# Libraries Briefing 2018

Culture and leisure services, including libraries, play an important role in improving the quality of life in local communities. In addition to the social and economic benefits delivered, the impact they have on promoting better health and wellbeing of the population, and in reducing demand on other core services, is well documented.

Libraries can also connect well with communities that more traditional and regulated services often struggle to reach. This unique relationship provides real potential to achieve impact for people in the greatest need.

However, given there is little in the way of statutory protection for culture and leisure spending, library services are in a financially challenging situation. Since 2010/11 there has been a year-on-year reduction in average cost per visit – with an overall reduction of 45.4% (£3.75 in 2010/11; £2.05 in 2016/17). The past 12 months have shown a 20.9% reduction in cost per visit across Scotland.

## Unit Cost and Satisfaction
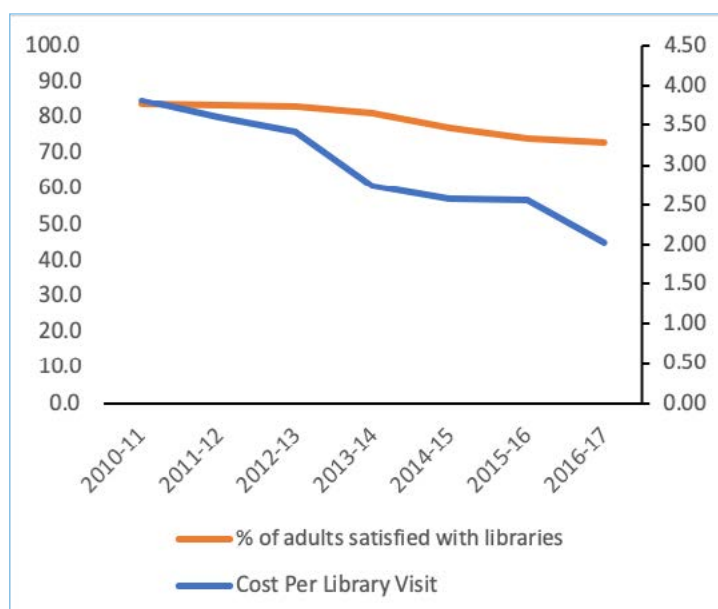
Expenditure and Use
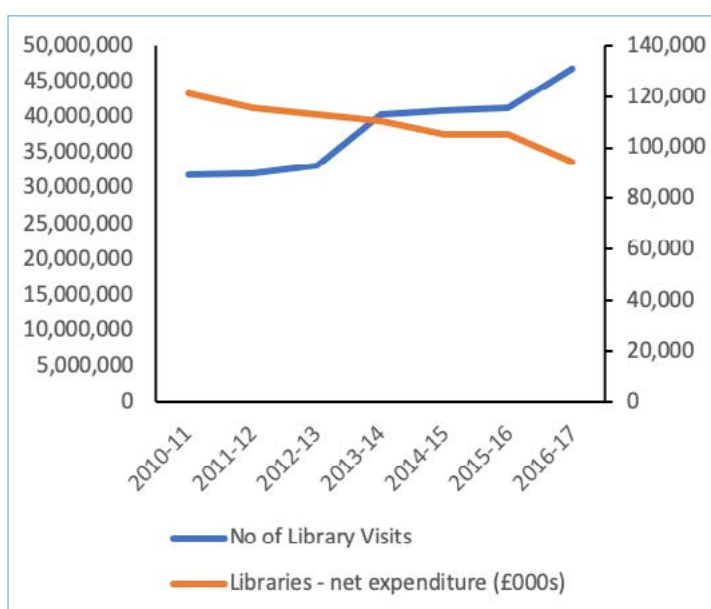
While there is significant variation in both cost and satisfaction trends across councils, there are no systematic effects of deprivation, sparsity or council size. However, work within family groups has identified the following factors as important in understanding the variation between authorities:

Local political and strategic priority given to the role of culture and leisure in supporting improvement in wider outcomes, e.g. health and wellbeing, educational outcomes, tackling inequality, economic development, community empowerment, etc.

