

**THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD**

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**PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY  
GROUPS:**

**THE INFLUENCE OF FRIENDS GROUPS ON PUBLIC LIBRARY POLICY**

**By**

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# **Public Libraries and Friends of the Library Groups:**

## **The Influence of Friends Groups on Public Library Policy**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the influence of Friends groups on public library policy in the UK, in order to investigate ways of involving Friends groups in library policy-making. The methodology of a grounded theory, and a semi-structured interview method, were used for the study. Fifty interviews were carried out with Friends group members, library staff and managers, and councillors in five councils in England.

There were more respondents who agreed than disagreed with Friends groups being allowed to influence library policy. The present groups have influenced many policy areas, such as policy on opening hours, decisions on library closure and building a new library, and library rules and regulations. They have exerted an influence on these areas mainly through campaigns or lobbying. However, there were also respondents who had personal concerns about the strong influence of Friends groups, particularly through these activities. They did not approve of these activities as being the ideal method of Friends groups to get involved in library policy. This is because these activities caused conflicts between Friends groups and library authorities or councillors. The respondents who had many experiences of such conflicts perceived Friends groups to be unrepresentative of library users and the community.

Influential groups, which had an impact on library policy, were born as influential groups. They were formed with unique managerial elements, such as simple and clear goals, spontaneous establishment, strong leadership, a well-structured and active committee, and strong membership power, i.e. having many professionals and famous people as their members, such as politicians, artists, writers, and celebrities.

The majority of the respondents agreed with the establishment of a British National Friends of Libraries organisation (NFOL), and considered its role in enhancing the operation of Friends groups, in supporting library services, and in campaigning to the government. However, many respondents did not recognise the fact that the Library Campaign (LC) had become a new British NFOL, and many group members did not have much information about the LC. Consequently, the study suggests that the LC publicise itself more actively and that CILIP support the publicity of the LC.

The study revealed that consultation is the most sensible method of getting Friends groups involved in library policy. Accordingly, the study suggests that Friends groups, library management, and councillors make guidelines for consultation. The study concludes that Friends groups could successfully operate and get effectively involved in library policy, if: together with library management they create some guidelines for the operation of Friends groups; they invite professionals and famous people to their group; and they maintain good communication with their members, the community, library staff, councillors, and also the local media.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background to the Study

Friends groups have been associated with libraries for almost a century (Murison, 1979; Usherwood, 1981; Wallace, 1968). During this period, they have been supporting and enhancing library services and operation in various ways. In the early stages of their history, they were primarily formed (by the public or library staff) to raise book funds for the library (Murison, 1979; Wallace, 1968). At the time, some Friends groups also publicised their library services. This role was considered to be particularly important after library staff accepted the concept of marketing. Library marketing was adopted to reach a great number of potential users, to encourage use of library resources, to improve satisfaction with library services and to work towards becoming an indispensable source of information for the community (Edinger, 1980). Since then, Friends groups have been considered very important in library management. This is because 'public relations is a core discipline in marketing' (Haywood, 1998: 3). Active Friends groups perform a public relations function and help the community to understand the library's function (Leerburger, 1989). Therefore, 'the public relations impact is spread widely' (Sager, 1984: 207) and as a result of this, the library is better placed to achieve its aims.

When library budgets were secured up until the mid-1970s (Potts & Roper, 1995), the involvement of Friends groups in library services and operation was less significant. At the time, Friends groups operated primarily to support library services rather than to influence them.

When libraries began to suffer from budget cuts, they came under pressure to find alternative sources of funding for their services. Fund-raising by Friends groups was considered to be an important source. Since then, library staff have founded many Friends groups to supplement insufficient library budgets, particularly in the U.S.A. (Potts & Roper, 1995). Their role in supporting library services was considered to be more important than ever. Thus, their involvement with them became greater. Friends groups became involved with library finance by providing funds; with library services by working as volunteers; with library management by performing public relations

and involving the community; and with library advocacy by undertaking lobbying and campaigns (Dolnick, 1996). As a result of this, some Friends groups began to attempt to influence library policy. However, this attempt, and their deeper involvement in library services and operation, led to an increase in apprehensions about the activities and operation of Friends groups (Baker, 1994; Dolnick, 1987; Skory, 1989). These apprehensions reflected the extent to which Friends groups were involved in library services, operation and decision-making, and are outlined below:

- Friends groups will take over the library, making decisions in matters that are of no concern to them.
- If Friends volunteer in the library, paid positions will be eliminated.
- If Friends raise money, budgets will be cut accordingly.

Friends groups also operated in academic and public libraries in the UK until the mid-1980s (Murison, 1979; Knight, 1998; Usherwood, 1982), although their numbers and activities were insignificant. The incidents that led to the dramatic increase in the number of Friends groups in the UK differed from the above. Public libraries in the UK began to suffer from budget cuts in the mid-1970s, but this did not result in the formation of Friends groups or focus on fund-raising. This was because, firstly, library staff and management did not have much experience in the operation and activities of Friends groups and, secondly, because 'British people expect their taxes to be sufficient to pay for all services' (Potts & Roper, 1995: 21). Smith (1999) supports this, saying that in the UK 'there is a much greater expectation and reliance on local authority funding' (p.22). The second reason could explain why only a small number of groups were established to raise funds in the UK, unlike in Australia, Canada and particularly the USA. In these countries, most of the Friends groups were established to raise funds for their library.

In the UK, library budget cuts in the mid-1970s resulted in unstable library services (Proctor, Lee and Reilly, 1998). This situation lasted until the end of the 1980s, and finally led to the threat of widespread library closures and a reduction in opening hours. It was this situation which triggered the establishment of many Friends groups, initiated by the public or library staff. In particular, people in the communities whose libraries were under threat of closure spontaneously founded Friends groups with the intention of undertaking campaigns against their council's decisions on library closure. Consequently, in the UK, the establishment of Friends groups resulted directly in a great effort to influence library policy.

The questions set by this study, based on the above findings, aim to discover to what extent, if any, Friends groups influence public library policy, to identify why they should or should not be allowed to influence library policy, and to determine how they could influence library policy.

The results of the literature review revealed that some materials (Dolnick, 1996; Ferguson, 1991; Leerburger, 1989; Sager, 1984) briefly cover the issue of Friends groups influencing library policy. Other research (Bundy, 1998; Robbins, 1975; Whittaker, 1998) deals with this issue as part of a project. The results of the literature review are contradictory, with some people recognising and agreeing with the influence of Friends groups on library policy (Bundy, 1998; Dolnick, 1996; Dutton, 1998; Ferguson, 1991; Leerburger, 1989; Skory, 1989), whilst others (The Commoner, 1992; Fletcher & Staniland, 1997) challenge this view. The reason for choosing the theme of the research, and the need for it to be studied, will now be covered in detail.

## **1.2 Grounds for Selecting the Theme**

There were essentially two considerations for selecting the theme for the study. Firstly, there was a lack of research on the theme of the present study. No in-depth research has been undertaken in the UK or the USA to examine the theme: the influence of Friends groups on public library policy. As described in **section 1.1** above, there are only studies and materials which investigate and discuss the operation and activities of Friends groups. These studies and materials only briefly cover the theme as part of a project.

Secondly, regarding the argument over the influence of Friends groups on library policy, there were gaps in the literature. This means that, among the studies and materials dealing with the theme briefly, some of them claim that Friends groups have an influence on public library policy, but they do not explain why Friends groups have an influence or how they influence library policy (Bundy, 1998; Dolnick, 1996; Dutton, 1998; Ferguson, 1991; Leerburger, 1989; Skory, 1989). On the other hand, some other studies and materials simply maintain that Friends groups have no influence on library policy. They neither discuss why Friends groups have no influence or why Friends groups could not influence library policy (The Commoner, 1992; Fletcher & Staniland, 1997). That is to say, these studies and materials do not present comprehensive views, but provide insufficient information, on the influence

of Friends groups on library policy. Consequently, when the researcher read these, he was not completely convinced whether Friends groups indeed have an influence on library policy or not.

Taking these two reasons into account, it was deemed that the theme was worth studying. This stems from the fact that the theme could explain in detail whether Friends groups have an influence on library policy or not, and how Friends groups could influence public library policy. In addition, the theme could ascertain the role of Friends groups in library policy-making in the UK. For this reason, it is apparent that the present study is unique in being the first research to answer the above questions. The detailed aim and objectives of the study are stated below.

### **1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The main aim of this study is:

- To investigate ways of involving Friends groups in library policy-making.

This research has the following objectives:

- To identify to what extent, if any, Friends groups influence public library policy in the UK.
- To explore why Friends groups should or should not be allowed to influence public library policy.
- To investigate the activities through which Friends groups could influence public library policy.
- To discover and analyse the policy areas in which Friends groups do have influence.

In addition, it is hoped that this research will produce the following outcomes:

- To inform the operations of Friends groups in public libraries in the UK.
- To guide Friends groups in their activities.
- To give public library staff and management an understanding of many aspects of the activities of Friends of Libraries, and to present ideas and information on the operations of Friends groups in support of public library services and operation.
- To provide ideas and information on the establishment, operation and role of a national Friends of Libraries organisation in the UK.

## 1.4 History and Development of Friends Groups

### 1.4.1 Why and how Friends groups were formed

Where there are friends, there is wealth. If these words, written by the great master of Roman comedy, Plautus, more than two thousand years ago still hold true, libraries today must be wealthier than they were about forty years ago when they first acquired 'Friends' (Brewer, 1961: 453).

The above quotation tells us why people began to establish Friends groups almost a century ago. However, a review of the history of the operation and activities of Friends groups shows that the ways in which they worked with libraries, and the content of the support that they provided to libraries, varied widely according to the time and country.

It is a controversial matter as to when the first Friends group was formed. However, it is clear that the early Friends groups were established to enhance library collection by providing funds and donating books. La Societe des Amis de la Bibliotheque Nationale et les Grandes Bibliotheques de France was established in 1913 in order to increase and enrich the library collection in Paris (Wallace, 1968). A German Friends group, the Wuppertal Friends of the Library Group, was established (in 1904) to collect funds and donate books to the library (Murison, 1979).

Wallace (1968) claims that the French one mentioned above was the first Friends group in the world. However, according to Murison's report (1979), the German group was founded in 1904, earlier than the French group. He states that the group had completed 75 years of service when he made his report in 1979. The present study claims that Murison's view on the first group is more reasonable than that of Wallace. The reason for this is that, firstly, Murison's report covers the operations and activities of Friends groups in many countries such as Germany, Indonesia, Spain and the UK, whereas Wallace (1968) mainly describes the groups in the USA. As a result, Wallace probably missed some important groups in other countries. Secondly, the Wallace's article was published in 1968, whereas Murison's report was printed in 1979. Hence, Murison could possibly have had a chance to study Friends groups more broadly and deeply. Murison's report is a remarkable source of information on Friends groups. It provides researchers, librarians and Friends group members with ideas and information based on the experience of the American Friends groups' activities. This report is one of the most extensively cited sources in the study of Friends groups' operations and activities. This stemmed from the fact that Murison

published his report at a time when no study on the subject of Friends groups had been carried out and very little had been written on the subject in the UK. In fact, a year later, in 1980, the first edition of the 'Friends of Libraries Sourcebook' (Dolnick, 1980) was published in the USA. In terms of covering Friends groups in many countries, the report contributes to the study of the history of Friends groups worldwide. Accordingly, the report is a truly remarkable achievement in the history of Friends groups throughout the world.

Smith (1999) seems to agree that the German group is the world's first Friends group. Reflecting on why the study of the history of Friends groups produced such a result as outlined above, Bennett (cited in Skory, 1989: 320) states that:

One of the problems in researching material on Friends groups, both here (Canada) and in the United States, is that 'no history of library friends exists'. Because Friends groups have not considered the preserving of their own history as important, their contribution to libraries is largely unrecognised.

#### **1.4.2 Involvement of Friends groups in public libraries**

Since the world's first Friends group came into existence at the turn of the 20th century, the idea of forming a Friends group swiftly spread all over the world. Much of the literature (Azar-Luxton, 1993; Ferguson, 1991; 1997; Murison, 1979; Skory, 1989) reveals that Friends groups now operate in many countries worldwide: Australia, Canada, Chile, France, Germany, Indonesia, New Zealand, Japan, Scandinavia, South Africa and Spain. Friends groups operate very actively and are involved in library services and operation in various ways, particularly in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the USA (Bundy, 1998; Kirby, 1995; Smith, 1999).

Friends groups were first formed in public libraries in many countries, including Australia, Canada, Germany and the USA, but this was not the case in the UK. However, in comparison with academic library groups, the establishment of public library groups, except in the USA, has been slow and almost dormant until the 1980s. According to the literature (Feather & Sturges, 1997; Fuggles, 1981; Strong, 1978; Wallace, 1968), there had been no public library Friends group until 1970 in the UK.

In Australia, the first Friends group was formed in a public library in 1932, but until 1981 only two public library groups existed. This is compared to six academic groups

in the same period. The reasons for establishing these groups were different, but they had two common aims: providing moral support and allocating additional funds for library collections (Ferguson, 1991). The number of Australian Friends groups has increased dramatically during the 1980s and 1990s. Ferguson (1991) and Smith (1999) estimated the number at about 80 in 1989, and 160 groups in 1999. It is apparent that there are many reasons for the number having increased in such a way. Ferguson (1991) offers the first reason, stating that:

Probably no more than 80 Friends groups are operating in Australia. And of this number 40 groups are in South Australia where, in the past few years, Friends groups have developed under a structure put in place by the Public Libraries Branch of the State Library of South Australia. [Many people] have been instrumental in this development, with the aim of establishing Friends groups in every South Australian public library (p.331).

The second reason could be an influence from the successful operation of American Friends groups. This claim is underpinned by the fact that much research was undertaken into Australian Friends groups, such as Bundy (1998), Ferguson (1991; 1997) and Kirby (1995), and these examined and introduced the operation and activities of American groups. Bundy also supports the above claim that many library staff and managers gained information about Friends groups from American people, books and conferences. Thirdly, the formation of the national Friends of Libraries organisation in Australia (FOLA, 2003) boosted the establishment of many new groups. Finally, other reasons, such as the threat of library closure and opening hour reductions, and an interest in involving the community in council services, generated many new groups. The claim that the threat of library service cuts triggered the establishment of many groups, is in line with the fact that many Australian groups have attempted to influence policy on library services charges and library decision-making for building a new library, library closure and library budgets (Bundy, 1998). Some groups have influenced such decisions (Ferguson, 1991). In Australia, librarians often view Friends groups as ‘troublemakers’ (Ferguson, 1997). However, it is not clear whether this is because they are very actively involved in library services and operation, or because library staff do not have much experience of Friends groups and are therefore suspicious of their activities and operation.

Stockett (cited in Skory: 1989) reveals that the first two Friends groups were established in Canada in a public and in an academic library in the same year, 1932. However, it seems that the establishment of public library groups had been almost inactive until 1980 because only a few groups existed before this year. Smith (1999)

claims that around 175 groups operate in Canada. According to the Friends of Canadian Libraries Association's websites, most of the groups were established in the 1980s and 1990s. There is a lack of information as to why this is the case. However, the possible reasons could be the same as the second and third of those for Australia. The national Friends of Libraries organisation in Canada (FOCAL) was founded in 1998. Similarly, literature has not been found in relation to the influence of Friends groups on library policy in Canada. However, Skory (1989) states that Friends groups are perceived to be a very effective tool in influencing political decisions in relation to government funding and legislation for libraries.

Publications on American Friends groups have been available ever since they started operating. Wallace (1968) suggests that the first article on Friends groups can be found in the *Wilson Bulletin* for September 1935. This is followed by an article on the M.I.T. Library's Friends in the *Library Journal* for April 1937, and another one entitled 'When a Library Needs a Friends (group)' in the same journal for May 1937. Since then, hundreds of articles, monographs, dissertations, and reports have been published in the USA. Among these materials, the literature (Brewer, 1961; Dolnick, 1996; Gwyn, McArthur and Furlow, 1975; Hood, 1998; Munch, 1988; Wallace 1968) comprehensively covers the history of the operations and activities of American Friends groups.

According to Wallace's article, although the world's first Friends group was established outside the USA, the concept of Friends groups has been greatly developed there and introduced to other countries. The results of the literature review reveal that hundreds of Friends groups had been established in public libraries by 1960 (Wallace, 1968). This contrasts with other countries in which only a small number of Friends groups were founded in academic and public libraries up to the 1960s. The first American group that was also the first public library group, the Friends of Glen Ellyn Free Public Library, was founded in 1922 (Wallace). Friends groups were set up in academic libraries a little later than in public libraries.

There have been some important events that led to the great development of Friends groups in the USA. Firstly, even in the early stages of the operations of Friends groups, the American Library Association (ALA) became aware of the need for Friends groups. The following events bear testimony to this:

- In the late 1920s and early 1930s the ALA felt the need for Friends groups.

- In 1934, the heading 'Friends of the Library' appeared in the ALA Bulletin index.
- In 1934, the ALA established a committee to encourage the formation of Friends groups (Brewer, 1961).
- In 1935, some publications in relation to Friends groups were printed by the ALA to supply information, to encourage the development of new groups and to improve the operations and activities of Friends groups.

A lesson can be learned from this finding: in order to develop and encourage the operation and establishment of Friends groups in a country, a Library Association should become actively involved.

Secondly, as Skory (1989) and Dolnick (1987) state, decreased funding for libraries in the 1970s and 1980s has coincided with a resurgence in the growth of Friends groups. Thirdly, according to Dolnick (1996), the formation of a national Friends of Libraries organisation in the USA (FOLUSA) in 1979 accelerated the growth and development of Friends groups. Finally, Ferguson (1991) claims that the USA has a strong culture of citizen participation, public benefactors and public donations, and that this might result in the great development of Friends groups. There is much evidence supporting the idea that the USA has such a culture. Ferguson cites Almond and Verba's opinion (1963), stating that citizen participation is much stronger in the USA than in other countries. Regarding public donations, Potts and Roper (1995) point out that 'asking for money is a much more acceptable practice in the USA than in Britain. Americans ... expect to give much more to causes of their own choosing' (p.21). O'Dea (1996) also claims that (but it does not seem to be true):

The United States is the only country in the World with this phenomenon of people giving freely of their time and talents to an organization for the enrichment of the organization and for the personal enrichment of the volunteer (p.224).

However, the widespread development of Friends groups resulted in their deep involvement in library services and operation, and also in attempts to influence library decision-making. Leerburger (1989) supports this, claiming that some independent groups often exert a significant influence on library policy. This involvement raised library staff's apprehensions about the operation and activities of

Friends groups (Dolnick, 1987). However, although some library staff raised these apprehensions, Friends groups are still very active in many libraries. Today, there are over 3,000 Friends groups in the USA (Dolnick, 1996).

Murison published a report on ‘**public library users’ consultative councils**’ in 1979 and, according to the report, Friends groups began to operate in public libraries in the early 1970s in many areas of England: Sutton (1972), Devon (1975), Somerset (1975), Bedfordshire (1976), Bradford (1978), Cumbria and Manchester. The report reveals that there were fewer than ten groups in these areas. Murison also discovers that there was no attempt to establish a Friends group in Scotland or Northern Ireland until 1979.

These groups were established with various aims, such as becoming involved in library activities, operating as a local consultation organisation, organising public meetings and acting as a focal point for general cultural activities. Interestingly, fund-raising was not considered to be the role of these groups. Instead, the common concern for the operation of these groups was to increase user consultation. Obtaining the views of users was considered very important in managing library services. It seems that this was influenced by the new concept of library marketing that began to be adopted in libraries in the 1970s.

This finding confirms that although public libraries in the UK began to suffer from budget cuts (Proctor, Lee & Reilly, 1998), this crisis did not result in the establishment of Friends groups. When the crisis led to widespread library closures in the early 1990s, this finally triggered the establishment of many Friends groups. Library staff and the public, who feared job or library service loss, initiated the establishment of these groups, either together or alone. Since then, the number has increased dramatically. According to the Smith (1999) report, over 150 public library groups operated in the UK in 1998.

As described in the previous **section**, the establishment of many British groups resulted directly in a major attempt to influence library policy. This raised apprehensions about the operation of Friends groups. There is one well-known source which criticises those operations and activities. Commoner (1992: 784) suggests that Friends groups are ‘more trouble than they are worth and ... they skew service provision to suit the needs of the few busybodies who have the time to get involved’. Baker (1994) challenges this view, arguing that this is not always the case and that

according to his experience of Friends groups, those members do not seek preferential treatment.

Since British groups became active, there have been many publications about their activities. A seminar and a workshop were held in 1998 and 1999 respectively in order to discuss the role of Friends groups and the establishment of a national Friends of Libraries organisation. Two reports (Sugg, 1998; Smith 1999) on the above issues were published. In MA dissertations, Miles (1994) and Whittaker (1998) undertook evaluations of the functions and importance of Friends groups. One journal article (Staniland, Fletcher & Townend, 1999) covers in detail one Friends group's activities and there are some other materials that briefly describe the activities of British Friends groups. These are: a committee report (Staniland & Fletcher, 1997), the Library Association Record (1999a, 1999b), and the Guardian (1999). In particular, the Library Campaigner (1998, 1999) consistently allocated pages for discussing the subject of Friends groups.

#### **1.4.3 Involvement of Friends groups in academic and national libraries**

Although Friends groups were first founded in public libraries in many countries, academic and national libraries soon adopted the idea of operating Friends groups. The French National Library's Friends group was established in 1913 in order to increase and enrich the library collection. In the USA, the first academic group was formed in 1925, three years after the first public library group. The literature reveals that, although Friends groups were well established and operated actively in public libraries from the time when the first group came into existence, academic library groups differed from public library groups. Brewer (1961) estimated the total number of Friends groups in academic and public libraries to be at about 650 by 1955. However, according to Munch (1988), the number of (documented) academic groups was only 27 by 1978. The literature review reveals that academic library groups had developed considerably between the 1970s and the 1980s. Munch points out that the number of (documented) groups had increased up to 293 by 1985. It was found that since many academic libraries began to suffer from financial difficulties from the mid-1970s, they started to establish Friends groups for developing financial support for the libraries. Gwyn, McArthur & Furlow (1975) and Munch carried out survey studies on academic and public libraries. Munch claims that 'as budgets strain to meet the rising costs of acquisitions, computerization, networking, specialized services,

and personnel, college libraries increasingly look towards Friends of the Library groups' (p.442).

The first group in the UK, the Friends of the Bodleian Library, was established in 1925. The Friends of the National Libraries followed this in 1931 (Bloomfield, 1997) aiming 'to help acquire for the nation printed books, manuscripts and archives' (Friends of the National Libraries, 2003) The Friends of the British Library was established in 1989 with the following aims (Day, 1998: 158):

(1) to widen public understanding of the British Library through the provision of information on its collections and services; (2) to improve awareness of the Library's role as a cultural centre and guardian of the national heritage; (3) to provide a means of developing special relationships with the private sector for fund raising and joint venture activities; and (4) to establish itself as a self-financing and profile raising organisation over a period of two to three years.

The Association of the Friends of the National Library of Wales 'aims to foster a wider interest in and understanding of the library and its work and maintain a support group dedicated to this aim' (Smith, 1999: 17). The National Library of Ireland has its Friends group but the National Library of Scotland does not have its Friends group yet (Smith, 1999).

In Australia, the first academic library group was formed in 1962 in order to allocate additional funds to its library collection, and to provide moral support (Ferguson, 1991). Until 1980, six academic library groups had operated, whilst only two public library groups were formed. The Friends of the National Library of Australia was founded in 1990, to promote its library and to foster community support for the activities of the Library (Friends of the National Library of Australia, 2003). Skory (1989) claims that the first academic library group in Canada was established in 1939. However, according to the Friends of Canadian Libraries (2002), the oldest university library group was formed in 1978. It stemmed from the fact that the former group once existed, but then disbanded. The Canadian National Library's Friends group was founded in 1990 with the intention of helping the Library to 'celebrate the past, honour the present and ensure the future of Canada's remarkable published heritage' (Friends of the National Library of Canada, 2003).

It seems that the involvement of these groups in their library was not significant because their library is an academic and a national one. That is to say, Friends groups in academic and national libraries usually provide moral support, by operating as a

fund-raising and public relations group, and are not keen on influencing library services and operation.

#### **1.4.4 Objectives and functions of Friends groups in public libraries**

The literature (Dolnick, 1996; Smith, 1999) suggests that the main aim of Friends groups is to assist the library and staff as they provide better library and information services to the community. Ferguson (cited in Smith, 1999: 23) states that Friends groups in Australia, Canada and the USA have the following common objectives:

- To promote the library within the community
- To sponsor events and activities
- To provide special gifts and other items for the library
- To encourage gifts, endowments and sponsorship arrangements
- To promote activities for volunteers
- To organise library book sales
- To raise funds for the library
- To act as an advocate and lobbyist

The literature (Baker, 1994; Dolnick, 1996; Fletcher & Staniland, 1997; Staniland, Fletcher & Townend, 1998) reveals that Friends groups perform various functions in order to achieve these objectives, such as fund-raising, lobbying or political campaigning, undertaking voluntary work, carrying out public relations, and being involved in the community. Some people (Ferguson, 1990; Gwyn, McArthur & Furlow, 1975; Murison, 1979; Skory, 1989) claim that fund-raising is the only function that has been widely performed for the library, from the very early stages of the history of Friends groups to the present day. The literature (Dolnick, 1987; 1996; Brownlee & Ney, 1988; Hood, 1998; Krull, 1991; Skory, 1989; Potts & Roper, 1995; Smith, 1999) discusses the fund-raising role of Friends groups i.e. how they raise and use funds for their library.

Some other sources (Brownlee & Ney, 1989; Cunningham, 1989; Frenchman, 1998; Harrison, 1997; Leerburger, 1989; Skory, 1989; Usherwood, 1982) consider political campaigning to be an important function of Friends groups' involvement in the library. Friends groups' public relations is considered to be another useful function (Berger, 1979; Cronin, 1981; Edinger, 1980; Skory, 1989; Usherwood, 1982). The literature (Brownlee & Ney, 1980; Fletcher & Staniland, 1997; Skory, 1989;

Usherwood, 1982) introduces in detail the ways in which Friends groups undertake public relations for the library.

The literature review (Dolnick, 1996; O’Dea, 1996; Sager, 1984; Smith, 1999) also reveals that Friends groups assist library services and operation by undertaking various voluntary activities - for example, book shelving and repairs, housebound services, lending services, and children services. The literature (Baker, 1994; Fletcher & Staniland, 1997; Payne, 1998) maintains that Friends groups can increase the visibility of the library by encouraging community involvement i.e. developing and maintaining an ongoing relationship with people and organisations in the community.

#### **1.4.5 Influence of Friends groups on public library policy**

One of the objectives of this study is, as described in **section 1.2**, to examine to what extent, if any, Friends groups influence public library policy. In particular, this examination focuses on which library policies Friends groups could influence. The examination intends to find an objective base for defining the role and importance of Friends groups in library services and operation. In other words, if they have some influence on public library policy, then they are clearly important to library services and operations, and therefore their role should be re-considered. This is because library services and operations are invariably affected by agreed library policies. For this reason, if Friends groups have an influence on library policy, it means that they could affect library services and operations.

Klausner (cited in White, 1960: iii) defines ‘policies’ as operation guides: ‘they point the way to achievement of purpose’. As a consequence, it can be said that library policies guide library staff and managers to the direction in which a library should be operated effectively to achieve its aims and objectives. Library policies also describe procedures for providing and managing library services such as a library’s daily and weekly opening hours, circulation, collection development, confidentiality of patron records, use of library space, facilities and electronic resources, fines and library displays and exhibitions.

In the main study interviews, the researcher’s intention was to seek the participants’ opinions about which library policies could be influenced by Friends groups. With regard to the way of asking interview questions, the methods chosen and the reasons for considering a particular method for this study are discussed in detail in **section**

**2.3.4.** In order to provide the participants with detailed library policies, the researcher studied library policy. However, there were some difficulties in selecting library policies for formulating questions. This was because, firstly, it was very rare to find sources that covered in detail the statement of British public library policy, and secondly, the statement of public library policy that was found in the literature (Hewitt, 1975) was too general. Comedia (1993) supports this, claiming that the British national policies for public libraries are weak and very general. However, this is not the case any more, because in 2001 (after the researcher completed the interview schedule for the main study) Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2001) launched ‘National Standards for Public Libraries’ for England, and these standards define in detail many areas of library services and operation.

Therefore, the researcher searched the American literature as an alternative source, to discover and consult materials that cover the public library policy of the USA. One useful source was found: White’s (1960) book focuses on how to formulate statements of library policy. She emphasises the importance of, and need to, establish written library policy, and she attempts to make written statements on library policy, covering the following matters:

- Book selection
- Resident and non-resident borrowers
- Displays and exhibitions
- Gifts and special collections
- Personnel
- Recruitment, appointment, probation
- Advancement: salary increases, promotions, transfers, demotions, merit increases
- Tenure, dismissal, retirement
- Working conditions
- Leaves of absence
- Staff development
- Public library and school library relationship
- Trustee-librarian relationship
- Use of meeting rooms

- Miscellaneous: extension, personal appearance, rental collections, staff use of new books, and fines.

Six policies were initially selected after studying White (1960), and also after considering public library services and operations in the UK. These policies were tested by the pilot study. However, after the pilot study was undertaken, two policies covering ‘the maintenance of library stock’ and ‘staff matters’ were excluded from the main study. Instead of these policies, a new policy was included in the main study. Accordingly, the five policies finally chosen cover the following areas: selection of library stock, opening hours, library displays and exhibitions, library rules and regulations, and decisions on library closure. All the detailed explanations of how the initial six policies were selected, why the two policies were excluded, and why one policy was included in the main study after the pilot study, are discussed in **section 2.4**.

As seen above, the term ‘public library policy’ that is used in the study, includes not only detailed library services policies for library staff, management and users, but also a particular principle that a government and a council believes in, and one that influences the way libraries operate.

#### **1.4.6 A National Friends of Libraries organisation (NFOL)**

The literature (Dolnick, 1996; Ferguson, 1997; Smith, 1999) shows that three countries have a National Friends of Libraries organisation (NFOL). In the UK, the Library Campaign was reorganised as a British NFOL in 2001 (The Library Campaigner, 2001a). Dolnick states that the growing number of Friends groups led to the establishment of FOLUSA, which aimed to increase communication among the groups and to further develop them. Australia and Canada have formed a NFOL, called Friends of Libraries Australia (FOLA) and Friends of Canadian Libraries (FOCAL) respectively. FO LA was established in 1994 and now has 160 group members. FOCAL was founded in 1998 and now has 175 group members (Smith, 1999). Each organisation has slightly different objectives or goals. These, and the operation and activities of each NFOL, will be discussed in great detail in **Chapter 7**.

### **1.5 Structure of the Thesis**

In order to help the readers to understand the study, **Chapter 1** describes the background to the research: why the research theme (whether Friends groups could

have an influence on library policy) was chosen, and what the main aim and objectives of the research were. It also deals with the background to the involvement of Friends groups in library services, operations and library policy in the UK, the USA and other countries. Furthermore it discusses how, and why, the five public library policies were selected for investigation in the study.

**Chapter 2** provides a review of the methodology adopted for the study. It states the reasons as to why a qualitative method, particularly a grounded theory approach, was selected; why a semi-structured interview method was chosen for collecting data; and how the interview schedule was designed to yield qualitative data. It also discusses how the qualitative data collected in this study were analysed. It also deals with the results of the pilot study.

An overview of the definition and functions of Friends groups is presented in **Chapter 3**. The study aims to show any evidence that Friends groups could have an influence on library policy, by looking at the respondents' perceptions of the definition and function of Friends groups.

Regarding the main theme of this study - the influence of Friends groups on public library policy - **Chapters 4 and 5** deal with the theoretical and the practical questions of the theme respectively. Thus, **Chapter 4** discusses why Friends groups should or should not be allowed to influence the five areas of library policy. **Chapter 5** covers the results of the investigation into the mechanics of the influence of Friends groups on library policy i.e. how they could influence the five library policies. Friends groups undertake various activities in order to support their library services and operation. In regard to the activities, it also discusses the activities through which Friends groups could have an influence on the library policies.

**Chapter 6** deals with the managerial issues associated with the operation of Friends groups. It presents evidence of how the present Friends groups were established, how they operate, the membership of these groups, and the partnership between library staff and the Friends groups. It also shows the results of the investigation into how these issues affected the effectiveness of the influence of the Friends groups on library policy.

**Chapter 7** concerns the role of a national Friends organisation. It discusses the views of the participants in this study on the value and necessity of such an organisation. It

deals with the Library Campaign in relation to the establishment and operation of the British National Friends of Libraries organisation. It also discusses the issue of a borough or countywide federal organisation of Friends groups.

**The last chapter** summarises the main findings of the research, and draws conclusions from those results. It also presents recommendations, and offers themes for future research.

## Chapter 2

### Methodology

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the methodology adopted for this study. It states why a qualitative, particularly a grounded theory approach was selected, why a semi-structured interview method was chosen for collecting data, and how the interview schedule was designed to yield qualitative data. The selection of people and sites for the interview sample is also described in detail. It discusses how the qualitative data collected in this study were analysed. It also deals with the role and impact of the pilot study and the literature search.

#### 2.2 Qualitative Research and Grounded Theory

According to Carr, et al. (1996), the philosophy of social science concerns: firstly, the research subject; secondly, the methods which social scientists use to collect, analyse and interpret data; and thirdly, the data collected from the research. That is to say, the philosophy of social science considers whether the subject of the research exists indeed as 'reality', and whether the methods and results of the research are valid. Carr describes the philosophical issues of social science as follows:

Fundamental questions will be asked about how the central problems of the discipline are to be defined, about the value and validity of the research methods currently being employed and about the nature and status of the knowledge that research yields ... [these] are philosophical questions about the role of observation in social research, about the nature and status of the data that [are] collected and the validity of the methods by which they are analysed, interpreted and understood (p.1-2).

The first philosophical question of social science focuses on the nature of the object of the research. There are different phenomena between social and natural science. Thus, the research approach towards these two sciences differs. Natural science studies natural phenomena, and particularly focuses on the behaviour of natural objects, whilst social

science is concerned with social phenomena, mainly the behaviour of human beings. There is also a significant difference between these two behaviours. Every human activity includes subjective meanings, whilst the overt movement of a physical object does not contain any meaning. It is claimed that:

Human actions cannot be observed in the same way as the behaviour of natural objects. They can only be interpreted by understanding the actor's own motives, intentions or purposes in performing the action. To identify these motives and intentions correctly is to grasp the 'subjective meaning' the action has to the actor. (Carr et al., 1996: 6)

This view has led to the interpretive approach of social science, which is one of two methodological viewpoints. The other view, the positivist approach, suggests that 'human phenomena comprise patterns of behaviour that are observable in the same ways as natural phenomena' (Carr et al., 1996: 7)

Stone & Harris (1984) argue that without clarifying the aims, and furthermore, defining the boundaries of the research, it is almost impossible for a researcher to decide which method he/she uses for a study. Therefore, it can be said that a research methodology adopted for a study depends on the research tasks a social researcher undertakes. The purpose of the present study has been clearly defined. It is again briefly summarised here.

The present study concerns the examination of the activities and operations of Friends groups in public libraries in the United Kingdom. In particular, it aims to explore whether they influence public library policy and also how people perceive the effect, if any, of this influence. The main object of study is a 'Friends of the Library' group, defined as a group of people who are mostly active library users. Therefore, the study mainly concerns human behaviour, a central focus of social science. It deals with people's subjective meanings, which is why the interpretive understanding approach was considered the most appropriate for this study.

### ● **Qualitative Research**

According to the literature, there are two main research approaches adopted in social science: qualitative and quantitative. Gorman & Clayton (1997) argue that a qualitative research strategy is regarded as an interpretive approach. They state the following:

Qualitative research is one of two main types of investigation employed in the social sciences, the other being quantitative research, that is, research, which focuses more on numerical or statistical data. ... The qualitative approach, on the other hand, lies within the **interpretive paradigm**, which focuses on social constructs that are complex and always evolving, making them less amenable to precise measurement or numerical interpretation (p.23).

Stone & Harris (1984) also suggest that a qualitative approach might be considered as 'interpretive understanding'. They argue that:

Qualitative research seeks understanding of an event or behaviour from the **actor's** perspective (p.6).

Qualitative researchers might counter that an individual's behaviour can only be understood if that individual's perspective is known and is understood in context (p.7).

Strauss & Corbin (1990) define qualitative research as follows:

Any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification. It can refer to research about person's lives, stories, behaviour, but also about organizational functioning, social movements, or international relationships. Some of the data may be quantified as with census data but the analysis itself is a qualitative one (p.17).

There are several different types of qualitative research: ethnography, grounded theory, the phenomenological approach, life histories, and conversational analysis. These differ according to the detailed methods of data collection, analysis and presentation. An elaborate discussion on each of these research strategies was considered outside the scope of this study. Therefore the discussion focuses on grounded theory - the approach adopted for this study.

### ● **Grounded Theory**

From the qualitative research approaches, a grounded theory technique was chosen for the present study. A grounded theory strategy is appropriate to the *interpretive approach*. Grounded theory is unique in terms of its characteristics. Punch (1998: 162) argues that

‘grounded theory is best defined as research strategy whose purpose is to **generate theory from data**’. It pays much attention to the views of informants. Therefore, it can be said that this research strategy conforms to the notion of the *interpretive approach*: that human actions can only be interpreted by understanding the actor’s own meanings.

Strauss & Corbin’s (1998: 12) definition of grounded theory confirms this viewpoint.

They state that:

[The theory] was derived from data, systematically gathered and analysed through the research process. In this method, data collection, analysis, and eventual theory stand in close relationship to one another. A researcher does not begin a project with a preconceived theory in mind (unless his/her purpose is to elaborate and extend existing theory). Rather, the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data. Theory derived from data is more likely to resemble the ‘reality’ than is theory derived by putting together a series of concepts based on experience or solely through speculation. Grounded theories, because they are drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action.

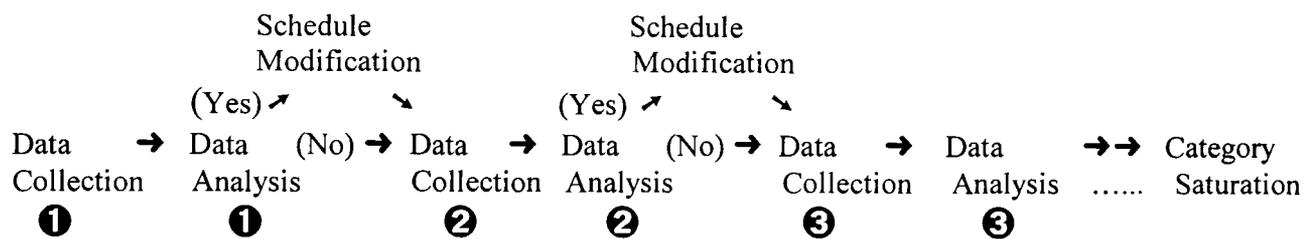
The grounded theory approach uses a systematic set of procedures - which differ slightly from other research techniques - to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon under investigation. Summaries of the particular methods used in the grounded theory approach are given below:

In grounded theory research, data collection, analysis and the revision of the interview schedule proceed almost concurrently. Punch (1998: 167) describes the process of data collection and analysis, but he does not raise the issue of modifying the interview schedule. He states:

In several views of research, data collection is a discrete stage in the research, to be completed before data analysis begins. In grounded theory, the pattern is different. Guided by some initial research questions, the researcher will collect a first set of data, preferably quite small. At that point, analysis of the data begins. ... The second set of data will be collected after the first analysis of data, guided by emerging directions in that analysis.

The process of data collection, analysis, and the modification of the interview schedule suggested by the grounded theory approach, can be described as below:

**Figure 1** Diagrammatic representation of the process of data collection, analysis and schedule modification in grounded theory research (partially adopted from Punch (1998) but slightly amended by the researcher).



This approach requires researchers to use a specific sampling method: theoretical sampling. With this sampling method, a researcher starts fieldwork without a specific number of samples in mind. Rather, subsequent data collection is guided by theoretical developments that emerge in the analysis, and the researcher ends up collecting data when categories derived from the data are saturated, and no more theoretical elements can be found in the data.

Grounded theory uses a specific set of procedures for developing theory through data analysis, which differ from other research approaches. In grounded theory, qualitative data are analysed through a process of open coding, axial coding and selective coding, and theory is developed from the data. However, these codings are not done sequentially, but rather are undertaken concurrently (Punch, 1998).

Grounded theory has some other different features from other research approaches. Firstly, grounded theory suggests that researchers only use literature when they prepare initial questions for an interview schedule, and when they enhance the validity of data collected.

Secondly, this approach emphasises a researcher's **theoretical sensitivity**, which 'refers to the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 42) in data analyses. This is because theoretical sensitivity allows the researcher to develop a theory that is grounded.

## 2.3 Research Methods

### 2.3.1 Introduction

As elaborated above, the present study uses a grounded theory approach. This strategy led to the use of the following:

Firstly, regarding the interview schedule, the researcher started fieldwork with only a small number of initial interview questions, and modified the questions according to the results of the analysis of the data collected in the first few interviews.

Secondly, a theoretical sampling was chosen for the study. The researcher started collecting data from a small number of people, and kept obtaining data until no more themes emerged from the data collected and analysed.

Thirdly, the data were analysed immediately after the data collection, with the intention of finding initial categories and using the results of the data analysis to guide the next data collection.

Fourthly, the data were analysed through open coding, axial coding and selective coding and theory that grounded on the data as they were developed.

Fifthly, CAQDAS (Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software) was used for the data analysis of the study.

In the following sections, these methods are discussed in detail.

### 2.3.2 Interview schedule

The final version of the interview schedule for the study (see **Appendix 2**) was decided on the basis of the literature review, the researcher's personal experience, and particularly the results of the pilot study (This process is elaborated in section **2.4 Pilot Study**). This is in line with Strauss & Corbin's view (1998: 205) that 'initial interview questions or areas of observation might be based on concepts derived from literature or experience or, better still, from preliminary fieldwork'. However, they also suggest that 'because these early concepts have not evolved from "real" data, if the researcher carries

them with him or her into the field, then they must be considered provisional and discarded as data begin to come in' (p. 205). Therefore, the present researcher endeavoured to collect data without holding preconceived views.

The interview schedule was designed using the following criteria: firstly, to identify the main issues raised in public libraries regarding the connection between Friends' activities and library policy; secondly, to obtain more practical data about the operations and activities of Friends groups, by interviewing the chairperson and officers of Friends groups, and library directors and staff who are involved in the operation of Friends groups; finally, to use the data arising from these questions to attain the aims of this study. Thus, the themes of the interview schedule were focused on Friends' operations and activities, and public library policy. The interview schedule, designed in accordance with these criteria, was again tested by the pilot study, and modified slightly as a result.

The interview schedule comprised seven parts, along with a short introduction preceding Part A, where the aims of the interview were presented and confidentiality assured. The questions were specifically prepared for all three categories of the interview sample (This is elaborated in the next section **2.3.3 Interview Sample**). The interview questions were arranged to progress from the general to the specific.

Part A of the interview schedule was designed to identify interviewees' perceptions of general Friends groups. The intention was to compare these to the description and function of their specific Friends group, which were addressed specifically in the next part. In this part, the participants were asked to define 'what a Friends of the Library group is' and 'what their main roles are'. This aimed to provide the participants with some opportunities to talk about general Friends groups, before moving onto the more specific aspects and issues of their own group(s). The literature (Ferguson, 1991, 1997; Fletcher & Staniland, 1997; Dolnick, 1987, 1995, 1996; Murison, 1979) was consulted for this part.

Part B of the schedule was concerned with all the issues and factors regarding the operation and constitution of the Friends groups with which the participants were directly involved. This involved matters such as the background of the establishment, aims and objectives, size of membership of the groups and the relationship between library staff

and the groups. The materials (Miles, 1994; Smith, 1999; Staniland, Fletcher & Townend, 1998; Sugg, 1998; Whittaker, 1998) were consulted for Part B. This part aimed to present an overview of the Friends groups examined in the study. However, it was not simply a general review, but intended to uncover how the factors examined were related to each group's activities, particularly with regard to influencing public library policy.

The literature (Baker, 1994; Dolnick, 1996; Fletcher & Staniland, 1997; Staniland, Fletcher & Townend, 1998) reveals that, in general, Friends groups carry out the following activities for the library: fund-raising, lobbying or political campaigns, voluntary work, public relations, and community involvement. Part C focused on activities. Group members and library staff were asked what activities their group(s) undertake(s) for their library. This part also aimed to discover how the activities of the groups were connected with the main theme of this study: whether Friends groups have an influence on public library policy.

The literature (Dolnick, 1996; Ferguson, 1991; Leerburger, 1989; Sager, 1984) deals with the issue of Friends groups influencing library policy, and other materials (Bundy, 1998; Robinson, 1975; Whittaker, 1998) cover this issue as part of their research. As the main body of the interview schedule, Part D, consisting of five questions, was designed to achieve the main aims of this study. The first question was prepared to examine how the participants in this study viewed Friends groups influencing public library policy. Question three attempted to identify any real evidence that the Friends groups had influenced any library policy in the last few years. The fourth question aimed to uncover and analyse the areas in which Friends groups influenced public library policy. The fifth question was to investigate how Friends activities influenced public library policy. According to the literature (Baker, 1994; the Commoner, 1992; Dolnick, 1987; Skory, 1989), there are three apprehensions concerning the operation and activities of Friends groups. Thus, the second question was designed to examine how the participants in the study perceived these.

Part E was prepared to uncover and analyse the areas in which Friends groups influence public library policy. The fourth question in Part D focused on whether Friends groups

‘**could**’ influence public library policy. On the other hand, Part E focused on whether Friends groups ‘**should** or **should not**’ be allowed to influence library policy.

The establishment of a British National Friends organisation has been an issue in the last few years in the UK (Smith, 1998, 1999; Sugg, 1998; Whittaker, 1998). Part F was concerned with this issue, and the role of a national organisation in influencing government policy on public libraries.

Since the literature (Azar-Luxton, 1993; the Commoner, 1992; Fletcher & Staniland, 1997; Leerburger, 1989; Murison, 1979; Usherwood, 1982) defines the advantages and disadvantages of Friends groups, Part G was intended to identify how the participants defined these. This part sought to discover which operations and activities of Friends groups were considered advantageous and disadvantageous regarding Friends groups influencing library policy.

Finally, the interview schedule concluded with the participants being asked to give any other opinions regarding Friends groups influencing library policy.

In some questions, the participants were asked to score their views on a five-point scale based on a Likert-type scale (cf Likert, 1961: 131). In addition, the respondents were also encouraged to give their reasons for selecting a term, because the interview schedule was principally designed to yield qualitative data. Two types of Likert scales were used according to the type of question. The first type, a scale ranging from ‘Strongly Agree’ to ‘Strongly Disagree’, was used for the second and fourth question in Part D and the question in Part E of the interview schedule. The second type, a scale ranging from ‘To a very great extent’ to ‘To no extent at all’, was used for the fifth question in Part D and the second question in Part F.

### **2.3.3 Interview sample**

Denscombe (1998) broadly classifies the sampling techniques used by social researchers as two types: ‘**probability**’ and ‘**non-probability** sampling’, according to the representativeness of the sample. It defines whether people or events chosen as the sample are representative, or not, of the overall population being studied. According to Denscombe, the first type, which is referred to as statistical sampling, including random.

systematic, stratified, quota, cluster and multi-stage sampling, is likely to be used for quantitative researches. On the other hand, the second type, which is referred to as non-statistical sampling, including purposive, snowball, theoretical and convenience sampling, is more relevant for the purposes of qualitative researches. Wilson (1996: 103) summarises thus:

Purposive or theoretical samples such as these can be contrasted with probability samples in which the random selection of individuals in large numbers gives a reasonable assurance that the sample represents the population accurately.

Punch (1998) also confirms this as follows: ‘qualitative research would rarely use **probability sampling**, but rather would use some sort of deliberate sampling: **purposive sampling** is the term often used’ (p.193).

Since the present study used ‘a grounded theory approach which is a qualitative research method’ (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 24), non-probability sampling was considered for the sampling of the study. Another reason for choosing this sampling was that the process of the (small-scale) study was ‘one of **discovery** rather than the testing of hypotheses’ (Denscombe, 1998: 25).

Purposive sampling was chosen. This is because, as Denscombe suggests, a researcher can adopt this method to situations where ‘the researcher already knows something about the specific people or events and deliberately selects particular ones because they are seen as instances that are likely to produce the most valuable data’ (p.15). Through the pilot study (as elaborated in section **2.4 Pilot Study**) the researcher had situations in which reliable sources were obtained, about which people could provide ‘the most valuable data’.

Although this study has essentially been carried out using a grounded theory approach, it can be said that the sampling strategy adopted in the study differs slightly from the method generally suggested for grounded theory researches. In the principles of grounded theory, ‘the selection of people, instances, etc. ... cannot be predicted at the start’ (Denscombe, 1998: 216). According to Strauss & Corbin (1990), theoretical sampling does primarily fit grounded theory research, because in a study adopting

theoretical sampling, a researcher starts fieldwork without a specific number or size of samples in mind. Instead, the researcher continues collecting data until he/she arrives at the point of theoretical saturation: ‘additional analysis no longer contributes to discovering anything new about a category’ (Strauss, 1987: 21). Denscombe’s (1998: 16) following statements of theoretical sampling support Strauss & Corbin’s views.

With theoretical sampling, the selection of (people and) instances follows a route of discovery based on the development of a theory, which is ‘grounded’ in evidence. At each stage, new evidence is used to modify or confirm a ‘theory’, which then points to an appropriate choice of (people and) instances for research in the next phase.

Although the study did not adopt theoretical sampling, it borrowed some aspects from it: through the pilot study preliminary data were collected, analysed, and the interview schedule tested and modified for the main data collection process. In the main research, these processes were repeated: when interviews were completed in one library authority, these interviews were transcribed immediately and the raw data analysed, rather than proceeding with interviews in the next authority. Using the results of the data analyses, the interview schedule was slightly modified to include concepts that had emerged from the analysis, which were considered important to the phenomenon under study.

It can be noted that Stone & Harris (1984), in some senses, regard theoretical sampling as purposeful sampling, because in both samplings a researcher selects people and events purposefully to suit the needs of a study.

Following this theoretical basis, the most relevant people and sites, regarded as ‘information-rich-informants’ and ‘information-rich-cases’ respectively, were chosen for this study as described below.

#### ● **The Selection of People**

Regarding sampling, early decisions had to be made about which people to interview. Initial sample categories were decided, as below, because the research aimed to identify whether Friends groups have a role in influencing public library policy.

Category A: Elected members, i.e. Chairperson of a Library Committee or a cabinet

member who is responsible for libraries, and spokespersons of opposition parties in a council.

Category B: Library director and staff

Category C: Friends groups' chairpersons and other officers

This preliminary sampling was based on the spirit of grounded theory that:

The sampling is open to those persons, places, situations that will provide the greatest opportunity to gather the most relevant data about the phenomenon under investigation (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 181).

Denscombe (1998) argues that 'in the spirit of grounded theory it is neither feasible nor desirable for the researcher to identify prior to the start exactly who or what will be included in the sample' (p. 216).

It was considered that the above categories contained the most relevant people for the purposes of this study. The reason for category A was that elected members are directly involved in making policies regarding public libraries. Usherwood (1993) confirms this: 'the most important decision-makers, so far as the public library or any other local government service is concerned, are the elected members. They are at the formal centre of the local decision-making process' (p.13).

Library directors and staff (category B) were sampled because firstly, Chief Librarians, who are appointed by local councils, have partial responsibility for library decision-making and are officially responsible for carrying out policies. Secondly, the library directors and staff manage and operate public libraries under policies decided by councillors.

Friends groups' chairpersons and their committee members (category C) were chosen as samples because they are the people who lead the operation and activities of Friends groups.

Regarding sampling, the next step that the researcher needed to take was to make a decision on how many people should be selected in each authority. The following considerations were taken into account.

Among elected members, councillors who serve as the Chairperson of the Library Committee or Sub-committee, and one or two elected members who work as the spokespersons of the opposition parties on the committee, were initially considered the most relevant people for the study. (However, at the time that the researcher was contacting the authorities, many councils were piloting a new cabinet or leader model of local government. Due to this new arrangement, many councils no longer have a committee or sub-committee for libraries. Therefore, in these councils, elected members, who serve as cabinet members and who are also responsible for libraries, were chosen.) In order to compare participants' responses to questions according to political parties, the researcher attempted to include one councillor in each party. Therefore, the researcher finally decided to choose three elected members in each council. However, in one council, only one councillor was interviewed. This was because the spokesperson of the only opposition party in the council was not available to be interviewed, although the researcher made every effort to contact him for several months. In another council, only two councillors (one cabinet member and one spokesperson) participated in the interview. Another spokesperson refused to take part in the interview. This was because his party jointly administered the council with the cabinet member's party. Thus, the cabinet member's views represented his party's views on library policy.

