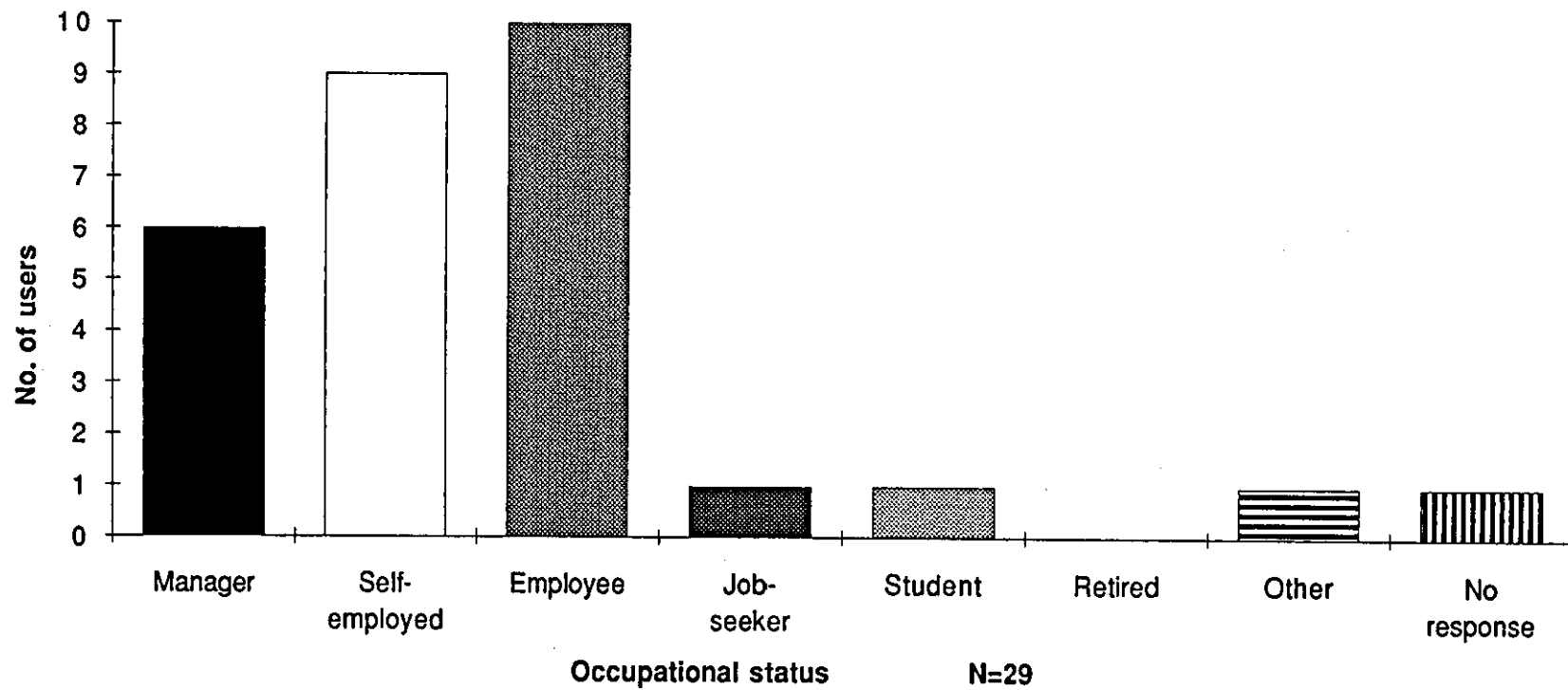
3.5.2 Results from Part Two: Personal Details

Telephone enquirers were asked to give details of their gender. One respondent did not answer this question, 19 out of 29 people (65.5%) were male and 9 out of 29 (31.1%) were female.

The ages of the respondents were divided as follows: none were aged 15 or under or 16 to 18, one person was aged 19 to 24, five people were aged 25 to 34, 17 people (58.6%) were aged 35 to 49, five people were aged 50 and over, and one person did not respond to the question.

Respondents were then asked to indicate their occupational status. Where 'manager' had been the most popular response category for the personal visitors, for the telephone enquirers the most popular category was 'employee', as indicated by 10 out of 29 people (34.5%). Nine telephone enquirers (31.1%) were self-employed and six (20.7%) were managers. The full set of responses can be seen in Figure 16. One person did not give details of their occupational status.

Figure 16: Occupational status of telephone users.



The results from the question on occupational status meant that a total of 16 out of 29 respondents (55.2%), ten employees and six managers, were eligible to complete the questions on company size and location of branch or office. Of these 16, 8 worked for small companies, 3 worked for medium-sized companies and 5 worked for large companies. A total of 11 out of 16 respondents (68.7%) who worked for companies worked for SMEs.

Details supplied on the location of the respondent's branch or office showed that 14 out of 16 of the telephone enquirers who worked for a company were located within the county of Northamptonshire. This figure was made up of 3 people who were located in Northampton town centre (postcode NN1), 5 people who were located elsewhere in the town of Northampton and 6 people whose branch or office was located elsewhere in the county of Northamptonshire. The remaining two respondents worked in a branch or office in another county, and specified these as being Middlesex and London.

3.5.3 Telephone Users' Comments on NBEIC

The final question of the telephone users' questionnaire was the same as that of the personal visitors' questionnaire, and provided respondents with the opportunity to express their opinions on any aspect of NBEIC. Out of the 29 telephone users who participated in the survey, nine made a comment under question 19. As the number of responses were of a manageable quantity, all nine are repeated below.

Two respondents commented on issues they felt to be unjustifiable or of an inconsistent nature, while one other person referred to the lack of space available at NBEIC. These were the least favourable of the responses given:

Even though I have access to my own fax machine, the price of the fax facilities in the library cannot be justified. Way too expensive.

