

Section 75, The Northern Ireland Act 1998, (The Equality Duty).

Electronic Libraries for Northern Ireland.

An Equality Impact Assessment.

1 June 2001.

CONTENTS	PAGES
Executive Summary	2
1. Introduction	5
2. Background	6
3. What ELFNI will mean for library users?	7
4. The New Facilities	9
5. Consideration of Available Data and Research	10
6. Assessment of Impacts	11
7. Consideration of Measures to Mitigate any Adverse Impacts	14
8. Conclusions	17
9. Formal Consultation	18
10. Publication of Results of this Impact Assessment	18
Appendix 1 – Inter-relationships between the Library Service and the Community	19
Appendix 2 – Statistics for Public and Schools’ Library Services in Northern Ireland	21
Appendix 3 – ICT Projects in Libraries	22
Appendix 4 – Services required from Private Sector Providers	23
Appendix 5 – Employment Data	25
Appendix 6 – The Location of Public Libraries in Northern Ireland	26
Appendix 7 – References for Sources of Research Information	27

Equality Impact Assessment – Electronic Libraries for Northern Ireland

Executive Summary.

1. The five Education and Library Boards are committed to fulfilling their responsibilities under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Equality duty. In their Equality Schemes, approved by the Equality Commission in March 2001, the Boards made a commitment to carry out an impact assessment on a new policy known as 'Electronic Libraries for Northern Ireland' or ELFNI.
2. The aim of the Electronic Libraries project is to deliver socially inclusive, cost effective, efficient and modern public library and information services to the Northern Ireland Community. To deliver these services the Boards will provide, by way of a partnership arrangement with the private sector (PFI) :
 - personal computers (PCs) with access to electronic information including the World Wide Web for public use in all branch libraries;
 - a computerised library management system to operate in all libraries, including mobile libraries;
 - an electronic libraries portal or gateway to a wide range of quality assured information sources;
 - modern IT systems for use by the staff in libraries; and
 - a range of associated services eg fax and photocopying for public use.
3. This Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) has been conducted jointly by the five Education and Library Boards and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. It has been completed using both quantitative and qualitative analysis, and is based on the practical guidance for carrying out Equality Impact Assessments issued by the Equality Commission in April 2001.
4. In conducting this Equality Impact Assessment the following data and research findings were taken into account:
 - data relating to the gender and perceived religious belief for all staff employed in the Library Service;
 - the location of all branch libraries in Northern Ireland;
 - such data as was available relating to the age and gender of registered library users and
 - details of information and communications technology (ICT) projects in libraries in Great Britain and beyond.

In addition account was taken of feedback from previous consultations. This included the views expressed by trade unions in respect of staff affected by proposals to rationalise certain services that could involve up to 60 employees transferring to a private employer.

5. An assessment of the impact of the ELFNI policy was then conducted on the equality of opportunity duty in respect of the nine categories of persons identified in Section 75. This exercise identified the following issues:

- there are barriers to older people using ICT facilities;
- some research indicates that men have greater access to ICT facilities than women;
- people who are visually impaired or with physical disabilities may require adaptive technology in order to make full use of ICT facilities;
- Irish Travellers may be disadvantaged in relation to sharing in the benefits of an electronic library service;
- concerns around the concept of involving the private sector in the delivery of public services;
- concerns in respect of potentially 60 staff who may transfer to a private sector provider as a result of proposals to rationalise existing arrangements for ordering and cataloguing new stock, stock delivery services and IT support;
- will there be access to information relevant to the groups identified in Section 75 of the N.I. Act 1998? and
- will the use of PCs in libraries be affordable?

6. The Electronic Libraries policy is founded on the principle of providing access to information and library services for everyone, in all communities throughout Northern Ireland. This will be achieved by providing PCs for the public's use with access to electronic information and learning opportunities, in all branch libraries. In addition the project will allow people to connect to the library services' information resources at any time from their home, school, office or other location using a PC that has access to the World Wide Web.

The Boards have proposed a range of positive measures which will, they believe, eliminate any adverse impact for the categories of persons covered by Section 75, with the exception of staff who would be affected by the centralisation of some services. These measures will include providing ICT training for library staff to meet the specific support needs of the elderly, those with a disability and members of ethnic minority groups including Irish Travellers. Also the Boards will provide a wide range of adaptive technology to meet the needs of the disabled. In the matter of the PFI staffing issue the Boards are willing to consider options which would mitigate any adverse impact.