Since there is only one Chief Librarian in each library authority, this person was to be included in the sample. The researcher attempted to compare the activities of two Friends groups operating around two different libraries: one central library and one branch library in each authority. Therefore, the researcher decided to choose two librarians (one manager and one from second tier in the same library) from each library. However, where libraries were operated as a group system, where libraries under one authority were categorised into many (usually three) groups by area, then two Group (or Area or District) Librarians and two branch library managers were selected for the sample. Therefore, one Chief Librarian and four library staff were chosen for Category B.

For Category C samples, Chairpersons (or committee members: if a chairperson was not available then another member on the committee was chosen) from two groups - one central library group and one branch library group - were selected. However, if a library authority had a federal organisation of Friends groups, then the leader of the organisation was also included in the sample.

Therefore, two or three elected members for Category A, five library staff for Category B and two or three people for Category C were chosen to be interviewed for the study. These numbers made a total of nine or eleven interviewees in each council.

- **The Selection of Sites**

It was decided to limit the investigation to library authorities in England. There were two reasons for limiting the investigation areas: firstly, it was not possible for the researcher to travel everywhere because of time and financial restrictions. Strauss & Corbin (1998) support this: 'initially, decisions regarding the number of sites and observations and/or interviews depend also on access, available resources, research goals, and the researcher's time schedule and energy' (p.204). Secondly, by limiting the investigation areas to England, the researcher would be provided with the best opportunity for collecting the most relevant data for the study, given that in the UK only a few Friends groups exist outside England (Smith, 1999).

The researcher decided to use a **multiple-site approach** (Miles & Huberman, 1984), as this could be used to examine many different cases, and consequently yield a rich diversity of practices, which could be applicable to other situations. Therefore, when setting about designing sampling procedures, eight library authorities were initially chosen, as described below.

Firstly, a list of library authorities having a Friends group was made using a sampling frame. A directory of Friends groups, made by Smith (1999) as part of his survey report on Friends groups in the UK, was considered the sampling frame. The sampling frame was later updated on the basis of the outcome of the bibliographic and electronic literature review, in order to make an objective list of Friends groups. Smith's (1999) survey was completed early in 1999, but since then new groups have come into existence in many areas in England.

Secondly, eight library authorities were chosen according to the type and number of Friends groups operating in a particular area. The researcher took the following two factors into consideration when selecting eight authorities. Firstly, the influence of Friends groups on library policy could differ according to what type of library authority it was: whether the authority was located in an urban or rural area. Secondly, library

authorities having more than four groups were considered information-rich cases. In view of these considerations, three County Councils, three Metropolitan Borough Councils and two London Borough Councils were initially selected for the sample.

Regarding sampling, the next task that the researcher faced was to obtain consent from the potential respondents. The researcher had to arrange appointments in advance because the study used an interview method for collecting data. In order to receive full cooperation from the potential respondents, the researcher contacted each Chief Librarian by post. A preliminary letter (see **Appendix 1**) was sent to each Chief Librarian, outlining the study topic and the interview plan, enlisting assistance and requesting permission to undertake the interview in their council area. A list of people to be interviewed was also included in the letter.

Five out of the eight Chief Librarians initially replied to this request and of these five, four Librarians agreed to take part in the study in their libraries. However, one Librarian regretted that because of 'a very heavy work load' he could not 'submit their Library Service on exhaustive interview process'. Another Librarian replied later, and refused permission to contact people requested for interviews. In the early stages two other Librarians did not reply, but later one Librarian was contacted and cooperated fully with this study. Therefore, samples were finally selected from five councils: two Counties, two Metropolitan Boroughs and one London Borough.

#### **2.3.4 Data collection**

Stone and Harris (1984) claim that in planning research, choosing the method of data collection is a central concern. This is because the method directly influences research results. Therefore, an appropriate method should be selected in order to achieve research aims. It is worth examining the kind of data collection methods suitable for social research, before discussing in detail the device chosen for this study. The kinds of methods differ slightly, according to social researchers. Stone and Harris suggest four methods: observation, questionnaire, interview and diary. On the other hand, Denscombe (1998) presents the four methods slightly differently, as observation, questionnaire, interview and document. He includes 'diary' as a document method. He regards the document method, using various types of literature including 'diary', as the fourth

technique of data collection. However, Wilson (1996) regards an interview and a questionnaire technique as being the same method. This is because these techniques involve asking people questions, thereby allowing both qualitative and quantitative data to be collected. Denscombe (1998) clearly confirms that qualitative data could also be available from questionnaires, stating that: 'opinions, attitudes, views, beliefs, preferences etc. can also be investigated using questionnaires' (p.89).

As discussed above, the researcher decided to use a grounded theory approach: to analyse people's (the participants in the study) perceptions of the activities of Friends groups, by interpreting 'what they say they do regarding, or what they say they think about', the activities. Therefore, at the first stage, an interview and a questionnaire method was chosen for data collection because these techniques were considered most suitable for collecting people's views as data. Of the four methods, the observation technique was excluded. This was because observational data are mainly derived from a researcher's perspective and not from the people's opinions, although this technique has generally maintained the objectivity of an observer (Mellon, 1990).

At the second stage of choosing the research technique (choosing between interview and questionnaire), interviews were decided upon as a data collection method. Data available from both methods are the same, but questionnaires are more commonly used in large-scale surveys requiring more time and money. To allow more detailed information to be collected from a smaller number of people, an interview method was chosen for this study.

However, it can be argued that in a broad sense, this study also used a document method. This is because, firstly, the study used various written documentary sources, for example, books, journals, Internet websites, minutes, notes and constitutions, 'to establish the existing state of knowledge in the area of proposed research and ... to set out research questions (for the interview schedule)' (Denscombe, 1998: 158). Data were also collected from documents, with the intention of comparing them to the data obtained by the interviews, during data analysis. Denscombe defines documentary research as an essential part of any investigation and as an alternative to questionnaires, interviews and

observation. Punch (1998) also argues that in case studies or grounded theory studies, 'documentary data may be collected in conjunction with interviews and observations. In conjunction with other data, documents can be important in triangulation, where an intersecting set of different methods and data types is used in a single project' (p.190). Therefore, it can be said that this study used multiple methods in order to improve its quality. Furthermore, by using multiple methods, triangulation could be used in the data analysis. However, it is clear that interviews were the main method of data collection in the study, with documents being used to complement the interviews. **Section 2.5** discusses in detail which types of documents were consulted for this study, and how and where these documents were found.

The researcher had to decide on one interview technique, given that there are various interview methods. Denscombe (1998) divides interviews into three types: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. On the other hand, Stone & Harris (1984) further divide the semi-structured interview into 'standardised open-ended' and 'interview guide approach'. Gorman & Clayton (1997) broadly divide interview techniques into two types: structured and unstructured, and further divide unstructured interviews into three sub-types: standardized open-ended, interview guide approach and informal conversational. This study adopted Denscombe's view. Given that an elaborate discussion on each of the interview techniques was beyond the scope of this research, it focused on the main technique used in this study, that of the semi-structured interview method. This interview strategy was chosen in view of the considerations below.

This study planned to collect the thoughts of its participants as data for studying its theme: the influence of Friends groups on public library policy. However, structured interviews tend to produce simple or factual information as data. For example, when the participants are asked a question such as 'how they perceived the influence of Friends groups on library policy', they are given a range of pre-coded answers such as, 'the role is considered important', 'the role is not considered important', and 'no, they must not influence library policy'. Consequently, the participants are only invited to offer 'limited-option responses', rather than to express their own opinions. As a result, this method could not collect in-depth views as data for studying the theme. Although unstructured

interviews can produce much richer qualitative data, 'respondents may "ramble" on about things in which the researcher is not interested. In addition, analysis of responses is difficult because of the amount of information generated, and the fact that there is no consistency of topic coverage or of ways of expressing similar ideas' (Stone, 1984: 19). It was also deemed that this method could demand 'more effort on the part of the respondents' (which might discourage the participation of any passive respondent in the study), and also reduce their willingness to express their views. This is because, for example, when the participants are asked how they perceive which library policies could be influenced by Friends groups, they would not be given any detailed example of library policies. Accordingly, they would not express their views on all the issues that the research concerns. On the other hand, a semi-structured interview method lets respondents 'develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised by the researcher' (Denscombe, 1998: 113). For example, when the participants are asked the question above, they are given some detailed examples of library policies (or issues raised by the researcher). Thus, they would give their in-depth views on each library policy (or issue) that the researcher provides them with.

In the study, qualitative data were collected by one-to-one interviews, with the exception of one interview. Library staff kindly arranged some interviews with group members. Thus, two people turned up to one interview. However, as the researcher required only one person's views, this was politely explained to them. Therefore, only one person answered the questions, and the second person expressed his views when he had opposite opinions regarding the questions. However, his views were excluded from the thesis because these views did not have implications for the theme of the study.

The study used a face-to-face interview method with the exception of one interview. The study had little choice in the character of the individuals sampled, because it adopted 'maximum variation sampling', including diverse characteristics or criteria of people (elected members, library staff and Friends group members) and sites (county, metropolitan borough and London borough). In each council, there is only one Chief Librarian and one elected member working as a chairperson on a council's committee covering library matters. Therefore, the study relied heavily on these people's opinions. In order to increase their willingness to participate in the interview, the researcher had to

convince them that their views were very important and valuable, and their participation integral to the success of the study. Groves and Kahn (1979) confirm that ‘non-response rates suggest that respondents find the telephone interview to be a less rewarding experience and more of a chore than the personal interview’ (p.222). Having considered these, although face-to-face interviews generally take more time and are financially more costly, the researcher decided to undertake such interviews in order to demonstrate his determination to potential participants. As a result of this effort, all the people who were initially considered as potential samples, with the exception of one person, agreed to be interviewed. The researcher could not make contact with one person, although he made every effort to contact him for several months. Of the 50 people who agreed to be interviewed, one person suggested a short telephone interview because he could not offer much of his time. Therefore, this interview was conducted over the phone. Fortunately the interview lasted over 25 minutes, and many interesting views were obtained.

### **2.3.5 Data analysis**

Qualitative data using an interview method were collected, and in order to analyse the data and furthermore, to build theory, a grounded theory approach was utilised in the study. The decision to adopt the grounded theory method for analysing the data stems from the following notions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990):

The development of theoretically informed interpretations (building theory) is the most powerful way to bring reality to light. ... The theoretical formulation that results not only can be used to explain that reality but provide a framework for action. Researchers concerned with building theory also believe that theories represent the most systematic way of building, synthesizing, and integrating scientific knowledge (p.22).

Grounded theories, because they are drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action (Strauss & Corbin, 1998: 12)

Punch (1998) states that ‘the essential idea in discovering a grounded theory is to find a category, at a high level of abstraction but grounded in the data, which accounts for what is central in the data’ (p.210). He then argues that a grounded theory approach does this in three steps. ‘The first is to find conceptual categories in the data, at a first level of abstraction (open coding). The second is to find relationships between these categories

(axial coding). The third is to conceptualise and account for these relationships at a higher level of abstraction' (selective coding) (p.210). Strauss and Corbin (1990) define these procedures as **coding**, and consider it the most important element in a grounded theory approach. They state: 'coding represents the operations by which data are broken down, conceptualised, and put back together in new ways. It is the central process by which theories are derived from data' (p.57).

Although coding is the core part of the grounded theory approach, the method of data analysis through the coding process is in fact widely used in other qualitative research. Punch (1998) underpins this claim, saying that coding is the starting activity, and also central in qualitative analysis, an approach adopted by Miles and Huberman (1994). However, Bryman and Burgess (1995a) argue that coding used in grounded theory analysis differs from other qualitative analyses because the coding is applied in more than one way to:

the task of fitting data and concepts together in such a way that conceptualisation is under constant revision (as in grounded theory) [and] to a process that is more or less identical to the coding of open-ended questions in survey research, where the aim is to quantify different categories of a variable (p.5).

In fact, in the grounded theory analysis, three types of coding are used, including open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Punch (1998) describes briefly how these codings operate in the analytic process of grounded theory.

Grounded theory analysis is a process of abstracting across two levels, first from data to first-order concepts, and then from first-order concepts to higher-order concepts. In this process there are three stages. In the first stage, open coding produces a set of first-order categories from the data, raised already to one level of abstraction. In the second stage (axial coding), these categories are interconnected with each other, producing a set of propositions. In the third stage, selective coding is applied to these propositions, raising the level of abstraction again, and producing the core category, around which the theory is written and the data are integrated (p.215).

The detailed definition and operation of these three codings are as follows:

**Open coding**, which is the first level of conceptual analysis with data is, as Strauss & Corbin (1998: 101) define, 'the analytic process through which concepts are identified

and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data'. They elaborate this process further, as follows:

During open coding, data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, and compared for similarities and differences. Events, happenings, objects, and actions/interactions that are found to be conceptually similar in nature or related in meaning are grouped under more abstract concepts termed 'categories' (p.102).

**Axial coding**, which is the second stage of data analysis, refers to the process 'where the main categories which have emerged from open coding of the data are interconnected with each other' (Punch, 1998: 215). Strauss & Corbin (1990) also state that this work is done 'by utilizing a coding paradigm involving conditions, context, action/interactional strategies and consequences' (p.96).

**Selective coding**, defined as 'the process of integrating and refining the theory' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998: 143), is the third stage of the grounded theory analysis. Punch (1998) elaborates this coding as follows:

The term 'selective' is used because, for this stage, the analyst deliberately selects one aspect as a core category, and concentrates on that. When that selection is made, it delimits the theoretical analysis and development to those parts of the data that relate to this core category, and open coding ceases. The analysis now proceeds around the core category, and the core category becomes the centrepiece of the grounded theory (p.216-217).

However, regarding these codings, Punch (1998) states that 'these are not necessarily done sequentially: rather, they are likely to be overlapping and done concurrently. But they are conceptually distinct operations' (p. 210-211).

There are two very important elements regarding grounded theory analysis: one is coding and the other is **memo writing**, 'whereby the analyst is constantly writing memos, perhaps relating to codes or to connections between emerging concepts, which elaborate the data and which represent the first step in the emergence of theory' (Bryman & Burgess, 1995a: 5). As Strauss and Corbin (1998) state, the memo, that has several forms of notes such as code notes, theoretical notes, operational notes, and sub varieties of these, 'refers to very specialized types of written records - those that contain the products of analysis or directions for the analyst' (p.217).

The diagram, which is ‘visual representations of the relationships among concepts’ (Strauss & Corbin, 1998: 241), is another essential feature of the grounded theory analysis, because this enables a researcher to keep a record of the analytic process.

Under these theoretical bases, fully transcribed textual data were transferred to the computer program, Atlas.ti, by which the data were then analysed.

### **2.3.6 The use of Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS)**

In the past, one of the important decisions regarding data analysis that a researcher had to make was choosing between a manual method and using computer software for handling the data. In quantitative research, using a computer software package has been standard practice for a long time, because such research deals mainly with large amounts of numerical data. On the other hand, qualitative research collects textual data, and thus because of its complexity, development of computer software for this research has taken longer.

However, because of the rapid development of computer technology and also, interestingly, as Bryman and Burgess (1995b) argue, because of the growing interest in the grounded theory approach, computer software for qualitative research has developed in the last twenty years. Bryman and Burgess state that ‘the influence of grounded theory extends to its impact on the development of computer software’ (p.220). They also quote the following: NUDIST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data: Indexing, Searching and Theorising) was developed with the grounded theory approach very much in mind (Richards & Richards, 1995) and Ethnograph was also influenced by the approach (Seidel & Clark, 1984). According to Weitzman and Miles (1995), at least twenty-four software packages useful for qualitative data analysis have been developed.

Since this is the case, deciding between a manual method and the use of computer software for handling data no longer seems to be a serious concern to researchers. Rather they have to choose the best package for their research. The advantages of using computer software for qualitative data analysis far outweigh the disadvantages.

The main concerns regarding the use of computers for qualitative data analysis are: firstly, computer programs cannot understand the meaning of words or sentences.

Therefore, they cannot do even the simplest analytical work (Denscombe, 1998; Stroh, 1996). Secondly, 'the software programs will kill off the intuitive art of analysis in qualitative research. It leaves little scope for interpretive leaps and inspirational flashes of enlightenment'. Thirdly, there is the problem of 'data overload and the tendency to distance the researcher from the data'; finally, 'the start-up time and costs involved' (Denscombe, 1998: 219-220) must be considered.

The advantage of computer software to researchers doing qualitative data analysis can be immense, for example: computer programs have superb abilities to manage textual data (Denscombe, 1998). In other words, these could help researchers with all kind of coding, sorting, creating, and retrieving tasks. Denzin and Lincoln (1998: 41) elaborates this as follows:

These (computer) programs have multiple text management uses, including coding, locating, and retrieving key materials, phrases, and words; building conceptual models; sorting categories; attaching key words and codes to text segments; isolating negative or deviant cases; and creating indices.

Some other advantages of using computer software, as observed by other researchers are: researchers can be freed from the practicalities of data management, the cutting and pasting, and can concentrate on the interpretation of their data (Seidel & Clark, 1984; Stroh, 1996). The computer software is able to:

alleviate the arduous cutting, pasting and subsequent retrieval of field notes or interview transcripts. ... The code of materials still needs to be done and its laboriousness is not really diminished, but the computer software opens up the possibility of those operations that follow on from coding being greatly eased. (Bryman & Burgess, 1995b: 221)

In the early stage of the study, when the researcher had not yet decided on a detailed method of data analysis, he was introduced to NUDIST, which was used by his roommate. In order to understand the package, he downloaded its demo version from the University of Sheffield Computer Centre and explored it for himself for a while. He later learned of another package, Atlas.ti. He attended a demonstration of Atlas.ti, which was held at the Department of Information Studies. After his participation in the lecture, he began to consider Atlas.ti for this study. He considered the following benefits offered by the program: as Punch (1998: 233) observes, the program:

offers a well set out, uncluttered workspace that provides easy access to all documents, quotations, codes and memos of a research project. The program allows the researcher to work with data in the forms of text, graphics and sound. One of the highlights of Atlas.ti is the extensive use of the mouse button to activate context sensitive 'pop-up' menus to activate analysis tools. Other features include a multifunction margin area, powerful text search and query tools, and a network editor for visual exploration or relationships between codes and other objects in a project.

Barry (1998: 1) also presents an overview of Atlas.ti:

The main strategic modes of operation can be termed 'VISE: Visualization, Integration, Serendipity and Exploration. Having all aspects of the data and analysis on screen at once and being able to visually map out relationships between different parts of the data and theoretical ideas, and to form links between them and jump back and forth, all seem to encourage that creative process of sparking ideas and pattern recognition.

In particular, with regard to choosing this package over other programs, Barry (1998) argues that '**Atlas.ti** would be the best choice for simple projects with researchers who prefer to work in a more complex software environment or where the software needs to be learned in a hurry' (p.1). In deciding to use this program, it was also considered that since the researcher has never attended a formal course on this program, other colleagues who were using it could aid him in using the software. They were undertaking qualitative research, adopting exactly the same research methods: using interviews for collecting data, and a grounded theory method for analysing data. In the early stages of using this program one researcher very kindly shared all his experiences of utilising it, and advised the researcher of this study when he confronted any problems in using it. Therefore, he was soon able to familiarise himself with the program.

## 2.4 Pilot Study

Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (1996: 121) define a pilot study as follows:

Piloting, or reassessment without tears, is the process whereby you try out the research techniques and methods, which you have in mind, see how well they work in practice, and if necessary, modify your plans accordingly.

As described above, a pilot study was carried out in order to use its results as a basis for testing the research strategies, and also to include concepts that emerged from data analysis in the main research interview schedule.

The initial interview schedule was designed by reviewing preliminary sources regarding the activities and operations of Friends groups. These sources were collected after the researcher reviewed literature, consulted members of library staff, and interviewed the chairperson of one group.

An area in Sheffield was chosen for the pilot study because of its convenience in terms of location. Also, the activities of Friends groups in Sheffield were regarded as information-rich cases: a couple of active groups came into existence after several libraries were threatened with closure. The same type of people considered for the main study were selected for the pilot study. The following nine people were chosen for the sample. The reason for choosing these people is set out in section **2.3.3 Interview Sample**.

- Two elected members: Chairperson of a ‘Library Committee’ and a spokesperson of the opposition party on the committee.
- Five library staff: Chief Librarian, two Group Librarians and two library (one central and one branch library) managers.
- Two Friends group members: one group’s Chairperson and another group’s committee member.

A preliminary letter was sent to the Chief Librarian, outlining the study topic and the interview plan, enlisting assistance, and requesting permission to contact and interview the people above. After the researcher obtained the agreement of the Librarian, nine interviews were carried out between the 30<sup>th</sup> July and the 7<sup>th</sup> September 1999. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Through these processes, preliminary data were collected and analysed using a grounded theory approach.

Although it was the pilot study, all the interviews were undertaken in a ‘real’ interview situation. This was, firstly, because there were initial doubts over the best form of research technique. Thus, the researcher aimed to produce a more solid basis for testing

it. Secondly, the researcher intended using the pilot study to practise all the procedures undertaken in a qualitative research using an interview method.

It became clear from the results of the data analysis, and the respondents' comments, that the interview schedule did not need to be modified greatly. Thus, the results of the pilot study indicated that the research method was valid, reliable and appropriate for the main research. The results also confirmed that the qualitative approach was well chosen. In the pilot study this method dealt well with gathering people's opinions and analysing complex social situations and people's perceptions. The results also showed that the three sample categories provided a suitable diversity of people, and that nine or ten people was an adequate number. It also confirmed that these people might be 'information-rich-informants'. The pilot study provided useful insights, which helped shape the main study.

However, a few minor modifications to the interview schedule were made as follows: firstly, in order to reassure the participants about the aims and the confidentiality of the interview, 'a short introduction' was requested before the main part of the schedule. Secondly, the order of the overall schedule was rearranged, with questions being organised from the general to the specific. Thirdly, it was recommended to revise a few of the questions to make them more understandable to the participants. Finally, two questions, which did not fit the topic of the present study, were removed, and one new question was added to the interview. The detailed reasons for, and the process of the fourth modification of the interview schedule are as follows:

Regarding the question, 'which library policies could be influenced by Friends groups', the researcher examined public library policy through the literature review in order to provide some detailed example of library policies to the participants in the study. Four policies were selected for the question after studying White (1960), i.e. the policies on library stock selection, library display and exhibitions, library rules and regulations and staffing. In addition, two more policies were chosen after considering the library services and the operation of Friends groups in the UK. The policy on opening hours was selected because of the state of public library services. As Proctor, Lee and Reilly (1998) reveal, opening hours have been reduced in the last 30 years in the UK, and this is the one of the reasons for the establishment of Friends groups. The policy on the maintenance of library stock was chosen after considering the activities of a Friends group operating around the

library in which the pilot study was involved. The issue of the maintenance of library stock was raised and debated between the library staff and the Friends group (Walkley Library Action Group, 1997). Through this process, six policies were initially collected and were ready for testing by the pilot study.

After the pilot study was undertaken, two policies covering the maintenance of library stock and staffing matters were excluded from the main study for the following reasons. Firstly, although the maintenance of library stock (all the books bought from a group's funds being kept at the library to which the group belongs) was one of the main issues debated between the group and the library staff, group members and library staff in other libraries, and councillors did not have a good understanding of this issue. The reason for this is that the issue was an isolated case. Secondly, the policy on staffing was not considered to be worth examining in the main study. This is because it became clear from the findings of the pilot study that Friends groups had no influence on this policy at all. No evidence that challenges this claim was found in the literature review either.

With the exclusion of the above two policies, it was decided to include 'decisions on library closure' amongst the main study questions. 'Decisions on library closure' was not initially considered for the question in the pilot study, because this is not a detailed library policy. However, it was deemed that one of the main reasons for the establishment of Friends groups in the UK is to undertake campaigns against a council's decisions on library closure. Thus, 'decisions on library closure' should be examined in the main study.

Through the pilot study, the validity of the study method was confirmed. The researcher also accumulated valuable experience and confidence in qualitative research, particularly in carrying out interviews and analysing qualitative data. At the end of the pilot study, a report of over 270 pages was completed.

## **2.5 Literature and Other Source Search**

Strauss & Corbin (1990) argue that by using a grounded theory approach for research, 'there is no need to review all of the literature beforehand (data analysis), because if we are effective in our analysis, then new categories will emerge that neither we, nor anyone else, had thought about previously' (p.50). Instead of that, they suggest the necessity of a

literature review after data analysis. This is because 'it is only after a category has emerged as pertinent that we might want to go back to the technical literature to determine if this category is there, and if so what other researchers have said about it' (p.50).

However, their claim should not be interpreted to mean that the literature review is not essential before data analysis. Rather, it should be understood that although researchers can review the literature at the beginning, they may have to discard preconceived ideas obtained through the same literature in order to allow the theory to emerge from the data. Therefore, Mellon's (1990) view, that a literature review is not considered important or necessary prior to data analysis in naturalistic (qualitative) research, is a debatable point.

In fact, Hart (1998) and Denscombe (1998) argue that a literature review is important in the whole research process because without it researchers could not have an understanding of their project, of what has already been done on it, how it has been researched, and what the key issues are.

In this study the literature has been examined to review appropriate resources, and also to allow for a sound understanding of issues throughout the study. However, in order to deter the readers of this study from forming preconceptions about the study being based on previous knowledge and on the content of the literature, the results of the literature review are not presented in a separate chapter or section. As Hofmann (1995) suggests, these are discussed and presented in the main context of the study, in which findings from the data are compared with the results of the literature review. He claims that 'it is possible to take the results of the textual analyses and as you discuss their meaning you would include the relevant literature in the discussion rather than as a separate literature chapter'.

The literature search made use of various sources. During the study, the most frequently used source was 'Star', the catalogue of the University of Sheffield Library, for searching its bibliographical resources: monographs, theses and journals, and electronic materials: databases (ERIC and LISA on CD-ROM) and journals. Sources available outside the University were the BLPC (the British Library Public Catalogue) and other Internet websites.

In particular, almost all public libraries in the USA, and many libraries in the UK, have their own Internet home page. Thus, much useful information concerning the activities and operations of Friends groups was obtained from these websites. For example, the DeKalb County Public Library in Georgia State in the USA, which has 13 Friends groups in its branch libraries, has an Internet home page that answers questions such as: Who are Friends of the Library? Why does the Library need Friends? How do Friends enrich the Library? How can you become a Friend? Thus, Internet searches have been carried out in order to review 'non-technical literature' (Struss & Corbin, 1998) such as reports and documents.

This study reviewed and used other sources such as personal letters and e-mails, minutes of group meetings and newspaper articles. The researcher also attended a national workshop, meetings for Friends groups, and an international seminar. He has also been participating in one Friends group's activities and committee meetings since he joined the group as a member in 1998.

## **2.6 Characteristics of the Councils and the Friends Groups Examined**

This section presents the characteristics of the five councils and the ten groups examined in the study in order to help the readers to understand the councils and the groups to some extent.

**Council 1** has 39 public libraries but only six libraries have a Friends group. In the past some libraries were threatened with closure but none of them were actually closed. Some groups are chaired by library staff. Three or four groups have been disbanded because most of the group members were reluctant to take the responsibility of running their group. No regional federation of Friends groups exists. Most of the Friends groups in this council were formed as a result of the library authority's genuine efforts to establish Friends groups.

In the council, two branch library Friends groups were examined in detail. The first group was founded to test how a group would operate in the council after one branch manager learned about an operation of a Friends group from the executive director of

Friends of Libraries U.S.A. The successful operation of the first group influenced not only the formation of the second group but also that of other groups in the council.

**Council 2** has 13 public libraries and all the libraries with the exception of one or two libraries have a Friends group. The central library established a group very recently. There is a very strong regional federation of Friends groups.

In the council, two branch library Friends groups were studied in detail. The first group was established by the public. Its library was threatened with closure by the council in 1989. Thus, public meetings were called and the group was formed to fight the council's decisions. The public also founded the second group. One councillor, who felt there was a serious threat to the council's library services, called a public meeting. At the meeting the second group was established to join the fight against the council's plans.

**Council 3** has 22 public libraries and 14 libraries have a Friends group. No regional federation of Friends groups exists.

Two groups at one central library and one branch library were investigated in the council. Its library authority established the central library group to raise the profile of the library and to get members of the public more involved in the library services. The branch library group, which was formed by the public, started off as a pressure group to persuade the council to provide a replacement library and the group achieved this.

In **Council 4**, there are eight out of 15 service points which have a Friends group. In the last ten years, four branch libraries have been seriously threatened with closure and two libraries have already been closed. Interestingly, two other libraries that were threatened with closure formed a Friends group. As a result, they have not been closed.

Two groups which operate around one central library and one branch library were surveyed. In the council, the Friends of the Archives was firstly established. When there were budget cuts in the library authority spending, the library staff, who thought that there would be a threat to the library service, approached the members of the Friends of

the Archives and other people. These people organised themselves and formed and independently ran the central group.

The branch library group was formed because its library was next in line to be closed in 1997, when two libraries in the same council were closed and the library was threatened with closure. The library staff organised a general public meeting and the local people co-operated fully with the staff's idea of forming a Friends group.

All the 19 libraries in **Council 5** have a Friends group. All the groups have the same constitution which was originally designed by the library authority. In the council a federation of Friends groups exists. Some (two or three) of the groups are chaired by councillors. The central library group and one branch library were selected for the examination.

The central library group was formed as the result of the council's overall policy to involve library users in the formulation of policy and the uses of the library services. When the group first started it was quite small in terms of the number of people involved in it and once they found their role, more and more people became involved in their activities. To a certain extent the group was almost led by the library staff but now its members operate the group.

When the council's library budgets were significantly cut in the early 1990s in the process of restructuring library services and operation, the library authority initially presented 'the idea of forming a User or a Friends group' to the public with the intention of obtaining their views on the library proposals and services. At the same time, since a couple of branch libraries had been closed as a result of the council's budgets cuts, the local people co-operated fully with the authority's idea of forming Friends groups. Therefore, after a general public meeting called by the library authority, the local people began spontaneously to hold meetings and formed their branch library group.

## 2.7 Limitations of Methodology

Obviously there are limitations to the methodology or methods of investigation of any study. This study has the following limitations.

As in the case of other qualitative research, this study used a small size of samples (50 interviews). Therefore, there is no guarantee that the councils and Friends groups involved and the interviewees (library staff, Friends group members and councillors) who participated are representative of those organisations and of those people in the whole. Consequently, there is no guarantee that the results of the study are representative of the influence of Friends groups on public library policy in the UK in general.

As Strauss & Corbin (1990) claim, theoretical sampling does mostly fit grounded theory research which this study has used as research methodology. However, this study did not comprehensively utilise the main idea of theoretical sampling for the study. According to Strauss & Corbin (1998), the key idea of theoretical sampling is that a researcher carries on sampling theoretically until a category has been saturated with data. However, the researcher of the present study continued his interviews until he had a certain number of samples. This is because the study needed to collect views from diverse people (library managers and staff, councillors and Friends group members) who are closely related to library services and library policy-making. The study also used a multiple-site approach (Miles & Huberman, 1984) in order to examine different cases pertaining to the research theme. Consequently, the study required a certain number of samples to satisfy the above research designs. The sampling method of this study breaches one of the rules of theoretical sampling, i.e. that a researcher stops collecting data when he/she arrives at the point of theoretical saturation (Strauss, 1987).

## Chapter 3

### **Definition and Functions of Friends Groups**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents an overview of Friends groups, defining them and outlining their main roles. However, it does not intend to repeat the findings from the literature, but proposes to review Friends groups from the respondents' perspectives. Some background information about Friends groups is provided before moving onto the more specific aspects and issues regarding their activities and operations. In particular, attention will be drawn to the connection between group activities and public library policy.

#### **3.2 Definition of Friends of the Library Groups**

##### **3.2.1 Introduction**

One of the aims of this study was to reveal the characteristics of Friends groups in the UK. The study examined the characteristics by asking people how they defined Friends groups, and by comparing their definition with those in other countries.

The participants were asked what the term 'Friends of Libraries' meant to them. They offered 43 divergent definitions of Friends groups. There were many respondents who had mixed perceptions of Friends groups. Therefore, various concepts emerged from the total of 50 participants in the present study. In particular, two people (one librarian and one councillor) and two other participants (library staff) offered four and five different definitions respectively. Councillors and library staff, particularly Chief and Group Librarians, noticed many different types of Friends groups in their area.

In accordance with Strauss and Corbin's (1998) suggestion on data analysis for theory building, the concepts that emerged from the respondents' views were categorised according to their characteristics (properties). Through this process, eleven 'more abstract higher order concepts' (Strauss & Corbin) were created or chosen by the researcher from the 43 concepts, and all the concepts were grouped into these. As Strauss

and Corbin state, 'categories are concepts, derived from data, that stand for phenomena' (p.114). The eleven categories were: support group, fund-raising group, moral support group, user group, event organising group, diverse group, campaigning group, strangers, voluntary group, library public relations group and consultation group. Among these, 'support group' was chosen as the core category, referred to as a central category (Strauss & Corbin), because this concept was shown to represent the majority of the eleven categories of Friends groups' definition. Under this concept, all the categories, with the exception of two, were integrated into the core category. However, two categories, **strangers** and **campaigning group**, were not. This is because these categories emerged from the respondents' perceptions that Friends group activities are not considered to be supportive to library operation and services. The respondents who offered such definitions regarded Friends group activities as unfavourable to library services. In particular, the study revealed that the library staff and councillors from two councils, where a few branch libraries were once threatened with closure, and were saved through Friends groups' campaigns, held such views. One librarian and one councillor (in Councils 2 and 4) considered Friends groups' campaigns reactionary and counterproductive, saying that:

I think people in communities recognise that they've lost their youth club day centre, local post office, local bank so they have to fight to keep something which gives communities a focal point. But unfortunately their motivation doesn't always lead to constructive and informed comment that helps people like me deal with some of the issues that we deal with in libraries as we try and deal with some of the challenges we've got; it's a **reactionary contribution**, its **not a helpful contribution** in some respects. They're a mixed bunch, some are better than others. (Librarian)

They could become just a small specific lobby, who have one particular bee in their bonnet in one area and weren't representative. I'm not aware of that being the case but that possibility always exists that they could say we don't want that sort of person in the library, we don't want that kind of book in the library, we don't want that medium or display in the library and that could be **counterproductive** and obviously if the Friends group was the only people we heard then that could be a difficulty. (Councillor)

However, there was also a claim that Friends groups' campaigns are supportive to library services because Friends groups could protect libraries under threat and improve library services through their campaigns. One librarian (in Council 1) stated that:

The Friends will support us in a range of activities that are carried out at the local library, they will act as a pressure group and a lobbying group if there are any difficulties at the library.

Therefore, it can be said that the decision not to assign the category, 'campaigning group' to the core category is controversial to some extent. However, there were more respondents who did not approve than who did approve of Friends groups' campaigns. The decision was made after considering this point.

### **3.2.2 Library support group**

The concept of 'support group' emerged from many participants: nineteen out of the total fifty participants' perceptions of Friends groups. The concept was chosen as the core category for the definition of Friends groups. Therefore, it can be argued that the participants in this study defined Friends of Libraries as support groups: a group of people who support library services and staff, and enlist the public's help in running a library. The respondents presented their definition as follows:

It's a group of people who support the library in all the ways they can They give help by organising events, raising money, all sorts of things really. (Librarian in Council 3)

Friends of the Libraries are supportive groups of people that are anxious to see libraries survive and also be an integral part of the community with the services on offer, so really a Friends is an excellent description, because when we have a Friends, a Friends is supportive, enthusiastic and generous and that's what a Friends strives to do in support of the libraries here. (Councillor in Council 1)

We decided to carry on as a Friends group really to be supportive of the librarians here, because it's a small rural community, they are quite distanced from their headquarters and we existed to try and help them where we could in a variety of ways, fund raising and carrying out events that had some sort of library link, and doing a little bit of support work actually within the library. (Friends group member in Council 3)

The literature reveals that other people also equate Friends of Libraries with 'support groups'. Miles (1994) refers to Friends of Libraries as support groups in his MA thesis, which studies the role, function, and status of library support groups.

The category of 'support group' consists of three concepts. One respondent simply defined Friends groups as 'supporters'. Some other participants offered the term 'assisting group'- a group which helps library staff with various library activities, such as library displays and exhibitions, events, and book sales. One librarian (in Council 1) stated that Friends of Libraries are:

A group of regular library users who have normally been approached to help the management of the library in certain activities, and those activities would normally be to do with helping to organise book sales, ... and just to be on hand if we need any additional help with exhibitions, events, displays, testing out new policies.

The 1976 ALA (American Library Association) Yearbook offers a similar definition to the one above: 'Friends of Libraries are citizens or lay support groups which **assist libraries** of all types in reaching their full potential' (cited in Murison, 1979: 33). Smith (1999: 2) also defines Friends of Libraries as 'a group of people voluntarily associated in **assisting the library** in its work'.

Interestingly, one person described Friends groups as 'outside the library', supporting library services and staff only when they are asked. Friends groups, which are not formally constituted but which have a certain number of people willing to help library staff, fall into this category. This type of Friends group does not undertake any particular activities for their library because these groups do not have their own committee. One librarian (in Council 1) presented her definition as follows:

It just means that we can call on them, rely on them. Friends mean that, don't they? Any sort of Friends and the Friends of the Library means that they are outside the library, not involved in the building. They are outside the building but we can call on them if we need extra help.

### 3.2.3 Moral support group

The concept, 'moral support group', emerged from a dozen respondents' perceptions of Friends groups. They basically had mixed perceptions, in which Friends groups were partially described as 'moral support groups'. As Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995) defines moral support, Friends groups are meant to give library

management and staff encouragement by expressing approval or interest in library services and operation, rather than by giving practical help.

The following are some of the views of the respondents who perceived Friends of Libraries as ‘moral support groups’. In their words:

In here we tend to see them as a group of people who just share the same aims and concerns about the library service. (Librarian in Council 4)

It tends to mean library users who are particularly interested in the service. (Councillor in Council 5)

A group of people that have got a particular interest in mind and on this occasion it's the Friends of the Library. (Friends group member in Council 4)

Some literature presents a detailed definition of Friends groups. Four decades ago, the ALA published a brochure describing Friends groups as follows:

A group of citizens in the community who have a common concern for their library's active expansion and participation in community life. They have a conviction that good library service is important to everyone. (ALA, 1961 in Murison, 1979: 28)

According to this account, Friends of Libraries are ‘moral support groups’, because at any given time they only have concern for, and a conviction that, ‘good library service is important’, rather than providing practical support.

The 1977 ALA Yearbook offers another definition: ‘Friends of Libraries (with a capital F and L) are organized groups of people whose purpose is to support the library morally and financially’ (Murison, 1979: 33). Here, Friends of Libraries are clearly defined as ‘moral support groups’.

Azar-Luxton (1993) also favours the term ‘moral support groups’. He claims that one of the main purposes of the operation of Friends groups is ‘to support the public library, financially or morally’ (p.14). His following view also suggests that Friends of Libraries are ‘moral support groups’. He states that ‘Friends of the Library groups are what the

librarian chooses to make of them: advocates, fund-raisers, volunteers or a **quiet support group**' (p.14).

The moral support group is similar to the group defined as 'outside the library', meaning they do not provide practical support to the library. However, it differs because, in general, the moral support group is formally constituted, whilst Friends groups defined as 'outside the library' are not.

One person offered the term 'affinity group', - a group consisting of people with particularly strong interests in library services and operation. He stated that:

It means people who have an affinity with libraries. You did mention users as well as Friends. So by the very definition it's going to be people who have an affinity to libraries and have an interest in what the outcomes are and what service we actually deliver through the library service. So basically, people [who have] an interest and an interest in service delivery as well as getting the best out of libraries and the library service. (Councillor in Council 5)

#### **3.2.4 Library consultation group**

A library consultation group is similar to a moral support group in terms of the group having a formal constitution, but not undertaking various activities. However, the former group differs slightly from the latter in terms of the group providing 'practical help', by consulting library staff and management. The latter groups do not provide 'practical assistance' to the library. The study revealed that many library managers, particularly those within the library authorities (in Councils 1, 3 and 5) in which library services and operations were secure, very much favoured this type of Friends group.

It was also discovered that many groups examined in this study were formed by library staff who favoured the consultative role of Friends groups. Furthermore, some of these groups were chaired by the staff, who regarded this role as being very important. The following represent some of the views of participants who perceived Friends of Libraries as 'consultative groups'.

The original intention was to set them up so that we could gather their views more effectively and listen to what people had to say, and also involve them in how we had planned to improve services. So it was

really about finding out what they wanted and involving them in helping us deliver the improvement that we wanted to do. (Librarian in Council 5)

They are there if something comes up and we want to consult people. I think they are a useful group for us to be able to consult. (Librarian in Council 3)

The literature reveals that Friends of Libraries are rarely defined as ‘consultative groups’ in other countries in which Friends groups operate. In Australia, Canada and Germany, where Friends group activities were mostly influenced by American groups, as Murison (1979) below and Fletcher & Staniland (1997) confirm, fund-raising is generally perceived as the central role of Friends groups.

In contrast, in the UK, the consultative role was considered highly important. Many respondents to this study offered ‘consultative groups’ as their definition. Fletcher and Staniland (1997) claim in their short report on ‘user groups’ that one group was established to use the group as a sounding board for opinions, ideas and proposals. Murison (1979) also perceives Friends of Libraries as ‘consultative groups’, as described below:

In the UK, there are no widespread user group activities in libraries to compare with the Friends of the Library in America and elsewhere, but the success of the latter, if only in their fund-raising, suggests that such lay bodies can offer useful support to British libraries and form **a channel for users’ opinion** through which those persons who lack confidence in the present ‘official’ staff and authority **consultative arrangements** may find a satisfactory expression (p.38).

The category of ‘consultative group’ has several sub-categories, such as ‘community contact’, ‘people’s voice’, ‘focus group’, ‘sounding board’ and ‘council’s eyes and ears’. One person defined Friends of Libraries as ‘consumer groups’, which would imply that more information about library services and operation is given to these groups, and that they provide their opinions on library plans and proposals. He said that Friends groups mean:

To act as a consumer group, a means whereby we can inform some of our users of what’s happening [in the library], also to get feedback on any plans or proposals we have for the library. (Librarian in Council 5)

One person, interestingly, defined Friends groups as the ‘**council’s eyes and ears**’. This concept, that emerged from a councillor’s perspective, differed slightly from the rest of the definitions in the same **consultative group** category. This is because this view was the only one that considered Friends groups supportive, particularly to the council. The rest of the definitions stemmed from the respondents’ perceptions that Friends groups are favourable to library services. This finding reflected the fact that the council in which the respondent works as a councillor is very much in favour of Friends group activities. The respondent defined Friends groups as follows:

They are the **Council’s eyes and ears on service delivery** and also on how we can meet the needs of the public. You can do whatever exit surveys you want or any reports, it’s literally people who are in there, some several times a week, looking at what we actually offer and looking at the shortfalls, but also for them to identify the way forward as well, so it’s been our **eyes and ears on service delivery** and what we can actually provide in the future. (Councillor in Council 5)

The study discovered that in this council, interestingly, a few councillors chaired Friends groups. Benjamin (2001: 3) confirms that in this council, councillors, librarians and Friends groups work together for the best library services as follows:

[The council] has adopted a rather different approach to turning its service around. It is one which involves librarians, elected members and library users [Friends groups] working closely together.

Another sub-category that was associated with the ‘consultation group’ was ‘link’. Two respondents described Friends groups as a ‘link’, ‘bridge’ and ‘go-between’, which act as an intermediary between library managers or staff and library users or the general public. In their words:

The members of the general public in their individual local areas who are willing to act as a link between the community and the library that they use. (Librarian Council 1)

A bridge between the library hierarchy, the managers of the library and the building and the use of the building by the public. I see us [a Friends group] as a go-between if you like, to give that link, that extra link. (Councillor chairing one Friends group in Council 5)

Usherwood (1981) also expresses much the same views as above. He states that ‘a particular feature of American Library life are Friends Groups. These provide a **link** between libraries and the public they serve’ (p.33).

The Friends groups that fall into the categories discussed above: ‘support groups’, ‘moral support groups’ and ‘consultation groups’, have the same characteristics in that their operation is to provide general support to the library, but not to undertake any specific activity. Many respondents also defined Friends groups according to the activities they undertake, such as fund-raising, voluntary work, public relations and events.

### **3.2.5 Fund-raising group**

The literature (Dolnick, 1996; Murison, 1979; Payne, 1998; Skory, 1989; Usherwood, 1982) reveals that among the many activities of Friends groups, fund-raising is generally regarded as the first major activity. Doran (1990) and Fletcher and Staniland (1997) confirm this, saying that according to their experience of the literature on Friends groups, almost all of the articles that they reviewed emphasised the importance of fund-raising. According to Gwyn, McArthur and Furlow (1975), it is clear why the fund-raising activity of Friends groups is considered so important. They comment on the phenomenon of the establishment of Friends groups since 1970 in the USA as follows:

What is especially striking is the large proportion of groups (28 percent) which have started since 1970. It seems that many libraries, feeling financial pressures, are looking for ways to supplement their budgets (p.272).

These results suggest that many people could perceive Friends of Libraries as ‘fund-raising groups’. However, it was revealed that this is not generally the case in the UK. Only a couple of respondents in this study had such a perception. Potts and Roper (1995: 21) reflect on this finding: ‘British people expect their taxes to be sufficient to pay for all services’. This view is also confirmed by one librarian’s experience of a library operation (Staniland, Fletcher & Townend, 1998: 66), as below:

As manager, I have found that a balance has to be made between the aims of the group with regard to raising funds and the users of the library who rightly believe it is the function of the council to provide the service without this support.

One respondent in this study, who is a librarian (in Council 4), had much the same views. In his words:

A lot of them start off wanting to raise funds to support the service, but we see them more as consultation groups. If they raise money and want to spend that on their particular library, that's very helpful, but I don't think they should get too concerned about having to raise money to support the library service. **They shouldn't have to. The service should be able to support itself.**

Some group officers also felt strongly that public services should be maintained by public funds. One officer (in Council 2) stated that:

There is no attempt by the Friends group to raise money for the libraries, I don't think they can do that. I think **the public purse has to pay for libraries**. If you're the government I give you a lot of my money anyway through taxes. I pay taxes, you should pay them. Not me, because I already pay you once, so if I had to get a whole load of books I'm forking out of my pocket twice and that's not fair.

Murison's study (1979) on the operation of Friends groups in the 1970s, which were the first to be established in British public libraries, also confirms that fund-raising was not the major motivation for the establishment of the early Friends groups. According to him, public relations, (moral) support and community involvement were the major issues. Therefore, it can be said that although fund-raising is generally perceived as the number one activity of Friends groups in other countries, this is very unlikely to be the case in the UK.

However, the study revealed that some groups were mainly formed to raise funds and, therefore, undertook fund-raising. For this reason, some respondents perceived Friends of Libraries as 'fund-raising groups', their aims being primarily to support a library financially; thus they conduct various fund-raising activities (this is elaborated **in section 6.9.4 Finance**) to raise funds for providing books or book funds, equipment and other resources that the library needs. One group member (in Council 1) stated in detail that:

**It was formed to really raise funds** to help [and] provide things for the library that were rather expensive and which the public funds couldn't provide. We had fund raising meetings and some social meetings. We fund raise by coffee mornings and things like that, but we haven't raised much these days because very few people come. ... we've got a coffee morning with a raffle and things to sell, and cakes and things like that.

Money goes to buy things for the library and we've bought quite a lot over the years, a lot of things for the library that the librarian would like, but can't have out of the public purse because its not big enough.

### **3.2.6 Public Relations group**

Three out of a total of fifty participants defined Friends of Libraries as 'public relations groups'. The respondents perceived that Friends groups operate to increase the visibility of the library in the community, by promoting the importance of the positive functions of the library. One councillor (in Council 1) said that a Friends group means:

People that will be willing to help others to use the library, to spread the word where the library is, and be volunteers for such things as open days.

This is in line with the literature (Murison, 1979; Payne, 1998; Usherwood, 1982). However, the number of respondents who offered such a definition is rather small. In terms of public relations, Friends groups are considered very important in the literature, revealing that promoting the library is one of their major functions. One occasion that led to the development of Friends groups was the recognition of the importance of library marketing by Friends groups (Edinger, 1980; Haywood, 1998). However, the study revealed that this is not the case in the UK. Most British groups were established to undertake political campaigns, to consult library management and staff, and to raise funds.

### **3.2.7 Voluntary group**

Five respondents in this study defined Friends of Libraries as 'voluntary groups' and 'volunteers'. It was revealed that this is in line with Dolnick (1996) and Skory (1989), who define these as dedicated voluntary groups. However, the study revealed that there were some differences between the respondents and the literature in the perception of Friends groups volunteering for the library. Dolnick states that in the USA, 'there is no limit to the services that a dedicated voluntary group can provide' (p.1). This is supported by Ferguson (1991). With regard to the use of volunteers in American libraries, he claims that there is 'a less rigid professional demarcation of roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis union(ed) labour and (volunteer) labour'. However, the study revealed that in the UK, there was much more limitation on voluntary work. This was because of 'staff and trade

union concerns regarding the use of volunteers' (Cookman, Haynes & Streatfield, 2000: 13) in libraries. However, although this is the case, more volunteers are expected to work in the library because the British Government encourages public libraries to make more use of volunteers (Department of National Heritage, 1997; Smith, 2002).

The respondents in this study considered that group members volunteer to support library staff, providing services to blind or elderly people, and undertaking some very routine, unsophisticated and labour intensive work, such as shelving books, tidying the shelves and library, and housebound services. However, they do not undertake other professional work carried out by library staff. As the councillor expressed above, sometimes they also volunteer to support library operations by promoting library services and undertaking fund-raising on behalf of the staff. One person stated that:

In other places it [a Friends group] may just be set up for one particular purpose, ... or perhaps to help blind people or elderly people, in the case of blind people, recorded work, and in the case of elderly people; big print books. (Councillor in Council 1)

### 3.2.8 Event organising group

Several respondents defined Friends of Libraries as 'event organising groups', which conduct various events (this is elaborated in **sections 6.9.1 Communication and 6.9.4 Finance**) in cooperation with library staff, or as part of their activities. These events aim to promote library services, raise funds, and maintain community involvement. One respondent said that:

They can, for example, exist where there is a particular local author or group of poets and it is desirable in those localities for there to be a greater concentration of books and other apparatus in relation to that local author. (Councillor in Council 1)

DeKalb County Public Library (2003) offers a definition in which Friends of Libraries are partially described as 'event organising groups'. The library's website states that:

The Friends of the Library groups are non-profit organisations dedicated to supporting the public library system by sponsoring cultural activities in many areas of the arts and literature as a means of broadening community awareness and use of library services and resources.

The concept, 'social activity or occasion', which is one sub-category of the event organising group, emerged from three respondents' views. One person responded:

A group of people in the community that come together once a month, ... to listen to very interesting speakers. We have various outings to parts of [Council 1]. So it's a social thing. (Friends group member in Council 1).

The concept was associated with the category of 'event organising group' because the concept 'social activity or occasion' means Friends groups organising social events for any purpose. However, it was revealed that the concept differed slightly from 'event organising group'. This is because the respondents' view of 'social occasion and activity' did not mean Friends groups holding events to support library services and staff.

The three respondents (two group members and one librarian) considered Friends of the Library to be a group of people which is formally constituted. They meet regularly inside and outside the library, holding various social events, such as going to the theatre, Christmas dinners and history tours. However, these activities do not aim to increase the use of the library, nor to raise the profile of the library, but to keep the group actively running. Therefore, this definition differs slightly from 'event organising groups', which mainly concerns Friends group activities for the library. However, Brownlee and Ney (1988) deem this role very important in operating a Friends group. They maintain that in order to keep a group in motion, the members of the group should be rewarded with fun while participating in the group.

Two other categories regarding the definition of Friends groups emerged from the data. These concepts explain the core category of 'support group'. That is to say, the following two concepts do not characterise what a Friends group is, but rather describe what kinds of groups exist, and what a Friends group consists of. In fact, these are not definitions of Friends groups, but they are important in defining Friends groups.

### **3.2.9 Diverse groups**

This concept emerged from the respondents' perceptions, which identified many different types of Friends group according to aims, size and location. Some people argued that there are two types of Friends group, according to the boundary of their activities: one is a small local group operating around one library, the other is a

federation of Friends groups in one council area. One group member claimed that these two organisations have very different aims in their operation. The federation mainly aims to influence library policy, whilst a small local group is more concerned with passing on information regarding its library services and operation to its users, but is not keen on influencing library policy. In his words:

There are two types of Friends group in my opinion. The group that I am involved in is called [name of an organisation] and it consists of people who are interested in libraries, who use libraries and who are very concerned about the way in which municipalities and the government are organising libraries. So such groups would regard themselves as being slightly, actually to a large extent, **groups who influence policy**. The second type of Friends group is a group that has been put together or composed by maybe the local library manager, and such groups are much more concerned with **passing information to other users** and that kind of thing, but would not see themselves as being primarily interested in changing policy.