Electoral role information unavailable for telephone customers. Why? As it is available for personal visitors to more than confirm details.

It's a pity you don't have sufficient space (or enough funds) to duplicate the reference books upstairs relating to all aspects of business. Also, because of space allocation - sometimes it is a bit crowded.

The comment made about the shortage of space at NBEIC implies that this telephone user is also a personal visitor of the Centre. It also highlights the fact that people may prefer to contact NBEIC by telephone to avoid the crowded conditions that personal visitors of the Centre have to encounter.

Another person's comment was a request for information to keep them up-to-date with the services NBEIC had to offer:

Please send details of new/improved services as they become available.

The remaining five comments were all complimentary and expressed appreciation of the staff and the service provided by NBEIC. The first of these respondents felt that NBEIC had:

To make Northamptonshire realise how important Euro-trading is and to continue to carry on the valuable service.

Another respondent found the presence of NBEIC convenient as they stated they were:

Quite often interested in American products/services. Useful to have access to current database. Please note that the American Embassy Commercial Library is only available two hours a day (10 - 12 o'clock) Monday to Friday.

The other three comments stated:

Generally a good service with staff answering the 'phone quickly (ie. not engaged all the time). Staff usually very helpful and give comprehensive answers rather than 'fob you off'.

I would just like to say that on my personal visits and 'phone enquiries I found staff intelligent and helpful.

If you have any thoughts about discontinuing this service - please don't!

This final comment does seem to represent the general consensus of feeling amongst the telephone users of NBEIC. While it must be acknowledged that a few individuals are discontented with

specific aspects of the service, the vast majority of telephone enquirers are satisfied with the service they receive and recognise the value of NBEIC's role within the local community.

3.6 Non-Users' Questionnaire

The non-users' questionnaire was designed to establish the extent to which members of the local business community were aware of the existence of NBEIC and the services it had to offer. The 32 respondents who participated in the survey may or may not have been users of NBEIC, but for the purpose of the questionnaire all respondents were assumed to be non-users. With this premise as the starting point, it was hoped that an indication of how far NBEIC had penetrated the local business community could be obtained and that potential customers, and their information needs, to whom the services of NBEIC could be marketed, would be identified. The results of each of the five questions are presented in the same order as they appear in the questionnaire (see Appendix III).

3.6.1 Non-Users' Awareness of NBEIC

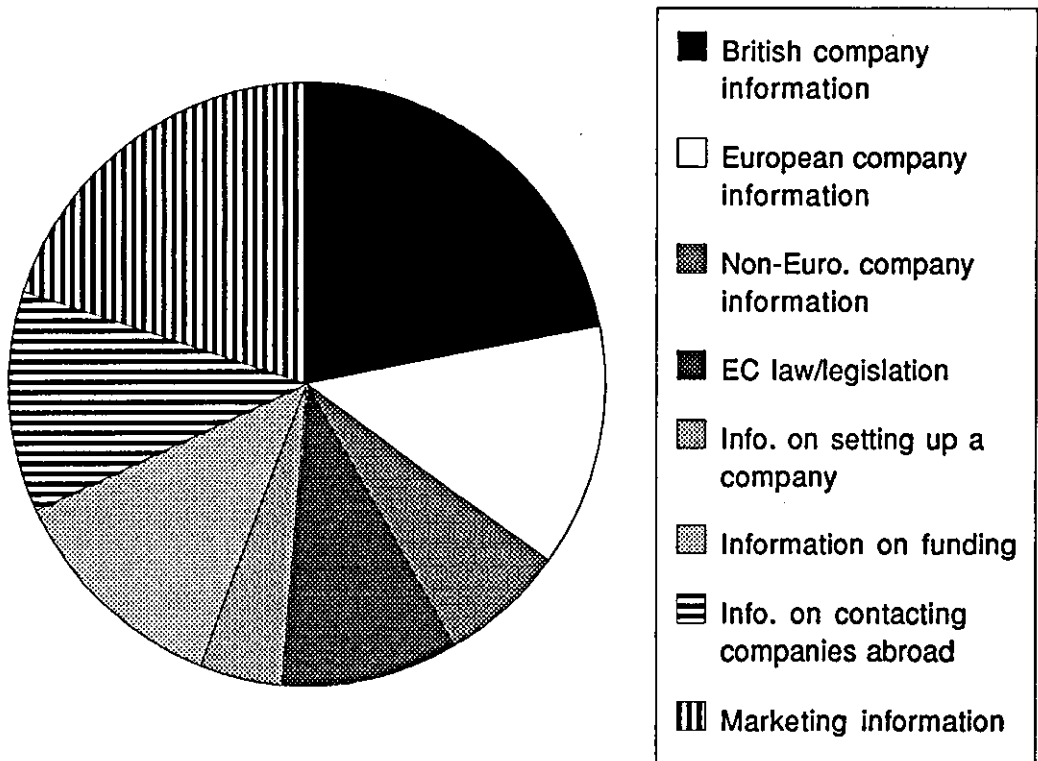
Respondents were asked if they had already heard of NBEIC. Of the 32 responses collected 8 (25.0%) replied 'yes' they had, while 24 (75.0%) replied 'no' they had not already heard of NBEIC. However, the non-users' questionnaire served as a publicity device, by raising the level of awareness of NBEIC within the local

business community, as these 24 respondents were now alerted to the existence of the Centre.