The Boards believe this project will be a major step forward in providing a cost effective, efficient and modern library and information service to all communities in Northern Ireland. The Boards are committed to the principle of equality of opportunity in the delivery of all their services and have confidence that the measures identified in the full impact assessment report will enable them to provide electronic library information services in an acceptable and socially inclusive manner.

7. The Boards wish now to consult on the findings of this Equality Impact Assessment. With this objective in mind the availability of this report has been publicised widely in the press and has also been posted on each Board's website. In addition a series of consultation meetings will be arranged both locally, within each Board's area, and at regional level. Publicity material and a questionnaire inviting the public to comment will also be available at each public library across Northern Ireland.

A copy of this report can be made available, on request, in alternative formats including braille, disk and audio cassette and in minority languages for those who are not fluent in English.

8. Arrangements for consultation are being co-ordinated, on behalf of the five Boards, by Ms. Helen Osborn, Head of Libraries and Information, Western Education and Library Board, Library Headquarters, 1 Spillars Place, OMAGH. BT78 1HL, to whom all enquiries should be made.

Telephone 028-8225-3600

Fax 028-8224-6716

E-mail at helen_osborn@welbni.org

The closing date for responses is Friday, 27 July 2001.

9. The outcomes of this Equality Impact Assessment will be published in the press and results will also be posted on each Board's website.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

ELECTRONIC LIBRARIES FOR NORTHERN IRELAND -- THE ELFNI PROJECT.

1.0 Introduction.

1.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires the five Education and Library Boards, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between nine categories of persons, namely

- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- between men and women generally;
- between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- between persons with dependants and persons without

and, without prejudice to its obligations above, to also have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

1.2 The Boards in their Equality Schemes, approved by the Equality Commission on 20 March 2001, set out how they proposed to fulfil their statutory duties. Existing policies were screened to assess whether they impacted on the promotion of equality of opportunity or the duty to promote good relations using the following criteria:

- Is there any evidence of higher or lower participation or uptake by different groups?
- Is there any evidence that different groups have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular policy issue?
- Is there an opportunity to promote equality of opportunity between the relevant different groups, either by altering the policy, or by working with others in government or in the larger community, in the context of the policy?
- Have consultations with relevant groups, organisations or individuals indicated that policies of that type create problems specific to any relevant group?

1.3 The Boards are committed to publishing a detailed report of the screening exercise, which has involved public consultation, identifying those policies judged as appropriate for impact assessment and those deemed not to require an impact assessment together with the reasons for reaching the appropriate conclusions. However, the Boards have already, in their Equality Schemes, committed to carrying out a full Equality Impact Assessment on a new policy known as “ Electronic Libraries for Northern Ireland “ or the ELFNI Project.

1.4 The purpose of this consultation document is to record the findings of an Equality Impact Assessment conducted jointly by the five Education and Library Boards and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure on the Electronic Libraries for Northern Ireland policy. This information can also be made available, on request, in alternative formats including braille, disk and audio cassette, and in minority languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English.

2.0 Background.

2.1 The Education and Library Boards have a mission to bring enjoyment and lifelong learning to as many people as possible through access to books and other information services, by providing high quality public library services which are readily accessible and responsive to the changing needs of users. The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure has responsibility for the development of library policy across Northern Ireland and for funding the Service.

The Boards also provide a library service to schools, which orders library books on behalf of schools, lends books and other materials to schools and provides advice and guidance as required. The service is available to every school in Northern Ireland. The Department of Education funds this element of the Library Service.

See Appendix 1 for details of the inter-relationships between the Library Service and the wider community.

2.2 Information and communications technology (ICT) has been a major influence on developments in library services across the world in two key areas:

- public access to electronic information and office software, e.g. the provision of CD ROMS and access to the World Wide Web have greatly increased the potential amount of information available to customers in even the smallest library, and
- the automation of many library administrative routines to increase efficiency including ordering, cataloguing and receipting new books, and counter routines concerned with the lending and return of books.

2.3 The People's Network is a recent government initiative which aims to ensure that every public library in the United Kingdom has sufficient computers and also staff trained to assist customers in using computers and accessing electronic information. The People's Network will also facilitate and encourage programmes to digitise printed material e.g. local history photographs and documents of national and local interest, to ensure the availability of high quality content on the Network.

2.4 In this context the Electronic Libraries for Northern Ireland Project (ELFNI) was established to procure on behalf of the five Education and Library Boards, and with support from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, robust systems that will support and enable the delivery of electronic information services to the Northern Ireland Community. This will enable the Boards to deliver socially inclusive, cost effective, efficient and modern public library and information services.