Another person described Friends of Libraries as ‘small library groups’, which mainly come into existence around the local branch library located in a small town or village, rather than in a big town or city. One person expressed his view as follows:

I’ve not managed to have a library with an organisation where people get together and talk about how they are going to help the library. You may get this in small areas and small towns but you will not get it in my opinion, and I hope to be proved wrong, but you will not get them in the urban districts where roughly 10,000 people use a library.  
(Councillor in Council 1)

### **3.2.10 Library user group**

A couple of respondents offered ‘user groups’. They considered that Friends groups mainly consist of ‘active borrowers’ or ‘regular users’, who are concerned about library services and operation, and who ‘wish goodwill and long life to the library services’. Fletcher and Staniland (1997) also apply ‘user group’ to describe Friends groups. Interestingly, one group member (in Council 2) defined Friends groups as ‘user representative’. In his words: the role of Friends groups is:

To represent users of libraries, to act as a lobbying group for users of a particular library, so that if any of the users have a particular complaint or request which they think that the library staff are not dealing with, or if a library user wants to change something about the

library, then the Friends group acts as a focus for all the library users. That's the first thing and in many ways I think it's the most important.

As discussed in the early part of this section, there are two categories of definition which were not integrated into the core category of 'support group', because of the different characteristics of the categories. The two categories are as follows: **campaigning group** and **strangers**.

### **3.2.11 Library campaigning or lobbying group**

From more than a dozen respondents' perceptions of Friends groups the following concepts emerged: 'pressure group', 'influential group', 'public voice' and 'independent group', and these fall into the category of 'campaigning or lobbying group'. The respondents considered Friends of Libraries to be groups formed by library users or local people, who have a great concern for their local library operation when their library is threatened with closure. These groups mainly aim to campaign against the council's decisions on library closure or cuts in opening hours. However, this operation causes conflict between a Friends group and library staff or a council, because these groups attempt to exert a strong influence on library policy. Therefore, as discussed in the early part of this section, some senior library managers and councillors, who plan to close certain branch libraries and reduce opening hours in order to manage their libraries more economically and effectively, do not favour Friends groups' campaigns and lobbying. Furthermore, they do not want to have a Friends group.

Some literature expresses concern about Friends groups' campaigns. As Dolnick (1989) states, some people have the view that in campaigning 'Friends will take over the library, making decisions in matters that are of no concern to them' (p.139). Fletcher and Staniland (1997) seem to present one such example. They comment on the operation of one group and its campaigns, with which they had some experience. They state that 'they [Friends groups] try to produce the kind of library that they would like. This can create tension with regard to overall service policies' [p.2].

In contrast, as also discussed in the early part of this section, there were group members and a couple of library staff who considered Friends group campaigns valuable to library services and operation. One group member in Council 2, who offered a definition of

‘public voice’, argued that Friends groups have a very important role in keeping public libraries. In his words:

In times of crisis, and obviously many libraries around Britain are in crisis at the moment, the Friends groups I think act as the **voice of the public** when dealing with local authorities, so for example in [name of a council], [name of a federal organisation of Friends groups] was able to form a united front against the council who wanted to close several libraries, and in this way, I think Friends groups have a very important part in keeping the subject of public libraries at the front of the political agenda to make sure that libraries are not just seen as a luxury in society, but as a fundamental building brick of civilisation.

One librarian (in Council 4) suggested an ‘independent group’. He favoured a Friends group that expresses its views regarding library policy to the council on behalf of the library staff. He stated that:

Our Friends group was set up to be an **independent group**, which could speak for the library in a way that officers in the Council can't, ... they could speak more freely about library issues than library staff can do, so I think one of the key issues on the agenda of setting that up was that we hoped that they would keep an eye on where they thought the library service was falling short and be able to **speak with more authority** than somebody within the library itself. That was certainly an element of why we encouraged them to set up the group.

A lot of the literature also shows that group campaigns were considered invaluable to library services and operation. Usherwood (1981) suggests that ‘the best Friends groups are in fact an active source of pro-library political pressure on influential individuals and groups in the community’ (p.33). Leerburger (1989) also points out the important role of Friends group campaigns in the community. He states that ‘some independent Friends of the Library are extremely popular in the community and often exert a significant influence on library policy’ (p.94). Skory (1989) stresses the importance of such a role regarding the Government’s policy on public libraries. She claims that ‘Friends groups can be a very effective tool in positively shaping public sentiment and influencing political decisions in relation to government funding and legislation for libraries’ (p.320).

Friends group campaigns and lobbying to influence a council’s policy on public libraries, are designated as the main theme of this study. This issue is therefore elaborated in **Chapters 4, 5 and 6** of this thesis.

### 3.2.12 Strangers

The study discovered that there were library staff and councillors who were concerned about Friends group operation and activities, particularly campaigning. They suggested 'strangers', 'reactionary group' and 'unrepresentative group' as a definition. One librarian (in Council 2) offered the first two definitions as follows:

People who find themselves being part of a Friends group are **strangers** to the library. The library staff don't know them. They don't use the library, but for some reason they are motivated to campaign. They feel strongly about the closure of a local facility even though in many areas they don't appear to use it and they are quite exclusive. They appear to be predominantly white and in terms of the perspective they bring to bear, by definition they are **reactionary** because they invariably form themselves in reaction to the Council policy.

This view is very much in line with Commoner (1992), who has a similar perception of Friends groups. He/she defines Friends of Libraries as 'trouble groups', as below:

Friends groups are more trouble than they are worth [and] skew service provision to suit the needs of the few busy bodies who have the time to get involved in them.

The study revealed that the participants above gave such definitions for the following reason: their main experience of Friends groups was with those which were established when their libraries were threatened with closure, and which carried out strong campaigns against their library authority's proposal or council's decisions on library closure or opening hours cuts.

One councillor (in Council 2) defined Friends of Libraries in his area as 'unrepresentative groups':

They tend to be comprised of vocal, normally middle class people. One of the problems is about listening too closely to just Friends groups because they are not always fully representative of the community as a whole, but that's basically what they are.

Fletcher and Staniland (1997) also argue that 'any user (Friends) group will inevitably be non-representative of the community' [p.4] because of the limitations of their commitment and the availability of individuals. The theme of the unrepresentative nature

of Friends groups is discussed in detail in sections **4.2.2 Friends groups represent the community** and **4.4.5 Friends groups are unrepresentative**.

### 3.2.13 Summary

Various definitions emerged from the respondents' perceptions of Friends groups. This reflects some different characteristics of public libraries and Friends groups in the UK. The situation of library services and their operation was more complicated, generating more diverse roles of Friends groups than in other countries such as Australia, Canada and the USA. The study revealed that different roles and definitions existed because the phenomenon of the establishment and development of Friends groups in the UK was very different from other countries. For example, since many public libraries have been closed or threatened with closure by local governments in the last ten years (Proctor, Lee & Reilly, 1998), a lot of new groups have been formed specifically to save their libraries. The number of groups has increased dramatically, and also their activities have become more vigorous (Smith, 1999).

Smith (1999) presents a definition in his recent report on British groups, which reflects certain characteristics of libraries and Friends groups in the UK that differ from those in other countries. The definition clearly points out that 'protecting funds' and 'supporting the maintenance of library services' are very important parts of the operations of British groups.

The respondents' definitions were integrated into the following eleven categories: 'support group', 'fund-raising group', 'moral support group', 'event organising group', 'campaigning group', 'strangers', 'voluntary group', 'library public relations group' and 'consultation group', 'diverse groups' and 'user group'. Of these, two categories: 'diverse groups' and 'user group', describe the main types of Friends group and the composition of their members.

It was revealed that among these, the category 'support group' represented the main concept of what a Friends group is, with the exception of two: 'strangers' and 'campaigning group'. Therefore, it can be argued that the respondents perceived a Friends of the Library as a support group: a group of people who are regular library

users, operate an organisation, and undertake various activities to support their library, such as fund-raising, organising various events, working as volunteers, promoting library services and operation, and consulting library management. Friends groups also provide the library with moral support. Friends groups can be distinguished according to their main concern. A small local group is more concerned with the communication role, i.e. consulting library managers and passing information onto other library users. A federal organisation aims to influence a council's library policy.

It was also discovered that definitions offered by the respondents differed slightly according to the sample categories and the councils. For example, it was mainly library staff, managers and councillors involved with libraries which were threatened with closure, yet were saved by Friends groups' campaigns, who perceived Friends of Libraries as 'reactionary groups' and 'strangers'. It was discovered that these campaigns caused conflict between Friends groups and library management or councillors, provoking the latter to have such perceptions. Library staff whose library services and operation were more secure, proposed 'consultation groups'. Library staff who considered a consultation role for Friends groups important, but who did not have an active group, perceived Friends to be 'moral support groups', because their own group did not undertake specific activities.

Some different perceptions of Friends groups from other countries were revealed in this study. Many respondents in this study regarded Friends of Libraries as 'campaigning groups' and 'consultation groups'. However, in other countries, many people perceive Friends of Libraries as 'fund-raising groups'. This result reflected the circumstances of British public libraries. In the 1990s, local governments closed hundreds of public libraries (CIPFA, 1989/1990-1999/2000). During this period, many library users and local people formed Friends groups (Simmons & Proctor, 1998; Smith, 1999). Through their activities, they campaigned to save their library. In this process, communication between library management and Friends groups was found to be very important. Therefore, many people in the UK defined Friends of Libraries as 'consultation groups'.

By the appearance of the definitions of 'campaigning group', 'reactionary group' and 'strangers', the study discovered that many British Friends groups have attempted to influence library policy on opening hours and decisions on library closure.

### **3.3 Functions of Friends of the Library Groups**

#### **3.3.1 Introduction**

The participants in this study were asked what they considered to be the main functions of Friends groups. Sixty-three different concepts of the function of Friends groups emerged from their views. This number is slightly larger than that which emerged from Bundy's survey (1998) on Australian Friends groups. There he found 49 different concepts of function. It can be argued that this finding reflects the fact that British groups perform more diverse functions than Australian groups because their library services and operations have been in a more complex situation in the last ten years.

The 63 concepts were categorised according to the types of support that the groups provide to their library, or the types of activities that they undertake with the intention of supporting their library. Thirteen categories were created as follows: support, fund-raising or financial support, acting as a link, moral support, campaigning or lobbying, volunteering, public relations, consultation, publishing materials, operating spin-off groups, organising events, co-ordinating small groups and multi-functional. Among these categories, the concept, 'support' was decided upon as the core concept, because it represented all the concepts. However, the last two categories, 'co-ordinating small groups' and 'multi-functional', differed slightly from the rest. The concept, 'co-ordinating small groups' is a function of a federation of Friends groups and the concept 'multi-functional' reflects the variety of functions of some Friends groups.

However, it was revealed that some of the categories were closely connected to each other, since many activities conducted by Friends groups have a multi-functional purpose. The group may initially aim to simply hold an event, but it may also intend to bring more people into the library, to promote library services, to increase the number of library users or to raise funds. For example, the category 'raising public awareness' can be linked to the category 'saving a library'. This is because when a library is under threat, its Friends group could attempt to raise public awareness of the library in order to save it. There is another example. The category of 'publishing materials' is closely connected to 'library public relations' or 'fund-raising'. The study discovered that many groups produced publications such as newsletters, a library or community history book, and a

calendar, and consequently raised funds by selling these publications. Gwyn. McArthur and Furlow (1975) confirm an interconnection between 'publications' and 'public relations' as follows:

Publications are a very important outcome of Friends groups. It is through them that the Friends can convey to the outside world what kind of material is stored away in the library ... Publications focus attention on the library with the result that more people, becoming aware of the library's needs, interest, and growth, are not only benefiting from its existence, but are also more likely to give help (p.280).

One group member (in Council 2) offered 'multi-functional' as a function of Friends groups. It seemed that he too considered the aspect of Friends group activities in the above manner. He stated that 'they [Friends groups] combine functions, putting on events whilst also campaigning. They also try to be educational and so on'.

Regarding the functions of Friends groups, some similarities and differences were identified among Friends groups in Australia, the UK and the USA. The literature (Doran, 1990; Fletcher & Staniland, 1997) reveals that in the USA, people regard fund-raising as the most important function. This is because many American groups were primarily established to raise funds. Dolnick (1987) supports this claim, stating that decreased funding for libraries in the last two decades has increased the number of groups in the USA. However, in the UK, consultation and public relations - particularly lobbying and political campaigning - were considered major functions. The present study found that one third of the total concepts pertain to the function of lobbying and political campaigning. Bundy's survey (1998) results also show that a significant percentage (eight out of forty nine) of the total concepts are associated with the function of lobbying. However, there were slight differences between the results of the present study and those of Bundy's survey. According to his study, the main aim behind the lobbying and campaigning of Australian groups was to increase library funds. The following concepts that emerged from his survey support this claim: 'lobbying for funding', 'political, social and educational fund-raising' and 'while it should be churlish to criticise fund-raising activities, I would prefer that FOLA (Friends of Libraries Australia) were more politically active' (Bundy, 1998: 168).

In comparison, the function of lobbying and campaigning in the UK pertained to the issues of library closure, opening hours cuts, funding cuts and building a new library. One librarian's views confirm this:

I think historically there will be statements from Friends groups and they will certainly have existed in order to **campaign against either the closure of libraries, the reduction in opening hours, cuts to the financial support, the budget** and those sorts of things so they see themselves very much as a Friends. Friends groups who lobby and campaign to resist cuts, that's the main focus that Friends groups have. (Librarian in Council 2)

It was revealed that, particularly in the small branch libraries, these functions are considered very important because these libraries are the ones most threatened with closure. In contrast, central libraries regard completely different functions to be important, because these libraries are rarely put under threat. One group officer (in Council 3) offered different functions of Friends groups between those operating around a central library and a branch library. In her words:

There are two separate groups in [name of a council]. This library as you can see will never close down as it is the Town [Library] and it is the big library. But the smaller groups in the villages, their aim is actually **to keep their libraries open** because they are threatened with cuts in hours all the time and perhaps being closed down. Now if I lived in a small village out in the country I would be devastated if my library went. So that's how I see it. There are two separate approaches to Friends groups [here], this [big] one, in particular, ... aims really **to keep the environment pleasant** with the things that we are doing and the money that we raise. I also see it as a social thing, I get **to know people in the group and get to know the librarians**.

This finding reflected the circumstances of public libraries and also Friends group activities in the UK: in the 1990s, in England alone, more than 500 small (branch) libraries were closed or had their opening hours cut (CIPFA, 1989/1990-1999/2000). Thus, many library users or local people formed Friends groups, through which they carried out lobbying and political campaigns to save their library, and to extend the library's opening hours. Simmons and Proctor (1998: 6) support this claim: 'the closure of any library service point is an emotive issue. Much may be made of closures in the local press and 'Save Our Library' campaigns by users are common'. They also quote Whittaker (1998) in expressing the view that 'Friends groups began life as a response to a threatened closure' (p.6). Fletcher (cited in Sugg, 1998) also supports this, stating that

according to his experience, 'Action Groups (Friends groups) mushroom when there are threats to withdraw services' (p.24).

With regard to the operation of Friends groups, the study discovered one interesting feature: that British groups are formed not only to save their library, but also to build a new library. Friends groups generally campaign to keep their library open when their libraries are threatened with closure. Therefore, people usually equate Friends of Libraries with groups carrying out campaigns to protect their libraries. However, one group officer (in Council 3) defined 'campaigning for the building of a new library' as a function. In her own words:

We originally were established as a pressure group to get a new library building and then we achieved that.

In the early stages the local people tried to move the library because the old library was small. (Q: Was it threatened with closure?) No it wasn't threatened with closure at all, but it really wasn't serving the needs of the town and it was a time of retrenchment in the County. They weren't looking to put funds in any great way into the library, but it was obviously a need here. So we **fought really to try and establish** the principal of needing a bigger library, which was a principal that they were persuaded of very speedily, the authorities. And then originally we worked ourselves to try and provide, using grant funding, to try and provide a better library than the one that then existed, but then the library service then came up with funding to allow this building, which was already in the ownership of the local authority, to allow this building to be established as a library.

This finding reveals that Friends group activities in the UK were diverse. Those activities have not been undertaken for the last two decades and were always small in comparison with other countries. Ferguson (1991) notes that Australian groups often undertook campaigns to build a new library. He claims that in Victoria, two groups both achieved new library buildings through campaigning.

The results of the present study's fieldwork disclosed that among the five library authorities examined, two authorities in particular (Councils 1 and 5) were very passionate about Friends group activities. Their commitment led to an amicable co-operation between the Friends groups and library management or the council. Furthermore, this close co-operation resulted in creating the respondents' perceptions of the positive aspect of Friends group activities, even lobbying and campaigning. Library

staff from these two councils only regarded lobbying and campaigning as a function. The following findings illustrate how the library management, councils and staff were keen on Friends group activities.

In one council, library management and councillors were very much in favour of Friends groups participating in library services and operations. A few councillors chair Friends groups. One librarian's view below confirms this finding:

The Council itself wanted more contact with users, more public consultation, more involvement of the public in running its services. ... as a means of involving people more..., increasing the level of democracy in Local Government by getting more people involved and letting them have a direct say in what was going on, so that's where they started from. (Librarian in Council 5)

In another council, the library authority initiated the establishment of most of the groups, and the library staff chaired some of these. (However, they are not directly involved in practical activities.) This is confirmed by one librarian's statement below:

The constitution states that a member of the library service must be a Committee Member. At the moment in effect that's me, ... really I suppose the library staff's role is to liaise between the Friends and the library service. (Librarian in Council 1)

As mentioned above, the library staff from Councils 1 and 5 defined lobbying or campaigns as a function of Friends. However, most of the group officers who were interviewed, with the exception of the officers from one council, were rather concerned about the term 'lobbying or campaigning'. None of them considered these activities as a function. It was revealed that many groups carried out lobbying or campaigning to save their library, but they too seemed to avoid claiming such activities as a function of their group. This was because they were very concerned that their operation should not be seen as political. Some group members strongly denied that they carry out lobbying or campaigns, because they perceived such an operation to be political. However, they defined 'saving libraries', 'expressing their views regarding decisions on library closure to the council', and 'talking to councillors and local media' as a function. The following group member's view illustrated the extent to which they were concerned with 'campaigning'.

We didn't [even] go for a title like Campaign group or Action group because that tends to give the impression that you're going to be campaigning in a way that some people might not want to be involved in. It's like an emotive word, ... It doesn't mean we won't campaign when necessary, but if you've got campaign in your title or action group then it's as though your main thing is that you're always campaigning or doing something, taking action. (Group member in Council 4)

One respondent, who is a leader of one federation of Friends groups, perceived functions of Friends groups differently according to the type of group: a small local group and a federation of small groups. He defined 'exercising political power' and 'co-operating with small groups' as functions of the federation, and regarded 'ensuring opening hours', 'selecting an appropriate book stock', and 'mobilising public opinions in the community' as functions of the small group. He stated that:

As far as the local library User group is concerned, I think the main function is to **ensure** that everybody who wants to use the library can use the library at **times** that are suitable to them and with **a book stock that is appropriate** for the people who want to use the library, and if those things are not forthcoming then the third function of that User group would be to **mobilise opinion in the community** in order to obtain the services that it needs from its local library.

As far as the much larger group is concerned, I see the role of that as being a co-ordinating one, in other words, the first and main function is to **co-ordinate the activities of all the smaller libraries** and then to act as a kind of body which can bring people together to **exercise a certain amount of political power** in order to obtain what is necessary in terms of library provision, because it does seem to me that without the constant pressure from User groups and from such umbrella organisations, libraries would tend to become the poor relations in the education field, because typically municipalities that are responsible for education have budgets which are ring fenced as far as schools are concerned, but which can be depleted as far as libraries are concerned.

As seen above, regarding the functions of Friends groups, the respondent claimed that the local groups should focus their roles on improving their library's services and operation. The federation should concentrate on carrying out political campaigns, at a local or central government level, in order to persuade them to continue investing sufficient funds in library services and operation.

The study discovered that a federation only exists in three of the five councils surveyed. Interestingly, Friends groups in these areas were more likely to have influenced library policy than in the other two areas, where there is no such organisation. In particular, in Council 1, where a vigorous organisation exists, Friends groups influenced decisions on library closure: they saved half of the branch libraries by carrying out campaigns. However, because there was such a strong organisation, more conflicts occurred between Friends groups and library management or the council over library policy on decisions such as library closure and opening hours cuts.

With regard to the function of voluntary work, an interesting feature was discovered: of the five councils, respondents from only two Councils (1 and 3) offered such a function. In these areas, library services and operations have been reasonably secure in the last ten years. However, in the other three areas, in the same period, many (small) branch libraries have been put under threat or closed. It seemed that the issue of volunteers provoked library staff into getting involved. The literature (Dolnick, 1996; Fletcher & Staniland, 1997; O'Dea, 1996; Sager, 1984; Smith, 1999) reveals that Friends groups undertake diverse forms of voluntary work. However, the literature (Bundy, 1998; Dolnick, 1989; Jervis, 2000; 1984; Skory, 1989) also claims that in general, library staff are concerned about library volunteers. This is because they fear that the use of volunteers will encourage library management or councillors to reduce personal budget, and that library volunteers will replace their positions (Sager, 1984).

### **3.3.2 Summary**

From the respondents' perceptions, the study revealed that the functions of British groups were more diverse than those of other countries. The literature (Dolnick, 1996; Fletcher & Staniland, 1997; Payne, 1998) reveals that the main functions of Friends groups fall into five principal areas: fund-raising or financial support, campaigning or lobbying, voluntary work, public relations and community involvement. The study discovered that British groups performed more diverse functions than Australian groups: more concepts of the function of Friends groups emerged from the respondents in the present study, than emerged from Bundy's survey (1998) on the roles of Australian groups.

The respondents perceived that British groups play various roles: they perform not only the five main functions as stated in the literature, but also other functions such as

‘consultation’, ‘acting as a link’, and ‘organising events’. The study also discovered that Friends groups were formed to build a new library. In particular, this finding reflected the diverse functions of British groups, although the number and history of (public library) Friends groups is small and short in comparison with other countries. These results showed that in the last ten years, public library services and operations have been facing difficult circumstances in the UK: library funds have been cut, opening hours have been reduced, and a lot of branch libraries have been under threat of closure or closed.

The following findings also confirmed the characteristics of British groups. According to the literature review, in the USA fund-raising is considered the most important function (Fletcher & Staniland, 1997). In this study, campaigning or lobbying were considered as a major or important function. This is similar to Australia, but the groups in Australia usually campaign to increase library funds (Bundy, 1998), whereas in the UK, Friends groups undertake campaigns to save their library. This finding again stemmed from the fact that in the 1990s in the UK, a large number of small public libraries were threatened with closure or closed. Therefore, many active library users or local people, who have strong interests in library services, formed Friends groups through which they campaigned against a council’s decisions on library closure.

In this process, communication between Friends groups or library users and library management or a council was also considered more important than at any other time. Therefore, consultation was regarded as a valuable function. Other functions that were suggested by the respondents, such as raising public awareness, organising events and fund-raising, had the ultimate aim of saving the library. One librarian’s (in Council 4) views on the aims of her library’s group confirm this claim as follows:

It was firstly to make sure the library didn’t close, then it was to encourage more people to join, more publicity. So that people actually knew that there was a library here, and certain fund raising activities which is[are] just to raise the profile of the library. It’s all really so that people know the library is here, so more people will join and therefore if more people join, the less likelihood there is of closure.

This study discovered that there are councils in which public library services and operations are more secure than other areas. The respondents (councillors and group members) from these areas were the only ones who offered the function of volunteers.

The respondents (library staff and councillors) from the councils in which library management and the council are passionate about Friends group activities and their operations, were the ones to primarily propose the function of campaigning or lobbying and consultation.

Group officers from one area strongly suggested the function of campaigning or lobbying. The group members from the rest of the library authorities attempted to stay away from campaigning or lobbying in order to avoid causing conflict between the group and library staff or the council, and to prevent them from being seen as being political by other library users or the public.

Regarding the subject of the functions of Friends groups, it can be argued that in a council in which library services and operations are secure, and library management and a council are in favour of Friends group activities, these groups could operate more effectively to support library services and staff.

### **3.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter deals with the respondents' perceptions of the definition and functions of Friends groups. The participants of this study were asked how they regarded Friends groups, and what they considered the main functions of Friends groups to be. The intention was to discover the characteristics of British groups and to reveal that Friends groups do influence library policy.

The study revealed that the respondents' overall perceptions of the definition and functions of Friends groups reflected the circumstances of public libraries. They also reflected Friends group activities in the UK: in the 1990s, hundreds of branch libraries were closed or threatened with closure (CIPFA, 1986/87-1996/97; Proctor, Lee & Reilly, 1998). Thus, many groups were established in order to protect their library from the threat (Smith, 1999). Many of these groups saved their library by undertaking various activities, particularly lobbying or political campaigning.

The respondents generally perceived Friends groups according to the type of support that they provide to the library, and the type of activities that they undertake. The types of support that the respondents described were: general support, moral support,

consultation, and financial support. Therefore, Friends groups were defined as support groups, moral support groups, consultation groups, and financial support groups. The main activities of Friends groups that were considered were: campaigning or lobbying, fund-raising, public relations, organising events, and volunteering. Therefore, the respondents considered Friends groups as: campaigning or lobbying groups, fund-raising groups, event organising groups, voluntary groups and library public relations groups.

The main functions of Friends groups considered by the respondents were more diverse than those found in the literature (Baker, 1994; Dolnick, 1996; Staniland, Fletcher & Townend, 1998). The main functions suggested by the respondents were: campaigning or lobbying, consulting library staff and management, fund-raising or providing financial support, volunteering, public relations, acting as a link, and organising events. Among these, campaigning or lobbying were considered as a major function. This finding differed from other countries. In the USA, fund-raising is regarded as the most important function (Fletcher & Staniland, 1997). In Australia, campaigning and lobbying mainly aim to augment library funds (Bundy, 1998), whereas in the UK, these activities aim to save the library. This finding stemmed from the circumstances of British public libraries, which are mentioned above. This situation also resulted in greater consideration of user consultation. Therefore, consultation was also regarded as a valuable function.

Regarding the definition and functions of Friends groups, the respondents' views differed according to councils and sample categories, and were also based on the situation of their library services and operations as follows:

The respondents from Councils 2 and 4, mainly **library managers and councillors**, viewed Friends groups as strangers. In these areas, several branch libraries were under serious threat of closure, but these libraries were saved as a result of the campaigns of the Friends groups. The respondents gave such a definition because they perceived their Friends groups to be operating to influence and oppose their council's library policy and proposals, rather than to support their library services and to operate and cooperate with their library policy and proposals.

**Library staff** whose library services and operation are secure, particularly favoured Friends of Libraries as consultation groups. Councillors and group officers in the same

areas (Councils 3 and 5) only defined Friends of Libraries as voluntary work groups, with volunteers being considered useful to library services and operation.

**Library staff and councillors** from Councils 1 and 5 mostly proposed the functions of campaigning or lobbying and consultation. In these councils, library management and councillors are passionate about Friends group activities and operation.

**Friends group officers from Council 2** strongly suggested the function of campaigning or lobbying, because in the last decade in this area, many branch libraries have been continuously threatened with closure. However, group officers from the rest of the areas were very concerned about campaigning and lobbying. This is because such activities could cause conflict between groups and library staff or a council, and also many library users and members of the public reluctant to join groups undertaking such activities.

In relation to the main concern of this study - whether Friends groups could have an influence on library policy - the study discovered that many of the present groups have attempted to influence library policy. Some of them have influenced policy on library funds and opening hours and decisions on library closure. The following findings support this claim. The respondents claimed that lobbying and campaigning are the roles of Friends groups, and are a means through which Friends groups influence library policy. They also regarded Friends of Libraries as ‘campaigning groups’, ‘reactionary groups’, and ‘strangers’, because their groups influenced (or attempted to influence) library policy and proposals.

These findings raised further questions: ‘Should Friends groups be allowed to influence library policy?’ ‘How do Friends groups influence library policy?’ and ‘What constitutional and managerial issues make Friends groups influence library policy?’ These issues are elaborated in the following chapters.

## Chapter 4

# Why Friends Groups Should or Should not be Allowed to Influence Public Library Policy

### 4.1 Introduction

As described in **Chapter 1**, the main topic of this study is the influence of Friends groups on public library policy. A further theoretical question was raised as to ‘whether Friends groups should be allowed to influence library policy’. Thus, the participants in the study were asked to give their perceptions on this issue. This chapter deals with the results of the analysis of the respondents’ perceptions, in the light of existing literature and research already undertaken in this area.

The participants were asked to give their views on the question in five library policy areas, in order to examine how their views differed in each policy area. **Section 2.4 Pilot Study** discussed in detail how six library policies were initially selected, why these policies were especially chosen, and how the section of these policy areas was tested. The five policy areas that were finally chosen after the pilot study were: selection of library stock, opening hours, library displays and exhibitions, library rules and regulations, and decisions on library closure.

### 4.2 Friends groups should be allowed to influence library policy

#### 4.2.1 Friends groups provide a different perspective

It was revealed that many respondents favoured the influence of Friends groups on library policy. Accordingly, they claimed that Friends groups should be allowed to influence library policy. One of the reasons for them having such a perception was that ‘Friends groups present a different perspective of library services’ to that of library management and councillors. Consequently, the involvement of Friends groups in library policy leads to the development of library services. This is due to the fact that, through having different views of library services from Friends groups, the library authority and the council operate effectively and provide better library

services to the public. The senior manager (in Council 5) confirmed that this is the case, particularly in his library authority, and stated how his library authority practised such a Friends groups' role in library management. He stated:

My view on it is that it is very effective. It almost offers a counter-balance to the views that officers of the Council come to, and it offers a different perspective. So I think it's absolutely vital that the Friends and User groups and the Federation are involved in policy-making. We incorporate that into our own policy-making. For example, we recently updated our User's Charter: we wrote to every User group and Federation. They sent their views back to us centrally, and we incorporated their views into the Charter itself. So not only do we think it's important that they influence policy, but we've got evidence that they do influence and change the policy that we have. They do make a real difference for us.

This view confirms that the involvement of Friends groups in library policy-making benefits the library authority. Accordingly, the manager considered Friends groups' involvement in policy-making to be vital. The view that 'Friends groups provide a different perspective' is very much in line with the following finding.

Four people claimed that there is a current emphasis on user consultation in library management in the UK. One councillor (in Council 3) underpinned the fact that 'there is a current emphasis on consultation'. He stated that 'the [his] council is committed to policies of encouraging consultation and opinion [and] that is the way we [they] work'. Another councillor (in Council 1) revealed one reason why there is a current emphasis on consultation. The reason is that 'if you [library management or council] didn't have the Friends understanding what you were trying to achieve [then] you would be losing the battle in the press from the start'.

Cummings (2001) also confirms the current trend in emphasising consultation in library management. A Friends group member, he expresses the view (in the Minutes of his group's meeting in December 2001) that his group or library users should be consulted on any library policy by both library management and the council. This would allow them to play a vital role in the strategy of library services. He argues that:

I do feel that the message of involvement is being heard and there is a recognition that members of the User group can play a vital role in not simply the details, but also in the strategy of the library service. We look forward to a major consultation process in the coming months and trust all members of the User group - along with all sections of the community - will play an active part in shaping the future of the service [p.1].

As libraries were a publicly funded service then (a) Users (group) should be consulted not only in the detail of any future policy but also in the strategy [p.3].

The literature reveals that the current trend in emphasising user consultation in library management results from the emphasis on public consultation on all the council services in the councils across the UK. Smith, et al. (1993) and Greenhalgh & Worpole (1996) confirm this claim, discussing user consultation on community care and park services respectively. The Hertfordshire County Council (2002) website also supports the claim, stating that the council is very keen on consulting local people on its services in order to encourage them to get involved in its decision-making. The website describes that:

The county council is committed to consulting local people on decisions that affect their lives. ... We are continually seeking other ways of involving local people in shaping of services and policies. ... We have a strategy for encouraging all groups to take part in decision-making, in line with our equal opportunities policy.

One of the reasons why Friends groups should be consulted in library policy-making is in line with the next claim: group members are library users. Eleven respondents considered the influence of Friends groups on **stock selection policy** to be an ideal system for improving library services, because group members are library users. That is to say, they are the people who use library materials. Thus, they are very keen on library stock and can make staff aware of ways to improve the stock by involving themselves in stock selection. One group member (in Council 2) stressed that their greater involvement could lead to a wider choice of library stock. He stated that:

They are the users and unless they participate in deciding what the library stock will be ... The more they do, the more probable the choice of library stock will be a good one. If they don't, it could be that the librarians will just buy a lot of books that nobody will read.

Another group member (in Council 4) regarded Friends groups' involvement in **policy on opening hours** as their role, owing to group members being library users. Other respondents presented different reasons to support this view. They identified Friends groups as being in an advantageous position to identify better opening hours for the general public, because group members are themselves library users. However, some other respondents argued that not all group members are library users. It is apparent that as long as they are members of the general public, they are library users or potential library users. Accordingly, they are eligible to get involved in policy on opening hours and library stock selection.

#### 4.2.2 Friends groups represent the community

Regarding the influence of Friends groups on public library policy, one of the controversial issues is the representative nature of Friends groups (Baker, 1994; the Commoner, 1992; Fletcher & Staniland, 1997). Many respondents in the study considered their group(s) to be representative of library users and the community. Consequently, they maintained that there is no problem with Friends groups getting involved in library policy-making. The study revealed that the respondents who held such a view were more likely to be group members or opposition party members themselves. The group members held such a view because they strongly supported their operation and activities. The opposition party members also supported the activities and operation of Friends groups, because these groups often carried out campaigns against the ruling party's council policy (mainly library policy). One group member (in Council 2) maintained that Friends groups should be allowed to influence library policy because they represent their users. He argued that:

They are representative of the users, and it's probable that the User group will know or have members who use it, and they will know the needs. So obviously the Friends groups, since they know the needs, should be in a position to influence library policy in that respect.

One opposition party member in the same council supported this view, maintaining that their groups represent library users owing to their speciality in dealing with library matters from users' perspectives. He stated:

I think that they represent the users of the services very accurately. They are active. They represent the view of the users very well because they are specialised.

Another councillor (in Council 5) considered his groups to be representative of the community. The study revealed that his council and library authority also shared this view. In this council, library management consulted Friends groups on library services. The study found that the library authority initiated the establishment of most groups in order to be able to consult them. Therefore, although each group only consisted of around a dozen members, many library staff and councillors considered these groups to be representative of library users and the community. The councillor said that it was useful to be able to consult Friends groups because they represented the community. He gave his view, below:

They are our consultees, and the advantage that we have as a council [is to have] organisations within the community who we can consult freely

with, and consult on a wide range of issues relating to the library service. If we didn't have that, we would then have to go and find some people to actually represent the community. We already have it and we support it, and it's respected, and that's a big advantage for us as an organisation to actually be able to use.

However, it was discovered that not all respondents (in Council 5) agreed with the claim. One junior manager in the council maintained that her groups' claims regarding library services were often unacceptable, because they were not representative of their community. The study discovered that she held such a view because she had often come into conflict with the groups over their activities, even though these groups were generally regarded as representative by the library authority and the council. She stated that:

If you get groups with strong characters in them, they can be led down a particular path, which isn't always necessarily helpful. You can unfortunately, because the groups tend not to be representative because they haven't been set up, we haven't said: we want this, this and this sort of person. The groups do effectively tend to be at the moment older people, older white UK people predominantly, because they have tended to be users, people who are used to using library services, although they may still not be aware of all the facilities that are available, so they can be very unrepresentative.

Some other respondents claimed that Friends groups should be involved in **decision-making on library closures**, because they represent their library users. They are thus both a part, and representative, of the community. One librarian and one group member (in Councils 1 and 4) maintained that their group is part of the community and represents the community, saying that:

They should have an influence because they are set up to support us, they obviously want us here and so they should be able to have their say and lobby people and tell people so that they influence whoever it is to prevent the closure, because it would be awful for the community and I think they are part of the community, as well as being Friends of the library. (Librarian)

We represent the community and therefore, if the library is under threat, it is our role to defend that and activate public opinion against closures, and we can help in that as a partnership with the library staff. (Group member)

One junior manager and one group member (in Councils 3 and 5) suggested that Friends groups should be allowed to influence policy on **opening hours** and **library displays and exhibitions** respectively. The reason for this is that they represent the community, i.e. their opinions represent the public's views. This claim is supported by the next view.

Several respondents maintained that Friends groups should be allowed to influence policy on opening hours. This is due to the fact that ‘these groups consist of a cross-section of people and are the library’s captive audience’. They are aware of local community needs regarding opening hours. They are also in an advantageous position to obtain the general public’s views on library services, to pass on these views, and to offer their own opinions to their councillors. One councillor (in Council 1) who held this view regarded influencing library policy to be the prime role of Friends groups. She stated that:

I think they are in an excellent position to tell the councillors, who are responsible for drawing up policies together with the library staff. They stand in an excellent position to have some really good influence on those policies, because they know what the people on the ground are specifically looking for, whereas councillors, because they are busy, don’t always know what the libraries’ needs are. So the lobbying effect, and the talking to councillors and trying to influence policy, is a prime important role really, and making sure we listen.

One junior manager (in Council 3) claimed that her library authority already worked with Friends groups on opening hours, because they considered their groups to be representative of the community. She stated that:

We’ve worked like that already with Friends groups. We ask their opinions and they are a good representation of people who live in the community, and they can say when people want the library open. I think that’s somewhere where they can influence.

It is apparent that the above findings underpin the next claim: ‘the involvement of Friends groups in library policy-making is a democratic process’. That is to say, Friends groups consist of a cross-section of people and thus, they represent the public. Consequently, it can be argued that the involvement of Friends groups in library policy-making is one way of operating a democratic society. Three out of six group members from Councils 2 and 3, who favoured Friends groups influencing policy, regarded their involvement in policy-making as a democratic process. One member (in Council 2) maintained that Friends groups not only participate in a democratic process, but also form part of a political sub-structure. He stated that:

My view is that such groups are essential, absolutely essential and vital. I also believe that Friends, Users or Supporters groups of ... many Leisure Services are absolutely essential. So, for example, you have a swimming club associated with a swimming pool and the way that club comes together, has meetings, talks to local politicians and others about how to improve or maintain that swimming club. The more they do that the better, and you can see the result when they don’t

do that, in that the facilities just simply get worse. So Friends groups for me are absolutely vital, and they form part of the sub-structure, **political sub-structure** of this country. Not just this country, but also any country where there are Friends groups to make a broad political point. In my view you can't have democracy without having lots and lots of different groups attached to all sorts of different facilities and operations, and in that sense, in a very broad sense, the User groups are actually participating in a **democratic process**. So I think they are essential from all sorts of points of view.

#### 4.2.3 The involvement of Friends groups in library policy leads to positive development of the library

Regarding the involvement of Friends groups in library policy, many respondents claimed that such involvement leads to positive development of the library. Ten people (mainly librarians and councillors) stated that in particular, involvement in **library displays and exhibitions** is appropriate. Consequently, they would listen to Friends groups' views. One group member (in Council 2) presented one example of the positive development that the involvement of Friends groups in these areas brings. In his own words:

The advantages are that libraries come into focus, the population at large sees a library group very much involved with the library and becomes enthusiastic about libraries, so it brings the whole question of education, reading and writing, and the possibility of exhibitions. Local libraries won't have such treasures, but the nice thing about these treasures is they come from all over the world. The exhibitions in libraries in [name of a place] are also sometimes about people or objects that are worldwide. So for example in [name of a place] there is a society that is dedicated to the memory of a [name of a person] poet, which I think is very good indeed, and there is a book of the poet in the library and I think at one point or another there will be an exhibition of his writing. Here, then, you would have an example of a User group making an exhibition.

One councillor (in Council 4) supported this view, saying that the involvement of Friends groups in these areas is useful. They often know more about displays and exhibitions than library staff and, as one member (in Council 2) maintained, non-staff (group members) could also make better **library displays and exhibitions**. Therefore, as one group member (in Council 1) suggested, library staff should welcome Friends groups' ideas for library displays and exhibitions that would attract more people to the library. These findings underpin the other respondents' claim that 'the positive involvement of Friends groups in library policy should be accepted'. Ten respondents (of these, six were senior and junior managers) agreed that Friends groups should be allowed to influence **library rules and regulations** if their views

were considered to enhance library services. This is because the rules and regulations basically exist for better library services. One junior manager (in Council 5) said that:

I would agree with that again, because we want to provide a service that people want, we don't want to have rules and regulations that put people off using the service, and therefore if that is happening we need to do something about it.

One group member (in Council 4) expressed a similar view, claiming that Friends groups should attempt to influence library rules and regulations if the current ones do not satisfy library users. He argued that:

I think we should be able to disagree with them if we don't think they are in the interests of the users, so if they try and do something that we are not happy with then I think we should have a voice in it. I would agree that we should have a voice when necessary.

These views were echoed by senior managers (in Councils 1 and 5), saying that library authorities could improve the quality and range of library services through the involvement of Friends groups in these areas:

I'd agree with that, again they should influence those, because rules and regulations are not made to be broken, so to speak, but they are made to be changed, they are made to reflect the changing use of libraries, to make it a better place for the customers themselves, so they should be able to influence our thought process and our decision-making processes. (Council 1)

We can work together to improve the quality and the range of services to people and that can have the obvious benefit of increasing library usage, so as a result of user groups we can actually see more people wanting to use libraries because they are much more user friendly. The rules and regulations are much more governed by what people want to see or don't want to see. (Council 5)

One councillor (in Council 2) also strongly expressed agreement that Friends groups should be allowed to influence these. She argued this because:

So many rules and regulations are not necessarily made for the benefit of the public, they're made because it's convenient in an office to sit down and say you shall not cough or speak to anybody. If you think about the rules and regulations that were in libraries 20, 30, 40 years ago, most of them now seem very silly and they have changed through public perception, I suppose, but possibly not as quickly as they might like. If we're talking about time to return books or whether you should have your mobile on or something. I think the Friends group should have a right, ... I think it's quite proper that they should have some sort of influences.

In terms of the positive involvement of Friends groups in library policy, the most invaluable benefit could be that ‘their involvement keeps libraries open’. Ten respondents claimed that Friends groups should have an influence on **decisions on library closures** because their involvement could save libraries from the threat of closure. One librarian (in Council 2) stated that they should be allowed to have an influence on decision-making on library closures because ‘they are likely to campaign against the closure and ...that’s where Friends groups are very useful in trying to keep libraries open’. Another librarian (in Council 3) also expressed a similar view, claiming that the involvement of Friends groups in this area is useful to library services; such involvement saves libraries. She claimed that:

We’ve got a practical example of how that happened in [name of a place] and they played an important part in stopping libraries being closed and they are very useful to the library service in that way because we are on our own and not such a strong voice, so if you’ve got Friends, your public and customers behind you, you’ve got a lot more influence with the decision-makers. It’s the people who use the service that are speaking, so it can be very powerful.

One group member (in Council 4) considered Friends of Libraries to be groups operating to fight the threat of branch library closure. In his own words:

We’ve definitely got to have influence there again because that’s what the users are there for. They are there to fight in the corner of any branches that might be under threat of closure, and I’m sure the staff of that particular library would welcome our wholehearted support in that.

The senior manager (in Council 2) also claimed that their groups were formed to oppose library closure, and they partially succeeded in keeping their library open after they influenced their council’s decisions on library closures. He said that:

They have done so. Friends in a sense ..., that is their history. They were formed to oppose closure and they lobby, they talk to newspapers, they talk to [elected] members, and they have succeeded in part because they have been important contributors in [name of a place], in terms of preventing libraries being closed.

Frenchman (1998) reveals much the same view. She states that Friends groups in her area were established to campaign against service cuts.

At that time, mid-1991, there had been a series of savage cuts to the service: ever shorter opening hours, fewer staff, and small book funds. And it was thought that there should be a group to wave the flag for the libraries, ... So our original intention was to demonstrate to the

council that the citizens of Islington valued their libraries very highly, and that the taxpayers and electors thought that they were worth spending public money on (p.15).

She adds that ‘there was a long, hard fought campaign and finally the library stayed open’ (p.23).

The view that ‘Friends groups should be allowed to influence library policy owing to their involvement in keeping libraries open’, is very much in line with the next claim. Several respondents maintained that Friends groups should be allowed to influence library policy, particularly **policy on opening hours**, because at the moment, libraries’ opening hours are insufficient. One group member (in Council 2) suggested that their group should be allowed to influence the policy because, as she stated, ‘the library is not open as often as people would like’. Another member (in Council 4) expressed the same view more strongly, saying:

What we’d like to see though, is the library open 24 hours a day or at weekends, you know like supermarkets, because that’s the main problem with the libraries, the restricted hours and people are moving to a 24 hour day now, and as most supermarkets are open until 10 pm, I think libraries ought to be open at least until 9 pm at night. My biggest gripe about libraries is that if you are in full time work, and you pay your full Council Tax, then you’re one of the people who can’t use the library because by the time you get to the library from work it’s closed, that’s my biggest gripe about it, that the people who contribute fully to the library service don’t get the benefit of it. I think they should be open Sundays, so that the workers can go and use them. We’re not there yet, but I think we should be working towards that.

These views are fully supported by the previous British Government report (Department of National Heritage, 1997) on English public libraries. Regarding public library opening hours, this report suggests that ‘public libraries should be open when their users want them to be’ (p.4). Furthermore, the report presents the following statement:

Too often public libraries are closed when many people most want to use them. Public libraries should be open in the evenings and at weekends where this meets local needs (p.15).

The current government also underpins the claim that libraries’ opening hours are insufficient and libraries are not open as often as the public demand. The government launched the National Standards for Public Libraries in 2000 and 4 of the 23 standards cover opening hours (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2000).

#### **4.2.4 National standards for public libraries request Friends groups' involvement**

Two councillors, and one group member in two councils, claimed that Friends groups should be allowed to influence **policy on opening hours**. This is because at the moment, many councils are reorganising their library services, and this demands Friends groups' involvement in the policy. The councils began to review their present patterns of opening hours, and to consider the increase of total hours and Sunday opening. These were especially considered after the National Standards for Public Libraries (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2000) was launched. One councillor stated that his council piloted the increase of opening hours in order to meet the targets that the National Standards impose. Thus, councillors favoured the involvement of Friends groups in the policy. In his own words:

We have Government targets, which we have to meet, which in itself is driving us through to increased opening hours and longer opening hours. So we already recognise that, and are trying to address that, so that there are performance indicators that we will have to meet anyway on those, which would greatly increase the hours of opening that we have at the moment, and I'm sure that that would be something which the Friends would appreciate, as well as the public. So it is in that context, that we all recognise that we all have to move together, and we are moving in the same direction, we're not going apart. We are going in the same direction because Government is driving the opening hours to meet performance indicators.

Another councillor's view (in Council 1) was similar to the one above. He said that he would like Friends groups to air their views on this policy because his council is considering Sunday opening, which is already being piloted by other councils. He stated that:

I agree they could suggest a different opening hour. I put in my form which I was doing there, that shift workers are the biggest people that complain about the hours. We have no libraries that are open 80 or 60 hours. We are considering, as a committee, Sunday opening because it has been a pilot scheme in one of the London areas and been successful, because with flexi hours and the different hours people are working. So very much the Friends groups and the users could influence the hours.

Yet another councillor's view in the same council was also linked to the National Standards. He claimed that Friends groups should be allowed to influence total opening hours within the number of hours the Standards impose. However, he disagreed with their demand to increase the number of opening hours beyond the number that the Standards impose. He argued that:

It could influence policy, it would be a voice of influence, but it

would have to be reflected in consideration of the National Standards that the Central Government seeks to impose.

### **4.3 Friends groups should be allowed to influence library policy to some extent, but library staff or councillors should make final decisions**

Regarding the influence of Friends groups on library policy, there were views which lay somewhere in the middle of the following two claims: Friends groups should be allowed to influence library policy and Friends groups should not be allowed to influence the library. Some respondents suggested that Friends groups should be allowed to influence library policy to some extent, but library staff or councillors should make final decisions. One councillor (in Council 5), who is also a member of a Friends group, maintained that Friends groups have a role in influencing library policy, but they should not dictate the policy. She argued that:

We have a role, there is a definite role for us there, but I can't see that it's a role of a Library User group to have any major point. I see us as an add-on and adding quality to the library, but I don't see us in a policy-forming group. We can have our say with the manager who comes to our meetings, and people do raise issues, and they will be attended to if it's a safety issue or whatever, or why has it taken so long to do this. But as far as assisting or dictating policy, like we need so many computers, we haven't gone down that path yet.

This view is very much in line with Bundy (1989). He states that:

There are clearly mixed views on the value of having a Friends group to provide a focus for client input to library decision-making. However, a majority of the respondents (library managers) welcomed, or had no problems with, Friends' views on policy issues provided they did not attempt to control or dictate policy (p.169).

Three other respondents held a similar view. They claimed that Friends groups should be allowed to influence **policy on opening hours** but, as one librarian (in Council 3) said, 'they don't have the final decision'. One councillor (in Council 5) expressed a similar view, stating:

I think they should be allowed to influence. They are the ones that go in and out. They are not going to be the first arbiters but they can have an influence.

One councillor (in Council 4) maintained that Friends groups should be involved in decision-making on library closures, but they should never make final decisions. She argued that:

I agree that they should be involved, and it may be that they have suggestions that they can bring forward, that would mean that either a library didn't have to close or you at least involve them in what replaced a library in terms of a mobile library or other service, so I agree that they should be involved but they can **never have the final word** on that.

These views raised a further question: who should make final decisions on library policy? Many respondents considered that library staff or councillors should have such a role. A discussion about why library staff and councillors should completely control library policy-making follows:

Three respondents claimed that Friends groups should be allowed to influence library rules and regulations, **but**, as one librarian (in Council 4) stated, library staff should be responsible for any final decision. This is due to the fact that library staff are professionals (custodians), who know how to operate library policy in the interest of the people. In his own words:

I agree that they should influence, but quite frequently professionals draw up rules and regulations to ensure equity, equal opportunities and all the rest. As long as that's the framework in which everybody operates, and ultimately the library staff are custodians of that, then I'm in favour of involving Friends groups in that area as well.

Consequently, one group member (in Council 3), whose group had a good relationship with her branch library staff, suggested that Friends groups should not attempt to influence the views of their library staff, but rather those of senior library management or councillors. This stems from the fact that a local group mainly operates with the cooperation of library staff. Accordingly, if there is any conflict between the group and library staff, the group could not achieve its aims and objectives. In her own words:

I think that Friends groups should certainly influence public library policies, because I see that as a process of democracy. What I think they definitely shouldn't do, is try to influence their own individual library, because those librarians are working to line managers who are the library service, and Friends groups should be going to whomever are the decision-makers in that library service, not going to their individual libraries and pestering them about their concerns.

However, one branch librarian (in Council 4) suggested that challenging views should only be made to councillors. She claimed that Friends groups should not try to influence the views of library staff or management, but rather those of councillors. This is due to library staff having much the same view as Friends groups regarding library services. It meant that generally, Friends groups and library staff and management share the view that library services should be properly maintained without budget constraint. She stated that:

I don't think they need to influence the views of library staff, we're all going in the same direction, but they do need to influence and change the views of councillors, and they will do that a lot better if they get together instead of concentrating on one service point.

It is doubtful whether this is always the case. This research revealed that in Councils 1 and 3, this was true, but in Council 2, this was not the case. The former (county) councils did not suffer from serious budget cuts in the last 20 years, and have maintained a good relationship with Friends groups. The latter (borough) councils suffered from budget cuts and did not have such a relationship because Friends groups, library staff, and the council had different opinions on their library services. In Council 5, even councillors shared the same common view. As a result, it can be argued that whether staff and management have the same view as Friends groups, differs according to councils.

Four respondents claimed that their group(s) has(have) no role in **library rules and regulations**, but they should make suggestions and discuss these with library management. One group member (in Council 2) argued that, although deciding library rules and regulations is a role of the library authority, Friends groups should be allowed to get involved in discussing these matters. He said, 'I think the library department has to make the rules and regulations and [but] I would like the User groups to be in a position to discuss'. One councillor (in Council 3) maintained that 'they wouldn't have a right to say this must be done or that must ... [but] they can make suggestions.' One librarian (in Council 4) also held a similar view to this, saying that deciding library rules and regulations is a role of library staff, but his group should offer suggestions. He stated that:

I agree. We would listen to them. But again, we would want to have the final say on rules and regulations. I don't think we have actually changed many of the rules for a long time, but I don't see why we shouldn't be open to suggestions.

Regarding the influence of Friends groups on policy on **library displays and exhibitions**, six respondents claimed that they should make suggestions but not influence. This is because they should:

- Not be responsible for approving library displays and exhibitions.
- Not influence actual main policy dealing with those content-related matters such as balanced coverage and racial equality of displays and exhibitions.
- Not influence whole decisions.
- Not decide the policy.