3.6.2 Information Interests and Needs of Non-Users

The information categories provided in question 2 from which respondents had to choose were based on the general subject divisions of stock held by NBEIC. Eight categories were listed and respondents were asked to indicate which types of information were of interest to them. The category achieving the highest response rate was that of 'British company information'. A total of 20 out of 32 respondents (62.5%) indicated they were interested in this type of information. The second highest ranking category was that of 'marketing information', which 18 people (56.3%) were interested in. A further 12 people (37.5%) expressed an interest in 'European company information', 11 people (34.4%) were interested in 'information on funding' and 11 people (34.4%) were interested in 'information on how to make contact with companies abroad'. The category with the least number of responses was that of 'information on setting up a company', as selected by 4 people (12.5%). This result reflects the fact that all of the respondents were already working for a company. One respondent did not indicate an interest in any of the categories. The full set of results can be seen in Figure 17.

Figure 17: Types of information of interest to non-users of NBEIC.



Question 3 of the non-users' questionnaire was divided into two parts. Respondents were provided with a list of services and asked to tick any that they had used before (whether at NBEIC or elsewhere) and any that they would be interested in using. The results to the second part of this question would give an indication of the level of demand for these services within the business community and therefore suggest which services should be marketed to potential customers.

In response to the first part of the question, which asked people to indicate any of the services they had used before, 27 respondents (84.4%) gave no response, implying that they had used none of the services. Only 5 people (15.6%) had used at least one of the services before. The results showed that one person had used Extel cards, two people had used Companies House microfiche, two people had used an online search service and one person had used a CD ROM business directory before. This low usage rate implied that the respondents and the companies they worked for either had no inclination or need to use such services, or that they were simply not aware of these services and what they had to offer.

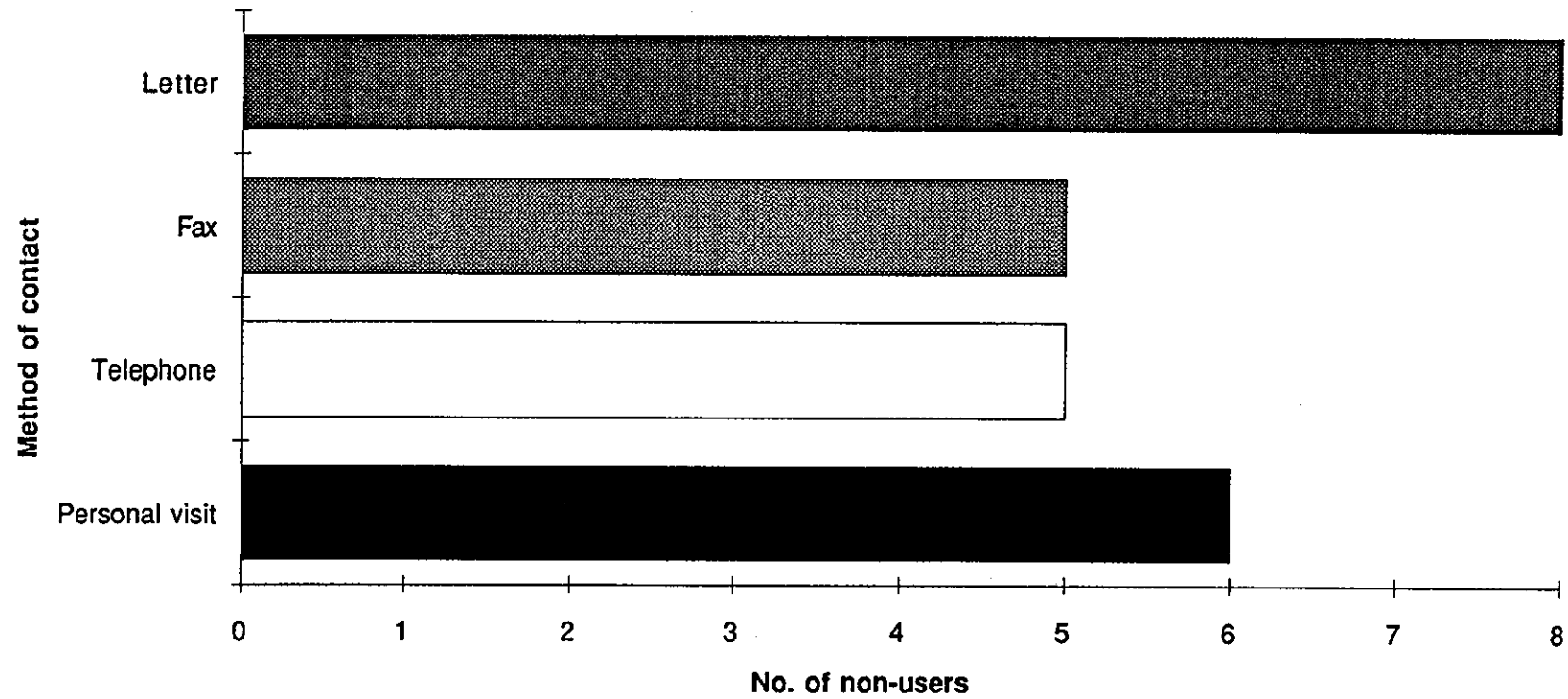
The second part of the question revealed that 15 out of 32 respondents (46.9%) were interested in at least one of the services offered by NBEIC. However, 17 people (53.1%) did not express an interest in any of the services. Three services gained an equal top ranking as 7 people indicated that they were interested in Extel

cards, in Companies House microfiche and in the online search service provided by NBEIC. The category of CD ROM business directories was selected by 6 respondents and 4 people were interested in British Standards on CD ROM. The category with the least number of responses was BC-NET, the Business Co-operation Network, which two respondents expressed an interest in. This may have been due to the fact that people were not fully aware of what this service was, as it encourages British companies to find business partners in Europe.