2.5 In 1999 the Department of Finance and Personnel and the then Department of Education gave approval for the procurement exercise to proceed under arrangements for the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) which involves the private sector in the provision of public services. Under this type of arrangement the Boards specify the outputs required from the system and the levels of service that must be provided, with the private sector taking responsibility for supplying computer equipment, communication networks and services. A private provider would also be responsible for training library staff on how to use systems and for maintaining and repairing computer equipment and for refreshing equipment to keep pace with advances in technology. The Boards would pay an annual charge for this service as part of a contractual agreement expected to cover a ten-year period.

3.0 What ELFNI will mean for library users?

3.1 Library users will continue to enjoy access to the wide range of reading materials, including books, periodicals, newspapers and reference works, together with access to videos and other information sources, traditionally available through public libraries.

3.2 The Electronic Libraries Project will complement and enhance these traditional services by linking all public libraries in Northern Ireland, thus enabling library users to:

- request a book held by any library in Northern Ireland and have it delivered to their local library;
- have access to the World Wide Web in their local library;
- have access to information on CD ROMs in their local library;
- use office software such as word processing in their local library;
- have access to the same range of library services in every public library in Northern Ireland, regardless of size or location; and

- allow access to library services and information at all times via the World Wide Web.

A statistical overview of library services in Northern Ireland is contained in Appendix 2.

3.3 The aim of The Electronic Libraries Project is to provide a modern library service for Northern Ireland which will enable libraries to deliver their services in a way that:

- ensures maximum access by the whole community to the resources of all public libraries;
- is modern, efficient and cost effective;
- provides access to electronic information and ICT facilities for everyone in their local library;
- allows people to connect to the library services' information resources from their home, school, office or other location using a personal computer that has access to the World Wide Web, and
- facilitates the harmonisation and extension of the different library management systems currently in use across the Boards.

A list of current ICT initiatives in libraries in Northern Ireland is contained in Appendix 3.

3.4 To deliver these services the Boards will provide, by way of a partnership arrangement with the private sector:

- personal computers - PCs – for public use in all branch libraries;
- a computerised library management information system to operate in all libraries, including mobile libraries;
- an electronic libraries portal or gateway to a wide range of quality assured information sources;
- modern IT systems for use by the staff in libraries; and
- a range of associated services e.g. fax services.

A full list of the services to be provided as part of the ELFNI project is contained in Appendix 4.

3.5 The Boards will be required to demonstrate that a public/private partnership offers best value for money and a decision to award a PFI contract will be subject to approval by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and by the Department of Finance and Personnel.

In the event of a PFI contract going forward, any staff transferring to a private sector provider would do so with their existing conditions of employment protected by virtue of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981,(as amended) – TUPE.

4.0 The New Facilities

4.1 Personal Computers will be made available for public use in each library and will provide access to electronic information including the World Wide Web and CD ROMs and also office facilities such as word processing. These PCs will provide free access to a wide range of designated websites selected for their usefulness to library customers and this range of websites will be regularly reviewed and updated in response to customer demand.

The access to these designated free websites will be designed to take account of the different needs and interests of children and adults and filtering software will be installed to bar access to any unlawful material. Unlimited access to the World Wide Web will also be on offer at a modest charge (excepting access to unlawful material), but the range of free designated websites should be sufficiently comprehensive and up-to-date that information seekers of all age groups should not normally need to go outside this range to satisfy their needs.

4.2 The new Library Management System will contain a database or catalogue of stock in all public libraries in Northern Ireland and will extend the availability to borrowers to much material that currently is not catalogued. Public access to this information will enable library users to know what is available throughout the Library Service and to request books or other material that may be of interest. This catalogue of information will also be accessible via the World Wide Web and so library members with web access from home/school/office or elsewhere will be able to request books electronically and also renew their book loans using the Web.

4.3 The Library Management System will include software to facilitate the ordering and cataloguing of new library stock, recording loans to library users, reserving books on request and recording the movement of library stock between branch libraries. The System will also be used to purchase books for school libraries and provide an automated update to individual school library management systems.

4.4 For the first time all five Boards will have a single library management system and this will provide opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness. For example all Boards currently order and then catalogue new books separately. The new system should help to reduce the duplication of specialised titles across the Library Service as a whole, whilst the rationalisation of the present arrangements for ordering and cataloguing could also produce efficiency gains. It will also be possible now to install electronic security devices, initially in larger branch libraries, to help combat the theft of books and other materials.