As the respondents revealed above, they initially agreed with the involvement of Friends groups in library displays and exhibitions. However, they were very concerned about the contents of library displays and exhibitions with which Friends groups are entirely involved. This result is much the same as the findings from Usherwood's study (1993). He discovers that many councillors in his study were very concerned about the contents of library displays and exhibitions, particularly those perceived as politically-biased displays. One junior manager in the present study (in Council 5) expressed his view regarding this issue, below:

We would allow a User group to put on a display, but again it would largely depend on what the display was. If it was a display just to promote the User group, we would not have a problem with that at all. What we would have to be careful of was if the User group was trying to put on a display to make a political point: if they put on a display against cuts to services, then we wouldn't be able to allow them to do that, simply because there would be a conflict of interest, because of the fact that we are part of the Council service. But if it was just a general display to promote the User group itself, or anything else in support of it, or to promote the library service, then yes, no problem at all. We would certainly let them do that. We would just have to be very careful about what they actually wanted to use the display or the promotion for.

Another junior manager (in Council 1) held a similar view. He maintained that as long as there is concern that Friends groups could cause conflict by displaying or exhibiting (politically) biased materials, they should not have an influence on the policy. He stated that:

We have a policy on the type of exhibitions and displays that we can allow, for instance we do not allow a politically-biased display, so if a Friends group member came to us and said 'I would like to do a display on the Labour Party', we would say, 'Sorry! We don't do that'. It wouldn't influence our policy, but we would listen to the idea simply because

that person was close to us as far as the library user was concerned.

However, there were three respondents (two group members and one councillor) who perceived that the involvement of Friends groups in these areas is not contentious. One councillor (in Council 5) expressed his view below:

I can't see a problem and would agree that, I would hope that our libraries are responsive to the needs of the Friends and Users, and would take on board their views on what could be attractive or what exhibitions or displays could be attractive and displayed at the time.

One group member (in Council 4) developed this view further, claiming that decisions on these areas should be left to the community, including Friends groups. He said that 'we have some influence over what's there, and it ought to be up to the local community, through a group like ours, to say what they want on display'. Another member (in Council 2) supported this view by emphasising Friends groups' enthusiasm for libraries. He was, however, strongly against the involvement of the council in these areas. He stated that:

Because the enthusiasm within any library is built on the participatory enthusiasm of the people who form the User groups, so they are the people who enjoy the facilities and they can put together the best exhibitions, rather than the Council. The Council can't do it.

One librarian (in Council 1) suggested an alternative way of involving Friends groups in these areas, claiming that Friends groups should be allowed to sponsor library displays and exhibitions, but they should not influence policy on these areas. This stems from the fact that the library should be neutral in its displays and exhibitions. He argued that:

If they sponsored a display or exhibition that would be fine, but not the policy on displays, because we have policies on what we accept and what we don't accept, and we don't accept things like petitions. If there is a display which wants to encourage people to do something, then our stance is that we should be neutral, we don't want to encourage people one way or another.

The literature review reveals that the following view, raised by the present respondents, is common to library management, not only in the UK but also in Australia: 'Friends groups should make suggestions on library policy as an indirect way of being involved in library policy, but library staff or management and councillors should make final decisions. Knight (1998) expresses his view, particularly on stock selection policy, stating that:

Friends are encouraged to take part in the decision-making process affecting the day to day running of their service and are welcome to input areas such as stock selection, but the final decision on the purchase and maintenance of stock rests with the staff (p.35).

Regarding Friends groups inputting into library policy, Bundy (1998) reveals that library managers in Australia maintained that 'suggestions are welcome, but formal input to policy seems a dangerous precedent to set; any client can make suggestions: comments but not decision-making' (p.169)'.

## **4.4 Friends groups should not be allowed to influence library policy**

### **4.4.1 Friends groups do not have knowledge or experience of library services**

There were respondents who considered that influencing library policy is not a role of Friends groups, but of library staff or management. Consequently, they believed that Friends groups should not attempt to influence library policy. This is because group members are not trained or have not worked in libraries. Therefore, they have no knowledge of library services and operation. The respondents gave their views on each library policy area.

**Three respondents claimed that Friends groups should not be allowed to influence stock selection policy** because library stock selection is professional work, namely, a role of library staff. One councillor (in Council 5) stated that:

I've got no indication that book stock selection is anything other than dealt with on a straightforward professional basis. That professional basis of course takes into account the users of that local library, but except for the requests where individual titles are requested, doesn't normally get influenced by users. You buy a wide range which you know your readership will use.

This claim is very much in line with the views of the respondents (elected members) in Usherwood's (1993) study. Most of them felt that 'stock selection was a professional task, and one that should routinely be left to professional librarians' (p.73). One librarian (in Council 2) seems to develop this view further. She strongly disagreed with the influence of Friends groups on stock selection policy, because she had a perception that attempting to get involved in such an area is taking over the work of paid staff. In her own words:

They think we will raise £200 and we will buy a set of books so in that way they are influencing the stock. We would fight against that because we have people who are paid to make decisions about stock and they're not.

The literature review reveals that the involvement of Friends groups in stock selection is also a potential source of conflict in other countries. Dolnick (1996) alludes to one of the several problems associated with Friends groups, that were raised by librarians in the USA, saying that ‘our Friends are more concerned with book selection than with the needs of the library. They aren’t friends of mine (p.9).’

Other respondents presented detailed reasons why professional people should deal with stock selection, and why library staff are considered professionals in this area. Three librarians replied to the first question. Two librarians (in Councils 1 and 4) maintained that stock selection needs ‘a very catholic view’ and ‘good knowledge about books’, but Friends groups only have ‘one-sided interests’ in books and are not qualified to carry out book selection. One librarian (in Council 1) said that:

Selection of library stock is a very wide subject, and the trouble is if you let a group of people become too involved it tends to be very much one-sided. If you have people’s interests in a particular direction then you might only look at that, and I think you need a **very catholic view** on library stock.

Another librarian (in Council 4) considered that stock selection is closely related to users’ reading habits. Consequently, library staff, rather than Friends groups, should be responsible for stock selection.

Two librarians (in Councils 2 and 4) answered the second question. One librarian (in Council 2) explained that library staff were formally trained to deal with stock selection and to identify what the public demands on library stock are. She argued that:

They should not be allowed to influence. I think we are professional people who have been trained to do the job of selection, we do take notice of what the public in general is asking for, and I feel it would not be right to allow the Friends to have a strong influence on what kind of stock we add to our library, no more than any other user of the library, we as professional people should do the selection.

Sager (1984) confirms this claim, suggesting that stock selection should be left to library staff because they are specially-trained professional people. However, he also maintains that they should consult library users:

Selection is generally delegated to staff members who have special training or familiarity with a subject category. Those who do the decision-making should work with the public on a regular basis, so that they will be familiar with the type of information currently being sought (p.144).

Another librarian (in Council 4) claimed that Friends groups have neither the necessary experience, nor the whole picture of what interest the general public have in library stock, but that library staff do have such things. She stated that:

They have no experience of ... what people want. They've only experienced what they want themselves. Therefore many tend to buy what they want to read and not have the whole picture of what everyone wants.

One librarian (in Council 5) maintained that stock selection is closely related to library budgets. Library staff have the whole picture of library budgets for stock but Friends groups do not have any idea about library budgets. He claimed that:

The actual selection of the stock should be left to the professional people. We do get, in terms of [what] they might be able to say, what things in the stock need making up, gaps in the stock, perhaps there are not enough homework books or not enough local history books. Or one of the things that users have done over the years is comment on the provision of newspapers, periodicals and magazines, and often that is a point where they will sometimes influence, but it's sometimes on the basis of saying, well we can start taking [name of a newspaper], but because we have got a limited **budget** we will have to drop something in its place, so what do you suggest we drop? - which often draws a blank because nobody says they want to cut certain things, although that sometimes ... that may be dictated by..., in the past it has been, because there have been cuts in the budget.

Spiller (1971) supports this view, maintaining that the public could not deal effectively with spending book funds. Consequently, library professionals should carry out book selection. He states that:

It is very difficult for any individuals outside a small, central circle in a library system to evaluate just how well the available money is being distributed; and almost impossible for a member of the public, from his isolated and uninformed position. The responsibility lies squarely with those who plan and co-ordinate book selection in the area (p.10).

Seven people claimed that Friends groups should not be allowed to influence **policy on opening hours**. This is due to the fact that library staff have a strategic decision-making role, while Friends groups are lacking in knowledge about library staffing and operations. One librarian (in Council 4) talked about the role of library staff, stating:

Like with stock policy, I think there does need to be a strategic decision-making role retained by the professional staff to make sure there isn't imbalance in the opening hours or stock.

Another librarian (in Council 2) talked of Friends groups' lack of knowledge about the connection between opening hours and staffing, as follows:

I don't think they understand the staffing constraints, and I think they are likely to say 'we want the library open until 8pm every night', but they don't understand that we've only got a limited number of staff and they don't want to work until 8pm every night, so I don't think they understand the full picture.

Eight respondents (mostly librarians) claimed that decision-making on **library displays and exhibitions** is a role of library staff. They offered the following reasons for their claim: Friends groups have no knowledge about these areas; Friends groups are not very interested in being involved in these areas; their involvement in these areas has never been an issue in the library; they have their own space to publicise and promote their activities. Accordingly, their involvement in these areas, which are essential parts of library services, is beyond their scope; if they decide the contents of library displays and exhibitions, these can be biased. This stems from the fact that they have no idea about the interests of the users and the community; the library does not have much space for Friends groups to get involved. One librarian (in Council 5) presented one potential problem with involving Friends groups in these areas, stating:

There could be a concern that they might try to take over things in terms of policy, that they could be hijacked by some local discontent for some reason, that they could perhaps latch onto a certain policy that could be [hijacked]. I'm almost thinking like in America, where you have religious groups who tend to promote a certain thing and don't like a certain policy or don't like the content of something.

One librarian (in Council 4) regarded the attempt of Friends groups to get involved in these areas as interfering. He maintained that making the policy on these areas is the duty of library staff. Accordingly, Friends groups should not influence library staff doing such work. In his own words:

That decision would rest with the library management, not a Friends group, so **interference** in library policy in that respect. We wouldn't accept that, so it's never been an issue, but library management will run the library service, not a Friends group. ... if the Friends group was heavily dominated by left wing socialists for instance, and we put a display on drawing attention to a Government policy, I'm afraid we wouldn't be influenced by what the Friends group had to say about that because it would probably be our duty to make that policy, that new initiative or whatever it was, known to the public at large. It's like responding to the grumbles of any minority group, it depends what it is. I don't [think] they should be able to influence our **independence** to put up displays and exhibitions, so long as they are within the law and don't offend public decency.

Three staff and one group member were concerned about Friends groups influencing **library rules and regulations**. One librarian (in Council 5) claimed that the involvement of Friends groups in these areas could cause problems, i.e. making

library rules and regulations complex. This is because they have not worked in libraries. Consequently, they do not have knowledge of library services and these areas. She argued that:

I think as far as that sort of thing goes, we've been involved with it long enough that we know where we're going as far as rules and regulations, and I think if you asked other people to influence that you might start to cloud the whole thing and end up with something that would be too complicated.

Respondents perceived that deciding and changing these areas is not the role of Friends groups, but that of library staff or management. The reason for this is that library staff are paid experts. Accordingly, Friends groups could interfere with library staff or management by attempting to exert an influence on these areas. One junior manager (in Council 3) maintained that senior management should decide and amend these areas. This is due to the fact that they are part of the remit of senior management. She stated that 'I think if they had opinions, they would be listened to, but it's senior management who actually decide those things'. One librarian (in Council 4) considered Friends groups' involvement in these areas dangerous and not appropriate. This stems from the fact that exerting an influence on these areas means attempting to get involved in library management.

I think these are areas where it's not appropriate for a Friends group to have any say, to be honest. So I disagree, because they are starting to get involved in running the service and they're not to be involved in running the service. They're there to support, modify and suggest improvements. These sort of questions are actually getting involved in managing the Service, and that's a very dangerous area.

It was revealed that the majority of group members in this study claimed that their group should not be allowed to influence library rules and regulations. They considered that deciding these is not their role, but that of the library authority. This result stems from the fact that the members regarded library rules and regulations as essential parts of library services and operations, which cannot easily be changed. One group member (in Council 3) determined that library rules and regulations are decided by the central government. In her own words:

Rules and regulations are formally determined by the management structure in normal circumstances, and that's what I would expect in the library service because they're made in the light of larger library rules from Central Government, or further up the line certainly, and governed by actual needs that we might not be aware of. So I don't think we should have any involvement in rules and regulations.

Two other respondents made this view clear, describing library rules and regulations as library by-laws, which are decided by the government. Accordingly, the government should incorporate these into the national law. One librarian (in Council 3) said that:

I don't think they would (change the regulations), because library by-laws are laws and they come from the Government. So unless they lobby Government about the library by-laws, I don't think so.

The next findings clarified the meaning of library by-laws. Many respondents perceived library rules and regulations as legal matters (some of them are related to safety issues), such as health and fire regulations. One librarian and councillor (in Council 3) perceived that library rules and regulations are usually related to Public Library Acts. These findings are reflected by one librarian's opinion (in Council 1). She claimed that Friends groups should not influence what she viewed to be **library rules and regulations**. The reason for this is that, at the moment, these are considered **reasonably sensible**. She said that:

Rules and regulations, they're two categories really but the by-laws have been set up for many, many, many moons and they are reasonably sensible, so that everybody that uses the library abides by them and everybody is comfortable with them: things like not eating or whistling. And then the other rules and regulations are basically because if you sign a form to agree that I am borrowing these books under these terms, that's all they are, terms, and you agree to them. I don't think the Friends could change that. They are both there for a reason.

Regarding the claim that 'Friends groups do not have knowledge or experience of library services', the study found that this is not always the case: there were group members who do have knowledge or experience of library services. One interviewee, who introduced herself as a former (public library) librarian, joined her group with the expectation of undertaking voluntary work in the library. Consequently, the study suggests that library staff and management should look for group members who have knowledge or experience of library services, such as retired librarians and teachers, and that they should involve those people in some areas of library policy-making. For example, former teachers, who might know about books for children or teenagers, can be involved in stock selection, although they should not take full responsibility for the selection.

#### 4.4.2 Friends groups are only familiar with part of the library services

Respondents claimed that Friends groups should not be allowed to influence library policies (areas) such as stock selection policy, library rules and regulations, library displays and exhibitions and decisions on library closure. This is because these policies (policy areas) are generally applied centrally to all the libraries in one council. However, a Friends group is usually involved in only one library. As a result, they are not aware of the workings of the centrally-controlled library services. One group member (in Council 3) expressed her view on **stock selection policy**. She seems to say that, as Chambers and Stoll (1996: 1) reveal, 'in some (library) authorities all the selection is ultimately determined centrally'. As a result, the groups which only know about their own library users' interests in books should not be allowed to influence the policy. She argued that:

Because there are a lot of small libraries in [name of a council], the stock circulates a lot, so decisions made in this library would influence a whole lot of libraries. If we said we love romantic fiction in this library, then some poor library somewhere else would eventually get Mills and Boon coming out of their ears.

Three respondents maintained that Friends groups should not be allowed to influence **library rules and regulations** for the following reasons. These regulations are laid down centrally, and apply to all the libraries in a council, yet Friends groups belong to one particular library. Consequently, a group should not request the amendment of a particular rule or regulation for its library users' interest. This stems from the fact that the amendment could badly affect other users' library services. One librarian (in Council 2) said that 'the council has a policy. You can't have one rule in one library and one rule in another. So it's got to come from up high'. One junior manager (in Council 1) held a similar view, claiming that the same rules and regulations should apply to all the libraries in one council. Accordingly, the library management should decide these. In her own words:

I disagree with that because, again, I think that is something quite apart from anything else. It has to be across the county. You can't have different rules in different libraries, and I think that it's policy that must be made from above.

Another librarian (in Council 2) expressed a similar view, maintaining that Friends groups should influence minor local decisions on library rules and regulations, but not other decisions, such as fees and charges, made by the council. However, this is not always the case, because in Council 5, the library authority recently reduced service

fees and fine charges following consultation with its Friends groups. This is discussed in detail in **section 5.7**. Bundy (1998) also reveals that Australian groups lobbied councils for a reduction in photocopying charges. (However, it is not clear whether they succeeded or not.)

Similarly, one librarian (in Council 2) claimed that Friends groups should be allowed to influence **policy on library displays and exhibitions** at a local level, but not at council level. This means that they should get involved in a local library's displays and exhibitions, but not influence the policy at council level. In her own words,

I think this is a very local thing, exhibitions and displays, a lot of them we put on ourselves, so if they wanted to suggest something they could. So I would say on a local level I agree, yes they could, but not on a Council level.

Three people claimed that Friends groups should not be allowed to influence **decisions on library closure** if these decisions were made as part of a bigger library plan. This is because they are often not aware of such a plan. One junior manager (in Council 5) maintained that although these decisions might affect their library use, Friends groups should not attempt to reverse them. Furthermore, he emphasised that Friends groups and the public should accept these decisions. He stated that:

It would be difficult sometimes, because if the library service itself was in support of closing that library for whatever reason, either because it's not being used or it's in the wrong place or something like that, we would hope that the User group would support our decision, even though it might affect people locally and affect that User group, we would hope that they would actually see that we were doing it as part of a much bigger thing, and they would understand our reason behind it. So I hope that they wouldn't go against us on something like that.

The view that 'Friends groups should not be allowed to influence library policy because they are only familiar with part of library services' in a council, raised many issues. Firstly, this reflects the nature of a Friends group: a local group basically established in order to support and improve its library services. Consequently, this is the reason why a borough or countywide federation of Friends groups should be formed, for supporting and consulting for all library services. Furthermore, a national Friends of Libraries organisation is to be formed to support and consult for library services at a national level. Secondly, library staff and management should let Friends groups know how library services operate in a council, so that they can work for library service improvement. The literature review underpins this claim. One group in Sheffield bought books from its own funds, with the intention of improving their

library stock. However, they realised later that they could not permanently keep the books at their library. The group was not told in advance that there is a policy covering such matters in libraries: all stock is circulated around branch libraries. This incident caused conflict between the group and library staff. The group's unpublished report (Walkley Library Action Group, 1997: 2) states the incident in detail:

By far the biggest issue has been that of ownership. We were naïve enough to think that all the books we purchased from funds raised by Walkley residents would stay at Walkley Library. We soon discovered that not only was this not the case, but that unless we paid to reserve the books we purchased, we may not even get to see them first, as they were put into the library system and allocated to whichever library did have them on reserve. Perhaps, not surprisingly, this has given rise to many arguments and discussions.

#### 4.4.3 Democracy: the role of elected members

Five respondents (librarians) considered the influence of Friends groups on library policy as 'dangerous', 'interfering', 'problematic', 'a negative influence' and 'going against library management's and councillors' views on library policy'. The senior manager (in Council 3) perceived the influence of Friends groups on library policy to be counter-productive and a negative influence. Thus, he maintained that elected members should make library policy. In his own words:

I think there is a danger that there can be **a counter-productive, a negative influence** if you like, in terms of the influence that the Friends groups have, and that has happened, I feel, with at least one of our groups, that they are perceived locally maybe as a small clique of people, a rather elite band of people who meet within the library. There may be a view that they are a little bit exclusive in their outlook. But the main danger, I think, to be guarded against, is for them to feel that they have an absolute right to say, if they raise some money to buy books, and not many of our Friends groups do that, but if they do that, to say what books they will actually buy for the library, then I think you have to be very careful in all you are doing with the Friends groups that that line isn't crossed, as it were, that library policy is one thing and is something that is determined by the councillors.

Respondents gave their views on each library policy area. Many respondents claimed that Friends groups should not be allowed to influence **stock selection policy**. This view was put across very strongly. They argued that even library staff, who have the necessary experience and an overall picture of library stock, should not influence the selection policy. One librarian (in Council 1) argued that:

I'm not sure how that would work, because even library staff can't influence library stock at the moment, and I think that if Friends were to take that on, the staff might feel that they were being discriminated against, because

they'd not even been asked to do that. It again seems a little bit unfair, because at least staff in libraries have some experience of stock and what our readers want, but the Friends have no idea at all of the whole picture. The staff have **the whole picture**, not just individual, the whole picture from young to old, and we're not allowed to do that. I wouldn't like that.

Another librarian in the same council held the same view, stating:

The staff are not allowed to do that and they have the overall picture, so that if Friends felt that they could start influencing stock, staff would not be too happy about that.

Yet another librarian (in Council 4) added:

It's nothing to do with them. Strongly disagree because it's nothing to do even [with] us, so it's nothing to do with them. We don't have much say in what stock we get. So they would certainly have no say at all in it.

They seem to claim that councillors should have a role in selecting library stock and making decisions on such matters. One councillor (in Council 1) supported this claim, maintaining that:

Library policies are influenced more by councillors on the council than the local groups. The only thing that we take from local groups is not a survey, but we ask them what titles they would like, that is the only participation, but the method and the way the library service is delivered to the best of our ability, but the councillors are the ones that really are the people that actually determine the library at the end of the day. The actual influence on the library is more from the councillors and not from the general public, which is wrong.

It was revealed that the view, 'stock selection is not a role of staff', was contrary to the findings of Usherwood (1993), who reveals that most respondents (elected members) considered that stock selection was a professional task, and thus, library staff ought to deal with stock selection. This result is in line with the following findings. Firstly, the respondents who disagreed with the involvement of Friends groups in library stock selection were mostly from Council 1. Secondly, regarding the involvement of Friends group on library policy-making, the views of the respondents in this council, particularly those of councillors, were very conservative. The third finding reflects these results. Thirdly, until the 1970s in the UK, elected members and library committees took a considerable interest in library materials (Usherwood). Hence, the respondents in this council perceived that councillors should have a role in selecting library materials. In addition, in line with Usherwood's view that the censorship issue cannot be separated from the subject of stock selection, the respondents above also considered censorship matters. Usherwood discovers that with

regard to stock selection, 'a number of (his study's) respondents (elected members) were aware of the dangers of censorship' (p.69). One respondent's view below underpinned the claim. Two councillors (in Councils 2 and 5) raised the censorship issue regarding the influence of Friends groups on stock selection. One councillor (in Council 2) maintained that stock selection is very complex, as it can relate to other matters such as censorship. Consequently, Friends groups should not be allowed to influence stock selection policy, because they do not have knowledge of such matters. Instead, she suggested that if there is a censorship issue, councillors should make a decision based on professional advice. She presented one case that occurred in her council, stating that:

It raises a lot of moral issues about whether you ban certain things, and that I believe to be the proper decision to be made by councillors on professional advice, not on the prejudices of a few people. We've had something recently, 'Do you know about David Irving?' He's a man who's written a number of books, mostly saying Adolph Hitler didn't kill the Jews, and that's very contentious. We had some approaches both in [names of places A and B], both of which have quite a big Jewish population, saying these books should be banned from public libraries, and some people in [place B] had come out saying yes they should be. We took it up in [place A] and then again with the User groups. The User groups, I think, had never come to a conclusion about it, but we took it up in [place A] and professional advice from [place A] was that complying with law that we were not banning them, we might not be promoting them, and in certain areas we might be keeping them as restricted stock, but we wouldn't be banning them. That decision I believe to be properly made by elected members on professional advice, and would not have been influenced by the User groups.

One councillor (in Council 3) claimed that Friends groups should not be allowed to influence **policy on opening hours**. This is because making the policy is a role of councillors: 'I think we have to decide what the opening hours are for libraries'. Another councillor (in Council 2) explained why councillors or a council should make the policy. The reason for this is that the council decides the policy under the consideration of council budgets, library usage, and a strategic view of library services. These findings are very much in line with the perceptions of the respondents (elected members) in Usherwood's study (1993). They considered that finance and policy issues, such as charging for services, **increasing opening hours**, and staffing, should be decided by elected members. However, the present study differed from Usherwood's study in terms of the number of respondents who held such a view. In the present study only two out of the 12 councillors held this view, whilst in Usherwood's study most of the elected members did. This discrepancy was firstly attributed to the fact that many of the current groups are actively operating and getting involved in library services in the UK. The majority of the councillors

recognised the value of the operations and activities of Friends groups. The evidence proving that councillors favoured Friends groups, and recognised the value of these groups, is that (as the constitution of Friends groups in Council 5 reveals) councillors are involved in many Friends groups in the UK. Secondly, as mentioned above, there is a current emphasis on user consultation on library services in councils across the UK. Consequently, the councillors who participated in the present study were more in favour of the influence Friends groups had on policy on opening hours.

Three respondents (two of them councillors) considered **library displays and exhibitions** to be a role of the council. One librarian (in Council 2) claimed that decisions on such matters should be made by the library staff or by the council. She said that:

They should not be allowed to have a strong influence on displays, but again that is something that is either decided by the local staff or by the wider, the bigger council.

One councillor (in Council 2) explained why this should be the case. He regarded these areas as part of the council's notice board, and maintained that information about council policies, or the council's future development, is distributed to the public through these areas. In his own words:

I don't really think they have a role in that ... because a lot of the displays and exhibitions are giving information about council policies or future development, and I think that particular thing is better controlled by the council.

This point is very much in line with the views of some elected members in Usherwood's (1993) study. He states that some Labour party members considered that 'library displays should be used as a way of informing people about local issues (such as a council's public services and town plan)' (p.76).

Three respondents claimed that Friends groups should not be allowed to influence **library rules and regulations**, because making and amending these are a role of the council. One librarian (in Council 2) argued that:

Most library rules and regulations are driven by council by-laws and tend to be comprehensive. They tend to cover most of our charities, and the Friends groups in a sense won't influence that.

Another librarian (in Council 1) also held a similar view. He claimed that:

We are there to sort out the policy, and they are there to support us and to fund-raise for us, so we would make the policy, and when I say we, this comes from the politicians to library management, and then we have to interpret that policy and implement that policy.

Another librarian said that even staff could not change these. She seems to say, as the librarian above claimed, that changing rules and regulations is a role of the council. Two librarians supported her view, maintaining that councillors should decide and amend library rules and regulations, and a library manager implement those decisions. They stated that:

Library rules and regulations are actually made and approved by the councillors so that they are by-laws. Obviously, if some particular by-law could seem extreme then it would be a question of having to persuade the councillors to change that by-law (A junior manager in Council 5).

Rules and regulations are difficult things. They are very hard to change. It's a very lengthy procedure and process to get the by-laws and rules and regulations changed, and it's our political masters who make those decisions, and we as managers then implement those decisions (A Group Librarian in Council 1).

Four respondents claimed that Friends groups should not be allowed to influence **decisions on library closures**. They considered that making such decisions is a role of the council or councillors. This is because library closure is closely connected with a council's budgets, and it is councillors who are mainly in charge of such matters in a local authority. One councillor, who also is a member of a Friends group (in Council 5), said that:

We (the group) can lobby, but at the end of the day the politicians and the new cabinet structure that is set up in [name of a place] has got the purse strings, and the only reason they would want to close a library is because they hadn't got the money to run it, therefore we could have our say and we would point out perhaps you shouldn't close library X, close library Z, or perhaps we could point out ways that money could be saved elsewhere, but at the end of the day the councillors on that cabinet have got to make the final decision and somebody has to, but at least we could have our say.

#### **4.4.4 The influence of Friends groups on library policy makes great demands on library budgets**

Many respondents maintained that Friends groups should not be allowed to influence library policy, particularly policy on opening hours and decisions on library closure. This is due to the fact that the influence of Friends groups in these areas makes great demands on library budgets. Three group members and one librarian claimed that Friends groups should not be allowed to influence **policy on opening hours**. This is

because increasing opening hours is a matter of library staffing, and this is closely related to library budgets. Therefore, if funds for staff's extra hours are not found, Friends groups should not attempt to influence the policy. This view can be conceptualised as 'no funds, no staff (thus, no more opening hours) and no influence'. This is very much in line with the concept 'no funds, no library and no influence (on decisions on library closure)', which emerged from the discussion about the influence of Friends groups on decisions on library closure. However, it could be suggested that the group members' views above were the library management's or the council's claim, rather than their own belief. This is because generally library users and Friends groups are in favour of an increase in opening hours. As a result, the members' views meant that Friends groups could find it hard to influence policy on opening hours, unless budgets for staff's extra hours are found.

Regarding the influence of Friends groups on policy on opening hours, there were other views concerning library budgets. Four respondents (three librarians and one councillor) maintained that Friends groups should be allowed to influence the **pattern of opening hours**, but not **total hours**. This is because increasing total hours requires extra funds. One senior manager (in Council 1) argued that:

They could influence opening hours. They could influence the selection of the periods of time that we are open within the maximum that we have to provide the services from that particular community library. What they could not influence is an extension of those hours. So they could influence the pattern, Monday through to Sunday within X hours per week, but they couldn't influence additional hours coming into the service, because that requires funding to provide it.

The senior manager (in Council 5) also held a similar view.

The reason for 'only agree' is because if User groups say we want to open an extra whole day each week [then] there's not the money to do that, so their ability to influence that is limited. If they say, well instead of opening on that afternoon we would rather you opened on that afternoon, then that's far more possible.

This view was echoed by one councillor (in Council 2) who said:

I indicated before **not on total opening hours** but on which day of the week they can have some influence, so disagree on [total] hours, but agree on days of the week.

However, in regard to opening hours, the study discovered an interesting feature occurring around public libraries in the UK, which is contrary to the respondents'

strong views above. In recent years, many library authorities have increased total opening hours, particularly by opening their central library on Sundays (this is described in detail in **section 4.2.4**). It seems that they did not increase the hours purely because library users or Friends groups strongly requested this, but because of the following consideration. If they did not open their central library on Sundays, an event which is becoming a trend in public libraries in the UK, then their library services might be seen as being left behind those of other library authorities. It can be argued that a council or a library authority is very strict about library users' and Friends groups' demands on the change of a particular library policy, but they often easily amend the policy thanks to the influence of other factors, such as the launch of National Standards for Public Libraries, library performance indicators, and a change of local council body. One group member (in Council 4) presented another factor, and his view supported the above claim.

We did manage to cause a change in policy ourselves by threatening to buy books. When they said there was no money for books, we said, 'All right, we'll use our own money to buy them', and they said, 'No, you can't do that!' and we said, 'Of course we can!' and the next thing we know money is available to buy books, because they didn't want the embarrassment of it becoming public knowledge that the Friends group was buying books for the library.

Regarding the influence of Friends groups on **decisions on library closures**, seven respondents expressed their views as 'no funds, no library and thus, (should have) no influence'. This means that if there are not enough funds to operate an entire library system, some of the branch libraries should be closed, regardless of the public's objection to the decisions. Thus, in this case, Friends groups should not attempt to influence the decisions. One councillor (in Council 5) maintained that if there is not a budget consideration, Friends groups might have an influence. However, if there is a budget to be considered they should have no influence. He argued that:

I think they would influence a decision on library closure. I would agree with that to a great or small extent. When it comes down to budget considerations, if it was that there wasn't a budget consideration and it was service led, I would see that they would have bigger influence than if it was a budget consideration, because if the service has to save £1/2M and it has to make a cut, then it has to make that cut. If it was that the service didn't have to make a cut, and that it was just operational, and then we had representations from users to actually say, 'Well! We should be able to keep this open', then we would look at it, but on budget considerations then I suppose all logic and all representation goes out the window. At the end of the day the book has to be balanced and they may have influence on it if we were closing two and it was one or the other, but it's very difficult on budget considerations when you have a finite budget.

The senior manager in the same council supported the councillor's claim: In his own words:

I can't say 'strongly agree' to that because if there are budget pressures or other circumstances which user groups either don't understand or just won't accept then their ability to change that or the degree of influence they have needs to be diminished.

Interestingly, some group members also shared this view. One group member (in council 5) said that influencing decisions on library closure '*(it all) comes down to money and staffing. The things we [they] cannot influence in the library really are if it comes down to finance*'. However, it was discovered that the respondents' views above were simply their belief, and that in reality this is not always the case. This is due to the fact that many Friends groups were formed to challenge the belief and some of them influenced decisions on library closures, which were made after budget considerations.

However, there is also literature confirming how Friends groups found it hard to influence decisions on library closures when these decisions were made following budget considerations. One group in Sheffield, together with a Residents Association, strongly campaigned against decisions to close its library due to budget saving plans. They even offered to pay the annual building costs of their library (more than £6,500). However, the Director of Leisure Services rejected their offer, and the library (building) was permanently closed in 1995 (Library Association Record, 1996).

However, it was revealed that not all library managers agreed that Friends groups should not attempt to influence decisions on library closures or opening hour cuts that were made after budget considerations. The senior manager (in Council 3) suggested that Friends groups should undertake campaigns against the council's library budget cuts. This is because his library management does not want library budget reductions. This finding stems from the fact that in general, county councils have not experienced huge library budget cuts or furthermore, massive library closures (the two county councils in this study secured most of their libraries, whilst in other (metropolitan) borough councils, many libraries were closed or threatened with closure in the 1990s.) The manager stated that:

It would depend on the context, the prevailing conditions. If we were in a situation where we were facing budget cuts then yes I think they could have a strong influence.

#### 4.4.5 Friends groups are unrepresentative

**Section 4.2.2** discussed why respondents considered their group(s) to be representative of library users and the community. This section describes why some other respondents argued that Friends groups are neither representative of all library users nor of the community.

Ten people (seven librarians, two councillors and one group member) regarded 'Friends groups as self-appointed or unrepresentative groups'. The number of respondents who held this view differed according to each council. The study discovered that there were more respondents from Councils 2, 4, and 5 who held this view than from Councils 1 and 3. In the former councils, there were conflicts over library policy between Friends groups and the library authority. In contrast, in the latter areas, there was no friction between them. In particular, five people (four library staff and one councillor) from Council 2 held the above view. In this council, several branch libraries were threatened with closure in the 1990s, but as a result of Friends groups' strong campaigns, no library was closed. It can be argued that their campaigns succeeded because they reversed their council's decisions. However, the study revealed that several respondents had reservations about Friends groups campaigning to keep libraries open, because they perceived these groups to be unrepresentative of the community. One councillor (in Council 2) expressed this view, as follows:

They tend to be comprised of vocal, normally middle class people. One of the problems is about listening too closely to just Friends groups, because they are not always fully representative of the community as a whole, but that's basically what they are.

One librarian in the same council offered a similar view to the one above, arguing that:

The Friends groups, ... [are] inevitably unrepresentative groups of predominantly middle class, white, conservative people who elect themselves as spokespeople on behalf of people who use libraries, and some Friends groups, but not all, will have come into existence as a response to the threat of a library closure.

Fletcher and Staniland (1997) also claim that 'inevitably' Friends groups are to be considered non-representative of the community because 'involvement is based on the commitment and availability of individuals' (p.4). The literature review reveals that Friends groups in other areas such as park services are also considered

‘unrepresentative’. Greenhalgh & Worpole (1996) state that regarding the operation of park Friends groups, many authorities are wary about the unrepresentative nature of these groups. This finding reveals that the operation of Friends groups in any area is followed by concern about the unrepresentative nature of these groups.

One librarian (in Council 2) outlined the problems of Friends groups not representing the whole community and all library users. She stated:

There is the danger that they think they can dictate what happens and that they speak as if they were the only voice, when in fact they are not fully representative of the full community in the area, or the different types of user. They really reflect one, possibly old fashioned type of library user; not always, they are changing. I think that’s the main thing, but they are not fully representative of the full range of users.

The senior manager in the council evoked some other problems, as follows:

They should not be dominating or monopolising that process. They hi-jack the label of community spokespeople and through their behaviour, sometimes they will squeeze out other perspectives. So the issue really is one of equity. Is it fair that a key public service can be influenced by a small number of people?... The people who shout the loudest, the people who have most to say, are the Friends, but they’re only a small part of the community.

Yet another librarian’s view in the council revealed that these perceptions of Friends groups being unrepresentative stem from major discrepancies between the Friends groups and the library management or the council. She said that the Friends groups’ campaign to keep their library open was detrimental to library services as a whole. She stated that the disadvantage of Friends groups in her area was:

They campaigned to keep one of the libraries open in [name of a place]. And they succeeded. It was actually detrimental to the library service as a whole because we really couldn’t afford to run 13 libraries across the whole borough. We are spread too thinly and they could have concentrated resources on fewer sites, and I think that elected councillors should have had the guts to make that decision, but then I guess they would lose votes if they had gone against the people who voted them in. I do feel strongly that there are councillors that have been elected and council employees who have been appointed to do this job, and the Friends are self-appointed, nobody asked them to form the group and we’ve had no say in who is the chair or who is on the committee or anything.

The Internet search reveals that in Council 2, there are Friends groups in other areas, such as parks and music. Interestingly, the operation of Friends of Park groups is contrary to the current situation surrounding the involvement of Friends of Library groups in the council’s services. It was mentioned above that in the council, there are

serious conflicts over library services between Friends groups and library staff or the council. However, according to Greenhalgh & Worpole (1996), one park Friends group is regarded as a good model for community involvement in the council's park services in the UK. They state that the group has even developed its own management plan for its park.

One librarian and one councillor from Council 4, in which some branch libraries were closed in the 1990s, considered their groups to be unrepresentative of the community. Their views were much the same as the above. One junior manager offered the view that one group's claim that its library should be kept open, was illegitimate. The reason for this is that the group was not representative of its community. He stated that:

The disadvantages, I think, come from some of the things we've talked about, for example, if a group comes into being and it doesn't genuinely represent the community on whose behalf it speaks, then clearly, to a degree, anyone who is involved in it could be an illegitimate body, and I think we talked earlier, didn't we, about if a Friends group articulated the case in a particular locality for a particular service to be maintained, but that detracted from general improvement across the library system, then they can skew the balance, and I would want to be clear that library managers should retain the need to take an overview.

One junior manager (in Council 5) expressed a similar view to the above. She maintained that her groups' claim regarding library services is not always acceptable. This is due to the fact that they are not representative of their community. She stated:

If you get groups with strong characters in them, they can be led down a particular path, which isn't always necessarily helpful. You can unfortunately, because the groups tend not to be representative because they haven't been set up, we haven't said we want this, this and this sort of person. The groups do effectively tend to be at the moment older people, older white UK people predominantly because they have tended to be users, people who are used to using library services, although they may still not be aware of all the facilities that are available, so they can be very unrepresentative.

One senior manager in Council 3 also claimed that his groups should not be allowed to influence library policy because they were unrepresentative. He considered that they were only representative of their membership, commenting:

They are not necessarily representative of their community. They are representative of themselves and their membership, and their membership may well be, at one particular time it may only be 20 people. They are not elected by the local community; they are self-appointed. So we can't agree, I think, that they should have any undue influence and certainly not over such an area, which is as important, I think, as displays and exhibitions, which can arouse, as you may be well aware, very strong feelings within the community.

In Council 3, no single librarian or councillor, bar the senior manager, held such an opinion. However, one group member did take the view of the unrepresentative nature of Friends groups. Her statement below reflected the reason why nobody except she and the manager held such a view. She said that they had been very careful not to attempt to influence library policy, because they regarded themselves as a self-appointed group. This effort resulted in a favourable view of Friends groups on the part of library staff and councillors. In her own words:

I think that any self-appointed group, and that's all we are, is in danger of treading on toes that they're not really entitled to tread on, which is why I've been so careful to say all the time, I wouldn't try to influence policy in the library.

From these findings, it can be argued that the respondents' perception of the unrepresentative nature of Friends groups is a subjective judgement, although the following claim is true: Friends groups normally consist of white, middle-class, conservative and elderly people. Their membership is also small in comparison with the total number of library users and the community as a whole. However, the view of the unrepresentative nature of Friends groups might not be entirely applicable. This is because such a perception is more likely to emerge from respondents who have experienced conflict between Friends groups and the library authority over library policy. The majority of respondents from councils where there was no friction, did not hold such a view. The following findings illustrate this case.

In Council 1, the view of the unrepresentative nature of Friends groups was lacking. This stems from the fact that in this council there had been no serious threat of, or actual library closure in the 1990s. The library staff, who also chaired some groups, established most of the groups that exist in this area. Furthermore, no significant conflict had occurred between the library staff and Friends groups. Therefore, the staff very much favoured Friends groups, and consequently, did not see them as self-appointed or unrepresentative groups. One group member's view explained why the view of the unrepresentative nature of Friends groups was lacking in this council. She said that:

It's purely a social affair and there's no influence or motive behind any of it for the meeting we have. No aim to do anything special. It's just a meeting and you discuss it afterwards and ask questions. We just have things that interest people.

#### 4.4.6 Attempting to influence library policy is considered political

The study revealed that many group members were highly concerned about their group being regarded as a political group. One member (in Council 5) claimed that Friends groups should not attempt to influence library policy. For Friends groups, undertaking activities beyond promoting and raising public awareness of library services could be considered a political action. She argued that:

What the Friends of the Library (User) groups try to do is magnify this, to influence people that the libraries are a massive source of information and knowledge, and they should use them. It does not go beyond that, it is totally apolitical.

Another member in the same council, who considered the operation of her group apolitical, suggested that Friends groups do lobby for changes in library policy, but should not carry out political campaigns. She meant that Friends groups should not involve party politics in their lobbying campaigns. This is because a couple of councillors actively participate in Friends groups in her council.

Two group members did not agree that their group should influence **decisions on library closures**, because decision-making is a matter for local politicians. They viewed that involvement in such affairs can be seen as political. One member (in Council 5) said: *'that (influencing decisions on library closure) will never be an issue for Library User groups. That decision would always be made by the Council'*. Another member (in Council 1) also strongly disagreed with her group influencing these decisions. She regarded her group as a small, friendly group, which does not intend to get involved in politics. She considered influencing these decisions to be a political gesture. Therefore, she regarded decision-making on library closure as a role of councillors. In her own words:

We can't do anything about that either. We're too small, we're just a friendly group and we have **NO** (expressed very strongly) influence at all about anything. ... I suppose that the county councillors can do that, but not us.

The study discovered the reason why the group members were very concerned about their group being perceived political, even though they often carried out political campaigns. They considered that if they were seen to be political, they could not attract many people to their activities. This is because people are reluctant to join political activities. Accordingly, the groups could not achieve their aims and objectives.

#### 4.4.7 Under-usage of the library

One councillor (in Council 3) maintained that Friends groups should not attempt to influence **decisions on library closure** if the decisions were made ‘due to the under-usage of the library’. He meant that if decision-makers have decided to close a library because of its under-usage, then the council has to close the library. This view can be conceptualised as ‘no usage (or low usage), no services and no influence.’ However, this is a highly controversial issue. The reason for this is that this view has caused conflicts between Friends groups and the council, and it has triggered the establishment of many Friends groups in the UK. The councillor claimed that:

It depends on the nature of the problem. The nature of the problem will determine how effective they are. That is to say, if they choose something that is clearly not going to succeed, for example a library where there is almost no usage that we have to close, they won’t succeed. If there is something that is in the balance, then they can be persuasive enough. So it depends on what they are challenging as much as the strength of their views.

### 4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the respondents’ perceptions of why Friends groups should or should not be allowed to influence public library policy.

With regard to the above question, it was revealed that the unrepresentative nature of Friends groups was the most debated issue. Respondents, particularly group members and opposition party members, considered Friends groups to be representative, because Friends groups were specialised in dealing with library matters from the users’ perspective; they consisted of a cross-section of people such as library users and people in the community. Consequently, they represented library users and the community. However, there were also respondents who challenged this claim. They regarded Friends groups as unrepresentative, because Friends groups had a small membership; they mainly consisted of white, middle-class, conservative and elderly people. Accordingly, they only represented a small number of library users and people in the community; they did not represent different types of users and people, such as young and middle-aged people, and ethnic minorities; they were not elected by the local community; their involvement is based on their commitment and availability (Fletcher & Staniland, 1997).

Greenhalgh and Worpole (1996) reveal that Friends groups in park services are also considered to be unrepresentative. However, in regard to Friends of the Library groups, the present study discovered that the view of the unrepresentative nature of Friends groups was subjective rather than objective, and thus cannot be accepted as a theory. The reason for this is that, firstly, such a view was mainly raised by the respondents (library staff and councillors) from three borough councils in which there were conflicts over library closure and the activities of Friends groups. In contrast, in (county) Councils 1 and 3, in which there was no friction between them, no one, bar one person, considered Friends groups to be unrepresentative. As a result, it can be argued that the view of the unrepresentative nature of Friends groups mainly arose from conflicts. The study found further evidence supporting this claim. One group in Council 2, in which Friends of the Library groups were heavily criticised as unrepresentative groups because of their small membership, has more than 500 members. In contrast, all the Friends groups established by the library authority in Council 5, which have only a small number of members, (between 7 and 12), are regarded as representative by the library authority and the council. This stems from the fact that each group basically consists of a cross-section of people such as councillors, library staff, and library users.

Consequently, the study suggests that the unrepresentative nature of Friends groups should not be over-emphasised. Regarding this claim, one councillor's view should be noted: basically, she held the view that Friends groups cannot be considered to be representative of all library users and the public. However, she emphasised that Friends groups should not be over-criticised for being unrepresentative. This is because Friends groups are equally as important as 'groups of bus or taxi customers', which are not necessarily representative of the public at large.

Regarding the issue of the unrepresentative nature of Friends of Park groups, Greenhalgh & Worpole (1996) emphasise that if the following elements of the operation of Friends groups become clear, the issue cannot be a problem any more. They maintain that:

Other authorities have been wary of friends groups, worried that they are unrepresentative. However, as long as all concerned are clear about the nature of the group, who it represents, what the broader policies of the local authority are, and where ultimate responsibility for decision-making lies, then friends groups can have a beneficial effect on the park (p.37).

These findings underpin the value of the operation of Friends groups, and raise the further question of how to operate Friends groups for the benefit of library services without causing conflict. The senior manager in Council 2, in which there has been friction over library policy between Friends groups and library staff, found a solution to this problem. He suggested having some rules or protocol for the activities and operation of Friends groups. In his own words:

I've written to the chairman suggesting that it might be helpful to have some protocols, some guidelines, some parameters so that front line managers in [name of a place] will feel a bit more confident when they interface with Friends groups about what front line managers can and cannot agree.

Knight (1998) reveals that his library authority already has such rules, called 'Golden Rules', in order to avoid friction between Friends groups and the library authority. The Rules are described in detail in **Chapter 8 Conclusions and Future Research**.

Hertfordshire County Council (2002) presents a rather different way of approaching the concern of the unrepresentative nature of community groups, by involving them in the council services. It is deemed that this method has many advantages, such as removing the above concern, because the members of the community group are selected to be representative of the people in the community. However, this approach could take a considerable amount of time and cost to establish, and is hard to operate. Hertfordshire County Council (2002) describes the method in detail below:

Working with the Hertfordshire Police Authority and two Hertfordshire Health Authorities, we (the council) established a 2,300 member Citizen's panel in the autumn of 1997. Members of the panel were independently selected to be representative of the population of Hertfordshire in terms of age, gender, background and race. The panel has been consulted on a wide range of issues (p.1).

Regarding the question as to whether Friends groups should be allowed to influence library policy, some respondents agreed with the idea because:

- Friends groups' involvement in library policy-making is a democratic process. The reason for this is that group members are library users and people in the community. Thus, they are familiar with local community needs regarding library services. They also consist of a cross-section of the community. Consequently, they are considered to be representative of library users and the community.
- Friends groups provide a different perspective on library services to library

management and councillors. The current emphasis on user consultation in library management results from this role of Friends groups.

The study discovered that some of the present Friends groups influenced library policy (areas), such as decisions on library closure, opening hours, stock selection, and library displays and exhibitions. This finding was very much in line with the following respondents' perceptions, which differed according to the policy areas.

Forty-two out of a total of 49 respondents, claimed that Friends groups should be allowed to influence decisions on library closure. (Among the 50 participants, one person who was interviewed over the phone did not answer the research questions with 'agree' or 'disagree'.) This was the highest approval rate given to any of the five library policy areas. This result revealed that, regardless of interview sample categories, the majority of the respondents favoured Friends groups influencing decisions on library closure. **Policy on opening hours** had the next highest approval rate. These results reflected the background to the formation of British Friends groups: most were formed following the threat of library closure or opening hour reductions (Smith, 1999; Whittaker, 1998). The present study discovered that the forty-two respondents favoured Friends groups influencing decisions on library closure, because Friends groups represent the community or because current library services and operation are inadequate. As a result, they can keep libraries open through their involvement in such decisions.

However, there were also some strong views that opposed Friends groups influencing decisions on library closure. Library staff and councillors summed up their view as 'no fund, no library and thus no influence'. In other words, if decisions on library closure were taken because of budget problems, Friends groups should not attempt to influence these decisions. The respondents who offered this view were mainly from two councils (4 and 5), in which a few branch libraries were closed in the 1990s. The study discovered that they supported their council's decisions on library closures. However, the study found that in Council 2, in which many branch libraries were threatened with closure in the same period, Friends groups reversed their council's decisions on library closure, even though such decisions were made because of budget problems.

It was also seen that Friends groups should have a role in influencing **policy on (patterns of) opening hours** because: Friends group members are library users and

they represent the community; the National Standards for Public Libraries request users' involvement; present libraries' opening hours are insufficient. As a result, they can keep the same opening hours. Many library staff and councillors maintained that Friends groups should be allowed to get involved in deciding and changing the patterns of opening hours, but not total hours. This is because changing the patterns of opening hours does not usually need extra funds, whereas increasing total hours does require additional funding.

Involving Friends groups in **policy on library displays and exhibitions** was favoured (by the respondents) after the two policies above. The respondents held the following opinions: firstly, Friends groups' views on library displays and exhibitions represent the public's opinions because they are representative of the community, and secondly, the involvement of Friends groups in these areas could lead to the positive development of library services. This is because through their involvement in such areas, libraries come into focus in the community, and non-staff (group members or users) often make better library displays and exhibitions.

The second lowest number of respondents agreed that Friends groups should be allowed to influence **stock selection policy**. The respondents perceived that group members are library users and thus, they are very keen on library stock. Consequently, they can make staff aware of ways to improve the stock by involving themselves in the policy. Furthermore, their greater involvement could lead to a wider choice of library stock.

In the case of **library rules and regulations**, there were more respondents who disagreed than agreed with Friends groups having an influence in these areas. This stems from the fact that people generally regarded library rules and regulations as fundamental to the operation of library services, and related to Public Library Acts, and legal matters such as health and safety. Therefore, they believed that these areas could not easily be changed. Most group members and library staff shared this view. However, six senior library management staff perceived that Friends groups should be allowed to influence these areas, because rules and regulations exist for better library services and use. It is deemed that they held such views because they are basically responsible for library services, and are in a position to implement such regulations.

There were also respondents who claimed that Friends groups should not be allowed to influence library policy. This is because:

- Friends groups do not have knowledge or experience of library services. They are not representative of library users and people in the community. Making and amending library policy is a role of elected members. Accordingly, they should not be allowed to influence all of the five library policy areas.
- They are only familiar with limited sections of library services. Thus, they should not be allowed to influence any of the policy areas, except that of (patterns of) opening hours. All the rest of the policies apply to all the libraries and thus, a change in the policies of one library could affect other libraries in a council.
- Attempting to influence library policy is considered to be political. Therefore, they should not be allowed to influence decisions on library closures.
- They should not be allowed to influence decisions on library closures which were made due to the under-usage of a library.
- The influence of Friends groups on library policy makes great demands on library budgets. Consequently, they should not be allowed to influence decisions on library closures or (total) opening hours.

There were respondents whose views lay somewhere in the middle of the two claims. They proposed the partial involvement of Friends groups in library policy, maintaining that Friends groups should be allowed to influence library policy to some extent, but library staff and management or councillors should make final decisions. They considered that Friends groups should make suggestions about library policy, but should leave final decisions with library staff and management or councillors. Knight (1998) suggests using this idea as a guideline for the operation of Friends groups, which may help the library authority and Friends groups to avoid entering into conflict.

The study revealed that there were more respondents who agreed than disagreed with Friends groups being allowed to influence library policy. As a result, it can be argued that influencing library policy can be perceived as a Friends groups' role. This is because there are more advantages than disadvantages regarding the influence of Friends groups on library policy. It is apparent that some of the perceptions of the disadvantages of involving Friends groups in library policy stem from conflicts between Friends groups and library authorities or councillors. However, as many respondents also saw the problems of Friends groups being involved in library policy-

making, it may conversely be argued that Friends groups should not play any role in influencing library policy. Consequently, it is important to seek the best way of involving Friends groups in library policy-making. This is discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter 5

# How do Friends Groups Influence Public Library Policy?

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of the investigation into the mechanics of the influence of Friends groups on library policy. The previous chapter dealt with a theoretical question, namely, why Friends groups should (or should not) be allowed to influence library policy. This chapter explores the practicalities of the influence of Friends groups on library policy, i.e. how Friends groups could influence library policy. There are slight differences between the previous chapter and this one. In the previous chapter the discussion focused on library policy. This chapter is concerned with the activities of Friends groups, namely the activities through which Friends groups influence library policy. Therefore in this chapter, the main theme of this study - the influence of Friends groups on library policy - is examined from the viewpoint of Friends group activities.

