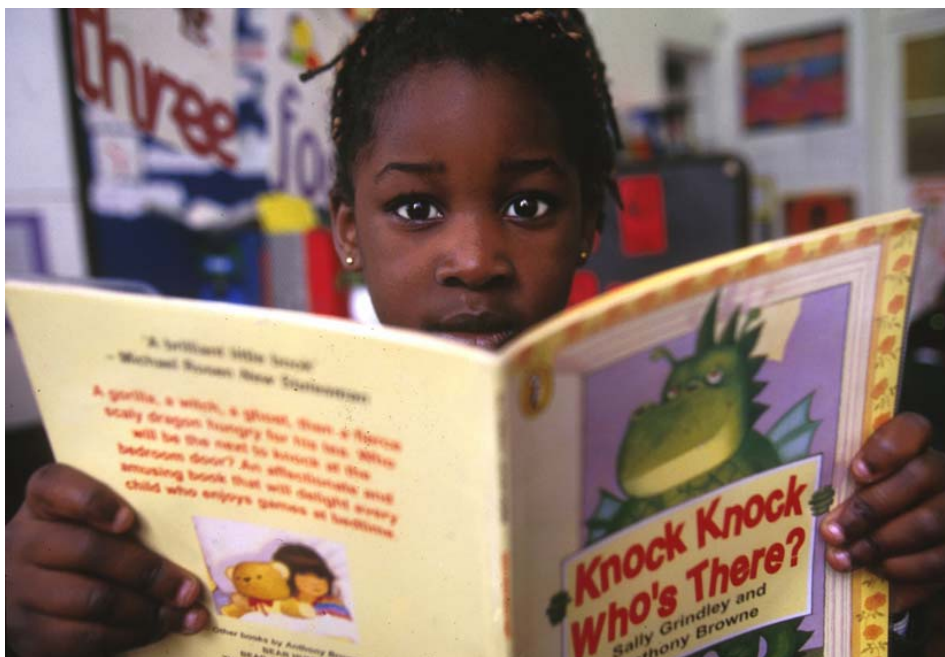




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COUNCIL**

Museums, Libraries and Archives Council and London Libraries Development Agency

Single membership card for London's public libraries:
feasibility study



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1 Executive summary

Scope and approach

The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) and the London Libraries Development Agency (LLDA) has engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC) to assess the feasibility of a single membership card for all of London's public libraries.

The review has been overseen by a Project Steering Group drawn from key stakeholders. The Steering Group has included representatives from the MLA, LLDA and the Association of London Chief Librarians (ALCL). Funding for the study was provided by MLA under its Framework for the Future programme.

The approach to this study has focused on obtaining wide input from a broad group of stakeholders. It has taken-in interviews with a selection of Chief Librarians and other stakeholders (including elected members from a number of London Boroughs and senior managers from library management systems suppliers) as well as a focus group to specifically consider the technology impact that such a change might have on day to day operations of the libraries service.

Key issues and findings

The primary research that has been undertaken during this study makes it clear that there is overwhelming support amongst London's Chief Librarians to move towards single membership. This would appear to support the user choice agenda identified within Strong and Prosperous Communities – The Local Government White Paper, which includes a focus on:

- Greater flexibility;
- Improved access;
- Sustained improvement;
- Excellence in delivery; and
- Working in partnership.¹

Elected Members from the local authorities that we spoke to are less enthusiastic but still generally supportive of single membership. Their concerns relate to the potential impact of single membership on the quality of the service received by residents of specific boroughs and to the potential increased financial burden this may place on the

¹ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1137789>

taxpayer. However there is recognition of the potential benefits of single membership to the public through access to a wider range of library services.

Despite their enthusiasm about the potential benefits, both officers and Members recognise that considerable challenges exist. The main issues that we surfaced during the course of the review are:

- The importance of reaching a common understanding of what single membership means;
- The actual desirability of single membership (from the perspective of library officers, Elected Members and suppliers);
- Implications for customer service;
- Financial implications;
- Legal implications;
- Technical issues;
- Political issues and implications for local elected members;
- Logistical and stock management; and
- The potential for linking to and developing existing partnership arrangements e.g. linkage to library membership or user cards in other sectors such as health and academic libraries.

Some of these issues identified by two previous reviews, including the Joint Membership Initiative undertaken by the CeLL Management Group in 2003, to consider a joined up approach. These reviews were not been taken forward primarily due to the perceived difficulty of overcoming these challenges.

However based on stakeholder feedback and other evidence, we recommend that it is the right time for London's public libraries to tackle these challenges and take forward further work in this area.

This will require a clear vision and definition of scope and suitably flexible protocols for participation. We therefore recommend that ALCL and the single membership project steering group facilitate further in depth discussion and debate amongst the 33 Chief Librarians of the London Boroughs to enable engagement about the practicalities of a potential operating model, and to agree a series of tasks and activities that can be undertaken as part of the next steps in the process.

Conclusions and recommendations

The recommendations set out in the table below have been devised as a series of next steps towards the implementation of a partial solution to single membership, which requires a low level of investment and will enable authorities to test any potential arrangements for collaborative working.

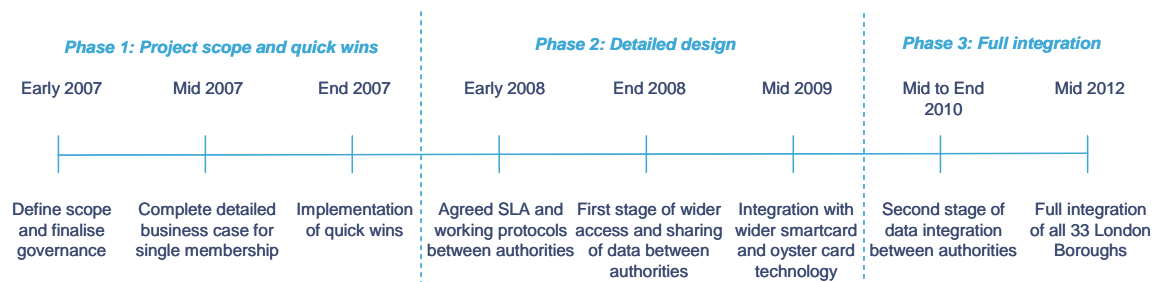
Each recommendation includes an indicative timescale, categorised as short-term (next six months), medium-term (next 6-12 months) or long-term (more than one year). We have indicated costs using a similar scale, for example if the cost is estimated below £10k then we have used a single £, if the cost is estimated to be between £10 and £50k we have added two ££ and anything estimated to be over £50k has been highlighted with three £££. The assessment of complexity has been developed based on the feedback from key stakeholders as part of the review.

Recommendation	Timescale	Cost	Complexity
Establish and more clearly define exactly what the vision and scope for single membership or a more joined up approach for access to London's public libraries is going to mean for each of the Boroughs	Short-term	£	Medium
Agree the threshold or level of critical mass needed to proceed between potential participating authorities to enable the project to be taken forward to the next stage	Short-term	££	Medium
Communication plan and stakeholder engagement to manage the potentially significant organisational change and impact this will have on operational libraries staff	Short-term	£	Medium
Further investigation and research required into the potential source of funding for the proposed initiative	Medium-term	£	Low
Development of a more detailed business case with further analysis to inform the level of investment and relative financial implications for each local authority libraries service	Medium-term	££	Medium
Market testing and further research through a customer survey of both users of public libraries in London, but more importantly non-users to establish what would encourage greater usage of the service and help to understand what these people want and expect from a modern libraries service	Medium-term	££	Low
Research cross borough demand amongst users but also the anticipated level of stock transfer and movement to understand likely level of take up and customer demand to access services operating across local authority boundaries	Medium-term	£	Medium

Recommendation	Timescale	Cost	Complexity
There will need to be established protocols and minimum standards for membership to enable participating authorities to comply with their legal, audit and compliance requirements	Long-term	£	High
Further investigation into the potential options and implications of LMS interoperability. This has been identified as a specific project workstream within the Better Stock, Better Libraries review	Long-term	£££	High
Consideration of new branding arrangements to enable the maintenance of strong local identity and brand	Long-term	££	High

Indicative outline timeline

We have also set out an initial long-term timeline that highlights the key stages and milestones towards full integration. This timeline is not intended to be linear and key initiatives may overlap. It is therefore indicative of what the project might look like from start to finish.



It is important for key stakeholders to maintain knowledge of other related initiatives that might impact on the ability to deliver a more integrated solution. For example, if the technology market changes and there is significant advancement in relation to smartcard technology, participating library authorities will need to be in a position to react and adapt their approach accordingly.

Concerns have also been expressed that by enabling London's public libraries to be more accessible and easier to join for the public will result in a significant increase in demand that will impact on the ability of individual library services to maintain service levels. This does not necessarily mean that a significant proportion of new users will join the service. It is more likely that simplifying the existing process will encourage greater usage amongst existing library members.

We have illustrated throughout the report a series of case study examples where library authorities are demonstrating the principles of greater flexibility, increased access and a more joined up approach to service delivery, to promote debate on the possible options for taking forward the single membership initiative in full. One good example of a joined up approach to service delivery is the London Libraries Consortium. There is a lot to be

learnt from the contractual and governance arrangements already in place at the Consortium.

Another option currently being considered by a number of authorities is greater usage of new technology. Whilst developments are still at an early stage the potential integration with the Oyster card, for example should be a matter of setting up local agreement and contracts with Transport for London (TfL) and ensuring the technology is in place to utilise spare storage capacity on membership cards.

In taking forward the recommendations in this report, library authorities will need to consider the following more detailed process issues:

- Standardise procedures e.g. joining rules, fees, fines and charges and loan periods across participating authorities;
- Agree proof of identification requirements that might enable a customer with a valid library membership card for one authority, to join another authority without showing subsequent proof of identification;
- Potential ring fencing of special collections that are known to have particularly high demand. This will enable these collections to be retained as an important resource with more limited access to particular users of an individual borough's library service;
- Cleansing of library data to enable it to be properly matched;
- Find ways of working within different audit requirements and operating procedures at each authority;
- Manage impact of cultural change on operational libraries staff through regular communication; and
- Potential for additional training and development of operational libraries staff.