4.5 The benefits of the new systems for Library Services include the opportunity to move on from the present various and in some cases outdated information systems, including manual systems, to use up-to-date library software geared to meeting the needs of library users. These systems will also include modern office software such as word processing and e-mail facilities and will provide links to the Boards other corporate IT systems.

5.0 Consideration of Available Data and Research.

5.1 In conducting this Equality Impact Assessment the Education and Library Boards took fully into account data and research findings from the following sources.

(a) Employment data – data relating to the gender and perceived religious belief for all staff employed in the Library Service and data relating to gender, religious belief, marital status and disability for those staff likely to be affected by proposals to rationalise certain services, including ordering, cataloguing, delivery services and IT support.

Reliable data for staff is not available for the remaining categories specified in Section 75.

See Appendix 5 for employment data.

(b) The physical location of existing branch libraries – the locations of libraries were plotted on a map of Northern Ireland and this information was then mapped against the Results of the Census of Population & Housing (1991) to allow inferences to be drawn on the equality of access to library services for different religious/political communities.

See Appendix 6 for details of existing branch libraries.

(c) A profile of current library users – data relating to the age and gender of registered library users in two Board areas was available from the Public Library User Survey, a national, standardised survey approved by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants, and for one Board from its existing library management system. Reliable data was not available for the remaining two Boards.

(d) Other ICT library projects – research was conducted to identify other information and communications technology projects, involving access by the public, with a view to gathering relevant information in relation to any of the categories of persons specified in Section 75. The research covered projects in Northern Ireland and in Britain and also in some cases the USA and Europe. Information was gathered mainly from available literature and from the World Wide Web. There were also some discussions with library staff in Great Britain

See Appendix 7 for details of reports and websites containing useful information.

5.2 The feedback from previous consultations by the Boards was also taken into account. This included the views expressed by trade unions in respect of staff affected by proposals to rationalise certain services that could result in employees transferring to a private sector employer.

6.0 Assessment of Impacts.

An assessment of the possible impacts of the Boards' policy to provide an Electronic Library Service is set out below.

6.1 Religious Belief.

Data is not collected on the religious belief of registered library users but there has been no suggestion to-date that library users or potential library users are discriminated against on grounds of religion. The mapping of public libraries exercise suggests that the religious breakdown of library catchment areas broadly reflect the religious composition of the population of Northern Ireland. This is better illustrated by the map at Appendix 6.

The proposed electronic library service will be available to all from branch libraries throughout Northern Ireland and from mobile libraries serving rural communities and also to anyone with a PC via the World Wide Web.

Questions have been raised in relation to those staff who would be affected by a decision to rationalise the current arrangements for ordering and cataloguing new stock, delivery services and IT support.

The Library Service employs in total some 1,182 staff. Of the 60 staff, including part-time staff, who could potentially be affected by the centralisation of services, 53.3% are Protestant, 35.0% are Catholic and the perceived religious beliefs of 11.7% is not known. These figures compare with 54.4% Protestant, 36.4% Catholic and 9.2% not known, for staff in the Library Service as a whole.

See also related comments at paragraphs 6.5 and 6.7 below.

6.2 Political Opinion.

Data is not collected on the political opinions held by existing registered library users but there has been no suggestion to-date that political opinion is an issue in relation to the public gaining access to library services. As was stated in section 6.1 above, the access to electronic library services will be available to all from branch libraries and mobile libraries throughout Northern Ireland and from any web enabled PC.

Trade unions and their members, including those involved in the Library Service, do have objections on political grounds to any arrangements that would result in the transfer of public sector jobs to the private sector.

6.3 Racial Group.

The Boards do not collect data on racial origin and so it is extremely difficult to assess the likely impact of an electronic library policy on this Section 75 category. The Boards' initial policy screening exercise indicated that language could be a barrier for those not fluent in English, but contact with local authorities running ICT projects aimed at ethnic minority groups in Great Britain suggested this was not a major issue.

There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that Irish Travellers are less likely to take out library membership or visit their local public library and accordingly may be disadvantaged in relation to sharing in the benefits of the electronic libraries project.

6.4 Age.

The research undertaken has indicated that ICT in libraries, supported by trained library staff, can play an important and effective role in providing children with homework support, the promotion of reading and helping to develop information gathering skills. ICT in libraries can also provide adults with the opportunity to develop new skills e.g. the use of applications software and e-mail.

Through ELFNI, library users will have free access to a comprehensive range of websites chosen to meet their particular interests and information needs. This will mean that access to many websites will be common for both adults and children but access to certain sites will not be available to children.