Much of the literature (Baker, 1994; Dolnick, 1996; Fletcher & Staniland, 1997; Payne, 1998) reveals that Friends groups generally carry out the following activities: fund-raising or financial support, lobbying or political campaigns, voluntary work, public relations and involvement in the community. Therefore, the investigation focused on these activities, and the participants were asked how their Friends group(s) could influence library policy through these or other activities. In particular, the investigation analysed how Friends groups, through each of these activities, could influence each of the library policy areas which were discussed in the previous chapter.

### 5.2 Fund-raising or Financial Support

The respondents revealed that their group(s) could have, or have had, an influence on library policy through fund-raising. One councillor and one librarian gave several examples of areas in which their group(s) had had an influence on library policy through fund-raising. The librarian (in Council 4) explained in detail what the groups had achieved through fund-raising. He maintained that it had resulted in a new library

and an IT point, the setting up of a borough-wide children's book festival, planning a family learning centre, and operating reader development activities. He stated that:

The fund-raising that was engaged in [name of place A] was a factor in achieving a new library. The fund-raising in [name of place B] led to the creation of the Children's Book Festival. Fund-raising in [name of place C] led to the creation of an IT point in the library; it's a small library and otherwise wouldn't have had one. Fund-raising in [name of place D] again is ensuring that a family learning centre is built on the site where the library is, which will amount to a substantial improvement to the library. Fund-raising in the Central Library has led to reader development activities. There's a whole raft of things, which have come from the Friends groups' fund-raising, that have made the staff realise ... that it's possible to do new things where there have been no budgets in the past. I gave you the example of the Book Festival earlier on. The initial fund-raising by Friends groups created a budget to run the Book Festival. The success of the Book Festival and its public support convinced councillors to provide mainstream budget monies to continue with the Book Festival. So there are a string of examples really from [name of a council] experience which make me say yes, Friends groups can to a great extent influence, through fund-raising, what happens in future.

### 5.2.1 Fund donations

Six respondents (five staff and one group member) claimed that their group(s) might have an influence on stock selection policy through **fund donations**. One librarian (in Council 2) maintained that if Friends groups made suggestions on the use of funds for particular collections by offering book funds, it could influence stock selection policy. She argued that:

The way that it could be influenced is if they come and say we've got £500 and would you like some art books, and we would say yes, that would be great, or we could say we would actually prefer some gardening ones or whatever.

One librarian (in Council 3) held a similar view. He claimed that Friends groups could influence policy on stock selection by providing book funds for insufficient collections, but that they could not make the final decisions. He stated that:

The only example that I can think of is that in a library where there are empty shelves in the junior library and we would like to fill them, and the Friends say 'we will give you some money to fill them'. We're working in the same direction. Now I don't know whether that is influencing things. Yes they are able and they can influence, but they will not govern or finally decide.

This view was reflected by one group member in the same council. The member revealed that her group donated book funds to spend on specific collections. However, she said that the group was able to get involved in selecting library stock because their library staff accepted their suggestions. She expressed her view, thus:

Because of the respect we have for [name of a person] it is unlikely that we ever would, we would say to her we have this money, where would it be best spent? However, when we gave money towards the children's books, I do recall that we were discussing where the money should go, and we as a group said to [name of a person], your children's section is very thin, and she agreed, and so we gave money to the children's section. So to that extent we are influencing, but we certainly wouldn't dream of influencing if it went against the librarians.

One group member (in Council 4) revealed that his group influenced **policy on library budgets** by threatening to buy books. In his own words:

We did manage to cause a change in policy ourselves by threatening to buy books. When they (council) said there was no money for books, we said, 'All right, we'll use our own money to buy them' and they said, 'No, you can't do that!' and we said, 'Of course we can!' and the next thing we know money is available to buy books, because they didn't want the embarrassment of it becoming public knowledge that the Friends group was buying books for the library.

### **5.2.2 Fund-raising makes library management take note of Friends groups' views**

One librarian (in Council 4) claimed that Friends groups could influence library policy through fund-raising because management staff could interpret this as a keen interest in the library. She said that:

It would show library management that there is an interested party in [within] the library in keeping the library open and supporting it. So they would be aware of this. It may influence them slightly.

Another librarian (in Council 3) developed this view further. She said that fund-raising or financial support could make library management take note of Friends groups' views on library services and operation. In her own words:

Because of the support, we take a lot of note about what our customers say about the service. So I think they can have quite a lot of influence politically about the worth and the value of the library service through their activities.

Yet another librarian (in Council 5) maintained that Friends groups could ask library management for minor changes in library policy as a result of fund-raising or financial support. He stated that:

They could say we've done the fund-raising to help support the library service, now you can sort of do this in turn for us; so yes, it could be possible, but only to a small extent.

One councillor (in Council 1) also held a similar view, claiming that fund-raising or financial support should be recognised, and that this in turn could affect library policy. He agreed that Friends groups could influence library policy through fund-raising, because 'they are putting an effort in and that effort has got to be appreciated, and it wouldn't be paramount, but they would influence it to a small extent'.

However, one Group Librarian (in Council 1) maintained that despite Friends groups asking a library authority for a change of policy as a result of their financial support, library policy would not be affected. In his own words:

I don't think that they could influence our policy. They could, for instance, say by their financial support, 'Purchase some books for us, much needed books or items of furniture'. But it wouldn't alter our policy, it might mean that we wouldn't need to buy a particular item for that library.

One librarian (in Council 2) held a similar view. She said that Friends groups' financial support could not affect decision-making on library services and operation. She strongly disagreed with Friends groups influencing library policy through fund-raising. The library authority would not make decisions based on funds provided by Friends groups. She stated that:

That sounds like if they give a certain amount of money, [then] we would go along with that. No. We wouldn't make decisions based on them offering us something.

### **5.2.3 No influence**

#### **5.2.3.1 Insignificant funds**

Six respondents said that fund-raising could not bring about change in library policy, due to the insignificance of such funds. These funds would not affect local or central government library budgets. One group member (in Council 4) said that:

The sort of money we can raise is not a great deal, and therefore it

would be a slight add-on [addition]; it should not take over the main funding sources for the library, i.e. the local authority or government grants. We're there to support, not take over.

The senior manager (in Council 1) confirmed their groups' offer as not being enough to affect library services. He added that the main library services should be funded by the local government rather than the public. He stated that:

I think that the level of activity that the Friends groups can undertake are [is] not going to provide us with great sums of money to provide the range of services that we provide. They provide the trimmings, the niceties and so on, but the core service has to come from the core funding.

The study revealed that, in comparison with Smith's (1999) survey results below, the amounts of funds that the present groups raised are insubstantial. Among eight groups (two out of the ten groups that were examined in this study did not provide their statistics on fund-raising), six groups raised between £150 and £500 a year. The remaining two groups raised £5,000 and £7,000 respectively.

**Table 1** Extent of fund-raising activities of Friends groups in the UK.

(Smith, 1999:11)

Purpose	Amount (1997/98)	Authorities	Total (£)
* Books	750-15,000	7	47,850
Staff	3,000-18,200	3	27,105
Equipment	100-10,000	14	21,700
Other	70-8,700	6	11,045

(\* Friends groups in seven authorities raised between £750 and £15,000 for books)

With regard to the small amounts of funds that Friends groups raise, Smith's (1999) view differs slightly from the views of the respondents above. He maintains that:

While these amounts may seem small in relation to the total expenditure of library services, they are significant in providing improvements in service for the users of particular libraries (p.12).

### 5.2.3.2 No fund-raising

One respondent in each interview sample category perceived that Friends groups could not influence library policy through fund-raising. In these instances fund-raising was not considered to be a Friends groups' role. One councillor (in Council 2)

claimed that Friends groups in her council did not regard fund-raising as their responsibility. Furthermore, they were not to carry out fund-raising if the funds they raised affected the council's library budgets. Therefore, they could not exert an influence on library policy through fund-raising. She said that 'if they realised the money they were raising had an impact on the policy [on library budgets], they would probably stop raising money'. One group member in the same council supported this claim. He strongly disagreed with Friends groups raising funds to provide financial support to libraries. He stated that:

No. I don't think they could (influence policy through fund-raising).  
... It's not their job (funding the library). It's the job of the local government to do that. I don't agree with that. No.

This opinion shows that different Friends groups have different operations regarding fund-raising. The literature (Murison, 1979; Wallace, 1968) reveals that one of the main reasons why Friends groups are established, is to raise funds and to provide financial support to the library. One group in Sheffield raised and provided substantial book funds to its library, in order to save the library when it was threatened with closure. One group member (Walkley Library Action Group, 1997: 1) states that:

The other threat to our library was that of under-usage. Again, we were concerned that lack of support from the community would be used as justification for reducing the opening hours of the library. In turn, this would result in even fewer customers and further reductions in hours, until the library closed altogether. We hoped that by improving the fabric of the building we may encourage people to use it, but were also aware that we had to have the right type of books available if we were to keep people coming back. Consequently, **we decided that the greatest proportion of the funds we raised would go towards the purchase of new books.**

The study discovered that this case contrasted with the views of two group members in Council 2. They maintained that although several libraries were threatened with closure because of a lack of funds in the 1990s, they did not attempt to support their library financially. They believed local and central government to be responsible for the complete funding of library services. One group member stated that:

In [Council 2] our view has always been that the libraries should be funded publicly, that we already paid for them through our Council Tax, and I don't think that in [Council 2] [we] were looking at a situation where Friends groups will be helping to run libraries. However, I think there are, according to the need, ... things that Friends groups can do.

However, the study discovered that this group did offer some funds to their library. Although the group did not generally provide much financial support, they did pay to have the library entrance refurbished, and also bought a clock and display boards. However, the group did not provide funds for stock purchases.

Another member in the same council revealed that her group deposited funds in a bank account for future activities, rather than offering them to her library. Over the past years the group had spent a significant amount of money fighting the council. She stated that:

We've done things for the library, but we like to keep quite a good balance in the bank in case we have to fight the council again, because, as I say, we did take them to court, and that did cost us a lot of money at the time. It's a fighting fund as well as anything else.

One councillor, also a committee member of a group (in Council 5), strongly disagreed with Friends groups raising funds in order to influence library policy. She claimed that her group was not in favour of fund-raising with the intention of influencing library policy. She said that:

I would hate us to go down that path. ... I would hate us to meet and be known as the people who raise the money to carry out what I believe is a very important policy and facility for [name of a place]. I don't want to go down that track of raising money.

### **5.3 Lobbying or Political Campaigns**

The literature (Frenchman, 1998; Smith, 1999; Usherwood, 1982; Whittaker, 1998) reveals that lobbying or political campaigning is the most common reason for establishing many Friends groups, and explains why it is a major activity in the UK. Bundy (1998) also discovers that Friends groups in Australia lobbied councils for improved funding, prevention of library closures, building branch and central libraries, refurbishment of libraries, a reduction in service charges, and extended opening hours. Regarding these lobbies, he further states that:

Apart from the example of friction between library staff and Friends over the closure of a branch, all of the comments about the involvement of Friends in lobbying and advocacy were positive. Some were distinctly enthusiastic (p.166).

Nineteen respondents (eleven staff, five group members and three councillors) considered that Friends groups could influence library policy through lobbying or

political campaigns. By undertaking these activities, influencing library policy was considered their main role. Eight out of the nine participants in Council 4 held this view. The study discovered that this finding stemmed from the fact that in this council, several libraries were threatened with closure, but two libraries, around which Friends groups were established, were saved. One group member in this council regarded lobbying as a vital role of Friends groups, particularly regional federations of Friends groups. He agreed that Friends groups could influence library policy through lobbying because, as he said:

we can have a great influence, which we have shown in what we've talked about before. So I think that's a vital role for a User (Friends) group, particularly the [Federation of Friends groups] more than the individual users, the [Federation's] job is definitely lobbying.

One councillor (in Council 2) revealed that one group has influenced **policy on the use of library space** by lobbying. She said that:

Another group might lobby for some sort of equitable division of space between books and IT. [Name of a library] is very concerned that large chunks of the library are now being given over to IT, with less room for books. So they [group members] are keeping up the pressure on that. I think they will end up with some sort of compromise, but it may be that if you didn't have the group, all the bookshelves would have been ripped out, and the whole place would have been completely full of computers.

One librarian (in Council 3) maintained that Friends groups could influence library rules and regulations if they were interested in them. They are lobby groups and thus, library management would listen seriously to them. One group member in the same council supported this view by giving one example, claiming that her group had influenced policy on building a new library. This finding is very much in line with Ferguson (1997), who states that 'two public library Friends groups (in Australia) have been able to achieve new library buildings as a result of campaigning' (p.334).

One group member (in Council 2) claimed that her group influenced the patterns of opening hours by campaigning. She argued that:

We have campaigned for longer opening hours, and although we haven't yet got longer opening hours, we have managed to change from one day to another when we get more people, so we have some small influence on that.

These findings are very much in line with Frenchman (1998). As a group member, she reveals that Friends groups often attempt to influence policy on opening hours.

She states that since her group was formed, the group has campaigned against opening hour reductions, and for increasing opening hours. (However, she does not state whether her group succeeded or not in this campaign.)

It was found that many Friends groups succeeded in changing the patterns of opening hours or increasing total hours. However, it was also discovered that not all groups were successful. One group member (in Council 4) revealed that although his group tried, they could not achieve good results, because his library authority denied their request. He argued that:

We've tried and we've had no effect. We've tried on a number of occasions to get the number of hours that the library is open to be increased, and the Local Authority aren't interested. They say they can't afford, it and that's the end of it. Our influence there has been non-existent, so we feel that we can't do anything about it, although we keep on trying.

There were respondents who considered the ways in which Friends groups could influence library policy through lobbying or political campaigns.

### **5.3.1 Lobbying councillors**

One librarian (in Council 1) claimed that Friends groups could lobby their MPs, and do everything in their power to save their library. One group member in the same council maintained that if branch libraries were threatened with closure, Friends groups and the community would campaign against these closures. It was discovered that Friends groups in Council 4 influenced library policy by lobbying councillors. One librarian revealed that the Friends groups influenced policy on library budgets. Another librarian stated that they influenced the policy by lobbying councillors, and that they campaigned through the local media. In their own words:

I use my examples again from earlier. We're in a position where the council in [name of a place] is going to put more money in the book fund. Friends groups campaigned and lobbied in favour of that. So they have had an influence.

They have done that, direct lobbying to council members and through the press and radio. They can do that.

It was revealed that Friends groups in this council were confident that they could influence councillors, and consequently influence library policy. The study discovered that this was because they had already exerted some influence on library policy. One member stated that they could influence library policy to a great extent

because ‘if we (they) got enough people interested locally, then we (they) could get on to the local councillor and make enough noise to have some influence’.

Another member (in Council 3) maintained that although Friends groups could not have a significant influence on library policy, they could, through lobbying, prevent decision-makers from proceeding with a library policy that was opposed to library service development. One librarian in the same council supported the above views. She maintained that although Friends groups in her area had not influenced library policy, they generally did have the capability to do so through lobbying. She said that ‘they have got the potential to.... We haven’t got a lot of examples of where it’s happened in [Council 3], but they have got that potential’.

Proctor, Lee and Reilly (1998) reveal that the most obvious reason why many library authorities closed a lot of branch libraries is due to financial problems. One librarian (in Council 4) suggested how Friends groups could influence decisions on library closure when there is budget consideration. He argued that if Friends groups attempted to protest against library closure, they initially had to lobby councillors to find funds for their library services. He stated that:

They could influence it if they could lobby hard enough to raise more money, but if they couldn’t find the money, we only ever close libraries as a last resort, unless they could change council policy at a higher level by persuading councillors to divert funds to the library, then ... They wouldn’t change it otherwise.

One Group Librarian (in Council 1) maintained that his groups influenced **decisions on library closures** by sending petitions to councillors, and that he favoured their continued influence on library policy. He argued that:

Over the years they’ve done all sorts of things for us, they’ve acted as advocates for the service, where they have written to our political masters, the county councillors, to say we don’t want this library to close.

As to influencing the policy, they have written in under the advocacy banner to influence policy, and I’m sure it’s worked, because no libraries were closed, and Friends of Libraries were very formidable. When the chairman of the committee who is there, deciding what he or she will do, whether to close a library or not, sees these letters coming in from various public groups, it all helps, so yes, they have had an influence on policy, and I hope they will continue to do so.

### 5.3.2 Lobbying or campaigns together with allies

It was revealed that Friends groups work with other people when they undertake lobbying or campaigns. The study found that in one council, opposition party members supported Friends groups' lobbying. One opposition party member (in Council 2) revealed that one group in her area has influenced policy on opening hours by lobbying, stating:

[Name of a Friends group] were [was] very enthusiastic for Sunday opening. It's quite [a particular ethnic community] round there and they were very keen on the Sunday opening, which we got. I wouldn't say it was entirely ... because **we lobbied** for it [too], but we certainly spoke up for that when it was being floated as an idea.

One group member (in Council 1) disagreed that her group alone exerted an influence on library policy. However, she argued that the group could influence library policy if they worked together with the community. She said that:

I don't think we can influence library policy at all, but if there was a campaign to shut the library, it would not only involve the Friends, but it would have to involve all the community. So if we're talking about 45 members in the Friends group, I would think they would have no influence at all.

### 5.3.3 Councillor participation in Friends groups

It was revealed that in Council 5, a few councillors actively participated in the activities of Friends groups. In this council, this situation was considered an important factor in Friends groups influencing library policy through lobbying. One Group Librarian agreed that Friends groups in her area could influence library policy because,

They are the representatives of a community and because generally, we've got local councillors on two of my three user groups, and they are very keen to be seen to take knowledge of the local community needs.

One councillor's view revealed how elected members in this council were keen on Friends groups. He was very much in favour of Friends groups' views on library services and operation, and strongly agreed that Friends groups could influence library policy. He argued that:

As [elected] members we need to know what is exactly happening on the patch and in the service area, and if we don't get the views of the users, we make decisions at our peril, because if they are diverse or opposite to what

the users [think], then we're going to get flack. So we would rather take the views of the users, but ultimately we have to make executive decisions on the way forward, and other considerations may be in play which we have no part in, but ultimately I think they would have to a greater extent some political influence on decision-making, if it's at all possible.

It was revealed that in other areas councillors also favoured listening to Friends groups' views, and library staff approved of Friends groups' lobbying. The senior manager (in Council 1) maintained that councillors could listen to Friends groups' views because they were considered to be the power and voice of the local people. He said that:

They could influence that to a great extent, because the power of the local residents through the Friends group or as individuals, is the power that the decision-makers listen to, and the voice of opinion that decision-makers listen to. They are very aware of where there is particular lobbying going on and pressure groups' actions. Sometimes they react to that in a positive way, other times they will react in a negative way, but Friends groups certainly could influence that to a great extent.

#### **5.3.4 Judicial campaign**

Four respondents (three staff and one group member) maintained that their group has influenced library policy through a judicial campaign. The group applied to the High Court for a judicial review of the council's library closure plan. One group member (in Council 2) described a case whereby they have influenced library policy. In his own words:

That's what we've done. We made a political campaign, and we've succeeded in a political campaign, and we've succeeded in a judicial campaign because we were going to serve the council with a judicial review, but we didn't need to because we won the political campaign. But yes, that is what the library group could and should do.

Another member's view in the same council confirmed why Friends groups in this area used 'judicial campaigns'. There was a continuous threat of library closures, and the threat still exists today. The group member said that '*we have fought this in the past and won. We've fought it twice over the years and we would do so again*'.

#### **5.3.5 Management By Objectives**

One junior manager (in Council 5) maintained that the influence of Friends groups on library policy through lobbying, depended upon the level of group activities. Active groups, with clear aims and objectives, could influence library policy. The study

discovered that active groups have a particular background to their establishment. They are sometimes established by the public with particular aims and objectives, such as protecting their library from threat of closure, or building a new library. This is discussed in detail in **Chapter 6 Management Matters**. The manager argued that:

Depending on the group, if you've got a very active group, they could to a great extent, I think. It would very much depend on how active, how much push that the library group wanted to have, but yes, if you've got somebody who's prepared to go out and lobby everybody and do a lot of work. I think they could to a great extent.

### 5.3.6 No influence

Regarding the influence of Friends groups on library policy, four respondents (one librarian, two group members and one councillor) claimed that Friends groups could not make a significant difference through lobbying. One librarian (in Council 1) said that although Friends groups strongly attempted to influence library policy, they could not have much influence, because nobody would listen to them to any great extent. In her own words:

They could lobby and I'm sure they would try very hard, but I think they wouldn't necessarily achieve anything. So to some small extent somebody would listen, but I'm not sure they would make a great deal of difference.

One councillor (in Council 1) slightly agreed with lobbying, but he was very much opposed to the political campaigns of Friends groups. The study found councillors, in particular those in (county) Council 1, regardless of their party, to have very conservative views on the influence of Friends groups on library policy. However, they were in favour of the operations of Friends groups. The councillor expressed his view below:

They could not influence through political campaigns, nobody could do that in my book, but they could lobby their councillors. A concerted political campaign from one party would be frowned upon very much, because education is broad-based. It's not the product of any one. It's across all parties. So I disagree with them putting political pressure, but I agree they could give some extent to the lobbying side.

Two group members (in Councils 1 and 5) strongly disagreed that Friends group could influence library policy through lobbying or political campaigns. Firstly, they felt that Friends groups have nothing to do with influencing library policy through their activities. Secondly, it is considered a political issue for Friends groups to lobby with the intention of influencing library policy.

### **5.3.6.1 Under-usage of the library**

One councillor (in Council 3) maintained that the influence of Friends groups on library policy through lobbying, was dependent on what context was being challenged. He claimed that if decision-makers had decided to close a library because of its under-usage, then the council had to close that library. In this case, Friends groups could not possibly influence policy through lobbying. In his own words:

It depends on the nature of the problem. The nature of the problem will determine how effective they are. That is to say, if they choose something that is clearly not going to succeed, for example a library where there is almost no usage that we have to close, they won't succeed. If there is something that is in the balance, then they can be persuasive enough. So it depends on what they are challenging, as much as the strength of their views.

### **5.3.6.2 No influence on local or central government policy**

Two librarians (in Council 2) maintained that Friends groups could influence library policy through lobbying at local level, but not at borough or county level. They said that although local groups often influenced decisions on library closures, they could not influence the overall library policy of central or local government. The senior manager in the council claimed that Friends groups could influence library policy to a lesser extent, explaining:

Unless it's the explicit closure strategy, which is what gets them really going, I just don't think they are influential enough to get into the detail of issues and policy, and even where they do, they tend to do it locally, so a lot of users lobbying locally in one library might have a result there, but it may not change the policy of the service as a whole.

One librarian in the same area claimed that Friends groups could not influence library policy which came from central government. In her own words:

I think, demonstration of feeling about policy, they can demonstrate it, but I think it really depends on the council's agenda. Although I seem to be contradicting myself, because I said before that they could affect the closure, which I suppose is policy. I think that a lot of the library policy is coming from high up and from the Government, but they can't do anything about that, its only fine-tuning perhaps, but all the policy now seems to be so central, so I think to a local level they can, but not council policy.

## 5.4 Voluntary Work

The literature (Dolnick, 1996; Fletcher & Staniland, 1997; O’Dea, 1996; Sager, 1984; Smith, 1999) reveals that Friends groups are involved in diverse forms of voluntary work in public libraries. This included book shelving and repairs, housebound services, organising events, helping and supporting library staff in organising library activities, and book sales. The participants were asked how their Friends group(s) could influence library policy through voluntary work.

### 5.4.1 Out of hours voluntary work

There were respondents who agreed that Friends groups could influence library policy through voluntary work. One councillor (in Council 1) maintained that if there were plenty of volunteers who could help and support library staff out of hours, their work could influence library policy on opening hours. In his own words:

If you went to out of hours, and we did manage for them to supplement or help out for the out of hours work, they would have a lot of influence in keeping our libraries open, but that, as I say, has not been forthcoming. But if you had 10 people who said ‘we are prepared to give 4 hours a week each’, that’s 40 hours, allowing for a bit of absenteeism or whatever, we would have another evening or two evenings open a week. I think that would have some influence that would be worth a lot of consideration.

Another councillor (in Council 2) held a similar view. He said that Friends groups could influence policy on library services by organising a special activity, such as operating a children’s group on a Saturday afternoon. These views are very much in line with the former British government proposals for public library volunteers (Department of National Heritage, 1997; Smith: 2002). The government encouraged library authorities to use more volunteers for ‘extending opening hours and running reading groups for children’. Smith (2002) also reveals that the current government persuades library authorities to make more use of volunteers.

### 5.4.2 Library staff work

Two librarians (in Councils 2 and 4) perceived that Friends groups could have some influence on library policy, because some libraries have volunteers. Library volunteers could also affect library staff work. They argued that:

We’ve never gone down that road [in Council 4] in any significant way, but it could do. Some libraries could do. So in terms of ‘could they?’ ‘to some extent but not a great extent’. I don’t think they could make a

significant difference. They haven't done here.

I think if they were allowed to work as volunteers, they would to a great extent influence library policy, because that would change the way we work.

### **5.4.3 No volunteers and thus, no influence**

Fourteen respondents deemed that Friends groups could not influence library policy through voluntary work. Interestingly, the study discovered that among them, six people were group members. This finding stems from the fact that library volunteers were not used in six out of the ten libraries examined. The percentage (40%) of libraries that currently involve volunteers is less than that (64%) in Smith's survey (2002) and that (75%) in Cookman, Haynes and Streatfield's (2000) study. This is due to the fact that the six libraries are in borough councils, one of which is a London borough. The literature above reveals that library volunteers are used less in borough councils, particularly London boroughs. It was found that there were no volunteers in the six libraries, for the reasons given below.

#### **5.4.3.1 Trade unions are opposed to library volunteers**

One member (in Council 2) provided one reason why volunteers were not allowed in libraries. She stated that '*on the whole, no influence, because the unions representing the library workers don't go along. They would go on strike*'. This view is very much in line with Whittaker (1999). She states that participants in her study overwhelmingly disagreed with the voluntary work of Friends groups because the (trade) unions were opposed to this. Regarding the use of library volunteers, Cookman, Haynes and Streatfield (2000) obtained the same result, namely that staff and union resistance were the main reasons for not using volunteers.

The present study discovered the reason why staff and the unions were opposed to library volunteers: they were concerned about volunteers replacing paid staff. The view of one group member (in Council 4) represents the belief of library staff regarding library volunteers. He maintained that 'people don't want to volunteer to assist in the library because they think that ... it would be threatening the library staff jobs'. Three people (one in each interview sample category) were very concerned about volunteers replacing paid staff. One group member (in Council 4) argued that he agreed with library volunteers as long as they do not take paid positions. In his own words:

Most of our individual members work. So they can't give much, but yes it has a role, but a small role, exactly as we said before. We don't want to take paid professionals' jobs. So yes, we have a role.

One councillor in the same council favoured library volunteers, and perceived that library staff could benefit from voluntary work. However, she was very concerned about volunteers taking over staff positions. She stated that:

I think there is no reason why they shouldn't be involved, but if it's work that's intended to replace a professional librarian, no I don't think they should. To some extent, not a great extent, putting a book

away isn't exactly replacing a librarian's role, it may be helpful to the librarian, but I don't think they should take over the work and I don't think they should be run by volunteers.

However, the senior manager (in Council 1) held a slightly different view to the above respondents. He perceived that Friends groups could work in libraries as volunteers, and regarded such involvement as the influence of Friends groups on library policy. He revealed that his library authority has considered the use of library volunteers, but emphasised that library volunteers could not replace library staff. He argued that:

We're looking at the use of volunteers in libraries, and certainly as part of that we're looking at the history and the benefit that we've got from Friends groups, and looking at the range of activities that they could influence. It wouldn't be to a great extent. The aspects of service provision that we wish to enhance and support will require more permanent trained staff within the service, if we're looking at things like people's network, and the way that rolls out, and currently investing in the training of staff to make sure that full time staff have the right skills and levels of expertise to support those aspects of service. So again, the Friends groups would be marginal.

#### **5.4.3.2 Friends group members are not trained**

Two librarians considered library volunteers to be problematic. One librarian (in Council 2) maintained that there is a limit to the voluntary work of group members, because they are not trained in library work. The senior manager in the same council was concerned about the lack of motivation among Friends groups for voluntary work. In his own words:

They talk the talk, but they don't walk the walk. So Friends groups will talk about voluntary activities, fund-raising and a whole load of things. When you actually invite them to do it, lots of them don't. It's just talk.

Voluntary input from Friends is problematic, with the strong trade union connection for anything other than areas of service that bring added value, and you know you could imagine you could have a Reading group, ... you can see how they would be prepared to contribute on a voluntary basis, could allow the library service to develop more Reading groups, but their motives are dubious and they're not really motivated to work in partnership (hand in hand) with the library service, within the constraints of our policies. It's more about them wanting to hijack a public space for their own personal and private uses, and it's difficult to always identify the match between their personal and private interests and then meeting the service.

#### 5.4.3.3 Different perceptions of voluntary work

One librarian and one group member (in Council 4) had a narrower view of library volunteers. They did not regard organising events as voluntary work. They maintained that although they help and support library staff or library services indirectly, they do not work as volunteers in libraries. Therefore, they perceived that Friends groups could only influence library policy through voluntary work 'to a lesser extent'. In their own words:

If you interpret voluntary activity as the wider remit that people get involved in out in the community, in support of a library, there's a lot of that actually, but in terms of physically doing things in library premises, we haven't seen a great deal of that ... support specific events that are occurring, like hosting an author visit, like taking part in a reading circle, that sort of thing.

That would be to a small extent. We wouldn't get involved in distributing books and things, only perhaps in the Children's Book Festival. We would help then, but not in day-to-day events.

One librarian (in Council 5) maintained that the influence of Friends groups on library policy through voluntary work was dependent on the intention of the voluntary work. He said that some people simply volunteer to work in libraries to see how libraries operate, and in this case, their voluntary work could not influence library policy. He stated that:

It would depend on why they were doing the voluntary work. Some of them want to help us out with particular projects, others actually see it as a way of finding out how libraries actually work. They only ever see it from one side, they don't see all the work that goes on behind [the scenes] to actually get the library service running.

One group member (in Council 2) also disagreed that Friends groups could influence library policy through voluntary work. However, his view differed slightly from those

of other members. The members above generally perceived that Friends groups could not influence library policy because there were no formally-recognised volunteers in their library. However, this group member believed that Friends groups should not necessarily provide libraries with volunteers. This is because public libraries are publicly funded services, thus the local or central government has a responsibility for providing libraries with enough staff. In his words:

It's not their job. It's the State's job to provide teachers, nurses, doctors, policemen and librarians, that's their job or our job because we're all part of the State, we do it already. I pay taxes so that those functions can be taken care of by the central government and by the local government. It is not the job of volunteers, in my view, to take over the job of government in this sense.

## 5.5 Public Relations

Payne (1998: 78) describes the purpose of library public relations as:

To let the public know what is offered and to enrich the quality of services. It helps inform the people about how the library can fully serve them by inviting them to use the services and materials and enjoy the available programs. Because every library is financed by the people, they certainly should know what they are paying for through their taxes.

The literature (Baker, 1994; Dolnick, 1996; Payne, 1998) reveals that Friends groups are often regarded as part of library public relations programmes.

Twenty respondents (eleven staff, four group members and five councillors) perceived that Friends groups could influence library policy through their public relations. This perception is reflected in Cronin's (1981) claim that good public relations are necessary for gaining public understanding and support of library services, and furthermore, this is vital for continuing the operation of library services. One junior manager (in Council 4) provided many examples of what his groups had achieved for library services through public relations. He stated that:

Public relations is what made a big difference to the new library in [name of Place A]: Children's Book Festival, generally lots and lots of good press coverage for library activities often involved in these voluntary groups, and we've often had spin-offs from our voluntary groups. The Friends of [Place A] Library comes into being some months down the road, there is an old folks' computer club that arises out of the Friends of [Place A] Library, there's also a reminiscence and local history group that came out of the Friends of [Place A] Library. All those three groups in [Place A] have undertaken activities, and usually

their activities have found their way into the media and particularly the local press, and they generate lots of press coverage for lots of activities, which usually have a library angle on them, and quite frequently take place in the library. So the public relations derived from all this activity is substantial.

The respondents revealed how Friends groups could influence library policy through public relations.

### **5.5.1 Public Relations promotes and makes the public aware of library services**

Two librarians (in Councils 1 and 3) expressed their views regarding the benefits Friends groups could bring to libraries through public relations. They said that Friends groups, through this activity, could promote libraries and make the public aware of library services. Therefore, the public relations of Friends groups keeps library services operating and furthermore, saves libraries from possible threat of closure because of under-usage or budget cuts. This is in line with the findings from the literature. Usherwood (1982) maintains that 'in terms of public relations Friends can do much to increase the visibility of the library in the community' (p.13). Skory (1989) further describes the public relations of Friends groups, stating that:

If there is a strong public awareness of what's happening at the community library, improved public support and understanding are more likely to be forthcoming when needed (p.320).

One councillor (in Council 5) argued that Friends groups could raise the profile of their groups, and that this achievement advertises libraries to the public. He stated that:

They could, to a greater extent, raise the profile of their groups, and as a public relations exercise give libraries or individual libraries a greater advertisement with the general public.

These findings are very much in line with Sager (1984), who claims that Friends groups 'represent one of the best public relations tools the administrator has' (p.207). The senior manager (in Council 1) also confirmed Sager's claim, and explained in detail how his groups practised public relations, and how they affected library services through public relations. He expressed his view, below:

I firmly believe that the Friends groups actually are influencing that [what] is happening within the local community, and how the library service is being seen and viewed. We're not fortunate enough to have

a great deal of Friends groups here [in Council 1], but where they are, they are valued by the local community as being supportive to the range of services that are being delivered, or the support that's provided to fund some of those things.

### **5.5.2 Influence on councillors and decision-makers**

Two group members and one councillor claimed that Friends groups could influence councillors and decision-makers through public relations. The councillor (in Council 2) said that if there is a lot of publicity for library services and the activities of Friends groups, this could put great pressure on decision-makers to do what Friends groups want. In her own words:

The more you publicise the work that the libraries are doing, the more you publicise the activities of the Friends and the support of the Friends, the more pressure builds up on the Council to do what the Friends groups and the library supporters are saying. If nobody speaks up in favour of something it may well go, but if it's all over the press, and also if when the Council has done something good, like it did when it refurbished and redecorated my local library, the Friends group there did a big public relations exercise, saying how wonderful it was and how wonderful [Council 2] was, and we had a big opening and everybody was pleased, and that must have done the libraries good, it must have been mutually beneficial. So yes, I think public relations are an area where the library groups can have a great influence.

One group member (in Council 3) also held a similar view. She said that when libraries are under threat of closure, Friends groups could make the community aware of the libraries' difficult situations through public relations. Furthermore, Friends groups, through this activity, could influence decision-makers together with the community. She argued that:

I think if the library service was under pressure, then the Friends of the Library would certainly go out into the community, ... seeking members of the community, the wider community than the Friends, to put pressure on the decision-makers to make decisions that suited us.

### **5.5.3 Meetings and seminars**

Interestingly, two librarians and one group member claimed that their groups influenced library services through public relations. One group member (in Council 2) said that in the process of carrying out campaigns, the groups in his area held a lot of meetings (including a seminar), and that these meetings publicised both the groups and libraries. Furthermore, this publicity raised public awareness of library services. In his own words:

If you're going to campaign, you have to have meetings and other awareness raising activities. That's what you have to do, and I've seen it being done. That's what we have done, and we've successfully had meetings that have raised public awareness, and that's what they can do very well.

The present study discovered that a regional federation of Friends groups in this area held a one-day seminar on public libraries when their library services were undergoing a second review. (The Friends groups had strongly opposed the results of the initial review, in which several library closures were suggested.) After the groups successfully organised the seminar, in which many library professionals participated, the second review report was published. It suggested that the council retain existing libraries for at least four years, the total number of opening hours be kept, and the present funds for book purchases be maintained. It seems that public relations, through meetings and a seminar, affected the review results.

#### **5.5.4 Local media**

One librarian (in Council 5) claimed that Friends groups' use of the local media for public relations could have an influence on library policy. That is to say, as the public relations of library authorities affects library services, so Friends groups' use of the local media also has an effect on library services. For example, as Skory (1989) and Usherwood (1982) maintain, the public relations of Friends groups promotes and makes the public aware of library services. Consequently, more people would come to, and use libraries. As a result, library decision-makers could not consider cutting opening hours or closing libraries. The librarian explained how his group was given much local press coverage, which correspondingly promoted his library. In his own words:

They are quite regularly in the local paper, and are therefore being seen as a User group, and seen organising things in relation to the library or in conjunction with the library. It all helps promote the library.

#### **5.5.5 More effective than staff's Public Relations**

One councillor (in Council 1) said that although conducting public relations is a professional job, Friends groups often undertake such tasks. The library authority does not have enough staff to do such work. He expressed his view, below:

I find that the PR of anything is quite a professional job today, but the Friends groups could give you the neighbourly presentation, I agree with that, but when it comes to the PR side of it, I believe we haven't got enough people in the library service who can do that behind the

counter. We have to really come up with a plan for that. The Friends groups have a point to sell us. I only wish that there was a Friends group I could go to and ask for this policy, but yes, ... to sell a library, to sell the goods even, it has to be local people that use the stuff.

One librarian (in Council 3) claimed that Friends groups undertake more effective public relations than those undertaken by library staff, owing to the general public being more convinced by the former rather than the latter. The public regard Friends groups as part of the community, similar people to themselves. She agreed that Friends groups could influence library policy through public relations. She argued that:

They are part of the community and they've got a voice of the public. We've got a voice as a voice of staff, but the general public influencing other general public has more of a voice than we could possibly have, because people might see us as biased because they are a Support group for us. So I think they can, through public relations, have a good influence.

#### **5.5.6 Regional federation of Friends groups**

One group member (in Council 1) maintained that his group alone could not have an effect on library services through public relations. He suggested that in order to have a real impact, his group has to co-operate with other Friends groups in the same council. It seems that he considered a regional federation of Friends groups to be an effective operation of Friends groups. At the moment, such an organisation does not exist in his council. The study revealed that in places where such an organisation exists, Friends groups undertook public relations successfully. Evidence for this claim was provided in sections **5.5 Public Relations** (in the case of Council 4) and **5.5.3 Meetings and seminars** (in the case of Council 2). The group member stated that:

We would have to get together with other groups to make any real impact, but if it was just [name of a group] alone I would think that there would be no hope at all. So you would have to come back to the view of involving other groups in the county and/or involving the wider public.

#### **5.5.7 No influence**

Two respondents disagreed that Friends groups could influence library policy through public relations. Interestingly, one librarian (in Council 2) considered that Friends groups were only able to influence library policy through lobbying, and not through public relations. It seems that she was unaware that 'libraries will have a future as primary information resources if librarians use public relations theories' (Cronin,

1981: 291). One group member (in Council 4) revealed that although Friends groups in his area work very hard on public relations, ‘an awful lot of people in [name of a place] are apathetic. ... they are not bothered.’ His view confirmed that some Friends groups were frustrated because many people did not support their activities and campaigns for saving libraries.

## **5.6 Involvement in the Community**

Although the published word is one way the librarian tells the community: ‘here is what we can do for you’, and also the most common means of promoting library services, personal contact can be equally effective. (Leerburger, 1989: 14)

The above statement shows what library involvement in the community is, and that it differs slightly from public relations. According to Leerburger’s statement (1989), the term ‘library involvement in the community’ refers to the concepts of developing and maintaining ongoing relationships with the public and organisations that may affect library services within the community. Library involvement in the community also means being aware of activities and events within local schools and community organisations. Libraries can increase their visibility in the community through such relationships and contacts. Friends groups often get involved in the community with the intention of increasing the visibility of the library on behalf of library staff. This is considered to be the fifth function of Friends groups (Baker, 1994; Dolnick, 1996; Fletcher & Staniland, 1997).

### **5.6.1 Increasing library usage**

One councillor (in Council 2) claimed that Friends groups could influence library policy through involvement in the community. This is because they could increase library usage through such involvement, and this higher usage could affect library performance indicators: two of the six performance indicators are ‘issues per capita of books and of other items’ and ‘number of visits per capita’ (Department of National Heritage, 1997: 34). The councillor stated that:

The more people that come into the libraries, the more users there are. Because we have to live with performance indicators, one of the performance indicators is cost per visit, cost per book issues, number of visits, etc., etc. Now, if all of those figures go up for whatever reason, then that makes it easier for the council when they are doing their performance indicators. If at the end of the day they have to say, well

only 20 people visited this library in a morning so each visit cost £20 of library time or staff time, it doesn't look very good, but if through some sort of community activities you get 40 people coming into the library that morning, each visit drops to £10, for sake of argument, so it looks good on our performance indicators and you can justify it. ... The more community activity that goes on, the more people that get into the library, the better for the library service. If their figures are good, their policy might change. So to that extent it impinges on the policy-making.

This could be a valid case as, according to Proctor, Lee and Reilly (1998), one of the reasons why library authorities decided to close libraries was 'lack of use'. Thus, if Friends groups could increase library usage, library authorities could reconsider their decisions on library closures. One councillor (in Council 5) supported this claim by giving one example. She maintained that Friends groups in her area had an influence on library services. She said that after the groups got involved in the community, and encouraged the public to use libraries and to participate in library activities, the libraries were very well-used and succeeded in holding a couple of interesting events. The respondents from this council revealed that Friends groups organised, and participated in, various local or borough-wide events, such as Christmas events, a teddy-bears' picnic, and a borough-wide art festival, in order to raise funds and bring more people into the library. She stated that:

That's another one where User groups can do quite a bit to a great extent I think. It really ties in with what I was discussing and talking about, the sort of events that have happened at libraries. Some of which had been precipitated by the fact that there was a User group in existence, and they mentioned things, and as a consequence we seem to get some interesting events and better usage of the library.

However, the senior manager (in Council 2) revealed the problem with involving Friends groups in the community. He said that the disproportionate efforts of Friends groups to encourage the public to come and use the library could cause problems, such as intimidating new users and discouraging present users. In his own words:

One Friends group in [name of a council], they tried very very hard to stimulate a lot of community involvement, but they couldn't move beyond their own very narrow support base, and over a period of time it almost looked as if their activities, because they effectively took over the library almost, in so many things that it was quite exclusive, and I think it was actually intimidating new users and was putting some people off, because, as I say, through their behaviour they get carried away, they forget themselves, and after a while they start acting like they own the library, and that's not very democratic.

One librarian (in Council 1) also disagreed with Friends groups increasing library usage through community involvement. This is because Friends groups' involvement in the community is less effective in encouraging the public to use the library than that of library staff. She stated that:

We have community team librarians and library staff that sort of go out into the community and build up community relations, and the community generally want to come into the library and see familiar faces. If the Friends went out into the community they would only see them [but no building of community relations], and then [the community] come into the library but not see the volunteers [Friends groups].

### **5.6.2 Influencing people's perceptions of library services**

Two respondents (in Council 3) maintained that the involvement of Friends groups in the community could influence library policy, because this involvement could affect people's perceptions of library services. One librarian agreed that Friends groups could influence library policy through this activity, because 'they can influence other members of the public'. Leerburger (1989) supports their claim. He emphasises that:

Because libraries must depend on the support of others for their existence, it is important – if not essential to survival – for them to understand and maintain a solid relationship with the local power structure. In most communities library funding comes from tax monies; thus residents must be convinced that the library is as important an investment as any other community operation dependent on tax revenues (p.87).

One group member in the same council further developed the above view. She said that if any issue arises which is not favourable to her library, her group could motivate the community to react to the issue. She stated that 'we would go out and galvanise the larger community if we felt [that] library policies were [detrimental] to the library, this library'. A group member (in Council 1) expressed a similar view. He said that if his library were under threat of closure, his group could get involved in the community and protest against the library closure together with the community. In his own words:

This [issue] really goes back to the point about if they were going to close it, then we would try and influence that policy by the whole of [name of a place] raising up to object to it.

These views reflect the fact that in the last 20 years, many public libraries have been threatened with closure. As a result, many Friends groups were established to undertake campaigns in order to prevent library closures.

One group member (in Council 2) offered one example of the involvement of Friends groups in the community within his council. He said that when libraries were under threat of closure, the groups convinced the public and community organisations of the problems the libraries were having, and what could be done to save the libraries. In his own words:

You may have heard of the [name of a person] Report. That was a report on public libraries [in Council 2], and it was chaired by [the person]. When [the person] had his report, it was very noticeable that so many different community groups came to the Town Hall in order to share their experiences, and to articulate their needs for library provision. So of course the function of a User group is to make it known to all of these people exactly what can be done.

One councillor in the same area gave a detailed explanation of the report, stating that:

We then set up a report, which was to have an independent chair, which was [name of a person], to look at the whole issue, and we all went into it in great detail, and finally the report was published, which agreed that at least 2 of the libraries should be saved and the third one should be looked at. The third one is still probably at risk, but is going to be rebuilt elsewhere, which some of us don't like.

### **5.6.3 Operating as a link between communities and libraries**

One group member (in Council 4) agreed that Friends groups could influence library policy through active involvement in the community. Through such involvement, they could operate as a link between communities and libraries, and also pass on the communities' views to library management. In other words, Friends groups could connect communities to libraries, and this role could affect library management decisions on library services. Usherwood (1982) considers a similar role, stating that 'they (Friends groups) can communicate community needs to the library's administration (p.131)'. The member stated that 'we are the bridge between communities and authorities, so therefore we do try to listen very carefully and represent what our communities stand for'.

One councillor (in Council 1) held a similar view. She strongly agreed that Friends groups could influence library policy by their involvement in the community. This is because Friends groups could encourage the community to express their views regarding library services to library staff or management. She argued that:

Communities need to be energised by somebody to make their voice heard.

Some communities are afraid of speaking out because they haven't the conversational skills or the confidence in their ability to make a difference. Now Friends of Libraries working in the community can give the community the confidence to actually try and make a difference.

One librarian (in Council 3) also expressed a similar view, claiming that Friends groups could help the public express their views to library staff and management. She stated that:

They talk to other people and the general public. So they can bring their opinions to us and hopefully we listen. So if there was anything they did want to change, we would really consider changing.

#### **5.6.4 No influence through involvement in the community**

Two staff and two councillors maintained that the influence of Friends groups on library policy through involvement in the community depends on the characteristics of the groups: whether a group operates actively, or whether a group exists around a branch or a central library. One librarian, who works in the central library (in Council 4) said, that a central library group could not influence library policy through community involvement. The reason for this is that this group could not make its library different by involving it in the community. That is to say, the central library differs from a branch library in terms of its service area and target people. The central library services cover the whole council area and accordingly, the central library group could not effectively get involved in such a broad area, and with such people. Therefore, their involvement in the community could be minimal. In his own words:

I don't think it's been particularly great here. The difficulty with the Central Library here is it's hard to define its community. We are a library for the whole of [Council 4]. So we're a bit different from a lot of the other community libraries, though we are styled as a community library. But this particular group hasn't done a great deal in community work.

One councillor (in Council 3) held a similar view. He was opposed to the influence of Friends groups on library policy through their involvement in the community. He considered them unable to affect the public at large. He argued that:

I think to get the public at large to take very much interest in anything is quite difficult. So I don't think the public, by and large, would be particularly interested.

One councillor (in Council 1), who represents an urban ward, also expressed a similar view. He perceived that Friends groups operating in urban areas could not influence library policy, but those existing in rural areas could have such an influence. This stems from the fact that the community can be stronger in rural areas than in urban areas. Morgan (1974) supports this claim, saying that in the community in urban areas (defined as ‘a residence community’):

The members of the various social groups do not necessarily know each other, (thus) the community offers no single representative opinion to consult, and consequently the statutory authorities often consult or call upon no opinion at all (Ravertz, cited in Morgan, 1974: 11).

The councillor gave his view below:

I’ve never come across that, ... No, I don’t think. It’s not even a small extent, no extent at all, because I speak as I find what I’ve learnt what local people want, and as I said to you before, maybe in the country areas it would happen, but we’re talking now about the patch that I know.

## 5.7 Consultation

One councillor (in Council 5) maintained that Friends groups in his area could get involved in library policy through the process of user consultation, because his council was very keen on consulting library users about library services. He gave one example of how his groups influenced library policy through user consultation. In his own words:

We’ve had Friends who’ve come and made representations about certain things, and they’ve either been changed or modified or whatever, so they have had an influence on them, those subjects, and it’s knowing what the service wants, and the users are the service’s eyes and ears, so yes, there are some decisions that have been changed.

The senior manager in the same council developed this view further, stating that his library authority recently reduced service fees and fine charges, and that these changes had been made through the process of consultation with Friends groups. He said that:

We’ve recently reduced all our fees and charges on the basis of being more socially inclusive and attracting more people to use services, and obviously that was incredibly well received by library users, and we know from talking to library users that some of our charges were too high, so they have influenced those kinds of things already. (*Did the Council reduce the fees and charges because Friends groups suggested*

*this?*). No, not because Friends suggested it, but simply in conversations with Friends and User groups about services and how people use them. It was evident that some people found our charges too high and therefore were discouraged from using those services. So it wasn't a campaign that they mounted. It was just in the overall consultation process with them. It was obvious that that was an issue for them.

There were respondents who viewed the way in which Friends groups could influence library policy through user consultation.

### 5.7.1 Major advisors

Three respondents maintained that Friends groups could influence **decisions on library closures** through the process of consultation. This is due to the fact that they are major advisors, and also form part of the consultation process regarding library services. One councillor (in Council 1) held this view, stating:

They would be part of the consultation process. They could certainly move towards influencing the way the councillors think. You would need their input in that. If a decision has been made about closing a library, we as the Council would consult with members of the public, the community at large, and Friends of libraries in particular, because we would need to have all the information before we took that decision, so they would be key to that discussion.

Four members of senior management discussed how Friends groups could get involved in **policy on opening hours**. One manager suggested that when a management team considers changing opening hours, Friends groups could help them. They have much experience of the present opening hours. Other managers maintained that Friends groups could be used as focus groups, and also consultation groups, regarding opening hours. One manager (in Council 1) stated that:

If we were considering rebalancing the hours, not increasing them but simply rebalancing them according to need of access, then one of the things we would want to do is consult with a group of people who had good experience of our opening hours. One of those groups would be a Friends group, so in that way, that consultation need, they would certainly have some influence, but not excessive influence. It's the issue about them being there as a group to be consulted, but not a group to be prejudicial to whatever decisions we are making.

### 5.7.2 Advising library management from a customer perspective

The senior manager (in Council 1) claimed that although Friends groups could not considerably influence library rules and regulations, they could get involved in these by advising library management from a customer perspective. He stated that:

I'd agree that they could influence those, because it's something that we need to get away from. I want to get into the situation where we are having more positive use of libraries rather than negative use. By-laws are very difficult to get changed, but the general rules and regulations of libraries, they could certainly advise us from the customer's perspective that this is not to their advantage, so they could actually influence those considerably because again, we would listen carefully to their views, we would make an informed decision about that and act on it.

## 5.8 Other Activities

The respondents revealed that there were some other activities through which Friends groups have had, or could have, an influence on library policy. One group member (in Council 3) revealed that her group influenced opening hours, and that her library staff agreed with their demand for increased opening hours. She said that:

I agree because that's what we did. I agree if this is amenable to the staff too. I certainly don't think we would have tried to influence the library service if the staff here had said they didn't want to work longer hours.

Several respondents supported this claim and presented some detailed methods of influencing opening hours, such as advising, helping and consulting library management, and making suggestions on opening hours. One librarian (in Council 2) revealed that her library now opens on Sundays. She claimed that her group was involved to some extent in such openings by answering the library's questionnaires on opening hours. In her own words:

I think they could to some extent, yes. I agree they could influence the policy on opening hours, and I think they already have to some extent, particularly here and at [name of a place], where we are now open on Sundays, and I do believe that the Friends were involved to some extent in that happening. Also with questionnaires to the public, I think Friends had some say in that.

### 5.8.1 Participating in council committee meetings

It was revealed that in Council 2, Friends groups involved themselves in library policy-making through **participating in council committee meetings**. The study discovered that they were given a non-voting membership for council committees,

since they were actively involved in the council's library proposals. However, it was also discovered that they could not send their representative to the meetings, since the committee system ceased to exist. When each local council was re-organised in 2001, the committee system changed into a cabinet system. Three respondents (one in each interview sample category) from Council 2 presented this as the reason why Friends groups could no longer influence library policy. One librarian, who strongly disagreed with the influence of Friends groups on policy, maintained that Friends groups in her council could have no chance of influencing library policy for this reason. She stated that:

They've all had a chance to vote in the local elections to elect a councillor to represent them at council meetings, and ... they used to have [name of a regional Federation of Friends groups], and they used to have a non-speaking [voting] member on the Leisure Committee, but the whole of the council has just been re-organised as of 1<sup>st</sup> September, [2001] and they have now lost that. The committees don't exist, they've changed the whole structure of the council. So they don't have the same voice as they used to.