Despite the potential complexities identified within the report, it appears that now is the right time to further investigate the potential of single membership in more detail. The reasons to take forward this initiative now include the need to:

- Respond to significant changes within the sector encouraged by recent policy initiatives;
- Demonstrate the delivery of an efficient and effective service;
- Maintain momentum and demonstrate gradual progress through collaborative working;
- Sustain the provision of a more modern, flexible and accessible service to their customers;
- Accept that many of the potential barriers, and fear of loss of local identity and control will always be a concern to some individuals and can only be allayed through developing a successful solution;

- Develop the progress made on the implementation of a single catalogue to a single membership card which is the logical next step;
- Seize the opportunity to integrate with and learn from other initiatives such as the LLC arrangements and the proposed London Connects combined entitlement card; and
- Take note of the outcomes from the two previous feasibility studies that identified as part of its key findings that local authorities were probably two years away from a technology solution.

This will enable London's public libraries to lead the local government sector in offering joined up service provision to local people.

2 Strategic context

Introduction

A recent article in the Guardian newspaper entitled “Why is it so hard to join a library these days?”² graphically illustrates the need for change across the library sector. Journalistic exaggeration or not, the piece asserts that three proofs of identification were required before the customer could borrow any material and that the vast majority of popular stock was, in any case, already out on loan. Truth or exaggeration, it represents a common public perception of libraries.

A single membership solution may be one of a range of service improvements to come out of a series of national and regional modernisation initiatives currently underway. These initiatives set the context within which the feasibility of a single membership solution for London’s libraries should be considered.

National

Public libraries are undergoing a period of challenge and change. Local government is facing up to the opportunities and challenges of the Efficiency Review³ and the Transforming Government agendas⁴, Strong and prosperous communities – The Local Government White Paper⁵ the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007⁶ and the report of the Lyons Inquiry⁷. The single membership feasibility project has been commissioned by the LLDA in partnership with MLA, and fits in with the Framework for the Future⁸ action plan to ensure that public libraries in the 21st Century can continue to deliver a service of high value to local communities.

It is critical that both the libraries community and local government seize opportunities to set the agenda and take a lead in transforming services to operate as efficiently and effectively as possible. Improving access to public libraries represents such an opportunity.

² The Guardian, 28th October 2006

³ Releasing Resources for the Frontline: Independent Review of Public Sector Efficiency, see http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spending_review/spend_sr04/associated_documents/spending_sr04_efficiency.cfm

⁴ Transformational Government, Enabled by Technology, see http://www.cio.gov.uk/transformational_government/strategy/

⁵ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1137789>

⁶ http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spending_review/spend_csr07/spend_csr07_index.cfm

⁷ <http://www.lyons-inquiry.org>

⁸ http://www.culture.gov.uk/global/publications/archive_2003/framework_future.htm and on www.mla.gov.uk via Programmes, Framework for the Future

Significant changes within the sector have been encouraged by recent policy initiatives and the need to demonstrate the delivery of an efficient and effective service. Public libraries in England are now making great strides towards the provision of a more modern, flexible and accessible service to their customers through a variety of projects. These include:

- Framework for the Future;
- Public Library Service Standards (PLSS) review;
- Better Stock, Better Libraries: transforming library stock procurement; and
- Operational improvements at local authority level, including Inter-Library Loans.

Community Leadership and Engagement

Framework for the Future was published in 2003 by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) as the Government's ten year vision for public libraries. It sets out how libraries can best change and improve to serve their communities in the twenty first century.

Libraries can have an important role to play in enabling citizen access to knowledge, skills and information. They also have a community leadership role in delivering the shared priorities of central and local government, for example, in raising standards across our schools, improving the quality of life of older people and of children, young people and families at risk, in creating safer and stronger communities and in promoting the economic vitality of localities.

Not only do libraries have an important role in community leadership, but the importance of their current and future role in community engagement should not be underestimated. The libraries which are already successful in this area frequently involve the communities themselves in the design and implementation of services. Many more libraries are beginning to establish programmes to engage groups and individuals that are hard to reach by identifying them, establishing their particular needs and by redesigning services to ensure there are no barriers to inclusion, for example the work by Manchester City Council as part of their community engagement toolkit and action plan for 2006-07. Community engagement can be defined as:

- More people getting actively involved in their neighbourhoods; and
- Local people able to influence decisions about their own neighbourhoods and public services⁹.

The MLA recently worked with Community Service Volunteers to research current practice in Community Engagement in public libraries. Their report found that whilst a proportion of library services are working closely with their communities, to involve them in shaping and delivering services, there is greater interest amongst services to better understand and implement community engagement.

⁹ Your Neighbourhood – Getting involved and having a say, ODPM and Home Office publication

The MLA is working in partnership with the Big Lottery Fund to deliver the £80million Community Libraries Programme. The Programme will deliver improvements for library spaces through increased engagement with local communities; in fact community involvement is a pre-requisite for successful bidding.

Public Library Service Standards (PLSS)

This strategic vision should also be seen in the context of wider policy developments, including work to revise DCMS Public Library Service Standards (PLSS) and the development and launch of public library impact measures, linked to community profiles, by the DCMS in March 2005. These moves are indicative of the increasing recognition by public libraries of the need to demonstrate the impact on communities and individuals that library staff and many others in the sector have long recognised.

The aim of the current review into Public Library Service Standards (PLSS) is to examine the extent to which they are still fit for purpose, to assess the impact they have made on the performance of Library Authorities, and how they are placed to adapt to future changes in policy and performance within the Library Service.

However the recently published white paper which sets out a vision for modern local government, new relationships between local authorities and their communities, and central government includes within it a proposal for a new performance management framework for the whole of local government that proposes the replacement of all service specific reporting frameworks with a new, more outcome focused framework. This new framework will be much more focused on the outcomes that are created by local government (and its partners') services than the inputs that go into them. This is likely to mean substantial reform to the PLSS framework with an increased emphasis on outcome measures such as broadening public access to knowledge and learning. This makes initiatives such as the single membership project all the more timely.

DCMS and MLA are keen to ensure that the public library sector continues to deliver relevant and high quality services to local communities, and that the role of libraries in contributing towards local authorities' wider objectives is recognised and understood. Effective performance management will be essential in this, and therefore they are keen to develop and promote a performance management framework for public libraries.

London Public Library statistics

London has an extensive public library network that comprises of around 360 public libraries and a range of mobile, domiciliary and other library services that are managed by the City of London and 32 London Boroughs, indicated on the map below. The majority of Londoners are rarely more than a mile away from their nearest library. In 2005 there were 54 million customer visits to London's libraries. In fact 46% of all Londoners have visited a library at least once in the last year and there are 2.1 million membership cards in circulation. Among those who had been to a library, about two fifths had visited 11 or more times in the last year. A variety of sources testify to the value people attach to public libraries, with 94% of adults in London either agreeing or strongly agreeing that libraries provide a valuable service to the community. Public libraries offer a wide range of materials that include:

- Books;
- Talking books, large print and Braille;

- Magazines, newspapers and journals;
- CDs, Videos and DVDs;
- Music collections orchestral and vocal sets for performance and for loan; and
- Information books, databases and electronic services.



In early 2006, MLA London commissioned a project to collate existing statistical data on London's public libraries.¹⁰ London public libraries need easy access to data to demonstrate performance and support advocacy. The report presents the findings under the headings developed by the MLA, which include; the number of libraries, visits, user information, value and impact.

The report provides a more detailed borough by borough statistical comparison of London's Public Libraries. The key facts about London Libraries are:

Opening hours and visits

- Collectively, public libraries in the capital were open for a total of 15,887 hours a week in 2003-04;
- In 2003-04, over 52 million visits were made to London's public libraries, an increase of about 3.5 million since 2001-02;
- More visits per head are made to London's libraries than to public libraries in the UK as a whole: 7.1 per person in London, compared with 5.7 per person in the UK; and

¹⁰ Fact not Fiction, Facts and Figures about London's Public Libraries 2006
<http://www.mlalondon.org.uk/sector/measuring/index.cfm>

- London's public libraries dealt with almost 9.5 million enquiries in 2003-04.

Expenditure and income

- In 2003-04, total revenue expenditure on public libraries in London was £179,959,000, or £24.36 per head of the population;
- The fastest growing area of expenditure was on electronic resources: amounting to £844,000 in 2003-04, an increase of 40% in the previous five years; and
- Total revenue income in 2003-04 was £16,202,000 or £2.19 per head of the population.

Stock

In 2003-04, London's public libraries between them had:

- An active lending stock of 11,751,000 books in 2003-04;
- 3,785,000 reference and reserve books;
- A total book stock of 15,536,000;
- 1,048,000 audio items, 442,000 videos and 51,600 CD-ROMs: a total audio-visual stock of 1,542,000 items; and
- The number of CD-ROMs increased by 86% in the five years between 1998-99 and 2003-04.

Services

In 2003-04, London's public libraries issued:

- 39.77 million books;
- 4.09 million audio items; and
- 2.74 million videos.

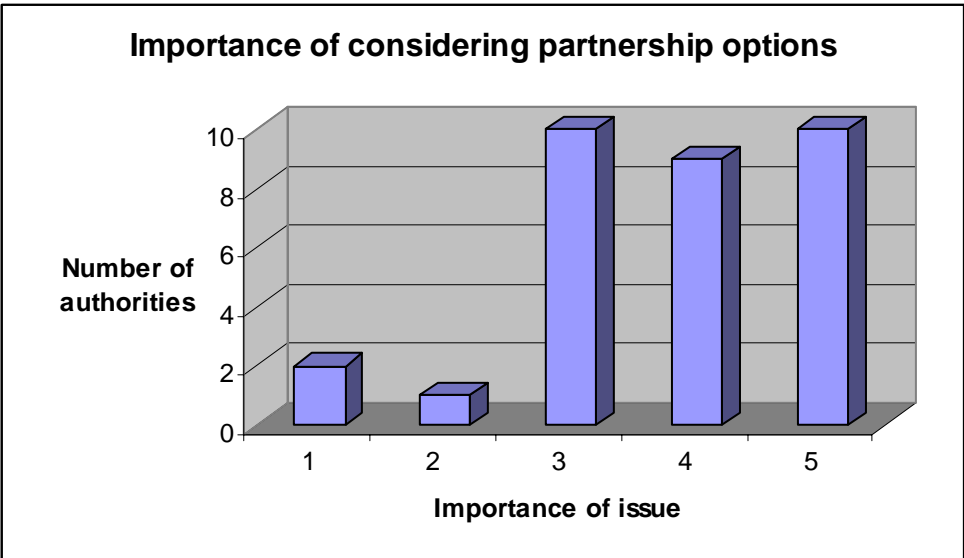
LLDA's remit is to develop and implement a co-ordinated strategic vision for library and information services across London. One of the main areas of activity to date has been the development of London's library network through the forging of partnerships and building links that improve the quality and scope of library services, widen access and increase the resources available. Examples include the What's in London's Libraries (WiLL) project; London Libraries Recommend shared reader promotions and engagement with London Connects to provide library content for the Your London portal.