The research undertaken has identified also a number of barriers to older people using ICT facilities. These barriers include cost, fewer opportunities for older people to use IT facilities, inexperience and uninterest resulting from a lack of understanding of the potential benefits to be gained from using modern technology. These obstacles have been addressed by a number of existing projects in Northern Ireland and elsewhere, involving placing ICT facilities in libraries. These projects have demonstrated the benefits to older people once they have gained a certain degree of confidence, often connected to e-mailing family, supporting grandchildren with their homework or accessing information. It is also apparent from the research that older people are more comfortable learning to use ICT in a familiar venue, with support from staff whom they know and trust, in a relaxed and informal manner.

6.5 Marital Status

The Boards do not collect data on the marital status of library users and so it is very difficult to assess the likely impact of an electronic libraries policy on this Section 75 category. However, there is no reason to believe that marital status will have any adverse effect in regard to persons making full use of the range of services available through the public library service.

Questions again have been raised with regard to those staff who could potentially be affected by the centralisation of certain services. The Library Service employs in total some 1,182 staff. Of the 60 staff who could be affected, 38 are married, representing 63% of the relevant group. There is no reliable comparator available for the Library Service as a whole.

See also related comments at paragraphs 6.1 and 6.7.

6.6 Sexual Orientation.

The research to date has not indicated any likelihood of adverse consequences for individuals covered by this Section 75 category in relation to making full use of the services available through the public library service.

6.7 Gender

Research has shown that men generally have greater access to ICT facilities than women do, whilst more women than men currently use the Library Service. The introduction of ICT facilities in libraries, therefore, available for public use, should be seen as a measure that will increase the opportunities for women to use ICT.

There is again an issue in relation to those staff who would be affected by any decision to rationalise the present arrangements for ordering/cataloguing new stock, delivery services and IT support. Some 1,182 staff are employed in the Library Service across all Boards. Of the 60 staff who could potentially be affected by the centralisation of services, 38.3% are male and 61.7% female. These figures compare with 20.2% males and 79.8% females for staff in the Library Service as a whole.

See also related comments at paragraphs 6.1 and 6.5 above.

6.8 Disability.

Research has indicated that wheelchair access to some branch libraries is a problem and that ease of use of ICT equipment can present difficulties for people who are visually impaired or have certain physical disabilities. In addition there are issues relating to the availability of access to library facilities for persons who are housebound, hospital in-patients or those confined to residential and nursing homes.

However, there is also evidence that the introduction of ICT in a manner which accommodates the needs of the disabled can remove barriers to usage of the Service and thus help to promote the social inclusion of members of the disabled community.

6.9 Dependants.

People who act as carers for the housebound or those confined to residential and nursing care homes may have difficulty at present in accessing facilities during normal library opening hours.

6.10 Other Issues

In addition to the various matters referred to above, consultations have raised a number of other issues that are capable of cutting across all of the nine categories of persons specified in Section 75.

- Access to information – will there be access to information that meets the needs of the nine Section 75 categories and will individuals have a right to privacy when accessing information through electronic libraries?
- Affordability – will the use of electronic libraries be free or will there be a charge for using the service, and if there is a charge for services is this likely to discourage users from economically deprived communities?

7.0 Consideration of Measures to Mitigate any Adverse Impact.

7.1 The Boards have given careful consideration to the measures that might be taken to eliminate, or at least mitigate, the adverse impacts which have been identified in the previous section of this report.

The Boards would propose the following actions to mitigate any adverse impact in the implementation of the ELFNI policy:

7.2 Access for all.

The Electronic Libraries project is founded on the principle of providing access to information and library services for everyone, in all communities throughout Northern Ireland. This would be achieved by providing PCs for the public's use, in all branch libraries and mobile libraries and by equipping library staff visiting the housebound with laptop computers with which to demonstrate the full range of available services. In addition the project will allow people to connect to the library service's information resources, at any time, from their home, school, office or other location using a PC that has access to the World Wide Web.

Potential private sector providers have been asked to submit for consideration, proposals for locating access kiosks in well-used public places outside libraries.

7.3 Well trained library staff.

Library staff are already accustomed to providing help and support to a wide range of library users and the continuation of this support will be a vital component to ensure the success of the Electronic Libraries project. All staff will be trained in general ICT skills, at least to the level of the European Computer Driving Licence standard - ECDL - and some staff to a more advanced level.