However, the study found that this is not always the case. In Council 5, Friends groups still involve themselves in their council's library policy-making through the new cabinet system. It was discovered that Friends groups meet with councillors and council officers every three months, and the chair of the meeting is co-opted on to the council's leisure cabinet advisory team. Accordingly, users are directly involved in library strategy (Benjamin, 2001). One councillor in this area confirmed this finding, saying:

When we had a cabinet structure last year [2001], we did have libraries and library users on our Cabinet Advisory Team as consultees. So again, it was recognised by the Council that we wanted fully to consult with the groups so that they would have a direct input into our decision-making.

The present study discovered why there was such a difference in the involvement of Friends groups in library policy-making between Councils 2 and 5. The main difference was the background to the establishment of Friends groups. In Council 2, the public spontaneously established groups in order to protect their library, but their activities caused friction over library closures. Thus, the council was not in favour of the involvement of Friends groups in library policy-making. In contrast, in Council 5, the library authority established most of its groups in order to use them as consultation groups. Thus, several councillors joined Friends groups, and these groups' involvement in library policy-making was very much welcomed. The library

authority's favourable attitude towards Friends groups is also reflected in the next findings.

### **5.8.2 Participating in making annual library plans**

The senior manager (in Council 5) revealed that his groups were involved in library policy-making through another medium. He said that his groups participated in making **Annual Library Plans**. In his own words:

When we write our Annual Library Plan, we send copies out to User groups, and I take it to the Federation meeting, and they comment on the key priorities and performance areas we have identified. The plan is much too detailed for them to read and comment on in any great detail, but the key areas I always talk about to the Federation, so we can gather their views, so that we can feed that into the process as well.

He also maintained that his groups continue to influence library policy because he regularly meets with these groups. He added that through these meetings, they could influence the library management's policy-making. He stated that:

The other way is I visit library user groups and friends groups, I get invited to them, so I go fairly regularly to the local group meetings, and then they can question me, and I can ask them about various things as well, so again they have direct access to me; they can fire questions and make demands on me, which they are very free to do, so they have lots of direct access to me, and they phone me up and write and so on. They have lots of opportunity, and they do influence the whole policy and strategy framework.

### **5.8.3 Making suggestions or comments about library policy**

One Group Librarian (in Council 1) maintained that not only Friends groups, but also any member of the public, could influence stock selection policy by making suggestions. His library authority welcomes any suggestions on the policy. He stated that:

Even if they were a Friends [group], or a member of the public, or whoever, they can all influence our stock selection policy in a sense, by making suggestions, because we have an open system of management, and this is the way we operate in [name of a council]. So we look forward to people making suggestions to us, and if the Friends group, for instance, say to us 'your history section is very weak', we would listen to them and do something about it, and redress the balance.

Two other respondents offered a similar view. They maintained that anybody could influence the policy by requesting particular titles in their own areas of interest. One councillor (in Council 3) stated that:

I think it could be quite helpful to the local librarian to see what people would like to read. Anybody using the library can ask to read a book, and they will generally try and get that book, so obviously as they get a greater demand for a particular book, that must influence the librarian to obtain the book, whether it's a single one or two or three copies, to meet the demand. So I think any Friends group could influence librarians to get a book which the librarian might not otherwise get.

The literature (Butler, 2002) reveals that in fact, one library authority in England actively practised the involvement of library users in stock selection. This finding confirms that anybody could have an influence on stock selection. Butler presents several detailed methods of user involvement in stock selection, as follows:

We want to involve our readers much more actively in the selection of stock for our libraries. You can **come to a meeting, visit a showroom, or mark up a list.**

The next big challenge is to involve our readers in **eclectic book selection** for their libraries.

Four respondents claimed that their groups could influence policy on library displays and exhibitions by making suggestions about these. One group member (in Council 4) said that they could make suggestions from a different point of view. In his own words:

I think we could influence it, because sometimes people working in a certain way can't see any other opportunities or openings, and therefore as coming from a different viewpoint, the Friends groups can make suggestions. They can be rejected, but they can be suggestions of how things might be made more attractive.

One librarian (in Council 2) also held a similar view. She argued that Friends groups could influence the policy by making suggestions, because their comments were favourable. She stated that:

I would say 'agree', they don't seem to have bothered with it. They have made favourable comments that we have been making a bigger effort in the last couple of years in doing displays, but that is somewhere where I would actually welcome suggestions.

It was revealed that groups in council 2 influenced **policy on library displays and exhibitions** by making suggestions. One councillor revealed that Friends groups in

her area deemed library displays and exhibitions that unduly emphasise computers and the Internet to be unsuitable. The library authority accepted such a criticism.

It was also discovered that Friends groups could influence **library rules and regulations** by making suggestions about these. One junior manager (in Council 5) maintained that Friends groups could get involved in these areas by making suggestions. He said that his library management would certainly take account of Friends groups' suggestions about library rules and regulations. He stated that:

They could have an influence on that. Certainly the rules and regulations are already laid down according to the by-laws which we have. Obviously if there are other things that people think that we should be bringing in, we would certainly look at the suggestions that they put forward, to see if they were actually reasonable and would actually make a difference.

One councillor in the same council supported this view, saying that 'provided that we're talking about sensible, practical suggestions, I don't see why they shouldn't be put forward. [However] they certainly shouldn't determine it though.' One Group Librarian (in Council 3) presented one example of how the rules can be changed by the public's suggestions about library services. She said:

There are certain rules that we might have that could be altered, people using laptops in the library, say, and they felt that people should be allowed to, and they could influence the policy because of what the public want.

#### **5.8.4 Readers groups as a spin-off from Friends groups**

Three respondents from two different councils claimed that Friends groups could influence stock selection policy through the activities of Readers groups. It was revealed that Readers groups, as a spin-off from Friends groups, operate in some areas. One librarian (in Council 1) explained what a Readers group is, below:

One of the ways they could influence library stock would be, positively, as I've already said. There is a Readers group established in [name of a place], what they do is they meet every 2 or 3 months, they have previously agreed some titles that they will each read, and when they meet again they discuss those titles. In any discussion that library users are having with library staff about the stock that they buy, there is bound to be some influence. It may not be a particularly strong influence, but it's likely to be an influence.

Another librarian from Council 5 also mentioned Readers groups, and one councillor in the same area claimed that their groups could influence the policy through the activities of these groups. They stated that:

One of the things that they are interested in has been the possibility of a Readers group, in terms of selecting and reviewing books. They have had a talk from the stock member about how we do our book selections, in terms of we get discount from our suppliers, and suppliers do certain things for us, and how the actual selection is done .... I wouldn't say that we want to get into the American situation, dictating what titles we have. (Librarian)

I agree, because with this reading scheme that we are setting up, that will eventually, if that's taken seriously and it develops, that could start to influence the stock eventually. It's early days, but I would agree. (Councillor)

Two respondents presented other methods for the way in which Friends groups could influence stock selection policy. They stated that Friends groups could meet a library stock editor regularly, and ask to get involved in library stock selection. They can then work in partnership with the library authority to develop better library stock.

#### **5.8.5 Donations of own literary works**

Interestingly, one librarian (in Council 2) claimed that Friends groups could influence library stock policy by donating their own literary works. She gave one example of such a case. She said that many writers, who participate in the Friends group in her area, donated their works. Through this, they affected library stock. In her own words:

At [name of a library] they [a Friends group] have a lot of writers who live there because it's in [name of a place], and they donate their own books to the stock. So in that way it's influencing the stock, but we've had less of that here, but I can imagine that happening.

#### **5.8.6 Carrying out library surveys**

One librarian (in Council 4) revealed that when there was a potential threat of library closure, her group carried out a survey on users' views on library services and operation. Its results have influenced many areas of library services and operation, particularly **policy on library stock** and **decisions on library closure**. She stated that:

I think they CAN (expressed strongly) influence them. When our group was first set up they did carry out a survey in the village, and from that survey, a video collection was introduced in the library, because a lot of people in the village said that they would like to have videos here. And they also kept the library open by the group being formed. It did have a direct influence on keeping the library here.

### **5.8.7 Raising awareness of unfavourable library policy**

One councillor (in Council 3) claimed that Friends groups could influence decisions on library closure by raising awareness of unfavourable library policy. In his own words:

They could raise enough awareness in the council, perhaps to make people realise that it's unacceptable, and I think this is what happened a few years ago when library closures were discussed, and the public opinion was so strong that the library closures were not pursued at all. So I think that was an interesting experience.

Nine respondents maintained that their groups have had an influence in the past, and could continue to exert an influence on the decisions. The senior manager (in Council 1) stated that their groups have influenced the decisions that were made by the management. He argued that:

They could, and have influenced decisions on library closures. They have fought for the retention of libraries at times when, from a management perspective, and looking at best value and most efficient use of resources within the council, we have put forward closure of some libraries, and, because of the influence of the Friends groups, some generated solely for that purpose and then moved on again, they have actually influenced that decision.

One librarian (in Council 3) also revealed that Friends groups in her area influenced the decisions. She said that:

That's how it's happened in [name of a council] libraries, where the strength of feeling of the community through the Friends groups has meant that the library hasn't closed, it's been an influence, it wasn't the whole influence, but it was an influence on the reason why the library didn't close.

### **5.8.8 Getting involved in neighbourhood management scheme**

One councillor (in Council 5) revealed that there was a 'neighbourhood management scheme', which covered health and other policies in the area. He stated that this management scheme operated by consulting with local people. Therefore, active Friends groups could influence library policy through getting involved in the management scheme, and expressing their views regarding library services. He argued that:

The debate now, and in the future, will be on neighbourhood management,

which will include the council, health, the police in an area, and we have recognised [several] towns. So there are, in all areas, consultations going on, which they should be involved in. Without their involvement their views are not going to be taken on board. So they could actually influence areas of policy on neighbourhood renewal (or management) if they were active in that context.

### **5.8.9 Having an ‘own display space’**

One group member and one senior manager maintained that their Friends group(s) influenced policy on library displays and exhibitions. The member (in Council 3) said that they displayed the results of storytelling activities with their librarian’s consent. She argued that:

Sometimes we ask [name of a librarian], for instance, with the Story Feast, if we could display some of the results of the Story Feast activities, those aboriginal things I spoke about earlier, and [name of a librarian] was happy, so we did. But if she hadn’t been happy, if she had said, ‘No! I don’t want it’, that would have been the end of it.

It was revealed that in one council, Friends groups were more actively involved in library displays and exhibitions. These groups had their own display space, and through this they advertised and publicised not only their activities, but also library services. The manager (in Council 5) stated that Friends groups in his authority could continue to be involved in policy on library displays and exhibitions through having their own space in libraries. He argued that:

They mount their own displays and exhibitions in libraries about the Friends groups, about activities that they are doing, so they already do it, and some of them do it quite a lot. They have their own user group notice board as well, so they are already influencing the exhibitions and displays, and they invite other people, and do their own, so it’s already happening.

### **5.8.10 The activities of a regional and national federation of Friends groups**

Regarding the influence of Friends groups on library policy, several respondents from four councils claimed that Friends groups could influence library policy through participating in the activities of a regional and national federation of Friends groups. They suggested that Friends groups could influence library policy areas such as policy on opening hours, decisions on library closures, and library rules and regulations, through the activities of these organisations. (This is elaborated in **Chapter 7 The Role of a National Friends of Libraries Organisation**).

### **5.8.11 Management matters affect the influence of Friends groups on library policy**

It was revealed that the influence of Friends groups on library policy differed according to the management of the groups. This means that managerial elements, such as aims and objectives, group communication, the structure of a group, and other matters, affected Friends group activities. One junior manager (in Council 5) maintained that well-managed groups could influence library policy. The next chapter includes an in-depth discussion on how the management matters of Friends groups affected their activities.

## **5.9 Chapter Summary**

This chapter discussed the practicalities of the influence of Friends groups on library policy, namely, how they could influence library policy through their activities.

The first and second highest number of respondents agreed that Friends groups could influence library policy through involvement in the community and public relations respectively. This result reflects the findings from the literature review. Skory (1989) and Dymond (cited in Azar-Luxton, 1993) consider that public relations and the involvement of Friends groups in the community are more important than fund-raising or financial support. Skory states that:

It is the public relations of a Friends group that is of particular significance; possibly even more important than any funds the group might raise (p.320).

Surprisingly, lobbying or political campaigns followed the two activities above. It was expected that these activities would come first. That is to say that the first highest number of respondents would agree that Friends groups could influence library policy through lobbying or political campaigns. This is because most of the Friends groups in the UK were established to campaign against decisions on library closures. Furthermore, many of them reversed the decisions through lobbying or political campaigns. The reason why lobbying or political campaigns followed the two activities above, stems from the fact that although many library staff and councillors recognised that Friends groups indeed influenced library policy through lobbying or political campaigns, they did not totally approve of such activities. This was particularly the case in Council 2. This is because Friends groups in this area actively undertook political campaigns against the council's decisions on library closures or

opening hour reductions. Another reason is that although Friends groups, particularly in Councils 2 and 4, actively carried out political campaigns, many group members considered these activities to be political. At the same time, they defined their group as a non-political group because they were concerned about that they would not recruit new members if their activities were seen to be political.

- **Through fund-raising or financial support:** there were more respondents who disagreed than agreed with Friends groups influencing library policy through fund-raising or financial support. Firstly, this was because funds that Friends groups raise are small. Thus, small funds could not affect library services and operations. Secondly, Friends groups in one area did not consider providing funds to the library to be a Friends groups' role. These findings again confirmed that British Friends groups are not fund-raising groups, whilst American Friends groups tend to fulfil this function. This is the one of the characteristics of British Friends groups.

However, several respondents maintained that although funds raised by Friends groups are small, these could still have a minor influence, particularly on branch library services. As described in **section 5.2.3.1 Insignificant funds**, Smith (1999) supports this claim.

Ten people (the majority of whom were librarians) agreed that Friends groups could influence library policy through fund-raising or financial support. For example, if library staff, management, and councillors appreciate the fund-raising or financial support of Friends groups, this recognition could affect library policy-making. Similarly, fund-raising makes library management take note of Friends groups' views on library policy. The respondents also maintained that Friends groups discuss the use of funds with library staff, and provide book funds for insufficient collections. These discussions could affect library policy. The study found this to be the case in Council 3.

A few respondents offered further evidence that Friends groups had an influence on library policy. In Council 4, fund-raising resulted in achieving a new library and an IT centre, creating a borough-wide children's book festival, planning a family learning centre, and operating reader development activities. One group in the same council influenced policy on library budgets by threatening to buy books. In Council 5, the council matched funds raised by Friends groups, and this encouraged the fund-raising of Friends groups. Thus, the more funds raised by Friends groups, the more library

budgets were provided by the council. Therefore, it can be argued that the fund-raising of Friends groups affected the increase in library budgets.

● **Through lobbying or political campaigns:** the majority of the respondents agreed that Friends groups could influence library policy through lobbying or political campaigns. This is because Friends groups, through these activities, could lobby councillors, who are the decision-makers. In Councils 2 and 4, Friends groups influenced decision-makers to withdraw their decisions on library closures through these activities. In particular, in Council 2, Friends groups used judicial campaigns to influence decisions on library closure. Friends groups in this council also influenced policy on the use of library space and (the patterns of) opening hours through these activities. It was revealed that the Friends groups undertook the activities together with allies such as the community and opposition party members. Therefore, it could be argued that the groups used party politics for their activities. However, it was discovered that this is not the case. According to the chairperson of one group, the elected members used Friends groups for their politics. He said that with regard to the council's plan for library closure, one opposition party member approached him. (This is described in detail **in section 6.9.3 Partnership.**) The study also discovered that Friends groups used local media, such as the press and radio, to carry out political campaigns.

In Council 3, one group influenced policy on building a new library through these activities. In Council 5, a couple of councillors participated in Friends groups, and this was considered an important factor in the Friends groups' influence on library policy. It was also revealed that in some areas, councillors and library management strongly approved of group lobbying to keep their library open. Active groups, who had a particular background to their establishment, were more likely to influence library policy through campaigns. It was revealed that group management was another important factor affecting the success of the operation of Friends groups.

As revealed above, the majority of the respondents considered influencing library policy through lobbying to be the role of the Friends groups. This finding is very much in line with the results of the literature review (Frenchman, 1998; Leerburger, 1985; Usherwood, 1982), which showed Friends groups influencing library decision-makers through lobbying or political campaigns. Interestingly, in Council 4, eight out of the nine respondents held this view. This finding stems from the fact that firstly, two groups saved their library. When four libraries were threatened with closure, two

groups were established, and they successfully protected their library. However, the other two libraries, which did not have a group were closed. Secondly, the library management favoured the activities of Friends groups. Thirdly, an active regional federation of Friends groups is in operation.

There were seven people (three librarians, two group members and two councillors) who completely or partially disagreed with Friends groups influencing library policy through lobbying. Firstly, this is because Friends groups, through lobbying, could not influence library policy at a local or central government level. That is to say, in general, a group belongs to one local library. However, as revealed above, there were cases when Friends groups did influence decisions on library closure at a local government level. Secondly, Friends groups have nothing to do with influencing library policy through such an activity. For example, they could not influence decisions on library closure through lobbying when decision-makers decided to close the library due to its under-usage. Thirdly, it is considered political for Friends groups to undertake lobbying with the intention of influencing library policy. Three group members considered their group to be apolitical, and claimed that although they often undertook political lobbying, they never involved party politics.

- **Through voluntary work:** more respondents disagreed than agreed with Friends groups influencing library policy through voluntary work. The main reason why they disagreed was that no library volunteers were formally used in their library. The study revealed that trade unions were opposed to library volunteers, because they considered voluntary work to be a threat to paid staff positions. Two library staff considered library volunteers to be problematic, because group members were not properly trained. Therefore, there is a limit to voluntary work. Friends groups also lack motivation for voluntary work. There was one group member who perceived that Friends groups should not necessarily provide volunteers to libraries, because the local and central government should have the responsibility of funding library staff.

In contrast, there were six people (three librarians and three councillors) who agreed with Friends groups influencing library policy through voluntary work. Firstly, library volunteers could affect staff work. Secondly, out of hours voluntary work could influence policy on library opening hours. Interestingly, no group member held this view, but a couple of councillors offered the view. This finding stems from the fact that library staff and group members did not favour library volunteers, because library

volunteers could replace paid staff positions. However, councillors did not strongly disfavour voluntary work. This is because they are in a position to effectively manage council services. Thus, they are very keen on reducing budgets by using volunteers. It seems that they were also encouraged by British government proposals on public library volunteers (Department of National Heritage, 1997; Smith, 2002).

- **Through public relations:** the majority of the respondents agreed that Friends groups could influence library policy through public relations. The respondents perceived that, as library public relations affect library services, the public relations of Friends groups could also influence library policy. They maintained that the publicity of Friends groups promoted libraries, and also made the public aware of library services; public relations raised the high profile of the Friends groups, and this advertised libraries as well; the public relations of Friends groups influenced the council and decision-makers, and also made the community aware of the library's difficult situation; public relations undertaken by Friends groups were more effective than those by library staff. The respondents provided some evidence for the influence of Friends groups on library policy through public relations. They claimed that after Friends groups undertook public relations, library services were well supported by the community, and some parts of library services were also financially assisted. Public relations for the activities of Friends groups and those of their spin-offs, such as a computer club, and a reminiscence and local history group, promoted their libraries through local media. Friends groups in Council 2 influenced decisions on library closures through public relations. An active federation of Friends groups operates, and this organisation used meetings and seminars for the public relations of their activities.

- **Through involvement in the community:** the study discovered that more respondents agreed than disagreed with Friends groups influencing library policy through involvement in the community. The respondents offered the following reasons: Friends groups raise the profile of the library by making the community aware of the value of the library; they attract more people to the library through involvement in the community; they operate as a bridge between the community and the library, that is to say, they connect the community to the library; they can influence people's perceptions of library services; they can encourage the community to express their views on library services and operations. In particular, when libraries were under threat of closure, Friends groups could make the public and organisations

aware of the problems of their library. One councillor maintained that the involvement of Friends groups in the community could increase library use, and the higher usage of the library could positively affect the 'library performance indicators' that library decision-makers use for deciding future library investment. Another councillor offered evidence that Friends groups influenced library services through involvement in the community. She claimed that libraries in her area were very well-used and succeeded in organising many interesting library activities.

In contrast, seven respondents disagreed with Friends groups being able to influence library policy through involvement in the community. The disproportionate involvement of Friends groups in the community could discourage new people from coming to the library, and intimidate present users. Furthermore, the involvement of Friends groups in the community was less effective than that of library staff. It was also difficult to affect the public at large through involvement in the community, particularly in urban areas.

The study discovered that the influence of Friends groups on library policy through involvement in the community depended on the characteristics of Friends groups. Active Friends groups are more likely to influence library policy than inactive groups. Friends groups which exist around branch libraries could have more influence on library policy than central library groups. This is because branch library groups are more advantageous, in terms of getting involved in the community, than central library groups: branch library services cover small areas. Thus, branch library groups could get effectively involved in the community in such areas. However, central library services cover broad areas. Thus, central library groups have difficulty in getting involved in such wide areas. This theory could apply to the next claim. Friends groups whose library is in a rural area could have more influence on library policy than those whose library is in an urban area.

- **User consultation:** there were respondents who maintained that Friends groups could influence library policy through the process of user consultation. The respondents perceived that Friends groups are major advisors and thus, they can advise library management from a customer's perspective. This was particularly the case in Council 5. The library authority established most of its groups in order to use them as consultation groups. Respondents from Councils 1 and 4 argued that Friends groups, through the consultation process, could influence decisions on library

closures and policy on opening hours, and could get involved in changing library rules and regulations. One case supported these claims. In Council 5, the library authority reduced service fees and charges after consulting Friends groups.

● **Through other activities:** it was revealed that there were many other activities through which Friends groups have had, or could have an influence on library policy. It was discovered that groups in Council 2 involved themselves in library policy-making through participating in council committee meetings. In Council 3, Friends groups participated in making an Annual Library Plan. Several respondents claimed that Friends groups, through making suggestions, could influence policy on library displays and exhibitions (this was the case in Council 2), library rules and regulations, and stock selection policy. It was found that Friends groups could influence stock selection policy through the activities of Readers groups. These groups, as a spin-off from Friends groups, operate in Councils 1 and 5. Many writers donated their own works, and this affected library stock policy in Council 2. One group, in Council 4, carried out a library survey when its library was under threat of closure, and through the survey the group influenced policy on library stock, and decisions on its library closure. It was revealed that Friends groups could influence library policy through raising awareness of unfavourable library policy. This was the case in Council 1. Friends groups in this area influenced decisions on library closure through such an activity. In Council 5, it was found that Friends groups expressed their views regarding library services through involving themselves in ‘neighbourhood management’ - a scheme covering health and other policies. In the same council, Friends groups influenced library services through having their own display space.

There were two other factors that could affect the influence of Friends groups on library policy. The first one was the activities of a regional or national federation of Friends groups. Friends groups could undertake activities more effectively when they were members of these organisations. The second one was the managerial matters of Friends groups. These issues are discussed in detail in **Chapters 6 and 7**.

## Chapter 6

### Management Matters

#### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses constitutional and managerial elements, which could help Friends groups to influence library policy. The present study aims to find factors that could affect Friends groups' influence on library policy. In order to achieve this, it examined constitutional and managerial elements using a particular management approach, called Management By Objectives (MBO). MBO is a very well-used management technique for profit or non-profit organisations, and it deals with all managerial elements. Cuthbert-Smith (1976: 3) briefly describes the purpose of MBO below:

In any activity requiring management, whether it be a profit making business, or a non-profit oriented government department there are a number of overall aims and objectives to be achieved. The problem is to ensure that all the people working in that activity are motivated and co-ordinated so that they all work together towards achieving those aims. It is this, which is the fundamental purpose behind the M.B.O. approach.

Hite (1996: 42) claims that MBO is very well used by libraries and is also a very useful management tool for Friends groups.

Management by objectives (MBO) is a management system that is used extensively and successfully by corporations, government agencies, and libraries. It also is a very effective tool for Friends groups. Although many Friends boards and their committees are already doing systematized planning, the boards may not define as clearly the steps for efficient organisation that MBO represents. Although MBO will not revolutionize Friends activities, it is a tool that when used properly helps the group define its goals, evaluate its accomplishments, and make its plans.

These descriptions reveal that the detailed managerial issues with which MBO is concerned, are: 'what are the objectives?', 'are they understood by all the members?', 'how are these to be achieved?', 'how does the group know if it has achieved its objectives?', 'what is the teamwork, status of the group and organisational climate?', and others such as communications, structure, partnership, finance and leadership issues. The study examined these issues in order to discover how they affected the effectiveness of the influence of the present Friends groups on library policy.

## 6.2 What are the Aims and Objectives?

The present study surveyed the operation and activities of ten groups in five councils (two groups in each council), and of these, nine groups provided the researcher with their written constitution. The aims and objectives of the nine groups were clearly stated in their constitution, so that everyone (their members, library users and staff) could easily understand them. Therefore, the aims and objectives were examined by looking at the constitution.

It should be noted, before discussing the aims and objectives, that there were some differences in the backgrounds from which each constitution was drawn up. In Councils 1, 3 and 5, Friends groups had an agreed constitution based on a draft version that was initially designed by their library authority. These councils had a common starting point: the library staff or authority instigated Friends groups. It seems that where the library authority was responsible for establishing Friends groups, they provided a draft constitution to members of the public interested in operating a Friends group. In Council 5, one constitution applied to all 19 Friends groups. That is to say, they all had the same constitution and hence, they all had the same written objectives. Friends groups in Councils 1 and 3 had almost the same constitution and accordingly, had quite similar objectives. However, in Councils 2 and 4 each group had a different constitution with different aims and objectives.

The constitutions of the nine groups examined specified their aims and objectives. It was discovered that the aims and objectives of eight groups were based on the background to their establishment. However, this did not apply to one branch library group in Council 3. The detailed explanations are presented below.

As described above, the library authority instigated all the groups in Council 5 to encourage user consultation. Thus, these groups shared the same aims whilst focusing on the role of user consultation. These aims differed from those of other groups in other councils. In Council 1, five groups were established. This was as a result of the successful operation of the first group, that had been set up by one branch library manager who was influenced by the activities of American groups. The aims of the two groups in this council were quite similar, but differed from those of other groups in other councils. In Council 3, the central library and the branch library groups examined had different backgrounds to their establishment. The library authority that

was influenced by the activities of American groups established the central library group. In contrast, the public spontaneously formed the branch library group in order to conduct campaigns. However, these two groups had almost the same aims. The latter group adopted the constitution of the former group after they had achieved their initial aim (in this case, building a new library). The objectives of the two groups differed from those of other groups in other councils. The central library group and a branch library group in Council 4 also had a different background to their establishment. The aims of these groups reflected this background. Accordingly, the two groups had different aims. In Council 2, the group that was surveyed had the same aims as the branch group in Council 4, i.e. saving the library. The reason for this is that these two groups were spontaneously established after their library was under threat of closure. The detailed aims and objectives, or purpose of the groups, are described in **Appendix 3**.

### **6.3 Are the Aims and Objectives understood by all the Members?**

According to Cuthbert-Smith (1976), the fundamental purpose of MBO is to make sure that all the people participating in an activity understand its objectives in order to achieve the aims.

It was clear that all the members of the present groups understood the objectives through the following ways. The original members of spontaneous groups had been aware of their aims since their group was established. New members of these groups began to understand the aims when they joined the group. This is due to the fact that Friends groups provided them with an application form for membership, which included the aims. The members of groups formed by library staff or authorities began to understand the aims when the library staff or authority provided them with a draft constitution stating the aims.

In order to recruit new members, or to advertise themselves, Friends groups displayed an application form for membership on the library notice board or on the counter. Through this, potential members, library users and other people, could see the objectives. Friends groups also publicised their aims through Internet websites and by holding activities and meetings. They promoted themselves or their activities through local media. By such public relations they also helped people understand the objectives.

## 6.4 How are the Aims and Objectives to be achieved?

Regarding the question of how to achieve objectives, Reddin (1973: 117-119) emphasises that:

For any objective there must be a plan and a timed schedule. Objectives without plans are dreams. Plans are a statement, prepared in advance, of what is to be done. A schedule is a plan with timings. Without plans managers muddle through to their objectives, which, if achieved, were almost certainly too low to begin with. A plan identifies what is seen as the best route toward achieving an objective. Planning is a purely intellectual process, and to plan well managers need to sit and think. ... Any plan consists of a series of things to be done called 'activities'.

In the operation of the groups, there were generally two types of meeting at which group plans were made: regular committee meetings and an annual general meeting (AGM). Therefore, it can be said that these meetings are very important in achieving the objectives. It was discovered that the nine groups specified these meetings in their constitution. According to the constitution, at an annual general meeting broad plans are made. At the AGM the chairperson and secretary report the results of their activities carried out in the last year. Based on the report, long-term plans are revised and new plans are made. At the AGM, the treasurer also presents annual accounts, which identify the financial resources available for plans. In particular, committee members, who make and decide detailed plans for the next year, are elected. Finally, it is also decided whether any changes to the constitution are necessary. Consequently, at the AGM, plans are revised, or new long-term plans drawn up according to the changes to the objectives. The constitution specifies the objectives, and they can be revised at the AGM.

Based on the results of the AGM, detailed plans (activity schedules) are decided by committee members at committee meetings. Hite (1996) presents five available resources for plans (activities): people, money, material, time and authority. As a result, during the AGM, Friends groups elect several officers such as a chairperson, a secretary, a treasurer, a membership secretary and other officers, who deal with such matters. The results of the investigation into the constitutions of the nine groups revealed that committees varied in terms of number of members and structure. All the groups' committees basically consisted of three officers (chairperson, secretary and treasurer) and a number of other members. Some committees had a vice-chairperson, membership secretary or publicity officer, whilst others did not. Overall, the total number of committee members varied from 5 to 15. No observable difference in the

number of members and structure of the committees was found between the groups that influenced decisions on library closure or new library building, and the ordinary groups that were not keen on influencing library policy.

In order to achieve the aims, at committee meetings, the groups generally made plans regarding the following areas: fund-raising, campaigning, public relations, voluntary work and community involvement. The groups' planning differed according to their aims. For example, those whose objective was saving the library focused more on planning a campaign. Those whose aims were supporting the library made more plans regarding fund-raising, public relations and other activities.

### **6.5 How does the Group know if it has achieved its Aims and Objectives?**

Hite (1996) and Reddin (1973) emphasise that in order to increase an organisation's effectiveness, its performance should be measured. Regarding this issue, Hite states that 'objectives not only state what is to be accomplished, they also define by when and how they are measured' (p.45). However, unlike profit-making organisations and well-organised non-profit organisations, most of the present groups were loosely organised. For this reason, the objectives of these groups did not specify how their performance should be evaluated. That is to say, they did not have any proper mechanism that could measure their achievement.

It was found that they relied greatly on voluntary feedback for evaluating their performance. This came from their members, library users, staff, managers and councillors. It can be said that performance can be measured differently according to the objectives. For example, in the case of obvious objectives, such as saving the library or building a library, it is easy for people to recognise whether such objectives were achieved or not. Other objectives, such as supporting the library, can be assessed differently according to the performance of Friends groups. For example, the performance of Friends groups in supporting the library by providing equipment, can be evaluated by the difference of the library layout or by the comments from library users, staff, and management. Library staff or management evaluated other performance levels, such as the results of library public relations or community involvement. An example would be the way in which the number of library users had increased as a result of such activities.

The present groups received comments on their performance from their members or library users at meetings, or events such as coffee mornings, arts and literary events, and other activities. The groups regularly held committee meetings, and library staff or a manager often attended these meetings. Hence, the comments from these people at the meetings were considered to be an important evaluation mechanism.

## 6.6 What is the Nature of the Teamwork of the Group?

As Hite (1996) claims, human resources are one of the five major elements in managing Friends groups. Regarding human resources, the study examined what kind of people joined the Friends groups, what kind of skill they had, and whether or not there were any team problems.

It was shown that the operations of the ten groups differed according to who joined the groups. In Council 2, many university academic staff and famous writers participated in Friends groups, and this participation affected the groups' influence on library policy. In Council 5, four councillors joined and chaired Friends groups. This particular situation often helped Friends groups to influence library policy. One senior manager claimed that:

As a major lobbying exercise, there were some very influential people there, with invites to a lot of the Councillors there as well. In terms of lobbying almost on a daily basis, if you want to call it that, there are a lot of Councillors involved in a lot of the Friends groups anyway, who turn up to regular meetings. So in terms of lobbying, they can always get at their local Councillor who sits on the groups as well. So that does go on continuously.

It was also found that the skill of the group members influenced the activities of the groups. In Council 5, a group member - a professional in architecture and town planning - applied for SRB (single regeneration budget) funds to modernise his library (Benjamin, 2001). In the same council, a group member, who was a former school head teacher, used his knowledge to lobby the right people when his group carried out campaigns. One junior manager stated that:

A lot of it comes down to strong personalities on the group and our last Treasurer was a very dominant personality, being a retired headmaster. He knew all about the Council and had very definite views.

Regarding the teamwork of the groups, it was discovered that only two groups had team problems. This was due to group members respecting other members' opinions.

However, two groups in Councils 1 and 4 had such problems because of a clash of personalities. One junior manager (in Council 1) stated that:

The only tension has been in amongst the Friends Committee. Occasionally a clash of personalities, somebody wants to do something one way and they'll do it, and somebody was on holiday perhaps and they would come back and think 'Why have we done that?', and they don't like it for a while, but that's about all and it usually blows over.

However, it was apparent that as the manager above claimed, such problems were not so serious as to cause the break up of the groups, or result in members leaving the group. One group member (in Council 4) argued that:

We've had one project that caused just a little bit of friction because different people were doing things without telling each other and it caused problems, but it was sorted out and nothing ever came of it. It didn't cause anybody to fall out or anybody to leave like that. It was just sorted out in a very friendly way. There's been no major arguments or anything like that.

## **6.7 What is the Status of the Group?**

It was revealed that the status of the groups differed according to the backgrounds to their establishment and their activities. It was discovered that the groups that were established by library staff or authorities were regarded as important, or classed as support groups. In Council 5, the library authority established the groups with the intention of using them as library consultation groups. Thus, the library manager and councillors met regularly with the groups and the chair of the meeting was co-opted on to the council's leisure and cabinet advisory team (Benjamin, 2001). Therefore, in this council, the groups were considered very important and essential for library services and operations.

In contrast, the groups that were formed spontaneously were often perceived by library management or councillors as reactionary groups. However, this was not always the case. Spontaneous groups that carried out useful activities for their library authority were considered beneficial and essential for library services. For example, in Council 4, all of the eight groups, bar the central library group, were spontaneously formed when their library was under threat of closure. After their library became secure, they devoted their activities to supporting their library. They supported library services and operations through various ways, such as undertaking public relations and providing books, library equipment and PCs. In particular, they sponsored an annual children's book festival, which started as one group's activity and became a

borough-wide event. This activity was very much appreciated by the library authority, and it influenced the authority to see the groups as support groups. One junior manager (in Council 4) stated that:

We've never at any stage wanted to deflect the independence of these groups. ... They tend to fulfil a role in the main, which is one of supporting development of the library where they have an interest. So they are a voice in favour of library development.

In Council 2, the groups were generally regarded as reactionary, but they participated in their council's committee meetings. This meant that the chairperson of the federation of the Friends groups used to participate in the Council's Leisure & Community Services Committee as a non-voting member. Consequently, the groups in the council expressed their views on library policy to the Council through their representative.

## 6.8 What is the Organisational Climate?

The literature review reveals that a relationship between community-based organisations (CBOs) and local government or statutory agencies, influences the organisational climate of CBOs. Demos (2003) claims that 'what most concerns CBOs is their relationship with the executive arm of local government and the statutory agencies with which they and their user groups have most day-to-day contact' (p.20). The present study found that existing Friends groups were also concerned with their relationship with the organisations, and that their relationship varied. This situation is very similar to other CBOs, as follows. Demos (2003: 20) states that:

Attitudes towards local authorities were mixed. Some organisations found them generally supportive, and a few respondents were very positive about their relationships with particular agencies or local government departments. ... Other respondents were fiercely critical, while still others were ambivalent.

It was found that Friends groups' relationships with local government and library authority differed according to what activities they undertook. Councils, it seems, were not in favour of Friends groups that undertook campaigns against their decisions on library closure or opening hour cuts. In Council 2, councillors, library staff, and management did not approve of their groups for this reason. However, in Council 4, councillors were not in favour of Friends groups, but library staff and managers were.

This stemmed from the fact that the council decided to close a couple of branch libraries, but branch library staff had disagreed with their council's decisions.

In Council 5, councillors, library staff, and management very much approved of Friends groups. This results from the library authority having basically established these groups, which operated as library consultation groups. For this reason, the library authority actively consulted its groups. However, it was discovered that not all the library staff favoured Friends groups in this council. One junior manager was not in favour of one of her groups. This is due to the fact that the group operated independently of staff wishes. She states that:

There have been difficulties in that the group was, at a certain stage, going down its own path and we did have occasion where the group was running very much entirely in its own direction. So it wasn't necessarily felt that the library staff were being particularly supportive, in fact at some stage in the proceedings it has appeared that they were putting on these events and were expecting library staff to also be involved, and therefore they were actually causing more work than necessarily was a support, so it could be seen as quite draining on staff time.

The results of the study suggest that the organisational climate of Friends groups could change according to how they operate.

## **6.9 Other Management Issues**

### **6.9.1 Communication**

Dolnick (1996) emphasises that 'cooperation and understanding can be accomplished through definite lines of communication' (p.8). It was shown that Friends groups used various communication methods for achieving cooperation from library users and members and understanding from library staff and management. They used different communication methods depending on who they intended to communicate to.

The major communication channel used was a committee meeting, which was used to communicate with committee members and library staff or management. Although committee members often met library staff at the library, committee meetings were more formal and official, and acted as communication channels for understanding library plans and Friends group activities. In general, all the committees, with the exception of three groups, operated quite actively in terms of the frequency of their meetings. The respondents claimed that the committee officers meet once a month to discuss their operation and activities. The officers of the three rural groups claimed to

meet only once every two to three months, as they could see one another when activities took place in their library. One officer claimed to see other officers around the village all the time because of living in such a small community. After meeting, the minutes were displayed on the library notice board in order to make their members, library users, and staff aware of their operation and activities.

It was found that the groups made extensive use of printing materials for communication. For example, four out of the ten groups published their newsletters in order to publicise and raise awareness of their operation and activities. One group in Council 1 used its parish council's newsletter and the local newspaper. The groups also used other communication methods, such as coffee mornings, social meetings and other events, in order to communicate with their members and other potential members. It was discovered that most of the groups were advertised on their own or their library's web-sites. However, most of the groups do not make great use of Internet facilities, such as e-mail, as a way of communication, whilst other profit or non-profit organisations use this comprehensively. With most group members being elderly, they were neither trained in using the Internet, nor had an on-line computer available at home.

#### ● **Recruiting New Members**

The present groups recruited new members through the communication methods above. Friends groups recruit new members in order to increase the size of their membership. There are many reasons why Friends groups have to enlarge the size of their membership. Firstly, as Dolnick (1996) suggests, a large number of members can give politicians a strong impression that a significant number of people are concerned about their library services.

It was apparent that the present groups recruited new members through group publicity. They carried out group publicity in order to achieve two aims: firstly, to publicise their library services and operation by promoting their existence and activities, and secondly, to draw public attention to their activities and to recruit new members. It was also discovered that the methods of recruiting new members were almost the same as those for group publicity, because the groups recruited members through group publicity. That is to say, when the groups undertook group publicity, the public began to be aware of them. As a result, those who were interested in the activities of these groups joined them. One officer of a branch library group in

Council 1 stated that her group recruited new members through group publicity, i.e. by using a notice board in the library, by putting up posters outside the library, and by advertising their group's activities in the parish council's newsletter and in the local newspaper. In her words:

We put notices up and we have items in (name of a newsletter) which is run by the Parish Council. On Mondays, in the local evening paper called (name of a newspaper), there is a section called Village Voice and we have a correspondent and if we want to put a notice in we submit it to them and they submit it to (the newspaper).

Therefore, it can be argued that the question of how the groups recruit new members can be resolved by looking at how they publicise their activities. The methods of recruiting new members as mentioned by a group's officer above, went some way towards group publicity. There are a number of ways of generating group publicity: through local mass media (radio and newspaper); through their own and other organisations' newsletters and Internet websites; by using notice boards in the library; by putting up posters inside and outside the library; by holding events; and by word of mouth. There was no observable difference in the methods of recruiting members between Friends groups that have more than 200 members, and those that have fewer than 100 members.

It was shown that although Friends groups did their best to recruit new members by using the methods above, some were not very keen on enlarging the size of their membership. One officer of a branch library group in Council 2 said that although its library has been under threat of closure for the last ten years, her group did not actively recruit new members. She claimed that:

We don't actually recruit (new members). Everybody, I think, knows we exist and everybody can see the events on the notice board and there is an application form for membership displayed on the notice board and on the counter. So anybody can join if they want to. We don't go out desperately recruiting.

This seems to be because, firstly, the size of the group's membership could not greatly influence politicians' impressions regarding the activities of the group, unless the group had several hundred members. Secondly, in the event of their library being put under threat of closure again, they would expect a great number of people to join the group.

## 6.9.2 Structure of the groups

### • Committee Structure

Although Friends groups consist of many members, the operation of these groups is led by a small number of active people who become committee members. This claim is in line with the view of one speaker at the Friends group workshop held in Birmingham in 1999. The speaker maintained that a Friends group could be formed with half a dozen people and operate very actively. Smith (1999) supports this. He suggests that ‘a core of keen people with time to work for the group’ is a pre-condition for the successful operation of a Friends group. The results of the pilot study for this research revealed that one of the main factors behind the successful operation of one group in Sheffield was that the group was very well-structured: active members became its committee officers, such as chairperson, secretary, treasurer, funding and membership secretary. The number of committee members, and the committee structure of the present groups, were described in detail in **section 6.4**.

An interesting feature regarding the structure of the committee was that each group had a clear statement as to whether library staff could serve on the committee, either as officers or members. In relation to the statement, there were some differences between those groups that were established by library staff and those that were formed spontaneously. The constitutions of the former groups stated that library staff could serve on the committee and could become committee officers, with the staff providing secretarial support for the group. However, one group’s constitution states that library staff could not take on the office of chairperson. The latter groups did not have such statements owing to the fact that these groups were originally formed spontaneously, mainly to conduct campaigns. Thus, the library staff did not want to get deeply involved in the operation of these groups.

### • Size of Membership

The literature review reveals that the size and nature of membership is another very important aspect of the operation of a Friends group. Dolnick (1996) emphasises the importance of the membership of a Friends group, describing membership as the ‘life-blood’. She states that:

The life-blood of an organisation is its membership. The dues paid are the basis of most budgets. More important are the number of people

representing the library and the Friends. Members represent your group, and their attitude contributes to the way the library is perceived by others.

For this reason, it can be argued that the success of a Friends group's operation entirely depends on how many energetic and dedicated members the group has. In particular, if the group charges membership fees, they can raise a considerable amount of funds simply by having a large membership. It can also be very useful to the group if they have many members who have various talents.

The size of the membership of the present groups varied from as few as 7, to over 500. There were some differences between the groups formed by library authorities and those established by people in the community. The former groups had fewer members than the latter groups. In Council 5, two library authority-formed groups had only 7 and 12 members.

In contrast, two independently formed groups in Council 2 had 250 and over 500 members. This stemmed from the fact that the latter groups were formed when their library was threatened with closure. Consequently, these groups actively recruited new members in order to inform the public of the problems, and to obtain their support for campaigning against decisions on library closure. At the same time, many local people, who were very concerned about their library, spontaneously joined these groups.

It was also found that branch library groups, with the exception of one group, had more members than central library groups. In Council 4, the former and latter groups had 224 and 60 members respectively. This study discovered the following two reasons as to why this was the case. Firstly, as described above, local people were very much concerned with their community library. As a result, when their library was under threat many people joined the branch library group. In contrast, the central library services covered the entire council area. Accordingly, not many people showed much interest either in the central library services or in the operation of the central library group. Consequently, the group may have had difficulty recruiting many members.

#### ● **Characteristics of the Groups**

In order to examine the characteristics of the present groups, the respondents were asked to select one of seven titles that best identified them with British Friends

groups. Their list included 'Library Action Group and Library Matters', 'Library Consultation Group', 'Library Users Group', 'Library Users Forum', 'Library Support Group', 'Library Campaigning Group' and 'Library Pressure Group'. Among these, 19 and 16 respondents chose 'Library Users Group' and 'Library Support Group' as the title of their group(s) respectively.

Among the 19 respondents who indicated 'Library Users Group', eight were from Council 5. It was discovered that they chose this title for the following reasons. Firstly, when Friends groups in the council were established as a result of the library authority's proposal to have more contact with library users, more public consultation, and more public involvement in the running of library services, the title of the groups might be more focused on 'library users'. Secondly, when the library authority initially designed these groups' constitution, the term 'Library Users Group' was used more than other terms such as 'Friends Group' or 'Library Support Group'. Hence, the respondents were more familiar with the term 'Library Users Group'. The view of one councillor in this area, who joined one group, supported this claim. She described her group as a 'Library Users Group', because:

We want a wider use of the facilities and we want users of this library to be part of the group. So I can't think of a better way of describing ourselves [than] as users. There are some better titles perhaps, but that's in our constitution and it would take quite a big process if we were to change it, but I can't see why we should.

The respondents from Councils 1, 3 and 4 mainly chose the title 'Library Support Group', whilst many respondents from Council 2 offered 'Library Campaigning Group' as a title. Six people, mainly councillors and senior management, claimed their groups could be described as a 'Library Campaigning group'. This result reflects the fact that senior library management and councillors were the people making decisions and policies on library services and operations. Hence, they were often confronted by Friends groups' campaigns for a change in their decisions and policy.

In particular, among the six respondents above, five people were from Council 2, in which several libraries had been threatened with closure in the 1990s, and Friends groups had conducted strong political campaigns during this period. The view of one librarian from this council clearly showed why they offered such a title. She stated that:

I think they've all had phases of being a Campaign group but I don't like it. I wouldn't want that to be their main function. I think Friends or Users or Supporters would be the ones that I would go for. I wouldn't

suggest they change their name.

On the other hand, her view revealed that library staff are concerned about Friends groups conducting campaigns. Therefore, in the next section, the relationship, and tensions between Friends groups and library staff are discussed.

It was also evident from the respondents' views that some groups were concerned about how they were labelled. They said that they rejected names such as 'Library action group' or 'Library campaigning group', which they felt might alienate potential supporters, because of a widespread reluctance to become involved in politics. It emerged that such concerns are rooted in a desire to maintain independence, and to attract more support from people with a wide variety of views and backgrounds.

### **6.9.3 Partnership**

Dolnick (1996) emphasises the relationship between a library manager and Friends groups for producing better library services, stating that:

Cooperation is vital. Without it, a library director can destroy a Friends group. On occasion, a Friends group has broken a library director. By understanding each other and working together, the library director and effective Friends group can produce the most desirable of improved library services for the taxpayer and the user (p.7).

The present study examined Friends groups' partnerships with library staff or management, councillors, and other organisations. The study revealed that, in general, the relationship between the groups and the library staff was good. Forty out of a total of fifty participants described the relationship as 'very good', 'excellent', 'very positive', 'very supportive', 'good partnership', 'cordial', 'constructive', 'great and wonderful', 'friendly' and 'co-operative'. No one from Councils 1 or 4 complained of any difficulty with relationships. However, ten people, particularly seven respondents from Council 2, claimed that there was some difficulty with relationships. In this council, more than half of the libraries were threatened with closure in the 1990s and thus, the groups carried out strong campaigns to save their libraries. As a result of this, there was some conflict between the groups and senior management or the council. A few respondents from this area claimed that the relationship between the groups and the local or junior staff was good. The view of one councillor in this area supported this claim, stating:

By and large the relations between the Friends groups and local staff are good. Relationships between Friends groups and library management, particularly senior management are not so good or have not been in the past, and I think that may be changing. Basically all Friends groups think there should be more money spent on the library service which I agree with, but it's not that easy.

The respondents offered several explanations as to why there was some difficulty with the relationship, and these are outlined below, as follows:

- Friends groups carried out campaigns against their council's decisions on library closure, or reduction of opening hours.
- They disagreed with the library staff about new library space.
- They operated entirely in their own direction rather than discussing their operation and activities with the library staff.
- There was potential conflict when the groups and the library staff had different opinions on the group activities.
- They took the credit for everything regarding the improvement of library services and operation.
- They treated the branch library manager as if he/she was the person who made decisions on branch library closure.
- Some of their activities impinged on librarians' professional work.

As described above, most of the respondents claimed that the relationship between the Friends groups and the library staff was very good. However, when the respondents were asked whether there was any tension between the groups and library staff, surprisingly only 15 people answered that there was no tension. It was revealed that firstly, despite there being not much tension between the groups and local library staff, there was tension between the groups and the library authority or council. Secondly, as four respondents disclosed, there was also tension within their group because of a particular co-opted member, or because of a clash of personalities.

The 15 respondents who stated that there was no tension offered the following reasons:

- The Friends groups and the library staff all have one and the same objective in mind: keeping the library open.
- They did not attempt to influence library policy.
- The library staff recognised the value of the groups' activities.

- There was no disagreement on library services and group activities. Consequently, there was no single conflict.
- The groups and the library staff worked together.
- The groups were not a threat.
- No tension between the junior staff and the groups existed.
- They achieved their initial aims: saving or building their library.
- The groups and the library staff appreciated each other's efforts.

In contrast, 16 people (among them, eight from Council 2) claimed that there was some tension between the groups and library service or staff or council over the following issues: decisions on library closure, service charges and the reduction of opening hours. Other people offered different reasons, given below:

- The Friends groups were not interested in the library's Best Value.
- They caused a problem by generating negative publicity.
- The library staff regarded the Friends of Libraries as a group that stirs things up, demands that library staff work harder, and raises uncomfortable issues.
- They were arrogant, resentful and irritated the library staff.
- In the early days of the groups, there was misunderstanding between the groups and the library staff regarding their role.

It was discovered that relationships were felt to be good between the groups and councillors regardless of their party, with the exception of Councils 2 and 4, in which the groups were spontaneously formed and conducted strong campaigns against their council's decisions on library closure. In Council 2, relationships between the groups and ruling party members were inadequate, because the groups were opposed to their council's policy. However, the groups' partnership with opposition party members was satisfactory. This stems from the fact that the members who disagreed with the ruling party's council policy favoured the groups' campaigns against the council's library policy. One example of good partnership is that the opposition party members often provided the groups with crucial information about their council's library plan. One group member stated that:

To be honest I had never even heard of Friends groups. I was approached by a local councillor (an opposition party member) who I know, who said that she felt there was a serious threat to the library and that she was going to call a public meeting and would I chair this meeting.

The results also revealed that the groups, particularly in Council 2, maintained a good partnership with local media such as newspapers. However, it was also found that the partnership was sustained by the interest of the newspapers rather than by the groups' efforts. The senior manager (in Council 2) suggested that:

They have influence. One of the reasons they have influence is because they're vocal and they are quite influential. So if the library service tries to do something which antagonises them, they can then write letters to Councillors and the local paper. You may find that local newspapers are quite hostile to Councils, so the local newspaper will be quite happy to print those letters.

Interestingly, one councillor (in Council 2) claimed that there was a little tension between the council and library staff, because the staff were often against any form of change in library administration, and hence, they supported Friends groups conducting campaigns against the council's library policy.

#### **6.9.4 Finance**

##### **• Membership Fees**

In some groups' constitutions and guide materials for establishing successful Friends groups, membership fees are regarded as the first source of income for Friends groups. Therefore, it can be said that membership fees are essential to, and a very important part of, the financing of the operations of Friends groups. This claim is in line with Pearson's (1996) view on membership fees, stating that:

One logical source for the funding necessary to operate a Friends organisation is through membership dues. Most Friends groups offer membership for individuals, householders, students, senior citizens, and life members. Membership dues may range from \$1 to \$500 or more based on the category and the type of community (p.175).

According to this statement, most American groups charge for membership. However, Smith (1999) maintains that only about 50% of British groups ask their members for annual subscriptions, ranging from £1 to £15. This study discovered that among the ten groups, three groups (two branch and one central library group) did not require any membership fee. The fees that they charged varied from £2 to £5 a year. No observable difference in fees was discovered between central and branch library Friends groups, or between groups that were established by library authorities and those that were formed by the public.

On the other hand, two interesting features were found. Firstly, among the five councils in which this study took place, none of the groups in Council 5 charged for membership. This seems to be because the library authority desperately needed people to organise and run a Friends group when they instigated the formation of all the 19 groups. Thus, they could not add a statement regarding membership fees when they designed a draft version of a constitution of Friends groups. In this council, the library authority uses Friends groups for user consultation, and they only consist of a small number of members (two groups have only 7 and 12 members). These groups obtained the necessary income for their operations through fund-raising and from other sources such as Lottery Funds.

Secondly, one group in Council 2 that had more than 500 members, only required a voluntary membership fee. The group decided to give its members the option of paying membership fees, the fees then being only £2 a year. One officer in this group revealed that one of the reasons for taking such a decision was to avoid excluding people from being a member should they so wish. In his words:

There is a voluntary membership fee. I think they can pay £2 per year if they like and some of them do, but we decided that for a variety of reasons we weren't going to charge, mainly because we felt the library is a free service and we shouldn't exclude people from being a member if they wanted to.