3.6.4 Non-Users' Preferred Method of Contact with NBEIC

Respondents were asked to select one category to indicate the method of contact with NBEIC they would prefer to use. Four people did not respond to this question, and four people gave a multiple response answer. Bearing in mind that all respondents worked for local businesses, the most popular preferred method of contact was that of a letter, as selected by 8 out of 32 respondents (25.0%). A personal visit was the method of contact chosen by 6 people (18.8%), while 5 people (15.6%) preferred to contact NBEIC by telephone, and another 5 (15.6%) preferred to fax NBEIC (see Figure 18). Although the multiple response answers were considered to be invalid responses, it was interesting to note that 3 out of the 4 respondents who gave a multiple response selected the categories of personal visit and telephone as the method of contact they would prefer to use. The fourth respondent who gave a multiple response answer chose the telephone and fax as the methods they would use to contact NBEIC.

Figure 18: Non-users' preferred method of contact with NBEIC.



The final question asked respondents if they had access to any other provider of business and European information. A total of 12 people (37.5%) replied 'yes' they did, and 19 people (59.4%) replied 'no' they did not have access to another source. One person failed to respond to the question. Of the 19 respondents who had no access to another provider of business and European information 14 had not heard of NBEIC (as indicated in question 1) previous to answering this questionnaire. This result is an important one, as it reveals that many companies are operating in isolation, unaware of the assistance and information available to them from organisations such as NBEIC.

The providers of business and European information named by the 12 respondents who had access to another source included Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Northamptonshire County Council Strategic Planning and Economic Development Unit. Other sources were DTI, Confederation of British Industry (CBI), Dunn and Bradstreet, and CCN Business Credit Information. Two respondents had access to specific industrial bodies. These were the British Fragrance Association and the British Institute of Surgical Technologists. Finally, one person gave their head office in Amsterdam as their source of information, while another person had access to a consultant (although it was not specified what sort of consultant).

The results to this question clearly show that there are potential customers within the local business community to whom NBEIC could be marketed. This is reinforced by the level of interest expressed by respondents in specific types of information held by NBEIC and also in the services NBEIC has to offer.

CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY

4.1 Introduction to Summary

The following chapter briefly restates the purpose of this research and summarises the main findings reported in Chapter 3. By recapitulating on Chapter 3 attention is drawn to the most significant results before the conclusions are presented in Chapter 5. The results from the personal visitors' and telephone enquirers' questionnaires are presented first. These have been amalgamated to highlight any similar or diverging response patterns provided by each type of user. This is followed by the main findings from the non-users' questionnaire.

4.2 Purpose of Research

The purpose of the user survey of NBEIC is to identify specific user groups by determining who is or who is not using the Centre. If non-users, and their information needs, can be established then NBEIC will be able to market their services to these potential customers. The research aims to investigate levels of awareness of services offered and areas of use and non-use of the Centre by finding out how and why people are using NBEIC. Finally, by obtaining the opinions of users of NBEIC the research also aims to assess levels of customer satisfaction.

4.3 Main Findings

The main findings of the research, as reported in Chapter 3, are listed below in point form, beginning with the users' questionnaire results which are then followed by the non-users' questionnaire results.

4.3.1 Users' Questionnaire Results

- * 65 out of 167 personal visitors (38.9%) to the Centre were visiting for the first time. A further 49 out of 167 (29.3%) visited the Centre less than once a month. 15 out of 29 telephone enquirers (51.7%) used NBEIC less than once a month.
- * 89 out of 167 personal visitors (53.3%) and 20 out of 29 telephone enquirers (68.9%) visited or contacted NBEIC for business reasons.
- * The most common purpose of use for both user groups was to locate a company's name or address: 95 out of 167 personal visitors (56.9%) specified this; 19 out of 29 telephone enquirers (65.5%) specified this.
- * The least common purpose of use for personal visitors was to obtain information on EC law: 2 out of 167 (1.2%) specified this. The least common purpose of use for

telephone enquirers was to obtain information on setting up a company: 1 out of 29 (3.4%) specified this.

- * 68 out of 167 personal visitors (40.7%) specified more than one reason for their visit to NBEIC. 22 out of 29 telephone enquirers (75.9%) specified more than one reason for contacting NBEIC.
- * 109 out of 165 personal visitors (66.1%) said 'yes' they had found the information they wanted. 28 out of 29 telephone enquirers (96.6%) said 'yes' their last telephone enquiry was answered to their satisfaction.
- * 30 out of 54 unsatisfied personal visitors (55.5%) gave the reason for non-satisfaction of their enquiry as 'information unavailable'.
- * The most important factor to both user groups when using NBEIC was up-to-date information: 75 out of 167 personal visitors (44.9%) specified this; 7 out of 29 telephone enquirers (24.1%) specified this. Closely following this result, 6 out of 29 telephone enquirers (20.7%) specified the convenience of the telephone enquiry service as the most important factor to them when using NBEIC.
- * The most common way personal visitors had heard of NBEIC was by noticing it when in the main library, as specified by 104 out of 167 people (62.3%). The most

common way telephone enquirers had heard of NBEIC was by word of mouth, as specified by 9 out of 29 people (31.1%).

- * 'Via publicity' had the lowest response rate from both user groups as the way in which they had heard of NBEIC: 9 out of 167 personal visitors (5.4%) specified this; 1 out of 29 telephone enquirers (3.4%) specified this.
- * Of the personal visitors who were visiting the Centre for the first time 41 out of 65 (63%) had heard of NBEIC by noticing it when in the main library; 1 out of 65 (1.6%) had heard of NBEIC via publicity.
- * 153 out of 167 personal visitors (91.6%) specified that their preferred method of contact with NBEIC was by a personal visit. Similarly, 22 out of 29 telephone enquirers (75.9%) preferred to contact NBEIC by telephone.
- * 90 out of 167 personal visitors (53.9%) and 23 out of 29 telephone enquirers (79.3%) had *heard* of at least one service offered by NBEIC.
- * 51 out of 167 personal visitors (30.5%) and 10 out of 29 telephone enquirers (34.5%) had *used* at least one service offered by NBEIC.