The Boards will consider how best to train staff to meet the specific support needs of children, the elderly, those with a disability and members of ethnic minority groups including Irish Travellers. The Boards will actively seek advice on this issue from representatives of these groups before drawing up a training programme, which also will be subject to further consultation.

7.4 Meeting the needs of the disabled.

The Boards are introducing a wide range of adaptive technology, with special funding provided by the Dept. of Culture, Arts and Leisure, to meet the needs of the disabled when using the existing, relatively limited ICT facilities in libraries. The following is a list of the adaptive technology that will be provided:

- touch computer screens;
- adaptive keyboards;
- childrens' keyboards;
- large tracker balls;
- speech and magnification software;
- braille translation software;
- braille readers;
- CCTV with PC attachment; and
- CCTV stand-alone.

ELFNI will keep the matter of adaptive technology under continuous review. The extent and type of adaptive technology provided will reflect library user needs and demand.

The Boards are committed to fulfilling their responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, which requires public authorities to make their facilities and services, including library premises, more accessible to disabled people by 2004.

7.5 Library staff – Employment issues.

Concerns have been expressed on behalf of some 60-library staff who could be affected by any decision, as part of a PFI arrangement, to rationalise the current arrangements for the ordering and cataloguing of new stock, the stock delivery service between libraries and providing IT support. However, the Boards are committed to providing a modern electronic library service that meets the needs of all in the community and to do so in a way that offers best value for money. Accordingly the Boards have an obligation to explore fully the ways in which this service can be delivered, including a public/private partnership. This approach is in accordance with current government policy for the delivery of public services.

Any staff transferring to employment with a private sector provider would do so with their existing conditions of employment protected by virtue of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981. However, private sector providers will be asked at Best and Final Offer stage to submit costs for consideration for a number of options:

- a project that includes only the IT elements of the ordering/cataloguing function;
- a project that includes a centralised ordering/cataloguing function; and
- a project that includes a distributed ordering/cataloguing function.

These options provide the possibility for mitigating the effects on or reducing the number of staff affected by any rationalisation of the present arrangements, for the functions mentioned above.

7.6 Access to information.

The Boards will provide free access to a wide range of designated websites selected for their usefulness to library customers and this range of websites will be regularly reviewed and updated in response to customer demand. The range will take full account of the different needs and interests of children, adults and special interest groups. A specialist group will be formed to validate websites and will meet at regular intervals to review the designated sites. This group will contain representatives from each of the Education and Library Boards and will be made up of information librarians and childrens librarians.

Access to certain websites will not be available to children and filtering software will be used generally to bar access to unlawful material.

The range of free designated websites will be sufficiently comprehensive and up-to-date that information seekers of all age groups and interests will not normally need to go outside this range to satisfy their needs. However, in addition, unlimited access to the World Wide Web (excepting access to unlawful material) will be available at a modest charge.

The Boards, while acknowledging the need of individuals for privacy, have a responsibility to ensure the law is upheld. PCs will be on the library network and will be located in public places, and it would not be possible, therefore, to guarantee absolute privacy.

7.7 Affordability.

The paragraphs in section 7.6 above make it very clear that the Boards will provide free access to a comprehensive range of websites that will be reviewed regularly so that library users of all ages should not normally need to go outside this range for their needs. Those who wish to “surf the net” outside the free designated range (excepting access to unlawful material), may do so at charges which take account of the costs of providing the service and also the Boards responsibilities under TSN. The Boards believe that offering such a choice will best meet the needs of library users and should not be to the disadvantage of any members of the community.

8.0 Conclusions.

8.1 This Equality Impact assesses whether the proposed Electronic Libraries Project will have a differential impact on equality of opportunity for any of the nine categories identified under section 75, and if so, whether this differential impact is adverse.

The positive measures which have been proposed by the Boards will eliminate the instances of adverse impact which have been identified in this report, except in the case of staff who would be affected by the centralisation of some services. In this case the Boards are presently exploring the viability of options which would reduce the impact on or reduce the number of staff who may transfer to a private sector employer.

The Boards believe this project will be a major step forward in providing a cost effective, efficient and modern library and information service to all communities in Northern Ireland. The Boards are committed to the principle of equality of opportunity in the delivery of all their services, and have confidence that the measures identified in this report will enable them to provide electronic library information services in an acceptable and socially inclusive manner.

