

*An application of community profiling to
analyse community information needs,
issues and providers in Broomhall,
Sheffield, UK*

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Overview

- Aim of the PhD project*
- Objectives of the PhD project*
- Community profiling and methodology*
- Results (2003-2007)*
- Research impact for the Mexican development of Library and Information Services (LIS) provision*
- Recommendations for CONACYT & worldwide research sponsors*
- Thanks to organizers*

A quote to break the ice

*“ We humans are biased observers,
with a vested interest in the answer.
The cure for this disease is more data.”*

*--Carl Sagan and Ann Druyan (1992:
400)*

*In: Sagan, C. & Druyan, A. (1992). Shadows of
Forgotten Ancestors: A Search for Who We
Are. London: BCA.*

Aim of the PhD project

To analyse, through the application of community profiling, the information needs and community issues affecting the people in Broomhall, Sheffield, and to evaluate how information providers sought to meet those needs.

Objectives of the PhD project

- ≈ To analyse the major information needs and community issues affecting the people in the community of Bromhall, Sheffield.*
- ≈ To evaluate to what extent the information providers located inside the limits of catchment areas meet those needs.*
- ≈ To analyse the implications of this study for policy makers.*
- ≈ To analyse the overall effectiveness of community profiling.*

Community profiling and methodology

What is community profiling?

“A COMPREHENSIVE DESCRIPTION of the NEEDS of a population that is defined, or defines itself, as a COMMUNITY, and the RESOURCES that exist within that community, carried out with the purpose of DEVELOPING an action PLAN or other means of IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY.”

(Hawtin, M., Hughes, G. and Percy-Smith, J., 1994: 5, 13).

Community profiling and methodology

/2

Why doing a community profiling for the Library and Information Studies (LIS) field?

- ↻ To relate the LIS service to the realities of the community being served.*
- ↻ To systematically collect evidence about the community.*
- ↻ To establish LIS service priorities.*
- ↻ For marketing purposes of LIS service.*

(Beal, C., 1985: iii-vii).

Community profiling and methodology

/3

Is community profiling new to LIS?

- ↻ It is interesting to note that this approach is apparently being 'found' as 'new' by the current British government at the Museums, Archives and Libraries. (Whitehead, J. & Rowan, T., 2005).*
- ↻ Christina Beal (1976, 1985) in the British LIS scenario already used it in the 1970s and 1980s.*
- ↻ Since 1896 a similar approach was used with a different denomination (Sarling, J.H. y Van Tassel, D.S., 1999: 7), but with the same essence of analysing the community to be provided with LIS services.*

Community profiling and methodology

/4

Why using Qualitative Research methodology?

For the use of LIS field qualitative research methodology can be defined as:

“A process of INQUIRY that draws DATA from the CONTEXT in which events occur, in a an attempt to describe these occurrences, as a means of determining the process in which events are embedded and the perspectives of those participating in the events, using induction TO DERIVE POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS BASED ON OBSERVED PHENOMENA.”

(Gorman, G.E. & Clayton, P., 1997:23).

Community profiling and methodology

/5

Why using qualitative research methods?

“The methods used by qualitative researchers exemplify a common belief that they can provide a ‘deeper’ understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative data”

(Silverman, D. 2000: 89)

Community profiling and methodology

/6

Qualitative research methods:

- Observation - note taking by walking up the streets.*
- Interviews on individual and focus groups.*
- Documental analysis or literature review - scholarly publications, statistics, population census, and specially grey literature.*
- Triangulation of methods - to obtain reliability and validity.*

Results (2003-2007)

Major community needs & issues

- ↻ Unemployment - abandonment of community caused by statutory, voluntary and private sectors*
- ↻ Working class deprivation of social housing caused by statutory and private sectors - people being moved out by market*
- ↻ Deprivation of health provision caused by limited statutory services (drug problems; heart and respiratory diseases; drinking; smoking; unhealthy food; mental problems...)*

Results (2003-2007)

Major community needs & issues /2

Political issues (dominant classes vs. dominated; oppression; political exclusion)

↻ Deprivation of asylum seekers, refugees, destitute caused by limited statutory, voluntary, & private sectors, & intolerance of Caucasian British society

↻ Clashes of cultures (sexism, homophobia, patriarchy, multiculturalism, tribalism, racism, intolerance, ignorance, prejudices, nationalisms, etc.) vs. “community cohesion” fallacy

Results (2003-2007)

Major community needs & issues /3

≈ Privatization of the state social services provision –hollowing out of the public, civic, political, arena & domain –PAY-PER-EVERYTHING society

≈ Insensitive urban planning, developing – destruction of green open spaces; playgrounds, public spaces (TSUNAMI effect)

≈ Deprivation of sports, leisure and healthy style facilities caused by statutory and private sectors

Results (2003-2007)

Major community needs & issues /4

- Deprivation of information, library, help, & advice provision caused by limited statutory, voluntary, and private sectors*
- Information secrecy and corruption by voluntary & community sector*
- Flawed, biased, and fallacious research by voluntary & community, & private sector – deceit of the public & government to carry out insensitive projects vs. residents*

Research impact for Mexican development of Library and Information Services (LIS) provision

- The major achievements: understanding, assessment of the applicability of the community profiling tool and qualitative research methodologies and methods which could be applied to any Mexican LIS scenarios or from anywhere.*
- The sound certainty that these tool and methodology could bring empirical evidence of feasibility of LIS projects in Mexico based on communities' needs and issues, rather than political or ideological perceptions (i.e. megabiblioteca "mega-library" by ex President Fox of National Action Party, PAN)*

Recommendations for CONACYT and worldwide research sponsors

~The researcher has been sponsored by the Mexican National Science and Technology Council (CONACYT <http://www.conacyt.mx>) and he thanks them very much for their sponsorship.

~The researchers suggests that CONACYT and other Mexican and worldwide funding bodies should fund more empirical research in whichever areas so students and researchers would enjoy the freedom of thought and academia most cherished by the researcher

~This project may as well foster new bridges of collaboration between Mexican and British LIS developments, specially in public libraries and methodologies.

Thanks

~The researcher also thanks all the people who made possible this event, the Mexican Student Association at Sussex, University of Sussex; the Mexican-Latin American Society at the University of Sheffield for the publicity and £25 support, and the good will of his paisanos (country fellows) who organized the trip and invited him over.

~Thanks to everyone!

*Thank you very much for attending
this presentation, for your attention,
and feedback!*

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