- * The service used most by personal visitors was Extel Cards, as specified by 20 out of 167 people (11.9%). The service used most by telephone enquirers was Companies House microfiche, as specified by 6 out of 29 people (20.7%).
- * The service used least by both user groups was BC-NET. 1 out of 167 personal visitors (0.6%) had used this service while none of the telephone enquirers had ever used it.
- * The majority of both user groups felt that NBEIC's role in providing business and European information to the local community was of great value, as specified by 103 out of 167 personal visitors (61.7%) and 17 out of 29 telephone enquirers (58.6%).
- * The examples of service given by both user groups were mainly experiences of excellent service. An example of poor service was expressed by one personal visitor and also by one telephone enquirer.
- * 114 out of 167 personal visitors (68.3%) did not have access to another provider of business and European information, while 20 out of 29 telephone enquirers (69%) did not have access to another source.

- * 121 out of 167 personal visitors (72.5%) and 19 out of 29 telephone enquirers (65.5%) were male. 41 out of 167 personal visitors (24.5%) and 9 out of 29 telephone enquirers (31%) were female.
- * The age category into which most respondents from both user groups fell was '35-49', as specified by 56 out of 167 personal visitors (33.5%) and 17 out of 29 telephone enquirers (58.6%). No users were aged '15 and under'.
- * The most popular occupational status category selected by personal visitors was 'manager', as specified by 43 out of 167 people (25.7%). The most popular occupational status category selected by telephone enquirers was 'employee', as specified by 10 out of 29 people (34.5%).
- * 34 out of the 43 personal visitors (79.1%) who were managers were using NBEIC for business reasons.
- * 62 out of 167 personal visitors (37.1%) and 16 out of 29 telephone enquirers (55.2%) were either managers or employees and therefore eligible to answer questions on the size of the company they worked for and the location of their branch or office.
- * The majority of personal visitors who were either managers or employees worked for large companies (125 employees or more), as specified by 28 out of 62 people (45.2%). The

majority of telephone enquirers who were either managers or employees worked for small companies (49 employees or less), as specified by 8 out of 16 people (50%).

- * A total of 31 out of 62 personal visitors (50%) and 11 out of 16 telephone enquirers (68.8%) who were either managers or employees worked for SMEs.
- * 21 out of 62 personal visitors (33.9%) who were either managers or employees stated that the branch or office where they worked was located in a county other than Northamptonshire. 14 out of 16 telephone enquirers (87.5%) who were either managers or employees stated that the branch or office where they worked was located within the county of Northamptonshire (3 in Northampton town centre, 5 elsewhere in Northampton and 6 elsewhere in the county).
- * The opinions and comments provided by both groups of users under the final, open-ended question were mainly favourable. These comments acknowledged how useful and valuable the service was and expressed appreciation of the helpful, knowledgeable staff. A minority of comments were less than favourable. These concerned the shortage of space and seating available at the Centre, out-of-date information and a lack of publicity about NBEIC.

4.3.2 Non-Users' Questionnaire Results

- * 24 out of 32 respondents (75%) assumed to be non-users of NBEIC had not already heard of the Centre. 8 out of 32 non-users (25%) had already heard of NBEIC.

- * The type of information of most interest to non-users was British company information, as specified by 20 out of 32 people (62.5%).

- * The type of information of least interest to non-users was information on setting up a company, as specified by 4 out of 32 people (12.5%).

- * 27 out of 32 non-users (84.4%) had never used any of the services offered by NBEIC (whether at NBEIC or elsewhere).

- * 15 out of 32 non-users (46.9%) were interested in using at least one of the services offered by NBEIC. The services in which most interest was expressed were Extel Cards, Companies House microfiche and the online search service, with seven people interested in each service. The service in which the least interest was expressed was BC-NET as specified by two people.

- * 8 out of 32 non-users (25%) stated their preferred method of contact with NBEIC would be a letter. The second most popular method of contact was by a personal visit, as specified by 6 out of 32 people (18.8%).

- * 12 out of 32 non-users (37.5%) said 'yes' they did have access to another information provider. 19 out of 32 non-users (59.4%) said 'no' they did not have access to another information provider - 14 out of these 19 non-users with no access to another source of information had not heard of NBEIC prior to completing the questionnaire.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Aim of Conclusions

The aim of the following chapter is to relate the findings of the survey with the purpose of the research, as summarised in the previous chapter. The user survey of NBEIC has established some interesting results concerning users' behaviour, their levels of satisfaction and opinions of NBEIC. It is hoped then, that the aims and objectives set out in Chapter 1 have been realised in the following conclusions.

5.2 Identification of Specific User Groups

NBEIC is open to all sectors of the local community and, as the results confirm, is used by people from a variety of backgrounds for a variety of reasons. There do, however, appear to be three distinct types of user emerging from the survey results. These are people who are seeking employment, students and business people (including the self-employed). It is apparent from the results of the telephone users' questionnaire that business people are the main group to utilise the telephone enquiry service. This is probably due to the fact that they have access to a company telephone and are more likely to have less time to undertake a personal visit to the Centre. There are, though, still a significant number of business people who prefer to make a personal visit to NBEIC.

The majority of both personal visitors and telephone enquirers using NBEIC are male. This implies that men either have a greater demand for business and European information than women do, or that they have a higher level of awareness of the existence of NBEIC and the services on offer.

If the groups specified above serve as a definition of who is using NBEIC, then it must be stated who is not using NBEIC. The results indicate that people aged 18 and under are not using the Centre. This may be attributed to the fact that they are of school age and so do not have any real need to utilise the facilities offered by NBEIC. However, it should be noted that these young people are the potential future customers of NBEIC and are probably currently unaware that the Centre exists.