Nowhere has the evidence of successful partnership working been more apparent than the operation of the shared libraries management system through the LLC project. The Consortium was originally established as a purchasing consortium to reduce procurement costs and negotiate larger discounts with book suppliers. In 2002 the remit was extended to develop a computer system that could be shared between participating authorities.

There are currently five local authorities that comprise the LLC. The members are the London Boroughs of Havering, Redbridge, Wandsworth, Waltham Forest and Barking & Dagenham. The consortium is an example of sub-regional partnership working that is beginning to expand its members as authorities see evidence of the benefits. Participating authorities' library stock becomes part of a main catalogue, which is available to all borrowers from any branch within the consortium. The London Borough of Richmond is in the process of joining the consortium. In addition two other authorities are also in negotiations with the consortium.

The idea of single membership and greater promotion of partnership working across library authorities is gaining credence. As part of this study, all of London's Chief Librarians were asked how important they believe it is to consider partnership options for a single membership card or alternative joined up approach to service provision. The response provides direct evidence that the concept is viewed as very important.

There are a number of examples within the sector of partnership or consortium arrangements at a regional and sub-regional level. Many local authorities are now considering revising working practices as part of the proposals within the Better Stock, Better Libraries stock procurement review. At a sub-regional level the example of the LLC aims to continue to increase access to all services offered by public libraries.



- 1 = Not at all important
- 2 = Not very important
- 3 = Quite important
- 4 = Very important
- 5 = Extremely important

New models of delivery

Some parts of the public libraries sector are embarking on plans for both new ways of working and new models of service provision. The development of community trust models, for example, and the exploration by some library authorities of the potential for 'trading' of high quality services by individual authorities, as a mechanism for capacity-building and practice transfer, are indicative of a service that is opening up to new ways of delivering improvements.

Nationally, the MLA has recently initiated a study to investigate the feasibility of networking existing inter-library loan catalogues (ILL) and re-designing the approach to allow individual library users to directly interrogate the catalogue, as they can currently with London's What's in London's Libraries (WiLL) system, and request delivery of their chosen item to their specified address. It is likely to be some time before this model moves towards implementation but if it moves forward it could provide important synergies with the single membership initiative.

The 'Better Stock, Better Libraries: transforming library stock procurement' report sets out proposals which, if implemented, have the potential to save up to £20million a year, creating opportunities for significant reinvestment in improving library services to customers and represents a major opportunity for the library service to innovate and to transform their approach to buying and managing stock through improvements to procurement, processes, and use of information technology, to invest the savings generated through these changes, in better stock and better services to the public; and ultimately to improve their services to users and to their local community as a whole.

The key issues, findings and recommendations laid out in this review should be considered in relation to the strategic approach to the provision of library services. The role and profile of public libraries has been the subject of significant and wide-ranging debate in recent years. This debate has reflected an awareness that libraries will increasingly need to demonstrate that they are providing an efficient and effective service that is relevant to the needs of local communities.

3 Scope and approach

The scope for this review is centred on investigating the possibility of a single membership card for London's public libraries. In view of the fact that London's public library services are delivered by 33 local authorities at borough level with over 350 static service points and a range of mobile, community and domiciliary provision, the following areas were deemed particularly important for consideration:

- Investigation of the legal, technical, political and customer service implications of a single membership card;
- Identification and consideration of the partnership possibilities for linking the single membership card to other developments e.g. smartcards and cultural entitlement cards;
- Recommending appropriate options for the implementation of a single membership card; and
- Consideration of the implications for linkage to library membership and user cards in other sectors, such as health and academic libraries.

The review has been overseen by a Project Steering Group drawn from key stakeholders. The Steering Group has included representatives from the London Libraries Development Agency (LLDA), Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) and the Association of London Chief Librarians (ALCL), a regional sub-group of the Society of Chief Librarians.

The approach to this study has focused on obtaining wide input from a broad group of stakeholders. It has taken-in interviews with a selection of Chief Librarians and other stakeholders (including elected members from a number of London Boroughs and senior managers from library management systems suppliers) as well as a focus group to specifically consider the technology impact that such a change might have on day to day operations of the libraries service. The activities undertaken in compiling this report include:

- Collecting and analysing information – we have completed a desktop review of key documentation and similar relevant projects to understand the lessons learnt from:
 - Access Your Library (2006): a pilot proposal under active consideration by three boroughs to consider streamlining membership procedures and to reduce or eliminate the burden of proof of identity for people wishing to join the library. The intention is to make it easier for customers to join, increase library use and reduce discrimination against disadvantaged people;

- London Connects proposals for a London three tier card (2006) to establish a framework and develop a pan-London smartcard allied to the ‘Your London’ portal and possibly to the Transport for London Oyster card;
 - Joint Membership Initiative undertaken by the CeLL Management Group (2003) to implement a single membership system across a number of London Boroughs; and
 - One Joining Card for London’s Libraries (2001) to design a membership form and standardise joining procedures suitable to be used by all London Library Authorities.
- Undertaking interviews with Chief Librarians – to understand perceived issues and complexities that such an operating arrangement might have both for individual boroughs but also from a more strategic London wide perspective, including;
 - Borough wide questionnaire – issued to the City of London and all 32 London Boroughs to capture their views, as key stakeholders, on the principle of single membership or an alternative joined up approach including working practices, key local issues and benefits and the potential opportunities for change;
 - Case studies – obtained examples of previous projects, both inside and outside London that relate to relevant issues raised as part of the study, for example the volume of stock transfer and cost implication of cross boundary stock transfer and the impact of removing proof of identification requirements in local authority library services;
 - Focus group – on technical and inter-lending issues aimed at assessing what could be achieved through joint working and identifying the challenges and technical issues associated with single membership; and
 - Undertaking interviews with Members – to understand the political perspective in considering joint working initiative across London including such issues as the perceived impact on local brand, borrowing and charging policies and ownership and rotation of stock.

4 Key issues and findings

The review has identified a number of key themes and issues that may have a bearing on the potential move to a single membership card for London's libraries. They are:

- Reaching a common understanding of what single membership means;
- Desirability of single membership (from the perspective of library officers, political members, suppliers and customers);
- Implications for customer service;
- Financial implications;
- Legal implications;
- Technical issues;
- Political issues and implications for local elected members;
- Logistical and stock management; and
- The potential for linking to and developing existing partnership arrangements e.g. linkage to library membership or user cards in other sectors such as health and academic libraries.

Common understanding of single membership

A consistent theme from our stakeholder research is that an individual's views on how to move forward with the single membership initiative are predicated on their understanding of what exactly is meant and defined as single membership or joined up approach.

Residents of London already have access rights to the stock of all authorities in the city if they either live, work or study in the area and most boroughs will accept people who visit the borough for shopping and entertainment. Therefore it is important to establish what is envisaged, over and above the current level of integration, by single membership and a joined up approach.

Essentially, the feasibility of single membership depends on getting specific agreement to a common vision, or definition, of what it means. This will have a direct bearing on the commitment and buy-in of member organisations. Integration and single membership may mean something very different to officers and library users. It has also been evident from the fieldwork that many local authority library services are operating in

terms of performance against both national targets and against delivery of local service plans. Our research has highlighted the following options for single membership and a joined up approach. The range of options listed further illustrates the need for further consideration and debate amongst authorities before developing a more detailed business case.

The options for initial integration are listed below. Rather than a list of separate options these might also be considered in terms of a critical path and the key milestones towards more full integration, as set out in the timeline in the Executive Summary of the report. The three options for a joined up approach are:

- Simplification of the above existing arrangements to remove red tape and make it easier for users to move seamlessly between service, the variations with this approach include;
 - Joined up approach that incorporates a greater commonality of standards and processes e.g. fines and charges and proof of identification;
 - Gradual standardisation of branding to give the perception of greater integration and access whilst still operating very distinct local services; and
 - Better communication and publication of the existing arrangements that enable multiple usages of other borough libraries by users if they either live, work or study in the area.
- Single membership card that incorporates use of existing Cultural Services entitlements within individual boroughs and therefore across London; and
- Single membership card for use in all of London public libraries.

ALCL will need to facilitate further in depth discussion and debate amongst the 33 London Boroughs to more clearly define the scope and therefore what is feasible and realistic at the outset.

It might be worth ALCL considering a stepped approach towards single membership that will initially enable more joined up working, for example some authorities might decide to agree protocols for membership, and other authorities may just agree to accept each other's library membership cards or a more integrated approach might mean that some authorities may opt for full shared membership.

This will enable individual authorities to better understand the implications and potential impact of participating in a new approach that will increase access to stock within their portfolio of public libraries.

Recommendation 1: Establish and more clearly define exactly what the vision and scope for single membership or a more joined up approach for access to London's public libraries is going to mean for each of the boroughs.

Recommendation 2: There will need to be established protocols and minimum standards for membership to enable participating authorities to comply with their legal, audit and compliance requirements.

Desirability of single membership

In principle the perceived effectiveness of single membership is well supported amongst local authorities and Members. As stated, part of our approach has been to engage with all the London Boroughs, and LMS suppliers through an interview, questionnaire or workshop. We interviewed Chief Librarians and Members from a cross section of authorities based on differences in:

- Geographical location;
- Organisational structure;
- Procurement arrangements;
- Potential impact of cross border demand; and
- Political control.