#### • **Fund-Raising and the Use of the Funds**

It was revealed that the present groups also raised funds by using other methods. They sold items such as second-hand books, cakes and raffle tickets. They held meetings, and events such as coffee mornings, literary and arts events, and fairs. Donations were another way of raising funds. They also raised funds by applying for external funds through the following organisations: the Lottery Commission, the Millennium Commission, the parish council, the local authority, and private companies.

It was apparent that branch library groups were keen on fund-raising and raised more funds than central library groups. Firstly, this was due to the fact that branch libraries were often threatened with closure due to lack of funds. Consequently, the people who used local libraries considered that they had to provide their library with financial support, such as donating books, library equipment and PCs, in order to save their library. Secondly, central library groups had more difficulties in raising funds

than branch library groups. In branch libraries, for example, holding coffee mornings was one of the best and most popular activities for fund-raising. However, central libraries were often under the control of the council's policy on contracts for catering. For this reason, central library groups could not have such activities.

The present groups used raised funds for various purposes. Firstly, they used funds for buying library materials such as children's books and reference books, periodicals (including newspapers), videos and computer software; secondly, funds were used for buying library equipment such as counters, video and leaflet stands, blinds for the windows, and a trolley for moving chairs. Funds were also used for buying PCs. Other groups used funds for different purposes. One branch library group (in Council 4) spent some money on carrying out a library survey. One central library group (in Council 5) used external funds for publishing a local history book and a calendar.

All the groups, bar the ones in Council 2, raised funds with the intention of supporting their library. However, the two groups in Council 2 had different views on fund-raising and giving financial support to the library. One group member disagreed with Friends groups raising funds in order to provide financial support to the library. They perceived that public library services should be fully supported by the central or local government. The other group in the same council saved money for future activities, instead of spending it on supporting their library.

In Council 5, the groups' funds were matched by the library authority. As a result, the groups' fund-raising resulted in an increase in library budgets. Thus, it can be argued that the groups' fund-raising caused these groups to influence policy on library budgets.

### **6.9.5 Leadership**

Regarding leadership, Demos (2003: 19) claims that 'certainly leadership is crucial within CBOs and the communities they serve ...'. The results of Dolnick's survey (1996) into Friends groups' leadership confirm this claim. She outlines the results of the survey as follows:

"We had a 'false start' several years before actual organization," one respondent wrote. "we started with a 'committee' and the chairman didn't carry through. ... The librarian and board representative selected the beginning group. The first chairman or president must be dependable." Another respondent stated that "Our library director has placed his wife in charge of a very important project for our group. She has no organizational ability and refuses help when it is

offered. It reflects on us, but we have no way out.”

The findings from the present study were very much in line with the results above. The study discovered that the leadership of Friends groups is vital in managing these groups and furthermore, in achieving their aims. The findings are as follows.

As mentioned in **section 6.9.2**, with half a dozen active people, a group could be established and operated very actively. However, it was discovered that, in reality, it is very hard to find half a dozen active people. This stems from the fact that not many people want to get heavily involved in managing a group. If there is any common or urgent issue to the public, such as threat of library closure, it is reasonably easy to find someone who could be a chairperson or other officers. However, if there is not such an issue, it is very hard to establish and operate a group due to lack of enthusiasm.

It was found that in the councils in which library staff or authority initiated the formations of Friends groups, the library staff initially chaired groups because of lack of enthusiasm. This was the case in Council 1. However, it was discovered that most of the groups' members were still reluctant to take the responsibility for managing their group. Therefore, this situation has caused some groups to be disbanded. Smith's report (1999) identified six groups in this area, but the present study revealed that three or four groups have been disbanded in recent years in the area. This result confirmed the way in which the leadership of Friends groups is important in managing Friends groups.

As described in **section 6.6**, in Council 5 three elected members chaired Friends groups. The study found that such involvement did not cause any political problems, but rather resulted in the successful operation of these groups. The members never wrongly used party politics in leading their group. One group member maintains that politics often become a problem in operating a Friends group. She (Walkley Library Action Group, 1998:1) states that:

Although I am a member of the Labour Party, my work of the group is entirely separate. Politics has never been, and will never be, a part of the group. I trust that this will nip in the bud any thought that I could jeopardise the independence of the group.

Demos (2003: 19) underpins the above claim, suggesting that:

One important ingredient in successful leadership, for both individuals and organisations, is political impartiality. ...Individuals perceived to be motivated by personal or political gain are unlikely to facilitate the building of trust.

**Section 6.6** described how the role of a chairperson, and other committee members who had a special skill, influenced the operation and activities of Friends groups.

## 6.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses the way in which constitutional and managerial elements could affect the influence of Friends groups on library policy. The chapter began by examining these elements from the viewpoint of a management approach, called Management By Objectives (MBO).

- **Aims and objectives:** it was revealed that the aims and objectives of the present groups were stated in their constitution, and that these differed according to the backgrounds from which these groups were formed. The objectives of groups from a similar background matched those of other groups in other councils. For example, Friends groups (in Councils 1 and 5) that were established by the library staff and authority focused their aims on supporting the library and helping their library staff. In general, central library groups had these aims regardless of the background to their establishment, because central libraries were never under threat of closure.

The objectives of the groups that were spontaneously founded by the public were saving or building the library. The public established their group in order to save (or build) their library when it was threatened with closure. However, it was also discovered that these groups changed their objectives, without revising their constitution, when they had achieved their original aims. They then had new aims: supporting the library.

The present groups included their objectives in the application form for membership, and displayed this form on the library notice board and counter. They also made the public aware of their objectives through Internet websites, and by holding activities and meetings. As a result, everyone (group members, library users, staff and councillors) was given the opportunity to understand the objectives.

As Reddin (1973) suggests, Friends groups achieved their objectives through their plans. They organised two types of meetings for discussing planning: an annual general meeting and a committee meeting. At the AGM, they made broad plans and

elected officers (committee members) who deal with making detailed plans. At regular committee meetings, the committee members drew up detailed plans for achieving the objectives. The groups discussed the plans with their library staff or management. It was identified that the groups that did not follow this procedure encountered conflict with library staff over their activities and operation. The number of the members, and the structure of the committee were considered very important, because the members decided on detailed plans at the committee meetings. However, no observable difference in these elements was found between the influential group and support groups.

Unlike profit-making and well-organised non-profit-making organisations, the present groups did not have any proper mechanism for measuring their achievement. However, obvious objectives, such as saving and building libraries, did not require such a mechanism. The achievement of these objectives can be visualised as follows: when the threat of library closure is removed, libraries can be seen to remain open or new libraries are built. However, in order to evaluate their performance in supporting the library, they relied on comments from members, library users, staff, managers and councillors. They obtained the comments from their members and library users at their meetings and events. The comments were also gained from library staff and managers at their committee meetings.

It was shown that the achievements of the groups differed according to who joined the groups, and what skills these members brought to their group. The groups that had professionals and famous people as their members benefited from their expertise and profile in achieving their objectives. This result suggests that Friends groups should recruit a more diverse range of people, such as politicians, teachers, artists and writers, who have different skills, in order to achieve their aims. Frenchman (1998) supports this claim, stating that:

It is important that library friends should get the support of the local authors and other celebrities, and the local gentry; and that they should be on good terms with their MPs and MEPs, and get to know their councillors of all parties.

It was revealed that almost none of the groups have any team problems, with the exception of an occasional clash of personalities in Councils 1 and 4.

- **Status of the groups:** it was apparent that the status of the groups differed according to the background to their establishment: whether the groups were

established by the public, or by the library staff or authority. The groups that were founded by the staff or authority were regarded as library support groups. This is due to the fact that they instigated establishment after they perceived Friends of Libraries to be support groups. Therefore, they used these groups for user consultation in Councils 1, 3 and 5. However, spontaneous groups were defined as reactionary. The reason for this is that they carried out campaigns against decisions on library closure and opening hour cuts. However, it was also discovered that these groups' status changed. For example, Friends groups in Council 4 began to devote their activities to supporting their library after they achieved their objectives, e.g. saving their library. Thus, they were considered as support groups. This result suggests that in particular, spontaneous groups should support their library services and staff, not only when they carry out campaigns, but also when they achieve their objectives.

- **Organisational climate:** regarding the organisational climate of the groups, similar results were discovered as follows. Councils and library authorities were not in favour of groups which undertook campaigns against decisions on library closure and opening hour cuts. On the other hand, they approved of groups which provided support to their library services and operation. In particular, in Council 5, the library authority and council very much appreciated the activities and operation of Friends groups. Consequently, they regularly consulted with group members about library services, and applied their opinions to the council's library policy.

- **Communication** is considered important in obtaining cooperation from their members and library users, and in gaining understanding from library staff and authority. The groups mainly used committee meetings to communicate with library staff and management. This is because these meetings are more formal. They used other methods for communicating with other people. For example, they displayed the minutes of the meetings on the library notice board. Four groups publicised newsletters, and most of the groups were publicised on their own or their library's websites. However, they did not use e-mail for communication, which is very common among other organisations. Accordingly, it would seem sensible for them to consider using e-mail for convenient and better communication with their members and potential members (library users). In general, e-mail saves time and money in comparison with other communication methods, such as newsletters and the post. Friends groups recruited new members by using the communication methods outlined above and through public relations.

- **Committee structure:** all of the ten groups had a committee system for managing their groups, and the committee was well structured. All the groups had a similar structure i.e. the committee consisted of a chairperson, a secretary, a treasurer and other members. There were some differences in the involvement of library staff in the committee. In general, library staff chaired Friends groups that they had established, but members of the public chaired spontaneously formed groups.
- **Size of membership** varied from 7 to over 500, and this number differed according to the backgrounds to the groups' formation. The groups that were formed by the staff or authority had fewer members than spontaneous groups. These results stem from the fact that the spontaneous groups were formed when there was an urgent issue, such as threat of library closure. Thus, many people who considered the situation serious, voluntarily joined the groups. This finding also applied to branch library groups, which had a higher membership than central library groups, except in one council.
- **Characteristics of the groups:** the results of the examination of the characteristics of the present groups were as follows: Friends groups in Councils 1, 3 and 4 operated as library support groups; groups in Council 5 performed the role of user consultation; in Council 2, groups existed as library campaigning groups. These results were confirmed by the finding that groups in Councils 1 and 3 focused their objectives on supporting their library services. Groups in Council 4 began to operate in support of their library after they achieved their objectives: saving their library through campaigns. In Council 5, groups operated as user consultation groups. On the other hand, groups in Council 2 carried out strong campaigns against their council's decisions on library closure.
- **Partnership:** the study revealed that Friends groups' partnerships with library staff and management were satisfactory in all the councils, with the exception of Council 2. The groups in Councils 1, 3, 4 and 5 operated in support of their library, and to help library staff. However, in Council 2 there were conflicts over library closure between groups and library staff and management. These results also applied to the relationships between groups and councillors. In Councils 2 and 4, where groups carried out campaigns against their council's decisions on library closure, the relationships were unfavourable. However, it was found that even in these areas, the partnership with opposition party members was constructive. Both organisations

benefited from each other in achieving their objectives. It was also discovered that Friends groups maintained a strong partnership with local media such as newspapers. They took advantage of the media in publicising their activities and operation, and in making people aware of particular issues such as the threat of library closure or opening hour cuts.

- **Finance:** unlike American groups, which raise lots of funds only through membership fees (Dolnick, 1996), the present groups raised funds not only through membership fees, but also by practising other methods such as selling items, holding various events, and applying for external funds. This is due to the fact that the groups had only a small membership, and some groups did not charge for membership. Branch library groups were very keen on fund-raising, and raised more funds than central library groups. This stems from the fact that branch libraries were often threatened with closure, due to lack of library funds, and central libraries had difficulty in undertaking fund-raising activities. Most of the groups, bar two groups in Council 2, raised funds with the intention of supporting their library and furthermore, they provided financial support to their library. However, the groups in Council 2 disagreed that Friends groups raise funds in order to provide financial support to libraries. They saved funds instead of spending them on their library. However, it would seem wise for them to reconsider their strategy for using funds. Such a strategy gives library staff and management the misconception that Friends groups exist not for the library but for themselves, and therefore, are not really friends of libraries. Dolnick (1996) supports this claim. She describes one of the problems of American groups - a problem which has been raised by librarians - saying that 'if the Friends groups aren't going to give us the money they raise, what is the point of having them?' (p.9).

- **Leadership:** it was confirmed that the leadership of the chairperson and their relationship to other committee members is crucial for the successful operation of Friends groups. The study revealed that groups could not survive without a leader. Friends groups could operate more successfully if groups were chaired or managed by prominent people, such as politicians, head teachers, architects, local artists and authors and other celebrities, who have special skills, experiences and status.

## Chapter 7

# The Role of a National Friends of Libraries Organisation

### 7.1 Introduction

The results of the literature review reveal that, at the present time, one of the main issues concerning the activities of Friends groups in the UK has been the possible establishment and operation of a National Friends of Libraries organisation (NFOL). The issue has been discussed in detail for several years, at a seminar (Sugg, 1998), a workshop (1999), in an MA study (Whittaker, 1998) and in a project (Smith, 1999). Smith (1998) also states that the Library and Information Commission and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport have considered the issue widely. Furthermore, the Library Campaign, formerly an independent campaign organisation for improved library services, was reorganised in 2001 as 'a national organisation for Friends and Users groups of public libraries' (the Library Campaigner, 2001a).

Therefore, it is worth discussing the role of a NFOL. This chapter initially deals with the establishment, operation, and role of a potential British NFOL and existing NFOLs in Australia, Canada and the USA. It then addresses the results of how the participants in this study perceived the possible role of a British NFOL in influencing government policy on public libraries.

### 7.2 The Role and Establishment of a NFOL

#### 7.2.1 The establishment of a British NFOL

One Friends group in Sheffield attempted to build a network of all the groups in the city (Staniland, Fletcher & Townend, 1998). The group intended to unite all the groups, and to work together as one big organisation to save their libraries. Townend (Staniland, Fletcher & Townend, 1998) explains why she made such an attempt, saying:

At the moment we have sent an open letter to all the libraries in Sheffield asking them to form a group in their library so that we can unite and stand together to preserve our libraries (p.68).

This statement shows two things. Firstly, Friends groups' desire to have a regional network or federation of Friends groups and secondly, the reason why they want to have such a network. They might consider that they could express their opinions more strongly towards their local government by being united. This finding is very much in line with the claim by Demos (2003), stating that:

Most (community-based) organisations are involved in formal or informal networking activities at some level, and seek to enhance the impact of their work by building strategic alliances with others, sometimes including larger voluntary sector organisations or statutory agencies (p.7).

The present study discovered that among the five councils in which this study took place, three councils (2, 4 and 5) already have a regional federation of Friends groups. Friends groups in these areas also operate more actively than those in the other two areas. In London, a much higher level of regional network was formed in 1999, called 'Libraries for Life for Londoners (LLL)' (2003), which covers all boroughs in London. These findings confirmed that Friends groups succeeded in building a regional, or a much wider, network of Friends groups.

All these efforts in building a regional network, and the dramatic increase in the number of Friends groups in the UK, caused group members and library professionals to consider the establishment of a national network (Smith, 1998, 1999; Sugg, 1998). The number of Friends groups has increased dramatically over the last two decades. In 1979, when Murison carried out his study, less than ten groups existed in the UK, whilst Smith identified more than 150 groups in 1999. The circumstances that brought the members and library professionals in the UK to consider the formation of a national network are similar to those in the USA two decades ago. Dolnick (1996) describes the historical background to the establishment of a national Friends of Libraries organisation in the USA, called FOLUSA:

As the rate of growth of Friends of the Library groups accelerated in the late 1970s, it became clear that some way to increase communication among groups and help them become more visible was necessary (p.13).

Regarding the establishment of FOLUSA, Dolnick adds that the growing number of Friends groups demanded 'some central source of information' about these groups and this demand led to the formation of FOLUSA.

The present study examined how the participants of the study perceived the operation of a British NFOL: more than two thirds of them favoured the organisation. This

result is very much in line with the findings of Smith (1999) and Whittaker (1998). Smith reveals that of the authorities with Friends groups, 83% thought that a NFOL would be useful, valuable, or very valuable. He also asked for Friends groups' views on the potential value of a NFOL. 75% of them thought that the organisation would be useful, valuable, or very valuable. Whittaker discovers that 'the majority of respondents would welcome the formation of an umbrella organisation for Friends of Libraries groups' (p.57). (However, the exact number of the respondents is not stated.)

### **7.2.2 NFOLs and their roles in other countries**

The literature (Dolnick, 1996; Smith, 1998) reveals that the major role of a NFOL could be to provide Friends groups with a communication channel, through which they could exchange ideas and experiences of their operation and activities. Furthermore, they could develop their group through such communications. Dolnick (1996) describes the benefits of a NFOL as follows: 'it lies in the opportunity to further the growth of new groups and to create a channel for exchanging useful ideas and information on fund-raising, advocacy, recruiting members and organising a Friends group'.

The present study examined the mission and goals of national Friends of Libraries organisations in other countries, in order to identify what roles they play and how these differ according to different countries. The results of the examination are presented in detail below.

According to the literature (Budnik, 2002; Dolnick, 1996; Murison, 1979; Smith, 1998), Friends groups exist in many countries worldwide: Australia, Canada, Chile, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, South Africa, Spain, the UK and the USA. Among these countries, Australia, Canada, the USA and Spain have a NFOL, the first three having Internet homepages (no web page could be found for Spain). Therefore, those organisations' mission and goals have been identified both electronically and by reviewing established literature. These were compared and contrasted in order to discover how they might differ, and to find out any unique characteristics of each organisation's mission. Three organisations' mission and goals, number of members and year of establishment, are detailed below.

**Figure 2 Friends of Libraries Australia (FOLA)**

(Friends of Libraries Australia, 2003: 1)

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**Mission:** To support and promote libraries through initiating, developing and enhancing Friends of Library groups in Australia.

- Goals:**
- To liaise with bodies with similar aims to achieve goals.
  - To encourage and assist the formation and development of Friends of Library groups in Australia.
  - To promote the development of library services for all people residing in Australian states and territories.
  - To provide a means for Friends of Library groups to have access to information and ideas that will prove useful to them in the operation of their organisations.
  - To promote public awareness of the existence of Friends of Library groups, and of the services they support and provide.

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**Number of members (group):** 160

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**Number of members (individual):** 25,000

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**Year of formation:** 1994

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**Figure 3 Friends of Canadian Libraries (FOCAL)**

(Friends of Canadian Libraries, 2003: 1)

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**Mission:** (a) To encourage and assist the formation and development of Friends of Library groups in Canada for all types of libraries.

(b) To promote the development of an excellent library service for all residents of Canada.

(c) To provide Friends of Libraries groups with access to information and ideas that will prove useful to them in the operation of their organisation.

(d) To make the public aware of the existence of Friends of Libraries groups and of the services they perform.

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**Number of members (group):** 175

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**Number of members (individual):** no record

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**Year of formation:** 1998

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As seen in **Figure 2** and **3** above, the Australian (FOLA) and Canadian (FOCAL) national organisations have very similar missions.

However, the mission of these two organisations differs slightly to that of the American national organisation (FOLUSA). On the whole, FOLUSA, as seen in **Figure 4** below, does not directly support and promote libraries. It mainly exists to assist the development and formation of Friends groups, and also to provide information and ideas in order to encourage them to support and promote libraries. However, FOLA and FOCAL partly aim to provide direct support to libraries. For example, one of their missions or goals is ‘to promote the development of an excellent library service’ in their countries.

#### **Figure 4 Friends of Libraries USA (FOLUSA)**

(Friends of Libraries U.S.A, 2003:1)

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**Mission:** To motivate and support local Friends groups across the country in their efforts to preserve and strengthen libraries, and to create awareness and appreciation of library services by:

- Assisting in developing Friends of the Library groups in order to generate local and state support;
- Providing guidance, education, and counsel throughout the Friends network;
- Promoting the development of strong library advocacy programmes;
- Serving as a clearinghouse of information and expertise.

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**Number of members (group):** 2,800

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**Number of members (individual):** over one million

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**Year of formation:** 1979

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#### **7.2.3 The potential role of a British NFOL**

The participants in this study broadly appreciated the role of a British NFOL in enhancing the operations of Friends groups and in supporting libraries. It was revealed that these two roles are much the same as the mission and goals of NFOLs in Australia, Canada, and the USA (Smith, 1999).

There were two types of views on enhancing the operations of Friends groups. Firstly, nine respondents suggested that through a NFOL, a Friends group could communicate with other groups. Furthermore, by such communication, they could exchange ideas and information and learn how to operate their group and undertake their activities. Thus, it can be said that their views mainly focused on the development of Friends groups. One councillor (in Council 1) claimed that by exchanging ideas through the NFOL, Friends groups could operate more effectively. In his words:

It would rejuvenate some of the ideas within Friends groups by sharing ideas and sharing best practice, and sometimes a group needs its confidence boosting by knowing that somebody else is not quite as good as they are. When you discuss with somebody and they say they are doing something, and you say well 'We've done that', you sort of get that boost of morale because you're actually a bit further down the road. So it's lots of things really, you would revitalise the Friends groups. You would get to share best practice.

Several other respondents emphasised the second role in enhancing the operation of Friends groups. They claimed that the organisation could make Friends groups' voices heard. They considered lobbying or campaigning to the government to be the role of the NFOL. One librarian (in Council 3) said that the organisation could have more lobbying power. She stated that:

If there was a national group and national body ... I think it would have more power in lobbying the Government over library issues for example. So from that point of view, I think it would be beneficial to support libraries and keep them in the full front of the public eye.

The results of the analysis of the mission and goals of the existing national organisations in other countries revealed that this role - lobbying or carrying out campaigns - is not directly carried out by the national organisations in Australia, Canada and the USA. That is to say, these three organisations do not consider this to be their main role. This finding reflects the unique circumstances of libraries and the operations of Friends groups in the UK: many branch libraries (more than 500) were closed or threatened with closure by local governments (CIPFA, 1989/1990-1999/2000; Proctor, Lee & Reilly, 1998) and thus, many groups were established in the 1990s to save their libraries (Smith, 1999).

However, it should be noted that there might be differences between perceived roles and mission statements. That is to say, although the three organisations considered lobbying and campaigning as their roles, they might not state these roles in their constitution. Similarly, such roles are considered as the roles of the British NFOL, but the organisation could not state these roles in its constitution. They feared that by stating these roles in their constitution, the public, library staff and politicians would interpret them as being political. The following is a case in point. The researcher attended the annual general meeting of the Library Campaign in 2001, and recognised that many Friends groups were reluctant to affiliate themselves to the organisation. They saw the organisation as a political group because of its name and mission. A letter announcing the AGM (19<sup>th</sup> May 2001) supports this claim as follows:

**Changing Name:** some of our members have for some time felt that the name 'The Library Campaign' does not fully express the supporting activities of many Friends groups and puts undue emphasis on *political lobbying and campaigning*.

One respondent's view (a librarian in Council 4) confirmed this claim. She defined a potential NFOL as a political group. She considered the main role of a NFOL to be lobbying or campaigning to the government. It seems that her perception stemmed from the fact that her branch library was threatened with closure, and the library's Friends group saved the library as a result of their campaigns. She expressed her view that '*it would be a good idea to support libraries which are in danger of closure etc, but it's a bit political really and I'm not into anything political.*'

These findings suggest the following considerations when choosing a title and mission statement for a British NFOL. Firstly, it should avoid using the term 'lobbying or campaigning' in its name. This is because the public instantly considers such a term to be political, and it may discourage them from joining the organisation, even though their group may often conduct campaigns. Secondly, the constitution should exclude any statement about lobbying or campaigns for the same reason. Thirdly, it should consider whether the role of the British NFOL should only focus on enhancing the operations of Friends groups, or on supporting both Friends groups and libraries. If the initial role of the British NFOL is enhancing the operations of Friends groups, the next role should be directly supporting library services. As shown above, these roles are much the same as those of FOLA and FOCAL.

However, a British NFOL should take into account the first two recommendations in establishing and operating its organisation. It does not mean that it should not undertake lobbying or campaigns. Thus, the British NFOL could have a potential role in lobbying politicians at a national level in order to bring attention to national public library services. The Laser Foundation Report (Leadbeater, 2003) supports this claim, stating that 'public (library) service renewal requires strong political leadership to challenge complacency, set ambitious goals and legitimise innovation. (However) Libraries lack such leadership' (p.11). Comedia (1993) also maintains the claim, expressing that although the status of public libraries is high as a result of their statutory position, they do not attract politicians' attention to any degree. Comedia explains:

There are national committees, professional organisations and local authority groups representing library interests, but none of these have as their primary purpose the role of the national public library service (p.57)

Comedia underpins its claim, saying that as a professional organisation, Cilip's (see below) primary purpose is 'to serve the interests of the library professionals rather than develop broad policies for public libraries' (p.57) and the British Library 'has far higher public status than the public library system' (p.57).

The study revealed that library staff and councillors had a broader view of a NFOL than Friends groups. In general, group members identified the role of a NFOL as enhancing the operation of their group and supporting their library. However, the library staff and councillors considered the role to be supporting and promoting libraries at a national level. One librarian (in Council 2) claimed that a British NFOL focusing its roles on supporting and promoting libraries at a national level could be more beneficial. In her words:

If it could raise the profile of libraries in general with the Government, that could be an extra help for libraries because the Government at the moment seems to be saying libraries are the street corner university, but the resources and the support are not really there. So I suppose if a large body of people are saying how valuable libraries are, it could be beneficial.

The following findings confirmed that the staff and councillors had catholic views of a NFOL. Firstly, each Friends group is only interested in its own library. Secondly, group members do not have much knowledge of the potential role of a NFOL because, at the moment, the organisation does not exist. One member of the senior management (in Council 1) stated that his library authority had considered the

establishment of a borough/countywide federation of Friends groups. However, they could not form the organisation because their groups were only interested in their own library. He said that:

We've considered a federated approach in [Council 1] where all the constituent parts could come together, say once a year, but it's the Friends themselves who've not wanted to do that. They've been what we call parochial, they've wanted to support just their particular library and we're not much interested in a federation of Friends groups [in Council 1].

This result suggests another consideration for the establishment of a British NFOL. It should be taken into account that Friends groups are more interested in a NFOL supporting individual groups and libraries rather than developing public library services at a national level.

#### **7.2.4 The role of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (Cilip) in establishing and developing a British NFOL**

Smith (1999) suggests that Cilip should lead the establishment of a NFOL:

In fulfilment of its Royal Charter duties the Library Association (Cilip) should take the lead in establishing a Federation or support group by calling a meeting of interested parties (for example, the Library and Information Commission, SLIC, SCONUL, the Society of Chief Librarians, the Library Campaign, LISC Wales and LISC Northern Ireland) to form a Steering Committee (p.40).

It seems that there are three reasons as to why he made such a suggestion. Firstly, as mentioned above, Cilip is well aware of all the interested groups concerned with establishing the organisation. Thus, Cilip could work more effectively with these groups to establish the organisation. Secondly, as Friends groups basically exist for improved library services, Cilip could be the closest alliance of Friends groups. Therefore, Cilip might be considered suitable for leading the establishment. Thirdly, 'the American Library Association (ALA) played a key role in its establishment' (Smith, 1999: 38) and FOLUSA was formed with the support of the ALA (Dolnick, 1996).

As Smith suggests above, Cilip did indeed take the lead in initiating a 'pre-steering group' and facilitated holding a series of meetings. 'It was suggested in the meetings that the Library Campaign might be an appropriate nucleus of such an organisation. However, there were some reservations expressed about the Library Campaign' (Wight, 2001: [1]). Therefore, the Library Campaign revised its manifesto in 2001

and was finally reorganised as 'the national organisation for Friends and Users (groups) of publicly funded libraries' (The Library Campaigner, 2001a: 5)

Therefore, it can be argued that Cilip initially played a role in establishing the organisation, and was influential in the Library Campaign being reorganised as the national organisation. However, in order to develop the organisation further, it is recommended that Cilip should provide some support to the organisation. This is due to the benefits of the organisation to individual groups and furthermore, to individual libraries. Although the situation of the Library Campaign (LC) is different from FOLUSA, the LC has operated since 1984, and some valuable lessons can be learned from ALA's contribution to the development of FOLUSA. Dolnick (1996) states how the ALA supported FOLUSA:

For many years ALA served as FOLUSA's mailing address and provided office services. In 1994 all office and financial functions were transferred to FOLUSA's new Philadelphia headquarters, but the two organisations continue to cooperate and support one another's missions and goals (p.14).

Another reason for Cilip needing to provide some financial support to the organisation is that at the moment, the LC is not financially independent. According to the LC's Treasurer's annual report (the Library Campaigner, 2001b), almost half of its income was raised by a UNISON grant. As Smith (1999) suggested, Cilip should also provide information on the LC and Friends groups on its websites, in order to promote and develop the organisation.

### **7.2.5 Role of other organisations in establishing and developing a NFOL**

Smith (1999) emphasised the role of other organisations, such as the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and Resource, the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries, in establishing a NFOL. However, since his report was published in 1999, the Library Campaign became (was reorganised as) the NFOL (The Library Campaigner, 2001a). Thus, the roles of these organisations should be focused on the development of the NFOL. The present study recommends that these organisations state their support for the NFOL, and make funds available for the operation of the NFOL, and that the Council provides strong moral support to the organisation.

### 7.2.6 The Library Campaign as a British NFOL

Interestingly, about a dozen respondents claimed that there are organisations representing Friends groups in the UK. Ten respondents regarded the Library Campaign to be this organisation. It was revealed that the respondents held this view because, firstly, the LC claimed that they represent Friends groups and secondly, many Friends groups affiliated themselves to the LC.

The LC was originally set up in 1984, to stimulate the establishment of campaign groups, to support campaigning activities, and to undertake political campaigns for improved library services (The Library Campaign, 2003). The LC revised its manifesto in 2001 to ‘make it more relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century’ (A letter announcing the AGM, 19<sup>th</sup> May 2001). In reality, the LC revised its manifesto with the intention of being seen as an organisation representing Friends and Users groups. The following old and new manifestos show how these have been changed:

- The original manifesto (cited from the letter above). The Library Campaign will:
  - ‘Stimulate the establishment of local **campaign groups** by the provision of information, publicity materials and other independent action groups.
  - Support campaigning activities undertaken by trade unions and other independent action groups.
  - Disseminate information on local initiative through The Library Campaigner (a periodical), regional conferences and other means.
  - Campaign politically whilst remaining independent of all political parties.’
- The revised manifesto. The Library Campaign will:
  - ‘Stimulate the establishment of local **Friends and User groups** by the provision of information and publicity materials.
  - Facilitate the exchange of information between **Friends and User groups** and represent their views nationally.
  - Disseminate information on local initiative through The Library Campaigner (a periodical), regional conferences and other means.

- Campaign politically whilst remaining independent of all political parties.
- Affirm that publicly funded libraries and information services continue to play a key role in lifelong learning.’ (The Library Campaigner, 2001c: [24])

Although the LC revised its manifesto, there is still some debate as to whether the LC can be regarded as a British NFOL. The reason for this is that firstly, it still keeps the title ‘the Library Campaign’, which raised the argument about its fundamental aims. Secondly, many Friends groups do not join the LC because they consider it to be political. According to the LC (Letter from the Director, 22 January 2003), it has about 40 group members. It was mentioned above that Smith (1999) discovered 150 groups in the UK. One group officer (in Council 5) stated that:

There is a National one and it was the AGM last month, the Library Campaign. At this level as well I don’t want to be politically involved. I’m not interested in politics. I’m interested in people, and the social side of this and the emotional side of it.

One senior member of the library management (in Council 1) supported this view. He considered the differing roles of a British NFOL and the LC. He saw the LC as a political group:

There is an organisation called the Library Campaign and to some extent they fulfil the balance between what the professionals think and what the library users think, but I think if a National Friends of Libraries could be established then we’d have three organisations, the Library Association (Cilip) you could argue, the Library Campaign you could argue, would be a sort of political arm of users and the National Friends would be somewhere between the two.

One group member (in Council 3) raised another issue regarding the LC, saying that her group did not have much information about the organisation. They did not fundamentally know what the organisation was, or what it stood for. This view suggests that the LC has not been appropriately publicised to all Friends groups and people in the library field, since the LC was reorganised in 2001. One source underpins this claim. According to the Laser Foundation Report (Leadbeater, 2003), library professionals do not know that the LC has finally become a national organisation for Friends groups in the UK, with the support of Cilip and many Friends groups. In the report, Leadbeater states that the creation of a national Friends of Libraries organisation would be one possibility for developing more effective

national advocacy for public library services. It seems that this finding is very important to the LC becoming a widely regarded national organisation for Friends and Users groups. In particular, the LC should advertise itself more effectively and actively, given that the controversial term ‘campaign or campaigning’ has been removed from its manifesto. The group member said that her group was not given enough information for joining the LC. She stated that:

Actually at our last meeting we were circularised by this new group and we decided that we would not get involved with it until we were clearer about its remit. We didn't feel that they were explicit enough about what they were going to do and we felt that we'd rather wait for a bit to see how they actually operated before we affiliated ourselves. So at the moment it's sort of a waiting game. We're waiting to see how it's structured and what information they might pass on to local Friends before we join, and also of course what their philosophy is before we join.

It was suggested that the following element should be broadly publicised to all Friends groups and library users, because it could be one of the advantages of the LC becoming a NFOL. Regarding the operation of a NFOL in the UK, one member of the senior management (in Council 5) stressed that ‘the LC is already made up of a lot of Friends and Users groups, staff and trade unions’. This means that the LC is reasonably well recognised by many people, such as Friends group members, library users, staff and library professionals. Furthermore, it has been operating as a formal organisation for 20 years. Thus, it is well structured and has accumulated much knowledge on operating a non-profit national organisation. In a word, the LC is well prepared for becoming a national organisation for Friends groups in the UK, with the exception of its name and some parts of its manifesto.

### **7.2.7 LLL as a British NFOL**

Two respondents (in Council 2) saw Libraries for Life for Londoners (LLL) as a NFOL. As an alliance of London Friends and User groups, LLL was set up late in 1999 in response to severe threats to public libraries in London. It was to be a concerted voice for library users London-wide (Libraries for Life for Londoners, 2003). As LLL only represents Friends and User groups in London, it cannot be considered as a NFOL. However, these two people held this view because LLL is a much bigger organisation than a borough/countywide one, and is also concerned with library services and the operation of Friends and User groups at a national level.

### 7.2.8 Disapproval of a NFOL

The study revealed that although the majority of the respondents in the study favoured a NFOL, there were some people who disapproved of the organisation: sixteen respondents (nine staff, five group members and two councillors) remained sceptical about the successful operation of a NFOL for the following reasons. Firstly, as six people claimed, many group members are only interested in their own library. Therefore, the members would not favour an organisation that might solely be concerned with the whole library service at a national level, and not directly support the local group and library. One librarian (in Council 2) supported this claim. She was dubious about the operation of a NFOL because the public were only interested in their own library. She said ‘I don’t see how it could work really. It’s too big [and] most people are only concerned with their local issues’. One group officer (in Council 1) also supported this view, stating:

It depends on what their agenda is, what they're there to do. We're just here to help in any financial way with extra items for this library. I don't know that one would succeed in this country, but if you were going to have a national group then probably their aims would be different and you may not get the support that we get in [here].

Demos (2003: 21) underpins this finding, claiming that ‘CBOs are often ambivalent about networks if they appear too formalised. There can be fears that formally structured networks will attempt to impose uniformity of practice ...’.

However, such parochialism adversely influenced the operation of a borough/countywide umbrella organisation. This study discovered that among five councils, three have an umbrella organisation, and the organisation does not operate very well in terms of unifying all the local groups. The leaders of the three organisations said that not all the groups in their council joined them, because many group members were only interested in their own group and library. This discovery is very much in line with Demos (2003: 7) as follows:

The potential for successful networking and alliance building is limited by fragmentation within the community sector. Often organisations are competing for the same scarce resources, or avoid joint working due to anxiety about losing their independence and identity.

The second reason for some respondents disapproving of a NFOL was that even the regional organisation was considered political, because of it being bigger and

focusing more on campaigns. One group officer (in Council 4) supported this finding. He claimed that his group members were only interested in their own library. Therefore, they did not join the regional umbrella organisation. In his words:

We won't join the local one. So I can't see us joining a national one. I'm afraid all we were interested in was [name of a library], and if you join a bigger group all you get is you want more people asking you to spend more time in committees and so on, and we weren't interested. Our particular committee is composed of people who want to get things done, and if there is only our group we don't have to ask anybody else. We can make up our own minds and say let's do it and go ahead, and we don't have to consult anyone else.

One elected member (in Council 5) also revealed that the umbrella organisation in her area was not successful in its operation. She stated that:

The local Federation of [Friends of] Libraries isn't doing very well. So I can't see how a National Federation of [Friends of] Libraries could work. ... But that's down to the people who wish to do that. But we're struggling in [Council 5] with the Federation.

Interestingly, in Council 2, five library staff challenged the idea of establishing a NFOL. It was revealed that this is because they basically did not favour the operation of Friends groups. Their view stemmed from the fact that more than half of the libraries in this area had been threatened with closure in the 1990s. In response to this threat, many Friends groups were established, and furthermore, an umbrella organisation was founded, and they carried out strong campaigns against the council's decisions on library closure. In this process, some conflicts occurred, not only between Friends groups and the council, but also between Friends groups and library staff. As a result of these conflicts, the staff began to disapprove of Friends groups. One librarian in this area remained deeply sceptical about a NFOL. Basically, he considered Friends groups to be reactionary and conservative, and furthermore, did not see the benefit of the operation of a NFOL. He stated that:

It will expose them, the greater their profile, the bigger their platform, the louder their voice nationally, ... When you bring them all together, it makes it more conspicuous and more explicit how unrepresentative they are, how reactionary and conservative they are. I think it's quite good for that to be shown to be the case, and I think it would be really good to get a national organisation, because then they will speak with one voice and we will be able to hear what that voice is saying, and I think then it will be easier for people to resist some of their unreasonable expectations. I think when they are all quite low key the only people they do get to deal with them are locally, but let's get a national organisation, let's actually put some pressure on them. They're so good at criticising. They're so good at blocking and obstructing.

Let's see what ideas they've got that are realistic ideas, which address the real problems we've got because they don't seem to live in that world. They don't seem to have solutions. They seem to thrive on criticising solutions that other people have. So I think it would be very funny actually for them to form as a national organisation.

## **7.3 NFOL's Ability to Influence Government Policy on Public Libraries**

### **7.3.1 NFOL could influence government policy**

The present study examined how the participants in the study perceived the influence of a British NFOL on government policy on public libraries. Twenty-six respondents (14 staff, 8 Friends group members and 4 councillors) deemed that the organisation could have more power than individual groups in influencing government policy on public libraries. They presented the following reasons.

About a dozen people considered that if more people were to get involved in a NFOL, the more strength and influence they would have. One group member (in Council 3) perceived that the NFOL could influence government policy to a greater extent. The organisation would be a big organisation and could make a bigger impression. In her words:

If there was a national group of people, a big group of people, you can always make a bigger impression than a small group. I think to a great extent we could. It would take some organising though. The Government would listen to a big group of people, whereas they would ignore a small one.

Several respondents suggested a couple of ways in which the NFOL could influence government policy. One group member (in Council 5) said that the organisation could operate as a pressure group. One member of the senior management (in Council 1) claimed that the NFOL could provide additional support in lobbying and promoting the importance and value of public library services. Another group member (in Council 4) suggested that the organisation could put pressure on MPs (the Members of Parliament). One member of the senior management in the same area considered that the public could build a strong network of Friends groups through the NFOL. He perceived that if this network had been built 10 years ago, they might already be having some influence on government policy. He commented:

I think it could [influence] to a great extent. Probably not so much now, as the Government is much more supportive of libraries than previous Governments, but I think if it had the situation of a strong network of Friends, who had been lobbying on our behalf 10 years

ago, I think they would have had some influence earlier than it actually happened. So I think it would have been beneficial and still could be.

Five people claimed that the NFOL could influence government policy because the present government is a listening government. One librarian (in Council 4) said that the NFOL could influence government policy to some extent because ‘this government claims to be a listening government and seems to be very keen on focus groups’. This finding revealed that for a non-listening government, the organisation would have difficulty influencing government policy. Eight respondents supported this, as described below.

### **7.3.2 NFOL’s influence on government policy depends on the external factors of its operation**

Eight respondents claimed that the influence of the NFOL on government policy depends on which government they are dealing with. That is to say, if a government is very keen on public libraries, and considers library services to be very important and valuable, the organisation could influence government policy on public libraries to a great extent. One librarian’s view (in Council 5) supported this claim. She said ‘I suppose it depends on which government it is. The present government is quite keen on libraries. So maybe they would listen.’

One group member (in Council 4) claimed that the level of influence depended on the issues involved. If an issue was important enough, and there was a national network of Friends groups, it could be worthwhile for Friends groups to influence the policy. Interestingly, another group member in the same area suggested ‘timing’ as being important in influencing policy. He said that if the NFOL campaigned to the government before a general election, they would have a better opportunity to influence government policy. The government, naturally, would be seeking their support in the election.

One member of senior management (in Council 5) revealed that the influence of the NFOL could depend on who is involved in its operation. He suggested that if famous people or professionals were involved in it, the organisation could influence policy to a great extent. He stated that:

It would largely depend on who was involved in it. If they got somebody like Melvin Bragg, but these people are already supporters of libraries, they already campaign. You can get somebody like Jilly Cooper, I think she helped to stop her local library being closed.

Another member of the senior management (in Council 3) held much the same view as above. She said that if influential people were involved in the operation, the organisation could exert a great influence. She stated: 'I think a lot of it would depend on who was involved. If they got influential people involved in it I think it could have quite a good influence on libraries.' Yet another member of the senior management in the same area echoed this view. He perceived politicians as influential people. In his own words:

They [NFOL] would have some influence certainly, depending on who their spokespeople were, and if their spokespeople happen to be people who were very articulate and very involved in another sphere of public life, for example they were a politician, then yes there may well be more influence.

This was the case too in the operation of a local group and a borough/countywide umbrella organisation. There is much evidence to suggest that the participation of famous people, professionals and politicians affected Friends groups' influence on council library policy. As described in **Chapter 6**, three or four councillors from Council 5 participated in the operations of Friends groups. One member of senior management in this area revealed that their participation affected the Friends groups' influence on their council policy on public library services. She said that her Friends groups could influence library policy to a great extent through lobbying or political campaigns, because *'we've got local councillors on two of my three Users [Friends] groups and they are very keen to be seen to take knowledge of the local community needs.'*

In Council 2, Friends groups saved their libraries as a result of strong campaigns against their council. One councillor claimed that one of the reasons for their success was that the Friends groups had many famous people (authors, actors and writers) on their side. In Council 5, there was also a case for the participation of professionals in Friends groups influencing policy on public library services. In this case, a Friends group, chaired by a person who is a local architect and town planner, succeeded in getting a £800,000 SRB (Single Regeneration Budget) bid to extend their library (Benjamin, 2001). One member of the senior management supported this view. He stated that:

Some of them now are very expert at it, [name of Person A who chairs the group above], [name of Person B]. Some of the other User group members are very well informed. They can talk to elected members and

other key people, and can influence them because of the experience they have got and the confidence that has grown over the years. So I think it's the ability of some of the individuals, which makes it possible for them to influence policy to that great extent.

Frenchman (1998), Chair of Friends of Islington Libraries, has much the same view as above. She maintains that Friends groups should invite professionals, famous people, and politicians to join them in order to achieve their aims. Islington Friends groups saved one branch library that was under threat of closure as a result of seven years of hard campaigns (Frenchman, 1998). She seems to argue that such people supported their campaigns. She reveals, in terms of the involvement of influential people in Friends groups, the advantages her group has, saying:

We are incredibly lucky in Islington in that we are the next borough to Ridgmount Street, and Ross has an affection for Islington Town Hall; we are in the same borough as Aslib, and Blackfriars is just down the road: also Chris Smith is one of our MPs, and George Cunningham used to be one of our MPs. So we have access to the top brass to come to speak to us (p.19).

### **7.3.3 NFOL could have difficulty in influencing government policy**

Fourteen respondents (seven staff, five councillors and two group officers) remained sceptical about the NFOL influencing government policy on public libraries. They claimed that it would be difficult for the organisation to influence government policy for the following reasons:

Seven people perceived the government to be a non-listening government that does not pay attention to the public voice, and a strong organisation that is not easily influenced. It seems that their view partly reflected whether they personally supported the present government or not. In particular, the following two councillors' views underpinned this claim. One opposition party member (in Council 2) considered that the present government does not take account of public opinion. She saw the government as follows:

Government does what Government wants and Government doesn't always listen to people outside telling it things. ... I think it is a great myth to think that we have any control over what they do in Government. The only control you have is at the ballot box and that's only every 4 years. Local Councils are much closer to people and they are much more sensitive on the ground to what people in their areas are saying. Are you going to tell me that this Government is going to listen to anybody about anything that doesn't fit in with its vision. I mean they're going to listen to a focus group? If they won't listen, not just this

Government, but any Government, if they won't listen to a national disability organisation, which is lobbying them over disability issues, they're not going to listen to a bunch of middle class people supporting libraries. ... That's my disillusionment with Government, not my disillusionment with Friends groups.

Another opposition party member (in Council 5) accused the government of having little concern for library services. This member stated that:

I haven't actually noticed Governments of either persuasion being terribly concerned about libraries. The existence of a body that could speak for the users might have some influence but I'm always aware that library services, and the extent to which they are funded through the Funding Councils, always seems a relatively low priority.

One group member (in Council 2) had a slightly different view of the government from that of the respondents above. He basically favoured the influence of a NFOL on the government, but stated that the organisation could not influence the government because it was more powerful than the organisation.

You have to pay attention to the realities of the difference of power between the Library User groups and Government. The Government is obviously much more powerful. So yes, of course they should play a very large role, but the fact is they find it slightly more difficult because they are not part of Government. I think to a great extent they should, they could influence public policy. Finally, however, it's the Government that makes the policy.

The issue of the non-representation of Friends groups, as discussed in **Chapter 4**, was again raised by one member of the senior management (in Council 1). He stated that politicians did not consider Friends groups to be representative of the community. Thus, the influence of the NFOL on government policy could be limited. In his words:

I think that politicians who actually make policies on libraries will always treat a group like that with some caution, because they will feel that it isn't wholly representative of the community at large. They will see it very much as a vested interested, seeing the service from a very local point of view. So I think that their influence would be limited.

One librarian (in Council 5) raised the issue of establishing too many national organisations representing libraries. He perceived that in this situation, having too many organisations would result in support being spread too thinly. He stated that:

There is a National Organisation. It depends on the overlap between that and various reading campaigns, the National Year of Reading, the Library Campaign and if you have another one, you will think is this something

else and spreading the support too thinly nationally.

Another librarian (in Council 2) seems to support this view. She suggested that Cilip should be the main campaigning body for library services and staff, instead of forming another NFOL. Cilip became a new professional and main campaigning body following the unification of the Library Association (LA) and the Institute of Information Scientists (IIS) (Cilip: 2002).

Interestingly, in Council 2, six people (three staff, two councillors and one group member) remained sceptical about the NFOL influencing the government. This finding reflects the fact that in this area, Friends groups were not generally viewed favourably. The detailed circumstances of the operations of Friends groups and library services in this area have been described before. The library staff suggested that library professionals should advise the government on library policy. As mentioned above, Cilip was their alternative organisation. One librarian stated that:

I would hope that maybe the Government would take notice of the professional people in libraries, take advice from them. I can see that Friends groups will have some form of influence but I hope not as large an influence as the professional people, who I feel should advise the Government on policies.

## 7.4 Summary

The establishment of a British NFOL has been an important issue in the last several years. This has been due to the dramatic increase in the number of Friends groups in the UK, which is a similar trend to that in the USA (Dolnick, 1996). Knight (1998) considers the potential roles of the NFOL:

I feel the time has come to consider the establishment of a UK Federation of Friends Groups similar to FOLUSA (Friends of Libraries USA). There are numerous Friends groups across the UK who might benefit from a national organisation which could arrange training and support, produce publicity materials and arrange national conferences. This would in no way undermine the independent local organisation of our Friends groups. Perhaps from this seminar we could take forward this idea and begin exploratory discussions on such an organisation (p.35).

However, local groups, particularly those existing in councils where many libraries were threatened with closure, had another reason for having a national network for Friends groups. They deemed that if they were a bigger organisation, campaigning to their local government, they would have a better chance of achieving their aims, such

as saving libraries. Therefore, in many areas, they attempted to establish a regional federation of Friends groups, and some groups succeeded in forming an organisation. This study discovered that, among the five councils in which the study took place, three had such a federation. In these areas, Friends groups partially achieved their aims as the result of the operation of the regional federation: they saved some libraries from threatened closure. Therefore, they considered a national organisation of Friends groups to be more beneficial for campaigning to the central government for improved library services. This claim is underpinned by the following findings.

The data revealed that more than half of the participants in this study favoured the operation of the NFOL because of the possible roles of the organisation. The respondents initially observed two roles: enhancing the operations of Friends groups and supporting libraries. These roles are similar to FOLA and FOCAL as well as FOLUSA. Interestingly, the respondents considered another role: lobbying or carrying out campaigns - activities which are not taken on by the existing NFOLs above. This factor stemmed from the fact that many libraries had been closed or threatened with closure, and that many Friends groups had been formed to protect their library in the 1990s. Furthermore, they succeeded in keeping their libraries open after they had carried out their campaigns. The literature review reveals that other community-based organisations also suggest roles similar to those above for their network. Demos (2003: 22) states as follows:

Related to this is the function of community networks to support not only learning or knowledge sharing, but also action and advocacy. Many CBOs funded by BCT (Barrow Cadbury Trust) view networking in terms of building capacity to influence national policy or public attitudes and discourse around the broader issues surrounding social exclusion. ... This illustration points to the dual role of CBOs: they might, individually, help to alleviate the symptoms of exclusion, but some also see a role for themselves in contributing to the diagnosis of the problem at the level of public policy and debate.

However, it was revealed that although the respondents considered lobbying or campaigning as the potential role of the NFOL, they were very concerned about the term '(political) campaigns'. Many respondents emphasised that they would not join the organisation, which uses the term in its title and stipulates such a role in its constitution. Ten respondents regarded the Library Campaign as the British NFOL. However, they stressed that they were reluctant to affiliate themselves to the LC because it used the term 'campaign' in its title and manifesto. They basically considered the term as political. There were two reasons as to why they were

concerned about ‘campaigns’. Firstly, although they often carried out political campaigns, they neither considered campaigning to be their major role nor daily activity, but rather an occasional activity. Secondly, if they are seen as being political, they could not recruit many members. This is because of the general public’s reluctance to join any political group. This result suggests the following considerations for the establishment and operation of a British NFOL.

- It should avoid using the term ‘lobbying or campaigning’ in its title.
- It should avoid stating the role of lobbying or undertaking campaigns in its constitution.

It was also revealed that many group members would prefer the national organisation to support both their individual group and library, and to promote national library services. Therefore, this view should also be taken into account when establishing and operating the organisation. With regards to the successful operation of the NFOL, this study also suggests that the organisation should invite, and obtain support from, famous people (authors and actors), professionals (architects and journalists) and politicians (councillors, MPs and MEPs) and also maintain close contacts and good relationships with them.

As Smith (1998) suggests, Cilip played a key role in initiating ‘steering groups’ for establishing the British NFOL, and in reorganising the Library Campaign as a national network for Friends and Users groups in 2001. Therefore, Cilip and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport should provide financial support. Resource, the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries should morally support the organisation in order for it to develop further. For example, as the Council (Resource, 2000), states its roles on its website, it accepts the LC as one of its working partners. This is because the successful operation of the LC could lead to improved library services. It means that the operation and activities of local Friends groups could be enhanced through the growth of the LC, which could in turn lead to the development of library services.

The results of how the participants in this study perceived the influence of the national organisation on government policy on public libraries are as follows:

Twenty-six respondents perceived that the British NFOL could influence government policy on public libraries. This is because a national organisation in which more

people are involved, would have more power, strength and influence, creating a bigger impression than individual groups.

On the other hand, eight respondents considered external factors to be the important elements for the national organisation to influence government policy. These included characteristics of the government, the timing of undertaking campaigns and the human resources of the organisation. Therefore, the organisation could effectively influence government policy: firstly, if they could identify the characteristics of the government that they were dealing with; secondly, if they selected the best time for influencing the government, such as preceding a general election; thirdly, if they had more influential people on their side such as politicians, professionals and famous people.

Fourteen respondents deemed that the national organisation could not influence government policy. Firstly, as an interest group, the organisation could not influence a stronger and more powerful government. However, this is not always the case. There are many cases in which interest groups have influenced government policy. For example, an interest group, CPHA (Campaigning to Protect Hunted Animals) influenced the British government in considering a ban on hunting (International Fund for Animal Welfare, 2003). (The government created two Bills for banning hunting, with the majority of support coming from MPs, but the Lords rejected the Bills. In Scotland, 'a ban on hunting with dogs' was introduced on August 1<sup>st</sup> 2002 (Morrissey, 2002).