The results of the non-users' questionnaire have provided an insight into the lack of awareness within the local business community of the existence of NBEIC. The following comment made by a personal visitor who stated that NBEIC was:

The best first stop for Europe we know - apparently underused which is a sad comment on Northants business.

leads to the conclusion that if local businesses are unaware of this free service how can they possibly be expected to use it? The opportunity exists for them to obtain the information they require to facilitate decision-making. The information needs of these non-users, relating mainly to company and marketing information, are

all fundamental to the decision-making process and could be catered for by the Centre. Therefore, if NBEIC could target these potential users within the local business community, clearly both parties would benefit from this newly established contact.

5.3 User Behaviour

Infrequent patterns of use are demonstrated by both personal visitors and telephone enquirers. This indicates that NBEIC is catering for immediate needs, as and when they arise. This can be applied to all groups of users, as visiting or contacting of the Centre on a fortnightly or more regular basis is limited to a small number of customers. In the case of the personal visitors using NBEIC for the first time, the vast majority only noticed the Centre when in the main library and so may not even have been aware of their own information needs until they entered the Centre. Their use of NBEIC may, then, have been based on curiosity to find out what sort of information was on offer. It would, therefore, be interesting to investigate further, if at all possible, how many of these first time visitors returned to use the Centre again.

The majority of people are using NBEIC for business reasons. This is especially true of the telephone users. The results of the survey indicate that the telephone enquiry service is catering, on the whole, for members of the local business community who require information for business use. The types of users who are visiting NBEIC for personal reasons are mainly students and job-seekers. The number of personal visitors using NBEIC for business reasons

is only slightly higher than those using the Centre for personal reasons, but the result remains significant because of the high proportion of business people utilising the Centre to cater for the information needs of their companies. Therefore, although NBEIC has so far only attracted the attention of a limited number of members of the local business community, these customers are aware of the assistance that NBEIC can provide to keep their businesses better informed, and are using the Centre to gain the competitive edge.

5.4 Areas of Use and Non-Use of Services and Sources

NBEIC holds a vast amount of information within the confined space allocated to the Centre. The results of the survey, however, indicate that a small proportion of the materials held are subject to a high rate of use. The demand for company names and addresses, and information on British companies corresponds with Jo Haythornthwaite's theory (as stated in Chapter 1) that a great deal of the enquiry work done in a business library relates to company information and is often of a quick reference nature.

The sources used least, being those concerned with funding, EC law and setting up a company, contain the sort of information that is more relevant for businesses or for those wanting to establish a business. This again suggests that local business people are not aware of the information held by NBEIC, freely available to them, that could help them trade more successfully with the rest of Europe.

As for the use and non-use of the services offered by NBEIC, the results demonstrate that usage of all services is low. This is especially true of BC-NET. The only way to increase the amount of use of these services is to raise customers' levels of awareness. People need to be informed of the existence of services on offer and of what each service can provide, in order for services such as BC-NET to be used effectively. If CD-ROMs are purchased to sit on a shelf for months on end then they become ineffective and a waste of ever decreasing financial resources. The interest in services, as expressed by respondents in the non-users' questionnaire, indicates that there is a potential market within the business community. Therefore, it is imperative that NBEIC invests in a good publicity campaign to attract present customers' attention and increase the use of these key services.

Publicity is necessary not only to raise levels of awareness with regard to the services on offer at NBEIC, but also to promote the actual Centre itself. The number of people who heard of NBEIC via publicity is minimal. If NBEIC are to become a recognised source of information throughout the whole of the local community they cannot rely on other sources to spread the news of their existence or hope that the Centre will be 'noticed' by users of the main library.

5.5 Users' Opinions and Levels of Customer Satisfaction

NBEIC exists to serve its customers and to fulfil their information needs. Satisfaction levels must then be an indication of whether or

not the service is catering for its customers and operating effectively. The results do show that a large proportion of users, both personal visitors and telephone enquirers, are having their information needs completely satisfied. The main reason for non or partial satisfaction , being 'information unavailable', suggests that NBEIC may not be entirely responsible for failing to meet the needs of all its customers. Despite this, almost all of the users who participated in the survey were provided with at least some information relevant to their enquiry. This success can be attributed to the helpful staff of NBEIC, as no respondents specified 'lack of staff assistance' as the reason for their enquiry remaining unsatisfied.

Obtaining users' opinions is an important part of survey research. Freely expressed feedback from customers is often the best indicator of whether or not people are happy with the service they are receiving. The results show that a few people are discontented with the range of materials held by NBEIC, while a few others express discomfort in the physical environment of the Centre and these opinions should be acknowledged. However, the vast majority of NBEIC's customers appreciated the prompt and helpful service they received, and provided positive comments on various aspects of NBEIC. These opinions, direct from the users themselves, are evidence of the effectiveness with which NBEIC is meeting users' needs. This is reinforced by the number of respondents who felt NBEIC's role in providing information to the local community was valuable. All but one respondent felt that NBEIC was of at least 'moderate value', and most people regarded NBEIC as being of

'great value' or 'invaluable'. The Centre is the only source of information for the majority of its users and so it will remain valuable to people as long as it provides them with the up-to-date information they require. As customers' satisfaction levels are high, NBEIC appears to be providing an effective service that caters for the needs of users from both the public and the local business community.

5.6 Concluding Comments

As stated in Chapter 1, different types of people have different needs. The results of the survey support this statement as the research has identified the different user groups of NBEIC and their respective reasons for using the Centre. By offering a variety of methods of contact, a wide range of services and a comprehensive stock, NBEIC does appear to be catering for its varied clientele. Knowledgeable staff are providing an effective service which is reinforced by the fact that levels of customer satisfaction are high, especially amongst users of the telephone enquiry service.