The questionnaire was issued to the City of London and all 32 London Boroughs and we received 32 out of a possible 33 responses¹¹, indicated in the graph below, which highlights that half of the participating 32 authorities thought any move towards single membership and a joined up approach would be very effective. Member interviews indicated a greater difference of opinion between those who are broadly supportive of the initiative in principle and those who have reservations and concerns about single membership. These concerns mainly relate to the potential cost implications and the need for greater clarity regarding the scope, as detailed in the earlier recommendations.

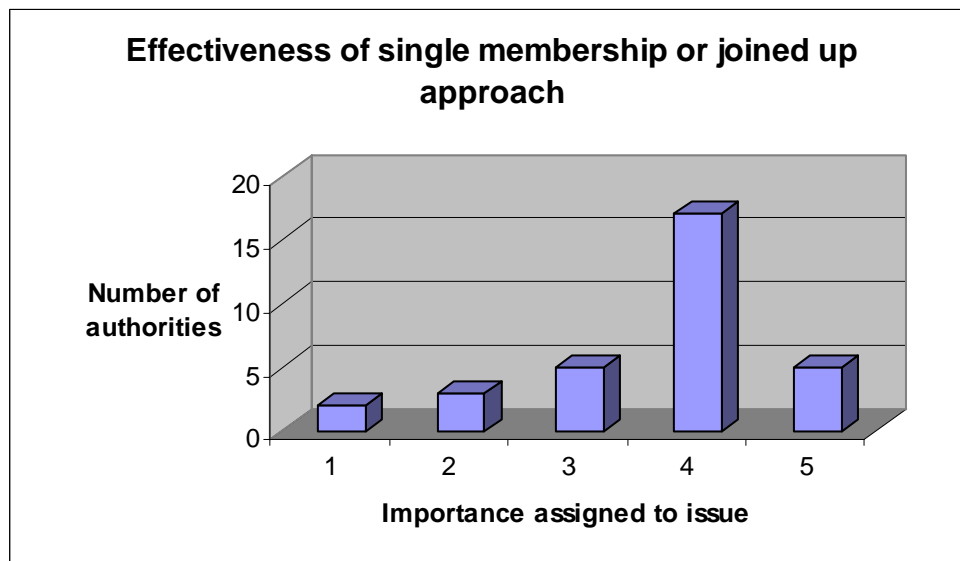
In fact many authorities have indicated that they see this as a worthwhile step forward and an opportunity to bring down the barriers to greater library usage. The majority of authorities appear to be in agreement that increasing access to the range of services provided within London's public libraries will enable many benefits to encourage greater long-term use of the service. These include:

- Provide greater simplification of use for the customer;
- Provide access to wider services including children's and lifelong learning;
- Encourage authorities to share resources;
- Reduce staff time spent on duplicated activity across authorities e.g. registering multiple users;
- Enable reinvestment of savings back into the service to improve front line services;
- Support the development of a single brand for London's public libraries; and
- Enable authorities to engage in promotional work across the region.

As part of the questionnaire participating authorities were asked to indicate how

¹¹ London Borough of Waltham Forest is currently operating interim arrangements and Diana Edmonds, Head of Libraries, Archives and Museum Service at London Borough of Haringey in post on a part time basis.

effective they believed a single membership card or alternative joined up approach would be as a driver of more effective library services. Respondents were asked to score this on a scale of 1-5 and provide additional qualitative information to support the rating.



- 1 = Not at all effective
- 2 = Not very effective
- 3 = Quite effective
- 4 = Very effective
- 5 = Extremely effective

As part of the review we engaged technical experts, from both LMS suppliers, London Borough library IT officers and other stakeholders such as London Connects in a workshop to establish individual and groups views on:

- Vision of a joined up approach analysing the similarities, differences and feasibility;
- Barriers to achievement of the vision; and
- Benefits and next steps required to progress the initiative.

All were in broad agreement that a joined up approach is the next step towards greater co-operation between libraries and greater access to resources. However commitment will be required from ALCL to ensure there is clarity regarding the purpose of the initiative, the impact of potential organisational change and to ensure there is the appropriate level of funding in place to support the initiative.

As part of the workshop, participants explored the proposed changes. Interestingly, there were only two challenges that were perceived would be very difficult to overcome without external input beyond ALCL. These issues were:

- Radical improvement to data sharing through greater LMS inter-operability; and
- Legal framework.

The stakeholder research indicates support for the initiative in principle and echoes the opinion that single membership is fundamental to show that public libraries in London are serious about provision and customer service to the citizens of the capital. There is a belief that libraries need to reposition themselves as places that fit with a modern lifestyle choice. Many authorities believe that, if library services are to meet the needs of the people in London, they have to be flexible and available to all.

The majority of authorities appear to be very supportive of greater integration but are of course keen to ensure that this is delivered in a managed and controlled manner. There is the recognition that this will mean a significant culture shift for both the local authorities themselves but also amongst the staff who are accustomed to working in a particular way within their borough library service. Again, this serves to illustrate the need to agree the actual definition of single membership. Only then can the extent of change to specific areas be quantified.

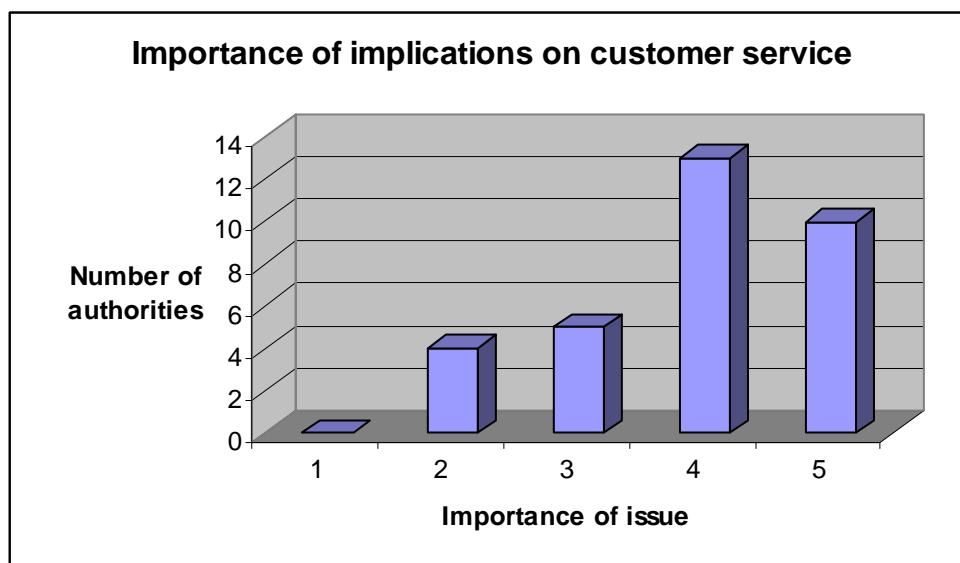
The important point to be made is that with the right level of commitment and agreement from authorities that single membership could eventually enable borrowers to get access to library material when they need it from where they want it and return it to where it is convenient to them. Libraries, more than any other local authority service are a national brand and customers do not necessarily understand the issues that result from the delivery of services within local government boundaries.

Recommendation 3: Communication plan and stakeholder engagement to manage the potentially significant organisational change and impact this will have on operational libraries staff.

Implications for customer service

One aspect that should be considered as part of developing the initiative is the need to market test public perception and demand for greater access to services currently offered by local authorities. Despite the perception that the customer would encourage any increase in access, there is a possibility that they will be resistant to significant change to their local libraries service. For example customers who frequently use more than one service may even feel that if they are only allowed one card, that their current entitlement may be reduced. It is suggested that further research is required to gauge whether this is anecdotal or a statistically significant number.

As part of the questionnaire, participating authorities were asked to indicate how important they believed the implications of a single membership card or alternative joined up approach to service provision would have on customer service in terms of greater flexibility and improved access. Respondents were asked to score this on a scale of 1-5 and provide additional qualitative information to support the rating.



- 1 = Not at all important
- 2 = Not very important
- 3 = Quite important
- 4 = Very important
- 5 = Extremely important

This appears to support the view that further research is required as part of any further work to support a detailed business case.

Recommendation 4: Market testing and further research through a customer survey of both users of public libraries in London, but more importantly non-users to establish what would encourage greater usage of the service and help to understand what these people want and expect from a modern libraries service.

Financial implications

One of the main concerns that has been expressed from both an officer and Member perspective relates to the potential cost of implementing any solution. There have been two previous studies to assess the potential for developing an initiative but both have been halted due to the perceived financial implications for local authorities and the limited ability to access funding to implement a solution.

Listed below are some of the financial barriers that have been identified as part of this study:

- Implementation costs;
- Source of funding;
- Cost of returning stock to originating authority;
- Increase in transport costs;
- Investment required to link different LMS;
- Different levels of service provided by authorities; and
- Different charging levels applied.

Support for the initiative by local authorities is likely to come back to the issue of funding required to support the project and any required investment in technology or additional costs associated with the transfer of stock to and from authorities. This is again dependent on scope and level of technological integration. For example, if it were not required that stock must be returned to the originating local authority then there would be no transport costs associated with the scheme. Evidence suggests the London Libraries Consortium (LLC)¹² have had an increase in transport costs based on the amount of material moving around on a larger scale this could have an impact.

Any potential scheme is likely to be deemed unacceptable if there was perceived as a loss of control over a flagship service funded by council tax payers or if levels of council tax had to increase to fund revenue costs of the project.

The issue of the current difference in locally determined borrowing and charging rates is one that would need to be addressed, for example could the participating authorities operate a system that would levy different fees and charges within individual boroughs or would there need to be a standardisation of these and what would the implications be for the existing arrangements within authorities and the subsequent impact on individual library service budgets.

The level of funding is yet to be determined and cannot be ascertained within the scope of this review, but on the basis that investment may be required to enable the scheme to commence it is suggested that alternate sources of funding being investigated and the potential requirements for grant be determined to strengthen the case. It may be that an

¹² The London Libraries Consortium is a partnership between the London Boroughs of Barking & Dagenham, Havering, Redbridge, Waltham Forest and Wandsworth who operate the same Library Management Systems (LMS). As their library stock becomes part of one main catalogue and this stock is then available to all borrowers in the partnership group. This also means that customers across the five local authorities can use any of the branches in the authorities involved.