9.0 Formal Consultation.

9.1 The Boards wish now to consult as widely as possible on the findings of this equality impact assessment. With this objective in mind the Boards propose to take the following actions:

- press releases will be prepared and submitted to various media outlets;
- prominent advertisements inviting the public to comment on this matter will be placed in newspapers popular in the main communities in each Board's area;
- this report will be issued to all of the consultees listed in each Boards' Equality Scheme and to any member of the public on request;
- a copy of this report will be posted on each Board's website;
- individual consultation meetings will be arranged with representatives of particular interest groups;
- consultation meetings for the general public will be arranged at suitable venues in each Board's area;
- publicity material and a questionnaire inviting the public to comment will be available at each public library across Northern Ireland;
- market research will be conducted using a general omnibus survey, and
- this report can be made available, on request, in alternative formats including braille, disk and audio cassette and in minority languages for those who are not fluent in English.

9.2 The arrangements for consultation are being co-ordinated, on behalf of the 5 Boards, by Ms Helen Osborn, Head of Libraries and Information, Western Education and Library Board, Library Headquarters, 1 Spillars Place, OMAGH. BT78 1HL, to whom all enquiries should be made.

Telephone 028-8225-3600,

Fax 028-8224-6716

E-mail helen_osborn@welbni.org

9.3 The closing date for responses is Friday, 27 July 2001.

10.0 Publication of the results of this Impact Assessment.

10.1 The outcomes of this equality impact assessment will be published in the press and results will also be posted on each Board's website.

Appendix 2.

Statistics relating to Public Library Services in Northern Ireland

Number of Branch Libraries	121
Hours open each week	4,250
Mobile Libraries	32
Book loans in 1999/2000	9,132,298
Audio-visual loans in 1999/2000	609,626
Visits in 1999/2000	6,755,299
Enquiries in 1999/2000	1,668,850
Bookstock (31 March 2000)	3,945,055
Additions to bookstock 1999/2000	228,357
Total revenue expenditure 1999/2000	£18,876,391

Statistics relating to Schools' Library Services in Northern Ireland

Book stock	3,271,689
Total revenue expenditure 1999/2000	£4,114,495

Appendix 3.

ICT in libraries – the current situation

A number of initiatives have led to the provision of PCs with access to the world wide web in various libraries in Northern Ireland. These include:

- Wolfson Centres of Excellence. One library in each Board to be equipped with high specification networked PCs, providing access to CD ROMs and the Internet funded by the Wolfson Foundation. Bangor, Derry, Ormeau Road, Ballymena, Newry
- ISTAR. EU-funded project to provide high spec PCs for public access in 4 libraries in WELB with 4 ISTAR officers to provide training and mentoring in ICT for library customers.
- Killyleagh Schools Internet Project. Joint project with 2 schools in Killyleagh (SEELB), sponsored by a local development agency which provides staff, pupil and public access to the Internet in Killyleagh Library
- BT Homelink. A scheme operating in 1 library and 2 schools in WELB and NEELB. Parents and pupils in a P6 class have access to similar ICT facilities at school and in the local library
- Within BELB, Learning Gateways in Central, Holywood Arches and Whiterock Libraries offering multiple public access terminals and medium to high speed electronic connections
- Learndirect - Belfast Central and Londonderry Central Libraries are learning centres within Learndirect (formerly known as the University for Industry) which involves the provision of ICT-based Learndirect learning packages with tutorial support.
- Access to Microsoft Office software is available to customers in a number of libraries in each Board.
- A selection of multimedia CD ROMs is available to customers on computers in a number of libraries in each Board.
- Oasis Centre in Ballee Library. An open learning service is provided in partnership with the North Eastern Institute of Further and Higher Education and Ballee Community Association, which includes IT facilities and courses.
- Distance Education in Rural Areas through Libraries (DERAL) Project in Ballee and Ballymoney libraries, which include Internet access.
- Delivery of accredited IT courses e.g. CLAIT and ECDL in Belfast Central Library in partnership with bodies such as BIFHE and the WEA.
- Youthnet/Internet Project, Antrim Library. Access to the Internet and Youthnet (a national online database of youth information) in partnership with Antrim Youth Council.