NBEIC is providing its users with the current, accurate information they require in a prompt, efficient manner. As levels of satisfaction are high it does seem rather futile to put forward a series of recommendations for changes to be made at NBEIC. However, the opinions of users of the Centre and the results of the survey do identify a couple of areas where improvements could be made. The need for promotion of the Centre and its services has already been expressed, and better publicity is vital if NBEIC is to attract new

customers from the local business community. If a publicity campaign proved successful then patronage of NBEIC would increase. However, personal visitors have already indicated that more space in which to research enquiries would be appreciated. Therefore, while it may be impossible to expand the Centre in its current location, consideration should be given to growth if present and potential customers are to be accommodated by the Centre in the future.

The following quote from Angela Abell states some ideas relevant to the conclusions of this research. She makes these observations on what local library services for small businesses should be aiming to achieve:

Library services in general should aim to become an accepted part of the business community, offering a reliable and efficient source of relevant information and acting as an intermediary and link with the growing network of help agencies.[1]

While NBEIC exists to serve a wider audience than small businesses alone, as a joint venture between a number of local organisations it has managed to achieve almost all of the aims quoted above. It should be noted that NBEIC has yet to realise its full potential in providing information to the local business community. However, once publicity raises levels of awareness of NBEIC's existence, the Centre should increasingly become an accepted source of free business and European information for both SMEs and large companies within the local business community.

On the basis of the majority of favourable opinions expressed by users, and the high levels of customer satisfaction, it can be concluded that NBEIC provides a valuable service that caters for the needs of all sectors of the local community in an attentive and effective way.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE BUSINESS AND EUROPEAN INFORMATION CENTRE

PERSONAL VISITORS' QUESTIONNAIRE.

1. How often do you use the NBEIC?

- More than once a week ☐
- Once a week ☐
- Once a fortnight ☐
- Once a month ☐
- Less than once a month ☐
- First visit to NBEIC ☐

2. Was your visit here today for personal or business use?

Personal ☐ Business ☐

3. What was the purpose of your visit to NBEIC today? (tick all that apply.)

- To locate company name/address ☐
- To consult British company directories ☐
- To consult European company directories ☐
- To consult non-European company directories ☐
- Information on EC law ☐
- Information on setting up a company ☐
- Information on funding ☐
- Information on how to make contact with companies abroad ☐
- Undertake research for a project ☐
- To consult library staff ☐
- To use fax facilities ☐
- Other (please specify).....

4. If the purpose of your visit was to find some information, did you find what you wanted?

Yes ☐ Partly ☐ No ☐

5. If you answered *partly* or *no* to the previous question please indicate why you feel your information needs were not satisfied. (tick all that apply.)

- Information unavailable ☐
- Materials held by NBEIC were out-of-date ☐
- Materials required not held by NBEIC ☐
- Lack of staff assistance ☐
- Not sure of what I wanted ☐
- Other (please specify).....

6. When using NBEIC, which of the following is *most* important to you? (tick one box.)

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Provision of free business and European information | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Comprehensive stock | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Up-to-date information | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Knowledgeable staff | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Convenient location of Centre | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Relaxed environment | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please specify)..... | |

7. How did you hear about NBEIC?

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Word of mouth | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Noticed when in the main library | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Via publicity (leaflets, posters) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| From workplace/college | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please specify)..... | |

8. Which method of contact with NBEIC do you prefer?

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Personal visit | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Telephone | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Fax | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Letter | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please specify)..... | |

9. Have you *heard* of any of the following services offered by NBEIC?(tick all that apply)

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Extel cards | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Companies House microfiche | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Online search service | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| BC-NET | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| British Standards | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| CD ROM business directories | <input type="checkbox"/> |

10. Have you *used* any of the following services offered by NBEIC?(tick all that apply.)

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Extel cards | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Companies House microfiche | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Online search service | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| BC-NET | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| British Standards | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| CD ROM business directories | <input type="checkbox"/> |

11. Do you feel NBEIC's role in providing business and European information to the local community is of...

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| No value | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Little value | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Moderate value | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Great value | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Invaluable | <input type="checkbox"/> |

12. It would help us a great deal if you could comment briefly on an example of *excellent* or *poor* service experienced by you at NBEIC:

.....

.....

.....

.....

13. Do you have access to any other provider of business and European information?

- | | |
|-----|--|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> (please specify)..... |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> |

To help us find out more about who our customers are, please answer the following questions...

14. Are you:

- | | | | |
|------|--------------------------|--------|--------------------------|
| Male | <input type="checkbox"/> | Female | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|------|--------------------------|--------|--------------------------|

15. To which of the following age groups do you belong?

- | | | | |
|--------------|--------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| 15 and under | <input type="checkbox"/> | 25-34 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16-18 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 35-49 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19-24 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 50 and over | <input type="checkbox"/> |

16. From the following list please indicate your occupational status. (tick *one* box.)

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Manager | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Self-employed | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Employee | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Job-seeker | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Student | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Retired | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please specify)..... | |

P.T.O.

If you answered *manager* or *employee* to the previous question it would help us to know more about your company. Please complete questions 17 and 18 on your company.

17. What is the size of your company?

- Small (49 employees or less) ☐
Medium (50-124 employees) ☐
Large (125 employees or more) ☐

18. Where is your branch/office located? (tick *one* box)

- Northampton town centre (postcode NN1) ☐
Elsewhere in the town of Northampton ☐
Elsewhere in the county of Northamptonshire ☐
(please specify).....
Another county ☐
(please specify).....

19. If there are any other comments you would like to make regarding the Northamptonshire Business and European Information Centre please use the space below:

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

If you would be willing to help us with some follow-up questions relating to this questionnaire we would be grateful if you would give your name and telephone number below:

.....
.....

Thank-you for your co-operation in completing this questionnaire.