Invest to Save Bid (ISB), National Lottery funding or funding from other routes is sought to enable progress.

Recommendation 5: Development of a more detailed business case with further analysis to inform the level of investment and relative financial implications for each local authority libraries service.

Recommendation 6: Further investigation and research required into the potential source of funding for the proposed initiative.

Legal implications

Whilst the potential legal barriers have not been identified as a major issue in feedback received through interviews and responses to the questionnaire, they were identified as the major barrier to successful implementation at the focus group of technical experts.

Listed below are some of the legal barriers that have been identified as part of this study:

- Establishment of a legal framework;
- Difference in locally set borrowing and charging policies;
- Ownership of membership data;
- Compliance with data protection requirements e.g. proof of identification;
- Ownership of stock; and
- Ownership of customers that contribute to BVPI and CIPFA statistics.

The issue here appears to be in two main parts, the proposed legal framework and operating agreement that would need to be in place to enable authorities to have confidence that they are all operating within the same principles and service level agreement (SLA), which was identified as the main barrier to the successful implementation of any future approach to single membership.

This is highlighted by the fact that all decisions have historically been taken at a local level and therefore there are local policies and often different identification validation rules in place. This indicates a current lack of consistency and standardisation of services across London in relation to joining rules, fees, fines and charges and loan periods. Without the necessary level standardisation it could be very difficult to convince customers of the likely benefits of single membership.

The second part of the issue relates to ownership of the membership data, stock and also customers of the libraries service for performance indicators. This information is used to contribute to a clearly defined set of indicators that the service is able to measure itself against. Within the current framework of service delivery individual authorities will be reluctant to jeopardise the loss of valuable customers that contribute to their performance targets. The question of exactly whom the customer has a contractual relationship with, and therefore who owns the customer data that can count towards existing performance measures is likely to arise unless these arrangements change.

Items of stock are still the individual authorities' assets and there would need to be an agreement not only on how to select and purchase the stock but on how and who withdraws it from stock.

Case Study 1: London Libraries Consortium – Legal Framework

The London Libraries Consortia for IT was established in 2003 and originally comprised of two London Boroughs; Redbridge and Havering. It was agreed that Havering would be the lead authority for the project and the LLC would appoint a Project Manager funded by both partners. An external legal company were then appointed to manage the legal elements of the project; this was funded by both partners.

The contract is based on a Framework Agreement, between Havering and DS Ltd. This agreement deals with all contractual issues with the supplier including framework structure, work orders, definition, scope of the services and systems, project management, quality assurance, intellectual property rights, acceptance, title and risk, rights of third parties, termination and consequences of termination, dispute resolution and service level agreements (SLA).

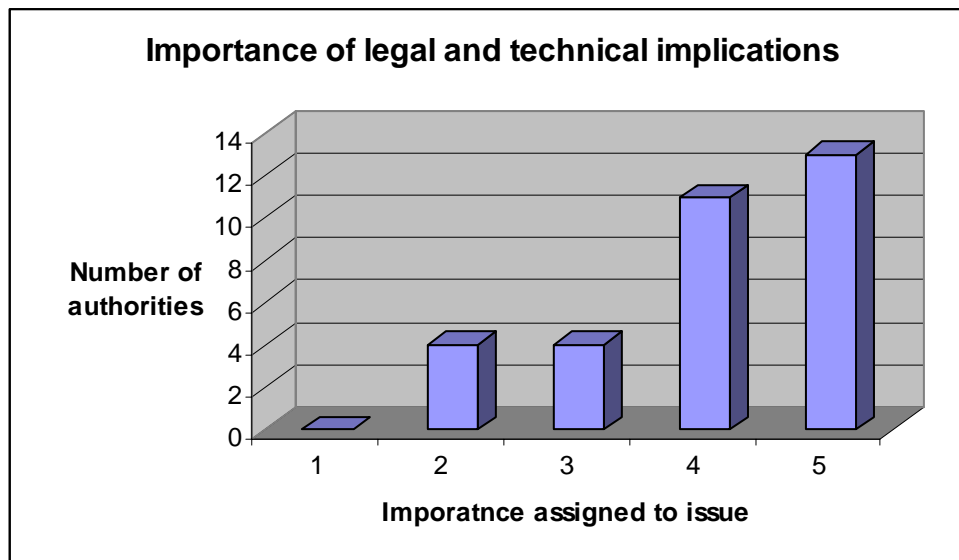
There is a further document called a Consortium Agreement. This is the document Havering require all partners to sign which deals with collaboration, relationship with project partners, partner obligations, acceptance of work orders, dispute resolution and joining the Consortium.

The project governance arrangements involve an established operational team made up of representatives from each partner authority, who deals with the day to day issues around the system and partnerships. This group meet on a six weekly basis.

An operational board has also been established, made up of Chief Librarians or Heads of Service from each partner authority and they meet once every six months to review the contract performance and to agree strategy.

Prospective partners wishing to join the LCC do not need to go through the tender process. The only requirement is that they sign up to the Consortium Agreement. There are opportunities for economies of scale through shared services. The system itself is already established and staff are able to share skills saving time and effort. The contract is suitably flexible to enable partner authorities to mix and match their internal requirements to the overall LLC offering such as the potential opportunities for shared bibliographic services.

As part of the questionnaire, participating authorities were asked to indicate how important they believed both the legal and technical implications of a single membership card or alternative joined up approach would be in terms of the scale of input required. Respondents were asked to score this on a scale of 1-5 and provide additional qualitative information to support the rating.



- 1 = Not at all important
- 2 = Not very important
- 3 = Quite important
- 4 = Very important
- 5 = Extremely important

The significance of ownership as one of the key issues is highlighted when considering that the majority of authorities have very different individual joining requirements, which must be verified in accordance with locally defined policies.

Case Study 2: PLUS – Library Membership ID

PLUS conducted a survey in early 2005 to ascertain different local authority practices in relation to the proof of identification requirements to join a library.

There was a wide range of practices among different library authorities, with many retaining the traditional requirement for some form of identification such as driving licence and utilities bill to allow membership. There were a number of libraries have introduced a system that allows users without identification a temporary or restricted membership to the libraries service. Some local authorities have done away with the requirement for proof of identification altogether.

The system for temporary or provisional membership entails a member of the public joining without showing any proof of name or address and is allowed limited use of library services for a limited period, typically three to six months. During this period, the temporary member may borrow books and also, depending on the rules of the individual authority, use People's Network computers, borrow a limited number of CDs, DVDs / videos, and other charged-for items, although there are many variations within this arrangement. One authority estimated the number of conversions from temporary to permanent membership to be approximately 45%.

There are some authorities who offer this as a permanent feature; the standard as opposed to full membership can continue to use the service on a limited basis for as long as they like without producing any identification. There are no libraries operating this model who have reported any particular problems with theft. There seem to be more problems caused by people joining as full members using false identification.

Some libraries have completely done away with identification requirements. There are minor variations; in some cases the new members immediately gain full rights, in others

they have restricted access on the first visit but automatically convert to full borrower access from the second visit onwards. The benefits of this policy are:

- Support of social inclusion;
- Opens up the library service and attracts a wider range of members;
- Increases the number of registered members and the number of active users; and
- Makes it easier for people to join in order to use non-borrowing facilities, especially the People's Network, and consequently makes it easier to monitor use, and to build up profiles of service users.

All respondents to the survey reported that abuse of the system was low and more than compensated for by the benefits listed above. Some genuine causes for concern such as the status of children can usually be overcome through direct contact with the parents. One authority noted that by far the greatest difficulty was in convincing the library staff of the merits and advantages of the system, and recommended a strong programme of staff training and support to ensure that the process was carried out in the manner intended.

Case Study 3: Leicester City Council – Proof of Identification

Leicester libraries withdrew all ID requirements and joining forms in May 2005. These were perceived as being major obstacles to library usage. If a new customer wants to join the library they are simply asked for their details and the information is then entered onto the system. The new user is able to borrow stock immediately. The number of active borrowers i.e. somebody who has borrowed an item within the previous 12 months are as follows:

June 2004 - 58,048;
May 2005 - 58,985; and
October 2006 - 70,376.

This information should be viewed within the context that since May 2005 the Council has closed four smaller libraries and opened two new slightly larger libraries, which has also had an effect on the number of borrowers. However the library service believes that removing barriers to access has played a major role in increasing the number of active borrowers.

Case Study 4: Stockport MBC – Proof of Identification

New members at Stockport libraries were previously asked to provide one form of ID, showing name and address, if they lived in Stockport and one form of ID, showing name and address, and one showing a signature if they lived outside of Stockport. Extending the list in an attempt to reduce the barriers to membership. This was not considered a suitable solution because introducing the concept of staff discretion would mean difficulties in providing an equal service to all new prospective members.

Membership without ID was also considered as a method of reducing barriers to library membership. In the survey of other library authorities and four, namely Essex, Sefton, Staffordshire and Trafford out of the 28 authorities asked currently offer membership without ID; many more stated that they were working towards this. All aspects were

considered including staff comments and advice from various Council officers. On this basis it was recommended that Stockport Library Service no longer ask for ID when new members want to join. It was believed the action would increase membership numbers and issues, and from the experience of other authorities, should not dramatically increase the number of overdue items.

There are no legal requirements for a library service to ask for ID from new members, but proof of ID seen would be needed if any outstanding items or charges were to be pursued by the Council's Finance and Legal Departments. The effectiveness of passing outstanding debts onto the Finance and Legal Departments was questioned, and therefore questions the need to ask for ID from new members.

Using statistics of all libraries and all borrower types, it was established there had been an increase in new members during 2005/06. The increase from 2004/05 is 3.3% and 18.5% in 04/05. This constitutes a significant increase of approximately 22% over the two year period since membership procedures have been simplified, and remains a positive outcome.

The new membership procedures have played a part in encouraging more new members, but a whole range of service improvements will also have played a major part in this increase.

Case Study 5: Essex County Council – Removal of the Proof of Identification requirements

Essex removed their proof of identification requirements at the end of June 2003. The data shows there was a significant decline in the total amount of overdue material following the removal of restrictions, and particularly the very long overdue material, although there was some growth in the amount material that was between 100 and 300 days overdue.