3 different library management systems are in use in public libraries in Northern Ireland. 40 branch libraries and the majority of mobile libraries are without a library management system

Appendix 4

SERVICES REQUIRED OF THE SERVICE PROVIDERS

A. Mandatory Requirements

Service providers have been asked to provide costed proposals for the following services in their pre-contract submissions:

- Acquisitions (IT Element) i.e. the ordering and processing of new stock
- Circulation (IT element) i.e. procedures for loan and return of stock
- Inter-Library Loans (IT Element) i.e. procedures to obtain books and other items from other Library Services, both within the UK and world wide
- Catalogue Creation and Maintenance (IT Element) i.e. producing and maintaining records of all items of library stock and where they are
- On Line Request Services (IT Element) i.e. a service which enables users to place their own requests for books or other items on loan or in another library
- Fax Services in all libraries for staff and users
- On Line Search Services i.e. facilities for searching specialist external databases
- Multimedia Storage and Retrieval Services e.g. networking CD ROMs within and between libraries
- Community Information Facilities to enable local staff to input, update, and make publicly available information relevant to the local community such as local clubs and societies, schools, transport, medical facilities etc
- On-line Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) i.e. provision of information to users about library stock and services in a user-friendly and secure format.
- Internet Services i.e. facilities to enable staff and users to access information from the Internet in all libraries, and to use email
- Data Transfer for Schools i.e. facilities for downloading stock records from the Schools' Library Service directly to individual school libraries and their systems
- Request Services which enable users to register requests for books and other items online or via fax, email, voice mail
- Government Information Services i.e. the facility to allow public access to government information and interactive services by electronic means

B. Separately Costed Mandatory Services

Service providers have been asked to provide costed proposals for the following separately costed mandatory services in their pre-contract submissions:

- Acquisitions and Cataloguing Services
- Digital Conversion Services i.e. facilities to retrospectively convert card catalogues to electronic form
- Stock Security systems in large libraries
- Self-Service Issue Facilities in some libraries

C. Separately Costed Optional Requirements

The Service Providers have been asked to provide costed proposals for the following separately costed optionals in their pre-contract submissions:

- Management of Reserve Stock Service i.e. storage of those items of library stock which are no longer suitable for display on open shelves but which are required by library services from time to time to meet specific requests or to answer information enquiries.
- Disposal of Stock i.e. sale or disposal by other means of books and other stock surplus to requirements due to age or condition
- Delivery Services between libraries
- Photocopying service in every library

D. Optional Services – To Be Considered Post Contract

Each of the optional services will be assessed to establish whether they provide value for money. The Service Providers proposals must be submitted within 2 years of contract signature.

- Digitisation of photographs service: Libraries hold collections of photographs of local and historical interest, which deserve to be exploited and made available more widely. Digitisation of this material cannot presently be undertaken to any great extent by library staff, but could provide an opportunity for the Contractor to generate income from the sale of individual images (eg as postcards or pictures) or by publishing collections of photographs of local interest.
- Exhibition services i.e. marketing of exhibition space in libraries, under agreed conditions
- Open Access/Self Learning Centres i.e. the operation, management and promotion of open learning centres in libraries
- Operation of a booking and hiring system for library meeting rooms and other multipurpose spaces within libraries to maximize income from this source.
- Publicity and Promotional Services
- Genealogy Services i.e. a fee-based family history research service
- Digital Publication Services i.e. publishing local history materials digitally without prejudicing their security or the integrity of library collections.
- Stock Recovery Service i.e. recovery of overdue books and other items
- Catering Services i.e. refreshment facilities for library users or staff or both.

Age Concern, www.ace.org.uk
Blanchard, C, First Byte: The People's Network and the Children's Library, 2000
Cabinet Office, PAT 15 Report
CHILIAS Project (Gateshead et al)
Conway Borough Council, www.conwy.gov.uk
DELTA Project (Derbyshire)
Denham, D et al, Children and IT in Public Libraries, 1997
Douglas, Jonathan, Professional Adviser (Youth and Education), Library Association – source of advice and information
Islington Library and Information Service, www.islington.gov.uk/libraries
Jones, S (ed), Bridging the Digital Divide – ICT in Library Services for Children, 2001
Library and Information Commission (now Resource), www.lic.gov.uk
Library Association Record
LISA Database (Library and Information Science Abstracts)
Muddiman, D et al, Open for All: The Public Library and Social Exclusion, Vols 1 – 3, Resource, 2000
National Library for the Blind www.nibuk.org
Online @ Leeds Project
ONS, Internet Access
Project Hercule (Walsall, Dublin, Oeiras)
Public Library Journal
Readers without Walls, www.essexcc.gov.uk
Rolling Zone (Hertfordshire)
Silver Surfers in Monmouthshire Libraries, www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/leisure/libraries/report.html
Stories from the Web Project (Birmingham et al)
Talking Newspapers Association, www.tnauk.org.uk
Talnet, <http://talnet.gov.uk>
Women Connect, A report on women and ICTs for PAT 15, 1999