APPENDIX II

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE BUSINESS AND EUROPEAN INFORMATION CENTRE

TELEPHONE USERS' QUESTIONNAIRE.

1. How often do you use the NBEIC?

- More than once a week ☐
- Once a week ☐
- Once a fortnight ☐
- Once a month ☐
- Less than once a month ☐

2. When you contact NBEIC is it usually for personal or business use?

- Personal ☐ Business ☐

3. For what reason/s do you contact NBEIC? (tick all that apply.)

- To locate company name/address ☐
- Information on British companies ☐
- Information on European companies ☐
- Information on non-European companies ☐
- Information on EC law ☐
- Information on setting up a company ☐
- Information on funding ☐
- Information on how to make contact with companies abroad ☐
- Gain information for a project ☐
- To consult library staff ☐
- Other (please specify)..... ☐

4. Was your last telephone enquiry answered to your satisfaction?

- Yes ☐ Partly ☐ No ☐

5. If you answered *partly* or *no* to the previous question please indicate why you feel your enquiry was not satisfied. (tick all that apply.)

- Information unavailable ☐
- Materials held by NBEIC were out-of-date ☐
- Materials required not held by NBEIC ☐
- Lack of staff assistance ☐
- Not sure of what I wanted ☐
- Other (please specify)..... ☐

6. When using NBEIC, which of the following is *most* important to you? (tick *one* box.)

- Provision of free business and European information ☐
- Comprehensive stock ☐
- Up-to-date information ☐
- Knowledgeable staff ☐
- Convenience of telephone enquiry service ☐
- Other (please specify).....

7. How did you hear about NBEIC?

- Word of mouth ☐
- Noticed when in the main library ☐
- Via publicity (leaflets, posters) ☐
- From workplace/college ☐
- Other (please specify).....

8. Which method of contact with NBEIC do you prefer?

- Personal visit ☐
- Telephone ☐
- Fax ☐
- Letter ☐
- Other (please specify).....

9. Have you *heard* of any of the following services offered by NBEIC?
(tick all that apply)

- Extel cards ☐
- Companies House microfiche ☐
- Online search service ☐
- BC-NET ☐
- British Standards ☐
- CD ROM business directories ☐

10. Have you *used* any of the following services offered by NBEIC?
(tick all that apply.)

- Extel cards ☐
- Companies House microfiche ☐
- Online search service ☐
- BC-NET ☐
- British Standards ☐
- CD ROM business directories ☐

11. Do you feel NBEIC's role in providing business and European information to the local community is of...

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| No value | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Little value | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Moderate value | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Great value | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Invaluable | <input type="checkbox"/> |

12. It would help us a great deal if you could comment briefly on an example of *excellent* or *poor* service experienced by you at NBEIC:

.....

.....

.....

.....

13. Do you have access to any other provider of business and European information?

- | | |
|-----|--|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> (please specify)..... |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> |

To help us find out more about who our customers are, please answer the following questions...

14. Are you:

- | | | | |
|------|--------------------------|--------|--------------------------|
| Male | <input type="checkbox"/> | Female | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|------|--------------------------|--------|--------------------------|

15. To which of the following age groups do you belong?

- | | | | |
|--------------|--------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| 15 and under | <input type="checkbox"/> | 25-34 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16-18 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 35-49 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19-24 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 50 and over | <input type="checkbox"/> |

16. From the following list please indicate your occupational status. (tick one box.)

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Manager | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Self-employed | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Employee | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Job-seeker | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Student | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Retired | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please specify)..... | |

P.T.O.

If you answered *manager* or *employee* to the previous question it would help us to know more about your company. Please complete questions 17 and 18 on your company.

17. What is the size of your company?

- Small (49 employees or less) ☐
- Medium (50-124 employees) ☐
- Large (125 employees or more) ☐

18. Where is your branch/office located? (tick *one* box)

- Northampton town centre (postcode NN1) ☐
- Elsewhere in the town of Northampton ☐
- Elsewhere in the county of Northamptonshire ☐
- (please specify).....
- Another county ☐
- (please specify).....

19. If there are any other comments you would like to make regarding the Northamptonshire Business and European Information Centre please use the space below:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

If you would be willing to help us with some follow-up questions relating to this questionnaire we would be grateful if you would give your name and telephone number below:

.....

.....

Please return in the pre-paid envelope by **Friday 16th July 1993.**

Thank-you for your co-operation in completing this questionnaire.

APPENDIX III

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE BUSINESS AND EUROPEAN INFORMATION CENTRE

QUESTIONNAIRE (Non-users)

1. Have you already heard of the Northamptonshire Business and European Information Centre?
Yes ☐ No ☐
2. Below is a list of types of information provided by NBEIC. Please indicate which categories are of interest to you:
- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| British company information | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| European company information | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Non-European company information | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| EC law/legislation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Information on setting up a company | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Information on funding | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Information on how to make contact with companies abroad | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Marketing information | <input type="checkbox"/> |
3. The following services are offered by NBEIC. Please indicate any that you
a. Have used before; b. Would be interested in using:
- | | <i>a.</i> | <i>b.</i> |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Extel cards (financial information) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Companies House microfiche | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Online search service | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| BC-NET (Business Co-Operation Network) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| British Standards on CD ROM | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| CD ROM Business directories | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
4. Which of the following methods of contact with NBEIC would you prefer to use (select *one* only) :
- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Personal visit | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Telephone | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Fax | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Letter | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please specify)..... | |
5. Do you have access to any other provider of business and European information?
Yes ☐ Please specify.....
No ☐

If you would like to know more about how NBEIC can help you please give your name and telephone number:.....

Please return this questionnaire in the pre-paid envelope by Friday 16th July 1993

Thank-you for your co-operation in completing this questionnaire.