The figures do not indicate excessive losses that were originally predicted. There have not been any further reviews of the data since 2004, but the withdrawals figures have remained fairly consistent since that period.

Essex overdue items @ 20/11/02		Essex overdue items @ 07/11/03		Essex overdue items @ 27/07/04	
RANGE	Total	RANGE	Total	RANGE	Total
>21 and <100 days	24,865	>21 and <100 days	25,559	>21 and <100 days	23,393
100 - 199 days	7,875	100 - 199 days	8,320	100 - 199 days	10,887
200 - 299 days	6,784	200 - 299 days	5,992	200 - 299 days	7,675
300 - 399 days	5,981	300 - 399 days	6,095	300 - 399 days	6,754
400 - 499 days	6,148	400 - 499 days	6,050	400 - 499 days	4,512
500 - 599 days	5,410	500 - 599 days	4,831	500 - 599 days	4,298
600 - 699 days	4,569	600 - 699 days	4,414	600 - 699 days	4,886
700 - 799 days	5,960	700 - 799 days	6,119	700 - 799 days	3,835
800 - 899 days	5,101	800 - 899 days	4,758	800 - 899 days	3,670
900 - 999 days	5,550	900 - 999 days	4,917	900 - 999 days	3,358
1000+ days	25,806	1000 + days	27,830	1000 + days	14,469
Grand Total	104,049	Grand Total	104,885	Grand Total	87,737

Recommendation 7: Standardise procedures e.g. joining rules, fees, fines and charges and loan periods across participating authorities.

Recommendation 8: Agree proof of identification requirements that might enable a customer with a valid library membership card for one authority, to join another authority without showing subsequent proof of identification.

Technical issues

The technical barriers were perceived by a significant proportion of respondents to be the most difficult barrier to overcome in terms of complexity and cost.

Listed below are some of the technical barriers that have been identified as part of this study:

- Local initiatives such as cultural services entitlement cards;
- Adherence to data protection requirements;
- Issue of data cleansing;
- Investment required to link different LMS;
- Different levels of progress in implementing LMS and RFID technology;
- Different contractual arrangements; and
- Commercial issues of supplier driven market.

It is the perception of participants in the study that the technical implications can be resolved, with the current arrangements in place at LLC used as the example. Investment in IT and current contract length will be a major issue for a number of boroughs and there will have to be forward planning regarding any proposed implementation of new IT systems.

There will be an issue of interoperability if IT systems link to each other, as there are a range of systems are currently in operation across London, and authorities are at different times of upgrading or changing them. The cost implications of this would need long lead in time to prepare through budget forecasting or else need grant or sponsored funding.

Case Study 6: London Libraries Consortium – Joint operating arrangements for LMS system

The London Libraries Consortia for IT was established in 2003 and originally comprised of two London Boroughs; Redbridge and Havering. It was agreed that Havering would be the lead authority for the project and the LLC would appoint a Project Manager funded by both partners. An external legal company were then appointed to manage the legal elements of the project; this was funded by both partners.

As part of the Consortia all partners agreed to move to a shared Libraries Management System. This means having one shared catalogue and one server. The Open Galaxy system provides a solution for consortia working through a flexible range of options that includes borrower categories, fines, fees and charges and loan periods.

The system is able to create management information, send out overdue and reservation notices and manage the software and hardware. Each authority has remained part of their corporate IT set up for desktop support and the procurement of PCs.

The key benefits to the customer include the option to use one library card in any of the partnerships branches. Customers also have access to over four million items of stock

without the need for extra investment from individual authorities. Reservation times have also been improved and there are enhancements to the online catalogue.

The lessons learned from the project include the need to agree project management arrangements and roles and responsibilities from the start to provide a suitable framework that partners can work within. There is a need to understand the resource commitments from all partners at a senior level and to engage with management at the local authority, for example officers from the corporate management teams and members.

The key challenges for the project are the management of borrower expectations, whilst the system does enable a flexible approach, it can on occasion confuse borrowers as there are different borrower categories, and different fees and charges. The movement and transfer of stock around the participating boroughs is also becoming a challenge for the consortia.

The cost of procuring a new LMS could be built into the specification for single membership through the setting out groups of authorities to be incorporated into technical aspects of single membership. For example, as part of the indicative timeline set out in section 6 of the report there might also be key milestones when groups of library authorities are in a position to migrate their LMS into consortia style arrangement.

The issue of data cleansing was raised at the workshop and deemed to be a significant obstacle. Library data has a very poor reputation and some local authority integration projects have decided to exclude it altogether as it cannot be properly matched.

There may be existing arrangements in place at authorities to notify customers of new offers or titles in stock or of forthcoming events. Therefore there will need to be consideration of a data sharing agreement that will require authority sign up to deal with data protection requirements.

Through a variety of different forums LMS suppliers have been engaged and are well aware of the move towards further integration. Recent announcements from London Connects have indicated the combined Your London Card, incorporating library, leisure and potentially the Oyster card will form a pilot in the Royal Borough of Kingston. There is now a need for greater engagement and planning to try and ensure all stakeholders are working towards the principle of improved customer access.

There has already been a Joint Membership Initiative undertaken by the CeLL Management Group in 2003. As part of this project there were three tiers of implementation considered:

- The ability of each library management system to read the barcode from a neighbouring borough. This would then act as a key to a new user record within the home system;
- A library management system solution; and
- A non-library management system solution, which might also integrate with other customer relationship management systems within the local authority.

The key findings were that local authorities were probably two years away from a

reciprocal borrowing solution using the NCIP technology and that some of the issues raised by the work would require LMS to comply with standards for e-Government initiatives. Distributed reciprocal borrowing would use NCIP technology by enabling user records to be pulled out from remote sources to create a record within the home system. The report further highlighted the following issues of:

- Available funding and source of investment; and
- Ownership of data and customers.

There will also need to be significant consideration of a roll out plan with key milestones to map the feasibility of the planned level of integration and sharing of data. However further lessons have been learnt from the consortium on how to operate as facilities managed service with different IT departments and their different network requirements.

Recommendation 9: Further investigation into the potential options and implications of LMS interoperability. This has been identified as a specific project workstream within the Better Stock, Better Libraries review.

Recommendation 10: Implementation plan and mapping exercise to understand current state of progress with LMS and RFID at all participating authorities as part of an IT work plan for single membership. The plan should include key milestones to inform the proposed level of integration.

Recommendation 11: Cleansing of library data to enable it to be properly matched.

Political issues

Elected Members from the local authorities that we spoke to are less enthusiastic but still generally supportive of single membership. Their concerns relate to the potential impact of single membership on the quality of the service received by residents of specific boroughs and to the potential increased financial burden this may place on the taxpayer. However there is recognition of the potential benefits of single membership to the public through access to a wider range of library services.

Listed below are some of the political barriers that have been identified as part of this study:

- Maintenance of strong local identity and brand;
- Marketing that is tied up with corporate strategy within each borough;
- Perception that excellent library services will be required to support those not performing as well;
- Reluctance to open up access to stock more widely e.g. use of special collections; and
- Cultural and political difficulties of cross authority working.

The political support and buy-in from local authorities will be crucial if a more joined up approach is to be successful. There are a few remaining local authorities who still implement restricted borrowing rights to non-residents and it is unlikely that Members in some authorities will endorse unlimited free lending.

All policy decisions have historically been taken at a local level and therefore, under current arrangements, all authorities have in place local borrowing and charging policies and different identification validation rules. The political issues associated with this are likely to be the implication of stock movement and perceived inability to recoup losses from lost resources. However the political support is likely to come back to the issue of funding. The scheme would be deemed unacceptable if it were perceived as a loss of control over a flagship service funded by council tax payers or if levels of council tax had to increase to fund revenue costs of the project.

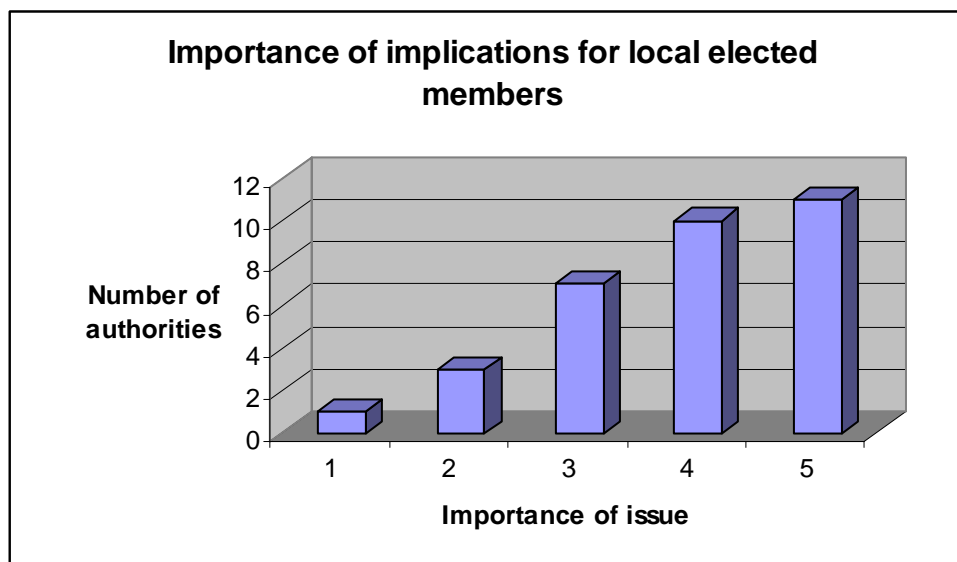
Local and corporate branding has also been identified a potential barrier as each authority has to comply with local authority guidelines. However, this might be achieved with a “local” card with a “London” logo, which if phased in could be introduced onto the same type of cards. Another example where this has been addressed is the LLC, whilst members acknowledge they are part of the consortium and operate one system the service provided is often still deemed local.

There has been a response regarding access to specialist or particularly well-developed collections owned by individual authorities and the relative benefits this increased access could bring to library users across London. It is likely that interested library users will be prepared to travel to access these collections, for example music scores and reference materials. There is some degree of concern amongst authorities who own these collections in enabling access to all residents across London.