Secondly, the present government is considered by some to be a non-listening government. However, opposition party members mainly offered this view. Therefore, it can be argued that this view need not be applicable. Thirdly, the national organisation of Friends groups cannot be regarded as representative of all people and all library users. However, it is also debatable whether political parties are considered representative of all people (all ages and classes). Fourthly, there are too many national organisations representing libraries. However, as Comedia (1993) claims, there is no such organisation representing public library policy development or library users. Fifthly, library professionals such as Cilip, rather than User groups, should advise the government on library policy. However, as Comedia (1993) emphasised, Cilip exists mainly for library professionals rather than library users. Therefore, it is considered that the national organisation should play its role in influencing government policy. This is because different organisations fulfil different roles.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusions and Future Research

#### 8.1 Introduction

This study examined the influence of Friends groups on public library policy in the UK, in order to identify the extent of their involvement in library policy, and also to investigate how the respondents (group members, library staff, and councillors) perceived the influence of Friends groups. The study ultimately aimed to find sensible ways of involving Friends groups in library management and policy-making. Two areas were highlighted: arguments for and against the influence of Friends groups on library policy, and the way in which they actually exert an influence. The study also undertook the following investigations in order to find additional information regarding the influence of Friends groups on library policy: how the participants defined the nature and functions of Friends groups, the constitutional and managerial elements of Friends groups involved in influencing library policy, and finally, the role of a national Friends of Libraries organisation.

This chapter deals with the main findings and conclusions drawn from the results of these investigations, and presents recommendations.

#### 8.2 The Influence of Friends Groups on Public Library Policy

##### 8.2.1 Why Friends groups should or should not be allowed to influence library policy

The present study revealed that (as shown in **Table 2** below) there were more respondents who agreed than disagreed with Friends groups being allowed to influence library policy. However, this finding does not mean that Friends groups should get completely involved in library policy-making. Firstly, this is because there were also many respondents who saw the disadvantages of Friends groups being involved in library policy. Secondly, the respondents' views differed according to policy areas (as shown in **Table 2**). Thirdly, many respondents were concerned about a particular way of influencing library policy, such as undertaking political campaigns. Therefore, many respondents suggested that Friends groups should be

involved in library policy-making by offering suggestions (or user consultation) on library services. This means that library management or councillors make final decisions on library policy, but Friends groups should offer their suggestions on library policy. They emphasised the importance of consulting library users and Friends groups on library services. The study discovered that in fact, the library authority in Council 5 practised user consultation very effectively. It applied Friends groups' suggestions, which were made after consultation, to library policy-making. The council has reduced service charges and made a new users' charter according to the suggestions. Library management in Councils 1 and 3, in which there was no serious conflict over library services and group activities between the library authority or the council and Friends groups, were also seeking user consultation by using Friends groups. However, the library authority in Council 1 could not practise user consultation properly, because groups in this area were not active. The library management in Council 3 was also eager to involve Friends groups in library services, although the management and councillors were slightly concerned about the strong influence of Friends groups on library policy.

**Table 2** Number of respondents who (strongly) agreed or (strongly) disagreed or neither agreed nor disagreed with the influence of Friends groups on library policy.

Category	Staff (25)			Friends group Members (12)			Councillors (12)			Total (49*)		
	SA or A	NA ND	SD or D	SA or A	NA ND	SD or D	SA or A	NA ND	SD or D	SA or A	NA ND	SD or D
Decisions on Library Closure	21	2	2	10	.	2	11	.	1	42	2	5
Opening Hours	18	2	5	11	.	1	10	1	1	39	3	7
Library Displays and Exhibitions	14	1	10	7	4	1	7	3	2	28	8	13
Stock Selection	10	5	10	8	.	4	6	.	6	24	5	20
Library Rules and Regulations	8	3	14	6	1	5	5	2	5	19	6	24
<b>Total</b>	71	13	41	42	5	13	39	6	15	152	24	69

\* Among the 50 participants, one person who was interviewed over the phone did not score his views on a five point Likert-type scale.

SA: Strongly Agree. A: Agree. NA ND: Neither Agree Nor Disagree D: Disagree. SD: Strongly Disagree.

The study revealed the reason why the respondents particularly shared the view that it is important for Friends groups to offer suggestions on library policy, and get involved in consultation on library services. The reason for this is that users' views and local community involvement in library services, became essential in managing library services after the British government introduced the Best Value review (Coburn, 1998). The literature (Greenhalgh & Worpole: 1996; Smith, et al.: 1993) also reveals that the current emphasis on user consultation in library management results from local governments' policies on consulting the community on council services in the UK. Usherwood (1996) supports this claim, stating that 'all local government services are being urged to consult more with their users. In the public library services, as elsewhere, such consultations have increased in number' (p.56).

The main reason why there were some respondents who disagreed with Friends groups being allowed to influence library policy, was that, as described above, they were concerned about the groups' strong attempt to influence library policy. This is because such an attempt could cause conflicts over library services between Friends groups and library management or councillors. This view is underpinned by the next finding. Many library staff, managers, and councillors who participated in the present study had experienced such conflicts. Accordingly, they disagreed with Friends groups being allowed to influence library policy. The study found that the view that Friends groups are unrepresentative, also results from such conflicts. This view was mainly raised by the respondents from councils in which there was friction between Friends groups and library staff or management, and between Friends groups and councillors.

Although the literature review reveals that Friends groups in any area are generally considered to be unrepresentative, the study discovered that such a perception regarding Friends of the Library groups is subjective. This is because this view was mainly held by the respondents who had experienced conflicts. Thus, this view should not be unduly considered in involving Friends groups in library policy. Greenhalgh & Worpole (1996) also claim that as long as the following elements of the operation of Friends groups are clear, such as the nature of the group, who it represents, what the broader policies of the local council are, and where fundamental responsibility for decision-making lies, the unrepresentative nature of Friends groups cannot be a problem any more. Ferguson (1997) reveals that such a view also exists in Australia. However, the view was raised to emphasise that the activities of Friends groups

should include people other than articulate and dominant language group members, and that they should also represent the interests of all people. Accordingly, the situation of the view being raised differs from the UK, where the issue was raised to insist that Friends groups should be representative of library users and the community, in order for them to get involved in library policy-making.

The study reveals that although many respondents were concerned about groups strongly attempting to influence library policy, their concern mainly resulted from experiences of conflicts, rather than the disadvantages of Friends groups. They maintained that it is crucial for Friends groups to provide suggestions on library policy, and get involved in library services. Consequently, solving the conflicts is the best way of involving Friends groups in library services.

As a result, regarding the operation of Friends groups, the study suggests, as Knight (1996) does, that the library authority and Friends groups set some guidelines for the operation and activities of Friends groups in their early stage, in order to avoid any future conflict between them.

The respondents' views on why Friends groups should be allowed to influence library policy differed according to policy areas. The study revealed that the highest level of support (42 of 49 respondents) was for Friends groups' involvement in decision-making on library closure. The policy on opening hours was considered another area in which Friends groups should get involved (39 of 49 respondents).

These results reflected the circumstances in which public libraries operate, and Friends groups were established, in the UK. In fact, both circumstances are closely related to each other. Both are unique to Britain, and differ from America, Australia and Canada, where the operation of Friends groups is highly developed in an environment of greater security for public library services (Bundy, 1998; Dolnick, 1996; Ferguson, 1991, 1997). In the UK, more than 500 public libraries were closed in England alone in the 1990s (CIPFA, 1989/1990-1999/2000), and as a result, many groups were established in order to protect their library from threat of closure, and also to resist opening hours cuts (Smith, 1999) in the same period.

The analysis of the respondents' understanding of the functions of Friends groups also reflected the state of library services in the UK, i.e. that library budgets were constantly being cut, many service points were closed, and opening hours were

reduced. Proctor, Lee and Reilly (1998) confirm the decline of British public library services, saying that 'one of the features of public libraries in England and Wales since at least the early 1970s has been an increasing struggle to maintain services' (p.2). Around 150 Friends groups were established under these circumstances in the UK. The study identified the functions of the Friends groups to be rather diverse because of these circumstances. The following five functions are generally presented in the literature (Baker, 1994; Dolnick, 1996; Fletcher & Staniland, 1997): fund-raising or financial support, lobbying or campaigns, public relations, voluntary work, and community involvement. Some other functions were defined in this study, such as consulting library management, acting as a link with the community, and organising events.

Respondents' definitions of Friends groups also supported the claim that the present groups perform various functions to support their library: the respondents' definitions varied greatly. Smith's report (1999) on the activities and operation of British groups also underpins this. Among the 132 groups that he found, 40 (30.3%) groups had a name other than 'Friends of the Library'. In Australia, Canada and the USA, most of the groups are called 'Friends of the Library' (Bundy, 1998; Dolnick, 1996; Ferguson, 1991, 1997). In the UK, each group is given a title according to the background to its establishment. For example, groups which were formed in order to undertake urgent action against their council's decisions on library closure or opening hours cuts, are called 'Library Action groups' or 'Library Matters' or 'Library Campaign groups'. Groups which were established with the intention of supporting library services, and being used as a consultation group, are called 'Library Support(ers) groups' or 'Library User groups' or 'Library Committees' or 'Library User Councils'.

Respondents considered that a role of Friends groups is to influence decisions on library closure, and policy on opening hours. Accordingly, if public libraries are threatened with closure or curtailed opening hours, Friends groups should get involved. However, the study also found that some library staff and councillors strongly opposed the influence of Friends groups on decisions on library closure. They considered that most decisions are made due to lack of library budgets, so Friends groups should not attempt to reverse these decisions. Nevertheless, many cases were discovered in which the present groups have influenced the decisions. In one area, the council threatened more than half of its libraries with closure, in order to

reduce library budgets. However, when Friends groups carried out strong campaigns against the council's proposal, the council retracted the proposal. In another area, two groups were established to protect their library after it was threatened with closure. As a result of the two groups' campaign against their council's decisions on library closure, the two libraries were saved.

These findings justified the idea that Friends groups should be allowed to influence library policy. Libraries that had been threatened with closure might not have been saved if Friends groups had not been established, or had not campaigned to avoid closure. There is evidence that supports this claim. In Council 4, four libraries were threatened with closure, but only two groups were founded. As a result of this, the two libraries that had groups were saved, but the other two libraries were closed.

The policy on opening hours was considered the second area in which Friends groups should have an influence. The reasons for this were: firstly, they are in a good position to identify the best opening hours because they are library users, and secondly, the opening hours are insufficient. The previous British Government report supports the involvement of Friends groups (library users) in the policy, saying that public libraries should be open when library users want them to be (Department of National Heritage, 1997). The current government also claims that libraries' opening hours are insufficient and libraries are not open as often as the public desire (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1999). Thus, in order to express their request for opening hours, Friends groups should get involved in the policy. However, the study also discovered that there was strong opposition to the influence of Friends groups on total opening hours. The policy on the pattern of opening hours was, however, considered to be very much an area in which Friends groups should get involved. This is because changing the patterns of opening hours does not generally need extra budget, whereas increasing total hours does.

The study discovered that policy on library displays and exhibitions is another area in which Friends groups should get involved. There were more respondents who agreed than disagreed with the influence of Friends groups on the policy. In particular, the majority of Friends group members and councillors agreed with this. They basically defined library displays and exhibitions as a non-contentious area, in which the involvement of Friends groups could not cause any problem. This is contrary to both the general view regarding library displays and exhibitions obtained from the literature (Usherwood, 1993) and ten staff in the present study. In general, there is

great concern about the contents of library displays and exhibitions, particularly those perceived as politically-biased displays. Consequently, the present study concludes that Friends groups should make suggestions on library displays and exhibitions, but should leave final decisions to library management and councillors.

The policy on stock selection was considered to be an area in which Friends groups should only be allowed to exert some influence. This is because, although there were more respondents who agreed than disagreed with the influence of Friends groups on the policy, the number (24) of those who agreed was less than half of the total respondents. Several library staff, and most of the group officers, agreed with the influence of Friends groups on the policy. It was perceived that the involvement of Friends groups in stock selection could be beneficial in improving library services. On the other hand, most of the elected members in the present study and Usherwood's (1993) study, as well as library staff considered stock selection to be a role for library professionals. A possible way of enabling groups to get involved in stock selection, without entering into conflict with library staff, was proposed: Friends groups should offer their suggestions on stock selection, but should leave final decisions to library staff.

The study discovered that it was thought that Friends groups should not attempt to influence library rules and regulations. There were more respondents who disagreed than agreed with the influence of Friends groups on library rules and regulations. This is because most library rules and regulations are related to Public Library Acts, and legal matters such as health and safety, and fire regulations. Therefore, changing and amending these regulations is considered to be the responsibility of the library management or the role of the council. Although the influence of Friends groups in these areas was strongly opposed by many respondents, some councils thought differently. In Council 5, some library rules and regulations, such as service fees and fines, were changed because of Friends groups' (library users') comments.

These findings can be summarised as follows:

- Friends groups' involvement in decisions on library closure might lead to saving those public libraries currently under threat of closure.
- Their involvement in policy on opening hours could protect further opening hours cuts. They could also change the patterns of opening hours to suit their need.

Library management and the council could obtain library users' views on opening hours through the involvement of Friends groups in policy on opening hours.

- Friends groups should not directly get involved in stock selection, but should offer their comments, leaving the final decisions to library management. In this way, they can present community needs and make library management aware of ways to improve library stock without causing any conflict.
- Friends groups should be wary of getting involved in library displays and exhibitions. There are strong views regarding these being an essential part of library services, because these areas are partly a council's notice board. However, they should comment on these.
- Friends groups should not attempt to influence library rules and regulations because there is great concern about them influencing these. This is because these areas are closely related to the Public Library Acts, and legal matters such as health, safety, and fire regulations. These are usually beyond the scope of the involvement of Friends groups. However, the present study and the literature (Bundy, 1998) discovered that Friends groups have even attempted to influence these areas in Australia and in the UK.

### **8.2.2 How Friends groups influence public library policy**

The study examined the respondents' perceptions of how Friends groups could influence library policy, namely, through which Friends group activities library policy could be influenced.

There were discrepancies between the activities that the respondents would have liked Friends groups to use in influencing library policy, and the activities that were actually used. It was revealed that the present groups have influenced various library policies (areas), such as those on library stock, budgets, opening hours, building a new library, decisions on library closure, and the Annual Library Plan. In particular, the present groups used library campaigning or lobbying to influence policy on library budgets and opening hours, as well as decisions on building a new library and library closure. Consequently, it was expected that the highest number of respondents would agree that Friends groups could influence library policy through this activity. However, the first and second highest number of respondents agreed that Friends groups could influence library policy through involvement in the community and

public relations. This result reflects the finding from the literature review. Skory (1989) and Dymond (cited in Azar-Luxton, 1993) consider public relations and the involvement of Friends groups in the community to be more important than fund-raising, which is generally the number one activity of Friends groups. The respondents regarded these activities as a prerequisite for the successful operation of other activities, such as fund-raising and lobbying or campaigning. For example, Friends groups could raise the profile of the library by heightening public awareness of library services and operation during difficult periods for the library. Consequently, Friends groups could obtain sufficient support from the public when undertaking library support activities. As a result, when they lobby or campaign the local or central government, they would have adequate power to influence both.

The study discovered the main reason why lobbying or campaigning ranked third among the five activities that the respondents would have liked Friends groups to use in influencing library policy. The reason was that many respondents had personal concerns about Friends groups' campaigning or lobbying. The following findings support this claim.

It appeared that although many library staff and councillors recognised that Friends groups influenced library policy through lobbying or political campaigns, they were not totally in favour of such activity. Many group members who defined their group as non-political, also considered the activity to be political. Furthermore, when the study examined the respondents' definitions of Friends groups, the results supported this finding.

The respondents defined their group(s) as a support group, rather than a campaigning group. Most definitions submitted by the respondents referred to a support group, apart from two definitions of 'strangers' and 'a campaigning group'. The definitions that they offered were: a fund-raising group, a moral support group, an event organising group, and a voluntary group. According to the respondents, a Friends of the Library group is one whose members are regular library users, and who run an organisation which undertakes various activities (such as fund-raising, organising various social events, working as a volunteer, promoting library services, and consulting library management) to support their library and staff.

There were respondents who offered other descriptions of Friends groups, such as 'strangers', 'a campaigning group' and 'a reactionary group', which differed from the

concept of a support group. The respondents who experienced conflicts over library services between Friends groups and library staff, management or councils, mainly used these definitions. A valuable lesson can be learned from this finding: Friends groups, which are generally defined as a support group, can be regarded as an unfavourable group if they attempt to influence library policy, particularly through campaigning and lobbying.

The study found general support for the view that Friends groups could not influence library policy through fund-raising or financial support. There were more respondents who disagreed than agreed with Friends groups influencing library policy through this activity. The reason for this is that funds raised by the present groups are small. Accordingly, small funds could not affect library services and operation. Smith's report (1999) confirms that the amount of funds raised by the present groups is smaller than the amount raised by other groups in the UK. This finding raised a further question: whether Friends groups could influence library policy if they raised a considerable amount of funds. There was one case which might answer this question. One junior manager in Council 4 claimed that Friends groups in his council have influenced certain library policies through fund-raising (fund donations), such as policy on creating an IT point and a family learning centre; policy on building a new library; policy on operating reader development activities; and policy on developing a regional children's book festival. (One branch library group in this council raised around £7,000 in 2000.) This result confirms that Friends groups could in fact have an influence on library policy through fund-raising.

There was also one case which proved that even small funds could affect a council's library budgets. Council 5 matched funds raised by Friends groups. Consequently, the council's library budgets have been increased according to the amount of funds raised by Friends groups. Therefore, it can be argued that the groups influenced policy on library budgets by using a match-funding system. This finding confirms that Friends groups could influence library policy through fund-raising, regardless of the amount of funds. Consequently, this result suggests the positive regard that councils and library authorities hold for Friends groups' fund-raising. They also demonstrate that the way in which funds are used is more important than the amount raised.

The two cases above described the methods that the present groups used for influencing library policy. The study also reveals the following methods: Friends groups influenced:

- Stock selection policy through fund donations.
- Policy on library budgets by threatening to buy library books using their own funds.

and

- Fund-raising or financial support makes library policy-makers take note of Friends groups' views on library policy.

It was found that Friends groups could not influence library policy through voluntary work. The reason for this is that firstly, library volunteers were not used in six out of the ten libraries examined. The study discovered that Unison strongly opposes library volunteers. Consequently, group members did not undertake work which could lead to the loss of paid posts. Instead, group members, particularly in two **county** councils, have undertaken the following forms of voluntary work, which cannot be considered as work that takes over staff positions: housebound services, book shelving and repairs, organising events, and helping and supporting library staff who organise library activities and book sales. These findings are very much in line with the results from the research (Cookman, Haynes & Streatfield, 2000). This particular study reveals that volunteers are used far less in urban areas such as London and Metropolitan Boroughs, stating that 'the use of volunteers varies from 85% of authorities in England (excluding the London Boroughs) and 82% in Scotland, to 39% in the London Boroughs' (p.6). Secondly, the most popular use of volunteers for the library is providing housebound services. Thirdly, Unison's opposition was one of the main reasons why library volunteers were not used in the library.

However, it can be argued that as long as the operation and activities of Friends groups are considered useful, and lead to the development of library services, Friends groups have an influence on library policy through their voluntary work. This is because Friends groups are operated by their members' voluntary participation, and the activities are undertaken by the members' voluntary work. This is very much in line with the definition that a Friends of the Library is a voluntary group but library volunteers are not necessarily Friends of the Library (O'Dea, 1996).

These findings can be summarised as follows:

- Friends groups could have an influence on library policy through their community involvement and public relations. This is because through these activities they can

raise the profile of the library, and make the public aware of library services and operations, which are the preconditions for the successful operation of other Friends groups' activities.

- They could have an influence on library policy through lobbies or campaigns, given that these activities are the fundamental role of most Friends groups in the UK. They could influence library decision-makers such as councillors, MPs and library management through these activities.
- They could have no influence on library policy through fund-raising or financial support, if this activity is not appreciated and if only small amounts of funds are raised. However, they could have an impact on library policy if this activity is favoured by the authority, and if even insignificant funds are effectively used for library services and operation.
- They could have no influence on library policy through voluntary work. This is due to the fact that library volunteers are not used in many libraries because Unison strongly opposes them.

### **8.2.3 How constitutional and managerial elements affect the influence of Friends groups on library policy**

The study examined the constitutional and managerial elements of Friends groups from the viewpoint of Management By Objectives (MBO), in order to identify what factors of those elements are involved in the influence of Friends groups on library policy.

It is apparent that among the ten groups examined in the study, two branch library groups in Councils 2 and 4, and one group in Council 3, have influenced decisions on library closure and building a new library, respectively. They have influenced these decisions through campaigning. Consequently, the study examined the way in which the constitutional and managerial elements of these groups differed from those of the rest of the groups. The three groups above are temporarily called 'influential groups', and the rest of the groups are given the title 'non-influential groups'.

The study found that there was a big difference between these two groups in the following constitutional and managerial issues: aims and objectives, establishment

initiative, group status, and membership. The differences are presented in detail below:

- Aims and objectives: when the influential groups were officially established as a result of initial common issues, such as threat of library closure or insufficient library space, these issues were transformed into formal aims and objectives. These included protecting the library and building a new one. Therefore, the influential groups began to have clear aims from the outset. Furthermore, these aims were well understood by all the members, because they were very concerned with the initial issues regarding their library. This is very much in line with Cuthbert-Smith's (1976) MBO (Management By Objectives) approach, stating that 'all the people working in that activity are motivated and co-ordinated so that they all work together towards achieving those aims' (p.3). The non-influential groups had broad aims and objectives, including enhancing library services, and supporting library staff. Yet these were ambiguous to group members. The following examples of the aims of the two groups (influential and non-influential) support this claim.

The aims of the influential groups are rather simple, and focus on a particular issue: 'the retention of the library, and its facilities, for daytime use on weekdays and Saturdays, and for evening use on weekdays'. In contrast, the aims of the latter group are quite broad, and focus on diverse issues: 'to act as a link between the library and community, to promote and publicise the library services, to encourage the assistance of volunteers, to carry out fund-raising activities, and to organise cultural activities and events.'

- Establishment initiative: the public normally initiated the establishment of the influential groups, because they were very concerned with the future of their library services. Therefore, they got actively involved in establishing these groups and furthermore, they chaired and operated these groups by themselves. However, the formation of the non-influential groups was usually initiated by library staff, when library users were not drawn to issues regarding library services. Furthermore, they often chaired and led these groups in their early stages, because the public were neither concerned about, nor very active in, the operation of these groups. In Council 1, many groups disbanded, after several years of operation, for this reason. The element of establishment initiative is closely related to the next issue.
- Status of the groups: the status differed according to the establishment initiative.

Non-influential groups that were founded by library staff or the library authority, were regarded as library support groups. This is due to the fact that the staff and the authority instigated Friends groups after they saw these groups as being supportive. Consequently, these groups were used for user consultation in Councils 1, 3, and 5.

In contrast, influential groups that were mainly spontaneous groups, were defined as reactionary. The reason for this is that they campaigned against their council's decisions on library closure. However, the study found that the status of these groups often changed. For example, one group in Council 4 began to focus its activities on supporting its library after it achieved its aim: protecting its library. Accordingly, the group was considered to be supportive. This finding suggests that influential groups in particular should operate to support their library services and staff, not only in the early stages of their operation, but also when they achieve their initial goals.

- **Membership:** the influential groups had (a few) more members than the non-influential groups, because the former groups had clear aims: protecting their library and building a new library. Consequently, many people who were concerned about these issues actively joined the groups. However, there was one exceptional case. One group in Council 2, which cannot be classified as one of the influential groups because the group has not influenced any library policy, had the largest membership (over 500) among the ten groups. This group applied a policy of a voluntary membership fee, in order to attract more people to the group. It is deemed that this policy helped the group to have such a large membership.

There was no difference in the type of members between the influential and the non-influential groups. Most of the group members were elderly and retired people (women). This is due to the fact that these people have more free time (Frenchman, 1998). It is apparent that this characteristic raised the issue of the unrepresentative nature of Friends groups. However, the groups also had a number of younger and male members.

The present study revealed that some other active and influential groups, which were not directly examined in the study, had famous people and professionals among their members, such as politicians, (retired) head teachers, architects, and authors. Frenchman (1998) confirms this finding. In particular, these people chaired the active and influential groups. The leadership of Friends groups is described in detail later.

The study discovered that the fundamental reason for the difference in constitutional and managerial issues between influential and non-influential groups, was the difference in the background to their establishment. That is to say, the influential and non-influential groups basically had different backgrounds to their establishment. Influential groups were established because their library was threatened with closure, or their library service space was insufficient. Non-influential groups were formed for different reasons, such as consulting library management, fund-raising, supporting and helping library services and staff, raising the public profile of the library, and community involvement. This factor influenced all the rest of the elements. For example, both groups had different aims and objectives because they have different backgrounds. They were born with different aims and objectives. This factor also affected the establishment initiative, and this influenced the status of the groups, and also their membership.

The study discovered that there was a slight difference in the following constitutional and managerial elements between the two types of Friends groups.

- Characteristics of a group: although, among the three influential groups, only one group had a different name from 'Friends of the Library', the literature (Staniland, Fletcher & Townend, 1998) reveals that influential groups often have a different name from 'Friends of the Library', such as 'Library Action Group' or 'Library Matters'. These groups intend to emphasise their aims and objectives, and to bring more people's attention to their activities.
- Partnership between Friends groups and library staff: in general, both types of Friends groups had good relationships, but there was some tension between the influential groups and library staff, which arose from their disagreement with the cuts in library services, budgets, and opening hours. The study identified that among three influential groups, two groups had no conflict with library staff, because they maintained good communication with their library staff when running their group and undertaking activities.

No difference was found in the following constitutional and managerial elements between the two types of Friends groups.

- Date of establishment: the dates differed according to when their council began to suffer from budget cuts. The influential and non-influential groups were not

established in a particular year. Most of the groups were formed throughout the 1990s, when British public library services declined.

- Management structure and committee meetings: the committees of both types of Friends groups are well-structured and operate quite actively.
- Recruiting new members and membership fees: both types of Friends groups used almost the same methods to publicise their group and to recruit new members. The groups set membership fees of between £2 and £5 a year.

Regarding the constitutional and managerial elements of Friends groups, the study concludes that the above differences in constitutional and managerial matters between the influential and non-influential groups, are not necessarily the elements that make Friends groups influential. Conversely, the non-differential elements of the constitutional and managerial issues are not necessarily the elements that make Friends groups non-influential. That is to say, no difference was found between the committees of the influential and non-influential groups, i.e. the committees of both types of Friends groups were well-structured and operated quite actively. However, it cannot be said that the committee is not an element that makes Friends groups influential. The reason for this is that the committee is a very important element in the operation of Friends groups, and it does make Friends groups influential. Knight (1999) and Smith (1999) confirm that a well-structured and active committee is more important than a large membership because a committee normally runs a group. In the present study, the reason why there was no difference between the committees of the influential and non-influential groups, was that both types of groups had a well-structured and active committee, but the non-influential groups did not influence library policy because this was not their aim. The present study found some other elements that make Friends groups influential, as follows:

- The leadership of the chairperson and their relationship with other committee members. These are crucial for the successful operation of Friends groups: a group could not survive without a leader. If prominent people such as politicians, head teachers, architects, local artists and authors, and other celebrities lead Friends groups, these groups could operate more successfully and become influential groups. This is because the operation of Friends groups benefits from their expertise and profile.

- The diverse membership of Friends groups. If Friends groups have a more diverse range of people as their members, such as politicians, teachers, artists and writers, who have different skills and experience, this could be beneficial to Friends groups achieving their aims, because of the expertise and profile of professionals and famous people.
- Effective communication. If Friends groups use effective communication methods for better communication with their members, library users and staff, such as e-mail and newsletters, they could operate more actively and become influential.
- Partnership with local library staff and the local media. If Friends groups maintain good relationships with library staff and they work together, then they could be more influential. This is because they can obtain useful information regarding library policy from library staff and concentrate their activities on particular policy areas. If Friends groups effectively use the local media in carrying out their activities their operation could be more influential.
- Influential groups have unique backgrounds to their establishment. Consequently, they have clear aims and objectives regarding influencing library policy, and also have special characteristics.
- Friends groups could be more influential if these groups are networked at a council and a national level.

The present study also revealed constitutional and managerial elements that make Friends groups slightly influential, as follows:

- Size of membership. As Dolnick (1996) maintains, a large membership could give elected members, who are library policy-makers, a strong impression that many people are aware of their library services. However, in reality, not all members participate in group activities, but a small number of committee officers operate Friends groups. As the present study revealed, in Council 5, Friends groups that have a very small membership (7 to 12) were actively involved in the council's library policy-making. Consequently, size of membership is not considered as a major factor making Friends groups influential.
- Membership fees. It cannot be argued whether this element makes Friends groups influential or not because the element could not directly affect the successful

operation of Friends groups. However, the present study discovered that membership fees influenced size of membership, i.e. a policy of voluntary or free membership fees resulted in a large membership. As a result, it can be said that the element of membership fees has an insignificant effect on Friends groups becoming influential.

- Recruiting new members. As with the element of membership fees, the methods of recruiting new members could affect the size of membership. Accordingly, the matter of recruiting new members is considered to be a minor factor in making Friends groups influential.

Consequently, the study concludes that there is no element that does not make Friends groups influential. That is to say, every element of the constitutional and managerial matters of Friends groups is important to the successful operation of Friends groups.

#### **8.2.4 Role of a National Friends of Libraries organisation**

The establishment of a National Friends of Libraries organisation (NFOL) has been an issue in the UK for several years. As was the case in Australia, Canada, and the USA (Dolnick, 1996; Ferguson, 1991; 1997), a dramatic increase in the number of Friends groups led to this issue. The number increased from less than 10 groups in the late 1970s, to about 150 groups in the late 1990s in the UK (Murison, 1979; Smith, 1999). Library professionals and group members considered the establishment of the organisation to be a way of creating a national network of Friends groups, and increasing communication among groups, through which they can exchange and share ideas and information on the activities and operation of Friends groups.

The present study also confirmed the need for the organisation. Many library staff maintained that they could not involve Friends groups in library policy-making in a council because Friends groups lacked knowledge of library services both at a council level, and at a national level. This finding reveals two things: firstly, library staff did not recognise the fact that Friends organisations have different roles according to the type of Friends groups. Secondly, they expected a local group to have knowledge of all the library services in a council. This view reflects the fact that library staff wanted to have a counterpart with whom they could discuss library services at a council or national level.

Regarding the establishment of a British NFOL, one of the many suggestions was that, as the ALA (American Library Association) initiated the establishment of the American NFOL (Dolnick, 1996), called FOLUSA (Friends of Libraries USA), so Cilip (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals) should initiate the establishment of a British one. Another reason for this suggestion was that the Library Campaign (LC) declared that they are representative of Friends and Users groups in the UK. Accordingly, Cilip was considered to be in a neutral position to deal with this issue. As suggested, Cilip organised a steering group for discussing the establishment of a NFOL, and it was finally recommended at the steering group meetings that the Library Campaign reorganise itself as an official organisation, representing Friends and Users groups in the UK. The recommendation stems from the fact that the LC has accumulated a great deal of experience in operating a non-profit organisation at a national level, because it has been operating as a formal organisation since 1984. In addition, many Friends and Users groups already affiliated themselves to the LC. However, there were two main concerns about considering the LC as an official NFOL. Firstly, the LC had a manifesto, which mainly stimulated the establishment of campaign groups instead of Friends or Users groups. Secondly, its title, the Library Campaign, reflected the organisation focusing its activities on (political) campaigns. Accordingly, many local groups were reluctant to join the LC.

As a result, the members of the LC discussed the above two matters at their AGM, in May 2001. At the Meeting, it was decided to amend the manifesto but to keep the present title. Finally, the LC was reorganised as an official NFOL in the UK in May 2001, after changing its manifesto. The LC has removed the terms ‘campaign groups’ and ‘campaign activities’ from its manifesto, since these caused people to perceive the LC as being representative of campaign groups rather than Friends and Users groups. (However, one of its aims is still to campaign politically.)

Consequently, the only thing that is left to be done for the LC, the British NFOL, is to operate the organisation effectively and successfully. This study concludes that the LC could operate more effectively and successfully, if:

- Cilip provides a range of support to the LC, in the same way that the ALA comprehensively supported FOLUSA in the early stages of the organisation. In particular, Cilip gives some financial support because the LC is not financially independent. Cilip also publicises the LC, which is considered to be one of its best allies in developing library services at a national level. For example, Cilip states

the role of the LC in its websites because this would help local groups to recognise the LC as an official British NFOL.

- The LC publicises itself more actively and effectively, in order to assist all the library professionals, councillors, and MPs who are involved in regional or national library services, and more importantly to help local groups to see it as a British NFOL. The study discovered that there were many library staff, councillors, and group members who did not know about the fact that the LC had become a British NFOL. According to the researcher's contact with those who are involved in NFOLs in other countries, the fact is not known to them. It is considered that this report has some role in publicising this fact nationally and internationally.
- More local groups affiliate themselves to the LC. According to the LC, at the moment, only around 40 out of 150 groups in the UK joined them. If those who are not members of the LC, are still concerned about the manifesto and title of the LC, they could raise these issues after they join the organisation.
- The LC reconsiders changing its title after collecting views on its title. The reason for this is that there is still great concern among members and non-members about the title, and many local groups have still not joined the LC.
- The LC invites not only local groups, but also borough or countywide federations of Friends groups to their organisation. This is because a NFOL could operate more effectively when the organisation is structured systematically. That is to say, all the local groups are networked at a council level or at a regional level, such as LLL (Libraries for Life for Londoners), and these networks are again linked at a national level to the national organisation.

Regarding the operation of a NFOL, one of the most important issues is what role the organisation plays. It is considered that a British NFOL can learn lessons from NFOLs in Australia, Canada, and the USA, because they have good examples of the roles that a NFOL can play. However, there is a slight difference in roles among these organisations. FOLUSA focuses its role mainly on supporting and enhancing the operation of Friends groups, with the expectation of these groups supporting library services and operation. FOLA and FOCAL play roles not only in enhancing the operation of Friends groups, but also in supporting library services. The respondents in the study considered the second case to be useful. This stems from the fact that

many library staff expected some support from a NFOL at a national level, such as campaigning to the government about library services. This is supported by the fact that the respondents observed the third role of a British NFOL: undertaking lobbying or campaigns - a role which is not seen in the constitution of the three foreign organisations above. This finding reflects the unique circumstances of the library services and operation of Friends groups in the UK: many groups were established in order to campaign against their council's decisions on library closure when their library was under threat of closure. Consequently, the respondents perceived that a British NFOL could take this role in lobbying politicians and in campaigning to the central government about public library services.

However, the study suggests that a British NFOL does not state such a role in its constitution. The reason for this is that firstly, if the organisation's constitution includes such a role, it could be seen as political. Secondly, as happened to the LC, this would deter many local groups from joining. It is deemed that as long as the organisation does not declare its operation and activities to be apolitical in its constitution, it could undertake such an activity when it needs to. However, the LC, now a British NFOL, still states such a role in its new manifesto, which clearly differs from NFOLs in the above three countries.

### **8.3 Summary**

The study concludes that Friends groups were involved in many library policies (areas) in various ways. The influence of Friends groups on decisions on library closure and building a new library was most observed. However, it was discovered that the present methods of getting involved in library policy were not appropriate. This is due to the fact that although arguments for the influence of Friends groups on library policy were predominant, there were many respondents who had personal concerns about the strong influence of Friends groups, particularly through campaigning or lobbying activities. However, the respondents unanimously approved of Friends groups getting involved in all library policies (areas) through user consultation (or offering suggestions). Consequently, it can be argued that user consultation or offering suggestions is the most sensible way of Friends groups getting involved in library policy. Regarding the influence of decision-making through consultation, Gomm, et al. (1993) claim that 'this consultation (informing people about what they had done or were planning to do and seeking people's views)

does undoubtedly increase the influence of those outside the agency over the decision-making process' (p.89).

Council 5 is a good example for such involvement: Friends groups in this council were involved in library management and library policy-making through user consultation. In this council, the library authority and the council were very keen on involving the public (library users and Friends groups) in library policy-making, as practised in other council service areas (Usherwood, 1996), such as community care (Smith, et al., 1993) and urban parks management (Greenhalgh & Worpole, 1996). In the council, all of the 19 libraries have a Friends group, and a regional federation of Friends groups also exists. The library staff established most of the groups, and the operation of these groups was active. Many councillors and professionals, such as former teachers and architects, joined and chaired these groups. Most of the groups had a small membership, but they were generally considered by the library authority and the council to be representative of library users and people in the community. The following finding supports this claim to some extent. In the council, Friends groups meet regularly with councillors and council officers, and the chair of the meeting is co-opted on to the council's leisure cabinet advisory team (Benjamin, 2001).

Library authorities and councils in other survey areas were also seeking a way of involving Friends groups in library management, but they did not achieve satisfactory results from their groups, due to the following reasons:

Firstly, some of them were initially established as a campaigning group. Consequently, they mainly focused their activities on campaigning rather than consulting or supporting their library management.

Secondly, some campaigning groups changed their aims and objectives after they achieved their initial goals, but the history of their operation was only short. Accordingly, they lacked experience in operating themselves as a genuine Friends group. (Genuine Friends of Libraries are groups that normally undertake various activities in order to support their library in different ways, rather than focusing their operation on one or two particular activities, such as lobbying or campaigning.)

Thirdly, some groups did not operate actively because of a lack of leadership or clear aims.

Fourthly, in some areas, there is no regional network of Friends groups to operate as a communication channel among Friends groups in a council area. Furthermore, until recent years, there was no official British NFOL.

These results conclude that Friends groups could get involved more actively in public library policy, if:

- Library staff and management encourage the local people to form Friends groups. When there is difficulty in finding people interested in organising these groups, they should initiate the establishment of these groups by themselves, and later encourage their members to operate their group by themselves.
- Library staff and management encourage Friends groups which have achieved their initial goals, such as saving the library, building a new library, and increasing opening hours, to operate as genuine Friends groups.
- Friends groups (or library management) build a regional federation of Friends groups. This is because Friends organisations have different roles according to their types, such as local groups, a regional federation (network) of Friends groups, and a NFOL. The federation would benefit not only local groups, but also library authorities. For example, Friends groups could get involved in library policy-making at a council level through the operation of the federation. It was discovered that library authorities which had no such network sought a counterpart with whom they could discuss library services and operation at a council level.
- The NFOL operates more actively. This is because the NFOL could enhance the operation of Friends groups and support the establishment of new local groups. Consequently, local groups are strongly advised to join the Library Campaign.

The study examined the respondents' perceptions of why Friends groups should or should not be allowed to influence library policy. Respondents who disagreed with the influence of Friends groups on library policy, gave the following reasons:

- Friends groups do not have knowledge or experience of library operation.
- They are not representative of library users and people in the community.
- Making and amending library policy is the role of elected members.
- They are only familiar with limited sections of library services.
- Attempting to influence library policy is considered to be political.

- They should not be allowed to influence decisions on library closure which were made due to the under-usage of a library.
- The influence of Friends groups on library policy makes great demands on library budgets.

Respondents who agreed, regarded the following points as beneficial to library services.

- Friends groups provide a different perspective on library services to library management and councillors.
- They are familiar with local community needs regarding library services, because they consist of a cross-section of the community. Consequently, they are representative of library users and people in the community.
- Friends groups' involvement in library policy-making is a democratic process.
- Their involvement in some policy areas, such as library displays and exhibitions, leads to positive development, because they often have better ideas on such areas than library staff.

These findings conclude that in order for Friends groups to get involved in library policy-making more successfully and effectively:

- Library staff should make group members understand how library services are provided and operated. It was revealed that library management could not involve Friends groups in library policy-making, and there could be conflict over library services and policy between Friends groups and library management. The reason for this is that library management considered Friends groups to have little knowledge of library services and policy.
- The notion of the unrepresentative nature of Friends groups should not be unduly considered. This is because the claim is subjective: library staff and management and councillors who experienced conflicts over library services with Friends groups mainly raised the claim. Greenhalgh & Worpole (1996) also maintain that as long as the following elements of the operation of Friends groups are clear, such as the nature of the group, who it represents, what the broader policies of the local authority are, and where ultimate responsibility for decision-making lies, the issue cannot be a problem.
- Friends groups use campaigning or lobbying as a last method for influencing

library policy. This is because they could be perceived unfavourably if they undertake this activity. This is due to the fact that the effect of this activity is strong. Thus, it often creates friction between Friends groups and a library authority or councillors.

- Friends groups have to avoid any conflict. When Friends groups attempt to influence library policy, there is always potential conflict over library services between Friends groups and library management or the council. This is because the library management and councillors often consider Friends groups to have little knowledge of library services and policy. Nor do they regard Friends groups as representative of library users and the whole community. Consequently, for Friends groups to get involved in library policy without causing any conflict, they must ensure good communication, by meeting regularly with library staff, management, and councillors, and talking with them about library services, policy, and their activities as well.
- As Knight (1998), and one senior manager in one council, suggested, library staff and management and Friends groups have certain rules or protocol for the activities and operations of these groups. Knight states that in order to work with Friends groups effectively and without conflict ‘(his) Friends groups run by adhering to three very simple *Golden Rules*, which are emphasised when the groups are formed’ (p.35). The Rules are as follows:

Rule 1: ‘There is a clear understanding of the respective roles of the Friends and the local authority and library staff. The local authority is elected to set policies and manage the library service through its appointed staff.

Rule 2: Friends are encouraged to take part in the decision-making process affecting the day to day running of their service, and are welcome to input into areas such as stock selection, **but** the final decision on the purchase and maintenance of stock rests with the staff. It is vital that the neutrality of the service is maintained and that no one pressure group is allowed to dictate to the community at large on issues such as stock selection.

Rule 3: Friends can become effective lobbying/pressure groups on behalf of their local library, or the service borough-wide at times of threatened cutbacks, but they must not be influenced or actively supported by staff’ (p.35).

The present study concludes that user consultation, or offering suggestions is considered to be the most sensible way of Friends groups getting involved in library policy. Consequently, the practical methods of user consultation should be sought, namely **how** consultation should be undertaken. The study discovered two methods. Firstly, the Friends groups' representative in a council participated in the council's (library) sub-committees (but this practice ceased after local governments were restructured in 2001). Secondly, the library management, councillors, and the Friends groups' representative in a council met together regularly and its chair was co-opted on to the council's leisure cabinet advisory team.

Gomm, et al. (1993) present some general methods of user consultation, such as holding regular forums, occasional public meetings, and making written requests for opinions on plans and developments (p.88). Gaster (1993) divides consultation into two types according to those concerns: informal consultation and one-off, single-issue meetings. She introduces two other methods. The first one, which is similar to the method identified by the present study, is that the representative of users groups participates in steering or management committees. The second method is that users provide feedback about their services in a variety of ways, such as giving their views to an external evaluation research team and participating in annual reviews of projects.

Martin & Gaster (1993: 36) suggest the principles of consultation, stating that consultation:

- Is undertaken sufficiently early in the process for modification to be made to plans.
- Is undertaken with an open mind.
- Is undertaken by providing sufficient information to consultees.

These findings lead to the detailed procedures that are considered necessary for effective user consultation, such as who consults who; how often library authorities meet Friends and Users groups for consultation; to what extent library authorities take groups' views into account; and on which areas of library services and operation library management should consult group members. Martin & Gaster (1993: 37) add that 'it is good practice to communicate what consultation can and cannot be done, especially what rights any participants will have, so that there is a shared set of expectations'.

## 8.4 Future Research

The study concludes that consultation is the most sensible way of Friends groups getting involved in library policy. However, the study could not identify many examples of practical methods of user (or Friends groups) consultation. The reason for this is that firstly, this was not the initial aim of the study. Secondly, Friends groups were established with different aims and objectives, other than consultation. Thirdly, the operation of many groups was inactive. The literature also presents some detailed methods of user consultation. However, those methods identified by the results of the study and the literature review are not sufficient for the successful practice of user consultation in libraries. This finding suggests a path for future research in regard to the involvement of Friends groups in library policy through consultation.

Accordingly, future research should be carried out into how library authorities in the UK practise user consultation: whether they use any particular group or people for consultation on library services, and whether they have detailed guidelines for user consultation.

Regarding the operation of a NFOL in the UK, future research should also be undertaken into how the present title and manifesto of the Library Campaign would influence the development of the British NFOL, in terms of increasing its membership. There were concerns about the manifesto and title of the LC when it became the British NFOL. However, the LC still keeps the same title and its manifesto partially encourages its members to undertake political campaigns. It is also expected that British groups will operate more actively, and that more new groups will be formed. It is for this reason that the British NFOL was founded. NFOLs in Australia, Canada and the USA enhanced the operation of their member groups and supported the establishment of new local groups. Consequently, this should be examined in the near future to see whether this would be the case.

It was revealed that many British groups were established in order to exert an influence on decisions on library closure when their library was threatened with closure. This means that many groups came into existence when British public library services declined. However, in the last few years, the situation has changed: new libraries have been built and opening hours have increased since the government

launched National Standards for Public Libraries (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2001). As a result, it is expected that fewer Friends groups are going to be established than before. This is because fewer libraries are threatened with closure than before. It is worth investigating whether this would be the case.

It would seem that findings from the present study and future research, offer practical lessons, and are of use to all those involved in making reasonable library policies, providing better library services, and operating ideal Friends groups. The present study and any future research into Friends groups should be based on the belief that:

Friends organisations will make a significant contribution to our library service in the future. I value their commitment and support. Together we can ensure the continued survival of our service (Knight, 1998: 36).

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## **Appendix 1 – Contact letter**

Department of Information Studies  
University of Sheffield  
Sheffield S10 2TN  
Tel: 0114-222-2630  
<http://www.shef.ac.uk/~is/home.html>

February 2001

Dear Chief Librarian

### **Re: Research into Friends of Libraries Groups and Public Library Policy**

I am a PhD research student in the Department of Information Studies at the University of Sheffield undertaking a study into Friends of Libraries. In particular, this research will examine the importance of Friends of Libraries with regard to public library policy, operation and services.

I would be grateful if you could allow me to carry out interviews in your library authority in order to obtain views regarding Friends of Libraries and public library policy. I am sending this letter for your agreement. The interview will take between 30 and 45 minutes. All the information from the interviewees will be treated in strict confidence.

#### **I would like to interview the following ten people:**

- **three elected members:**

comprising **the Chairperson of the Committee** responsible for libraries in your authority and **two spokespersons** of the opposition parties on the committee.

- **yourself**

- **four library staff:**

**two Group Librarians and two branch library heads**

- **the chairpersons** of the two Friends groups

I obtained all the data above from your council's Internet websites and other sources. If the details are incorrect then it would be most appreciated if you could let me have the correct ones. I would be also grateful if you could let me have details of the heads of the two (branch) libraries.

If you have **the Constitutions of your Friends groups or any other relevant documents**, I should be grateful if you could let me have copies and details of the **Chairpersons** of the two Friends groups.

If you would allow me to carry out the interviews in your authority and are willing to provide all the details then could you please use and return the enclosed stamped envelope.

Please contact me, or my supervisor Professor Bob Usherwood if you have any queries about the research. Your co-operation would be very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Young S Kim  
Research Student

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## Appendix 2

### Interview Schedule

This interview is being carried out as part of my PhD research. In order to further my research, I would like to ask you some questions about Friends of Libraries and their operation, activities and influence on public library policies. I should emphasise that your answers will be treated in strict confidence and no individual will be identified in the final report. In order to obtain as accurate record as possible, I would like to tape-record this interview. Do you have any objection to it?

#### Part A. Definition and Functions

I would like to start by asking about a definition and functions of a Friends of the Library group in general.

1. What does the term '*Friends of the Library group*' mean to you?
2. What in your view, are the main functions of Friends groups?

#### Part B. Operation and Constitution

I will now move on to talk about the operation and constitution of the Friends group in your library/library authority.

1. Why was the group established?
2. At the moment, in the UK, Friends group often exist under various types of titles, for example, Library Support(ers) Group, Library User Group, Library User Council, Library User Forum, Library Action Group, Library Working Group, and Library Campaign Group.

Among these, which is the closest description of your Friends group?

Could you explain why you think so?(after obtaining an answer)

3. When was the Friends group established?
4. What are the aims and objectives of the Friends group in your library authority?
5. Did the Friends group form spontaneously or were members recruited by the library staff?

6. To what extent, if any, are the library staff involved in the operation of the Friends group?
7. How often does it meet?
8. What is the management structure of the Friends group?
9. How is the group publicised?
10. How many members does the Friends group have?
11. How does the Friends group recruit new members?
12. Is membership of the group free or do members have to pay a fee/subscription?
13. How would you describe the relationship between the library staff and Friends group?
14. Has there ever been any tension between the library staff and the Friends group?  
  
If yes could you explain why there has been tension and give some examples?  
  
If not why do you think that is?
15. What are your views on the involvement of the library staff in the running of the Frinds group?

### **Part C. Activities**

Having read the documents and listened to the outline of the operation and constitution of your Friends group, I have some more detailed questions about the activities of the group.

1. What activities does the group undertake for the [name] library?
2. Which activites of the group have had most impact, for good or bad?
3. How does the group raise funds?
4. How much has the group raised, in the past [financial] year?
5. How if at all does the group financially support your [name] library?

6. During the past year, has the Friends group lobbied, or carried out any political campaigns? (Please give examples)
7. How many, if any, members of the group are working in the library as volunteers?
8. How if at all does the group undertake public relations activities for the library?
9. How if at all is the group involved in the local community?

### **Part D Ability to influence the Library Policy**

I will now move on to the subject of Friends groups influencing public library policy.

1. What are your general views on Friends groups influencing public library policy?
2. Using the terms on this card (A) please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Friends' activities in your library authority:
  - The Friends groups will take over library decision making.
  - If the Friends group raises money, the library budget will be cut accordingly.
  - If the members of the Friends group work as volunteers in the library, paid positions will be eliminated.

Could you explain why you think so? (After obtaining an answer)

3. Within the past year, has the Friends group attempted to influence library policy in your library/library authority? (Please give examples)

I will now move on to talk to in detail about the influence of Friends groups on public library policy. Before I ask you the next questions I would like to remind you that there are some differences between the questions. The first set of questions focuses on whether the Friends group '*could*' influence the library policy. In contrast, the next set of questions focuses on whether the Friends group '*should*' be allowed to influence the library policy.

4. Please indicate by using the terms on this card (A) how strongly you agree or disagree that the friends group *could* influence the following public library policies?

- Selection of library stock
- Opening hours
- Displays or exhibitions in the library
- Rules and regulations
- Decisions on library closure
- Other library policies (which are given by the interviewee as examples in Question 3 above)

Do you think there are any other public library policies which **could** be influenced by the Friends group?

Could you explain why you think so? (After obtaining an answer)

5. Could you please indicate by using the terms on this card (B) to what extent, if any, you feel that Friends group *could* influence library policies through the following activities:

- Fund-raising or Financial support
- Lobbying or Political campaigns
- Voluntary work
- Public Relations
- Community involvement

Do you think there are any other activities by which the Friends group **could** influence library policies?

Could you explain why you think so? (After obtaining an answer)

### **Part E Should the Friends group influence Library Policies?**

I will now move on to ask you whether the Friends group *should* be allowed to influence public library policies.

Using the terms on this card (A) please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree that the Friends group *should* be allowed to influence the following library policies irrespective of the present situation.

- Selection of library stock
- Opening hours
- Displays or exhibitions in the library
- Rules and regulations
- Decisions on library closure

- Other library policies (which are given by the interviewee as examples in Question 3 in Part D)

Do you think there are any other public library policies which the Friends group **should** be allowed to influence?

Do you think there are any other public library policies which the Friends group **should** not be allowed to influence?

Could you explain why you think so? (After obtaining an answer)

### **Part F. National Friends Organisation**

(I will now move on to the subject of a national Friends organisation)

1. A national Friends organisation, such as Friends of Libraries USA, has been suggested for the UK. What are your views on this?
2. Could you please indicate by using the terms on this card (**B**) to what extent, if any, you feel that a national Friends organisation could influence government policy on public libraries?

Could you explain why you think so? (After obtaining an answer)

### **Part G Advantages and Disadvantages**

(I will now move on to talk about the advantages and disadvantages of Friends groups in general)

1. What in your view, are the advantages of Friends groups?
2. What in your view, are the disadvantages of Friends groups?

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, is there anything else you would like to add about Friends groups influencing public library policies?

**CARD A:**

**The terms for use with the questions 2 and 4 in Part D and with Part E**

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree Nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

**CARD B:**

**The terms for use with the question 5 in Part D and the question 2 in Part F**

To a very great extent

To a great extent

To some extent but not a great extent

To a small extent

To no extent at all