A solution to this might be to ring fence these, making only books available for access

by library customers throughout London. This will enable these collections to be retained as an important resource with more limited access to particular users of an individual boroughs library service.

As part of the questionnaire participating authorities were asked to indicate how important they believed the implications of a single membership card or alternative joined up approach were in terms of the impact of local identity and brand and potential level of investment required for local elected members. Respondents were asked to score this on a scale of 1-5 and provide additional qualitative information to support the rating.



- 1 = Not at all important
- 2 = Not very important
- 3 = Quite important
- 4 = Very important
- 5 = Extremely important

As indicated in the graph a large proportion of authorities believe the issue is either extremely or very important as an issue.

Recommendation 12: Potential ring fencing of special collections that are known to have particularly high demand. This will enable these collections to be retained as an important resource with more limited access to particular users of an individual borough's library service.

Recommendation 13: Agree the threshold or level of critical mass needed to proceed between potential participating authorities to enable the project to be taken forward to the next stage.

Recommendation 14: Consideration of new branding arrangements to enable the maintenance of strong local identity and brand.

Logistical and stock management

The logistical arrangements for how stock can and should be managed were highlighted earlier in the financial implications section of the report. It is clear from the responses to the questionnaire and from our interviews that the implications for the movement, transfer and ownership of stock are likely to be important for the following reasons:

- Cross border transfer and demand;
- Access to specialist collections;
- Different implications based on work and study destinations; and
- IT barriers associated with return of stock arrangements.

It is perceived that stock rotation and ownership between authorities would be a difficult agreement to reach as authorities with good stock levels and quality are concerned those authorities with more limited stock resources may disproportionately benefit from these arrangements.

Case Study 7: London Borough of Wandsworth – Movement of stock

The movement of stock between Wandsworth and other LLC members is substantial and increasing. The figures for borrowing rates within Wandsworth are likely to be higher than those of other LLC members as, at present, online reservations are free. This means reservations have escalated from around 36,000 per annum to more than double this amount. Wandsworth also have a very large number of uncollected reservations. This means the LLC is wasting resources on moving stock customers don't collect. This problem should reduce once LLC authorities have been able to activate online payments.

The table below gives the figures for the movement of stock between the London Borough of Wandsworth and the LLC.

Time period	Volume of stock transferred from LLC	Volume of stock transferred to LLC
Dec 2004 to April 2005	4,263	4,323
2005 to 2006	23,379	22,778
April 2006 to Sept 2006	18,751	18,975

The implications for those authorities that are popular work and study destinations are likely to be greater due to a much higher proportion of stock transfer and movement out of the authority, and the need to recover and return stock back to its originating library. For example, the issue will have very different implications for inner London Boroughs such as Westminster City Council and the City of London as opposed to outer London Boroughs.

It is suggested that further useful data collection would include any information available from local authorities regarding the daytime influx of commuters and the night time economy.

The issue needs to be addressed through a clearly defined scope. For example, if stock can be returned to any library, the IT system barriers are likely to be very significant as will the logistics of moving stock. A quick win solution could be that customers can use any library but must return items to the right authority, which is more likely to be achievable in the short to medium term.

Recommendation 15: Research cross borough demand amongst users but also the anticipated level of stock transfer and movement to understand likely level of take up and customer demand to access services operating across local authority boundaries.

Partnership arrangements

The opportunities for working in partnership with the private sector at a sub-regional or London-wide level and how these arrangements could link to other developments such as smartcards or cultural entitlement cards represent another major consideration before the technical implications and full integration can be achieved.

The majority of respondents believe this is essential if the initiative is to be a success. The reasons for this include:

- Access to private sector sponsorship;
- Linkage with Oyster card (to be considered by London Connects);
- Value for money and economies of scale;
- Enabling cross border payments of loans and fines; and
- Flexible and sustainable approach.

Case Study 8: Royal Borough of Kingston – Your London Card

The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames were simultaneously in the process of redeveloping one of their main libraries, renegotiating their leisure contract and exploring the possibility of enabling the use of Oyster with TfL and the GLA. It was decided it was the right time to develop a smartcard that initially incorporated library, leisure and potentially the Oyster card or any future alternative.

The Council have built the smartcard into their overall Customer First programme and integrate data with their internal CRM system. This has meant that smaller projects such as discounts and incentives for looked after children to use the library and leisure facilities will become a real possibility.

The Council have been working with London Connects on the implementation of the card. This has included a joint tender for London Boroughs which has secured a competitive price for the cards. London Connects is also co-ordinating the encoding of the smartcard, linking to the national schema. This means that cards in Kingston can be integrated with other schemes working to the same standards as they are developed.

The Council is also working with London Connects to develop a common branding template for all card schemes in the capital. It is also intended the project will work with London Connects to implement the PASS proof of age scheme.

The card is due to go live on 20th January 2007 for use in the libraries service and as other services and projects come on board will mean more joined up working and greater interaction between frontline Council services and the residents of the Borough.

Case Study 9: London Borough of Newham – Smartcard pilot

Newham have been piloting the use of a dual-chip card with an Axalto Payflex contact chip for the library application that also has an Oyster chip on the card.

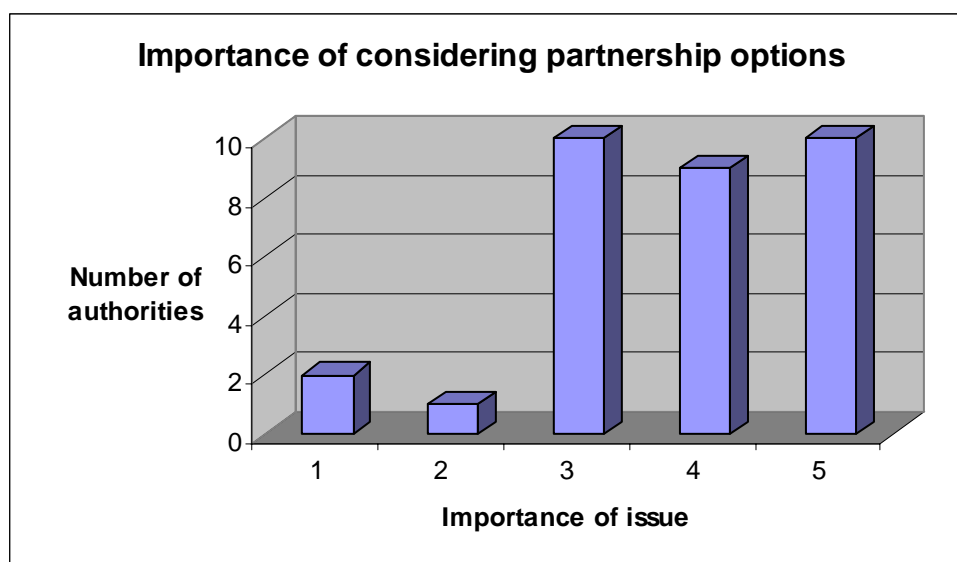
The Oyster identifier was used as the prime key for the applications, but use of the embedded Oyster chip was not too substantive. Consequently the applications are being reprogrammed to only use the Axalto identifier. However the authority are considering use of the new Your London Card, as being piloted by Kingston in the future, but have not formally started on this path.

Case Study 10: London Boroughs of Croydon, Greenwich and Lewisham – Sealegs pilot

The pilot was completed in 2005 and included the use of the library service in all three boroughs. The present position for each authority is as follows:

- Greenwich is developing a rollout business case and plan for a multi-service card, in co-operation with the Your London Card;
- Croydon is not planning anything yet but may be in the near future; and
- Lewisham are well advanced with their own Lewisham card.

As part of this study, all of London's Chief Librarians were asked how important they believe it is to consider partnership options for a single membership card or alternative joined up approach in terms of the link to other developments such as smartcards or cultural entitlement cards. Respondents were asked to score this on a scale of 1-5 and provide additional qualitative information to support the rating.



- 1 = Not at all important
2 = Not very important
3 = Quite important
4 = Very important
5 = Extremely important

It is generally perceived by respondents that, unless authorities can demonstrate a partnership approach, the business case for one card will not be given any credence. Potential private sector investment and sponsorship will depend on the ability of the group to demonstrate value for money and to show that there are a range of stakeholders who will benefit from implementing the idea.

Therefore partnership options are considered likely to be extremely important because the existence of a viable business case for the use of technology such as smartcards is likely to be dependent on schemes such as Oyster card with a genuine London-wide reach and associated economies of scale.

The LLC partnership works extremely well, and to extend this would appear to be a positive step forward. There is a need for the partnership option to be as flexible as

possible, and to link to other projects such as smartcards.

There were very differing opinions regarding the options for operating a partnership at the sub-regional or London-wide level which would need to be addressed as part of the detailed business case. There was, however, a small consensus of opinion that believes this approach is guaranteed to make it even more complicated and less likely to succeed.

Recommendation 16: Further consideration and agreement regarding the scope and level of partnership working as part of the initiative.

5 Conclusions

Single membership for London's public libraries is widely supported amongst Chief Librarians. Elected Members from the local authorities that we spoke to are less enthusiastic but still generally supportive of single membership. Their concerns relate to the potential impact of single membership on the quality of the service received by residents of specific boroughs and to the potential increased financial burden this may place on the taxpayer. However there is recognition of the potential benefits of single membership to the public through access to a wider range of library services.

Despite their enthusiasm about the potential benefits, both officers and Members recognise that considerable challenges exist. There are financial, cultural and political issues to be addressed before individual authorities are able to make a more informed decision regarding participation.

However based on stakeholder feedback and other evidence, we recommend that it is the right time for London's public libraries to tackle these challenges and take forward further work in this area.

This will require a clear vision and definition of scope and suitably flexible protocols for participation. We therefore recommend that ALCL and the single membership project steering group facilitate further in depth discussion and debate amongst the 33 Chief Librarians of the London Boroughs to enable engagement about the practicalities of a potential operating model, and to agree a series of tasks and activities that can be undertaken as part of the next steps in the process.

The aim of single membership is to improve access for people to use London's public library network and in most instances anecdotal evidence suggests customers do not understand the detailed arrangements of local government boundaries and often where they do they simply join more than one service. This is worth further research as part of local authority customer satisfaction surveys. It is an opportunity for London's public libraries to assist the public to make the most of the huge range of books and other resources.

There are significant obstacles to overcome but this will be an excellent development for London's public library users. London residents do in fact already have access rights to the stock of all authorities if they live, work or study in the area.

A more joined up approach is about developing the current offering in a suitably flexible way that is acceptable to both customers and participating authorities. The LLC has already identified and proven some of the benefits, but with funding and political will London's Public Libraries could eventually deliver a truly joined up service to their customers.

We believe the reasons to take forward such an initiative now include the need to:

- Respond to significant changes within the sector encouraged by recent policy initiatives;
- Demonstrate the delivery of an efficient and effective service;
- Maintain momentum and demonstrate gradual progress through collaborative working;
- Sustain the provision of a more modern, flexible and accessible service to their customers;
- Accept that many of the potential barriers, and fear of loss of local identity and control will always be a concern to some individuals and can only be allayed through developing a successful solution;
- Develop the progress made on the implementation of a single catalogue to a single membership card which is the logical next step;
- Seize the opportunity to integrate with and learn from other initiatives such as the LLC arrangements and the proposed London Connects combined entitlement card; and
- Take note of the outcomes from the two previous feasibility studies that identified as part of its key findings that local authorities were probably two years away from a technology solution.

6 Recommendations

The recommendations set out in the table below have been devised as a series of next steps towards the implementation of a partial solution to single membership, which requires a low level of investment and will enable authorities to test any potential arrangements for collaborative working.

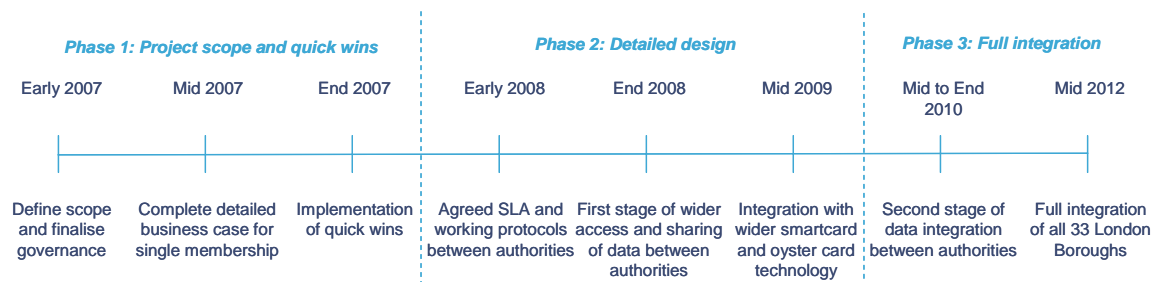
Each recommendation includes an indicative timescale, categorised as short-term (next six months), medium-term (next 6-12 months) or long-term (more than one year). We have indicated costs using a similar scale, for example if the cost is estimated below £10k then we have used a single £, if the cost is estimated to be between £10 and £50k we have added two ££ and anything estimated to be over £50k has been highlighted with three £££. The assessment of complexity has been developed based on the feedback from key stakeholders as part of the review.

Recommendation	Timescale	Cost	Complexity
Establish and more clearly define exactly what the vision and scope for single membership or a more joined up approach for access to London's public libraries is going to mean for each of the Boroughs	Short-term	£	Medium
Agree the threshold or level of critical mass needed to proceed between potential participating authorities to enable the project to be taken forward to the next stage	Short-term	££	Medium
Communication plan and stakeholder engagement to manage the potentially significant organisational change and impact this will have on operational libraries staff	Short-term	£	Medium
Further investigation and research required into the potential source of funding for the proposed initiative	Medium-term	£	Low
Development of a more detailed business case with further analysis to inform the level of investment and relative financial implications for each local authority libraries service	Medium-term	££	Medium

Recommendation	Timescale	Cost	Complexity
Market testing and further research through a customer survey of both users of public libraries in London, but more importantly non-users to establish what would encourage greater usage of the service and help to understand what these people want and expect from a modern libraries service	Medium-term	££	Low
Research cross borough demand amongst users but also the anticipated level of stock transfer and movement to understand likely level of take up and customer demand to access services operating across local authority boundaries	Medium-term	£	Medium
There will need to be established protocols and minimum standards for membership to enable participating authorities to comply with their legal, audit and compliance requirements	Long-term	£	High
Further investigation into the potential options and implications of LMS interoperability. This has been identified as a specific project workstream within the Better Stock, Better Libraries review	Long-term	£££	High
Consideration of new branding arrangements to enable the maintenance of strong local identity and brand	Long-term	££	High

Indicative outline timeline

We have also set out an initial long-term timeline that highlights the key stages and milestones towards full integration. This timeline is not intended to be linear and key initiatives may overlap. It is therefore indicative of what the project might look like from start to finish.



It is important for key stakeholders to maintain knowledge of other related initiatives that might impact on the ability to deliver a more integrated solution. For example, if the

technology market changes and there is significant advancement in relation to smartcard technology, participating library authorities will need to be in a position to react and adapt their approach accordingly.

Concerns have also been expressed that by enabling London's public libraries to be more accessible and easier to join for the public will result in a significant increase in demand that will impact on the ability of individual library services to maintain service levels. This does not necessarily mean that a significant proportion of new users will join the service. It is more likely that simplifying the existing process will encourage greater usage amongst existing library members.

We have illustrated throughout the report a series of case study examples where library authorities are demonstrating the principles of greater flexibility, increased access and a more joined up approach to service delivery, to promote debate on the possible options for taking forward the single membership initiative in full. One good example of a joined up approach to service delivery is the London Libraries Consortium. There is a lot to be learnt from the contractual and governance arrangements already in place at the Consortium.

Another option currently being considered by a number of authorities is greater usage of new technology. Whilst developments are still at an early stage the potential integration with the Oyster card, for example should be a matter of setting up local agreement and contracts with Transport for London (TfL) and ensuring the technology is in place to utilise spare storage capacity on membership cards.

In taking forward the recommendations in this report, library authorities will need to consider the following more detailed process issues:

- Standardise procedures e.g. joining rules, fees, fines and charges and loan periods across participating authorities;
- Agree proof of identification requirements that might enable a customer with a valid library membership card for one authority, to join another authority without showing subsequent proof of identification;
- Potential ring fencing of special collections that are known to have particularly high demand. This will enable these collections to be retained as an important resource with more limited access to particular users of an individual borough's library service;
- Cleansing of library data to enable it to be properly matched;
- Find ways of working within different audit requirements and operating procedures at each authority;
- Manage impact of cultural change on operational libraries staff through regular communication; and
- Potential for additional training and development of operational libraries staff.

Despite the potential complexities identified within the report, it appears that now is the right time to further investigate the potential of single membership in more detail. The reasons to take forward this initiative now include the need to:

- Respond to significant changes within the sector encouraged by recent policy initiatives;
- Demonstrate the delivery of an efficient and effective service;
- Maintain momentum and demonstrate gradual progress through collaborative working;
- Sustain the provision of a more modern, flexible and accessible service to their customers;
- Accept that many of the potential barriers, and fear of loss of local identity and control will always be a concern to some individuals and can only be allayed through developing a successful solution;
- Develop the progress made on the implementation of a single catalogue to a single membership card which is the logical next step;
- Seize the opportunity to integrate with and learn from other initiatives such as the LLC arrangements and the proposed London Connects combined entitlement card; and
- Take note of the outcomes from the two previous feasibility studies that identified as part of its key findings that local authorities were probably two years away from a technology solution.

This will enable London's public libraries to lead the local government sector in offering joined up service provision to local people.

7 Appendices

7.1 Document review

The following documents have been reviewed as part of this review:

- Access Your Library proposal (2006);
- Royal Borough Kingston Smartcard Discover (2005);
- CeLL scoping paper (c.2003);
- Joint system spec (c.2003);
- Joint system meeting minutes, (September 2003);
- London Connects 'three tier' card proposal, (May 2006), author: Mick Davies;
- Notes from London Connects smartcard forum, (May 2006);
- One joining card feasibility study (for a single method of joining rather than a single card), (December 2001);
- Technology overview for one ticket project (October 2003); and
- Visionware summary overview (August 2003).

7.2 Interview list

The following individuals have been interviewed as part of this review:

Officers

- Adrian Whittle, Chief Librarian, London Borough of Southwark, Chair of Association of London Chief Librarians (ALCL);
- Trevor Brown, Chief Librarian, London Borough of Barking and Dagenham;
- Lesley Ray, Chief Librarian, London Borough of Lambeth;
- Martin Timms, Chief Librarian, London Borough of Redbridge;
- Jane Allen, Chief Librarian, London Borough of Wandsworth;
- Jan Lessons, Chief Librarian, London Borough of Havering; and

- Ann Rennie, London Libraries Consortium Project Manager, London Borough of Havering.

Focus group

- Nick Tjaardstra, London Connects;
- Gregory Everett, London Borough Lewisham / London Connects;
- Mike O'Brien, Royal Borough of Kingston;
- John Usher, London Borough of Islington;
- Jennifer Cox, London Borough of Bromley;
- Robert Gent, Derbyshire County Council;
- Ken Chad (Talis); and
- Ed Davidson (OCLC-PKA).

Members

- Councillor Graham Tope, London Borough of Sutton;
- Councillor Daniel Astaire, London Borough of Westminster;
- Councillor Andrew Curtin, London Borough of Havering; and
- Councillor Lorraine Zuleta, London Borough of Southwark.

Other stakeholders

- Michael Clarke, London Libraries Development Agency (LLDA); and
- Sarah Wilkie, Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA).

7.3 Case studies

The case studies have been used to inform an approach to deal with the key issues and assisted in the formulating of the conclusions as part of this review. The case studies are:

- London Libraries Consortium – Legal Framework;
- PLUS – Library Membership ID;
- Stockport MBC – Proof of Identification;
- Essex County Council – Removal of the Proof of Identification requirements;
- London Libraries Consortium – Joint operating arrangements for LMS system;
- London Borough of Wandsworth – Movement of stock;

- Royal Borough of Kingston – Your London Card;
- London Borough of Newham – Smartcard pilot; and
- London Boroughs of Croydon, Greenwich and Lewisham – Sealegs pilot.

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