- Scale of provision and level of service (e.g. opening hours)
- Digital channel shift
- Service delivery model and level of in house and trust delivery
- Staffing composition, level and roles
- Level of volunteering, community involvement and asset transfer
- Income generation capacity
- Asset management and co-location/multi-use premises

Family Group Graphs: Cost per Visit
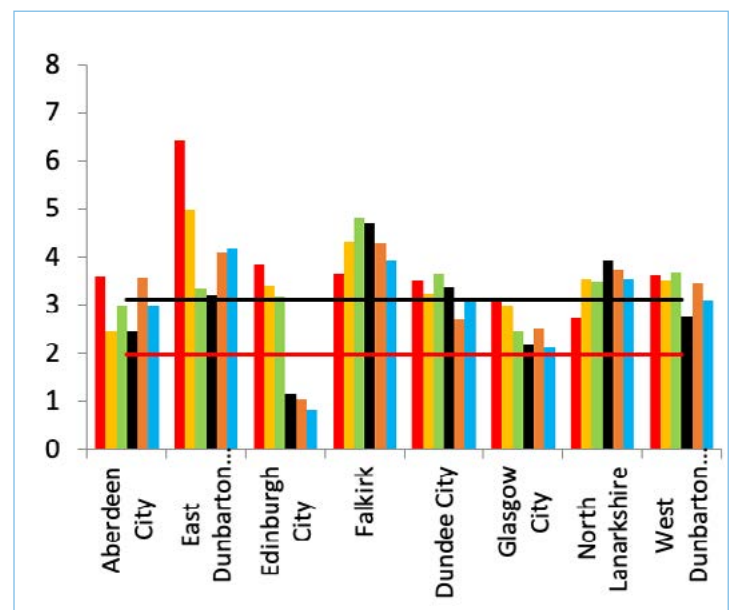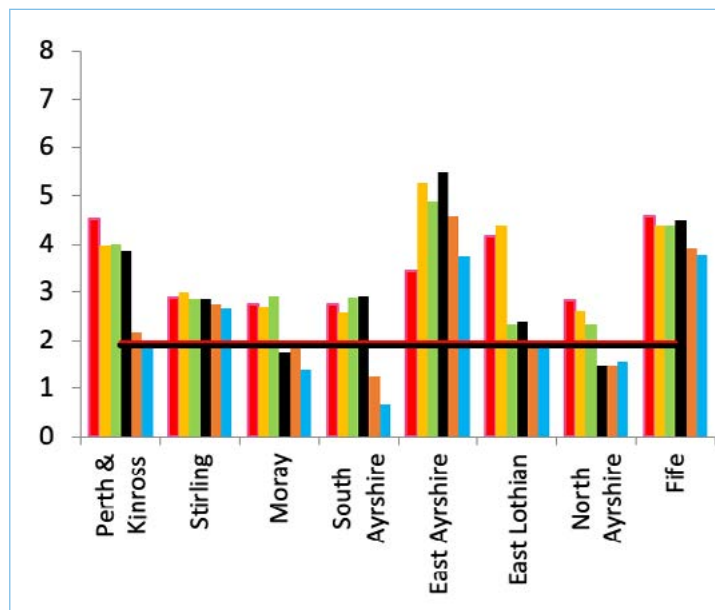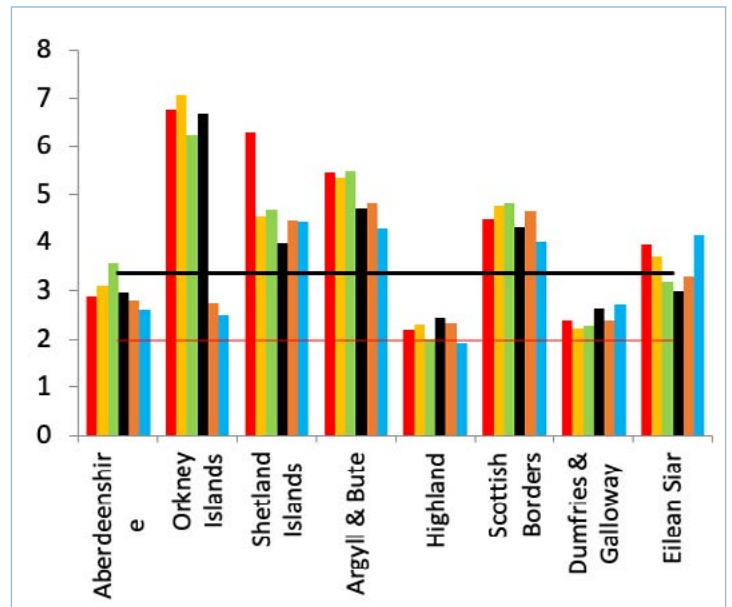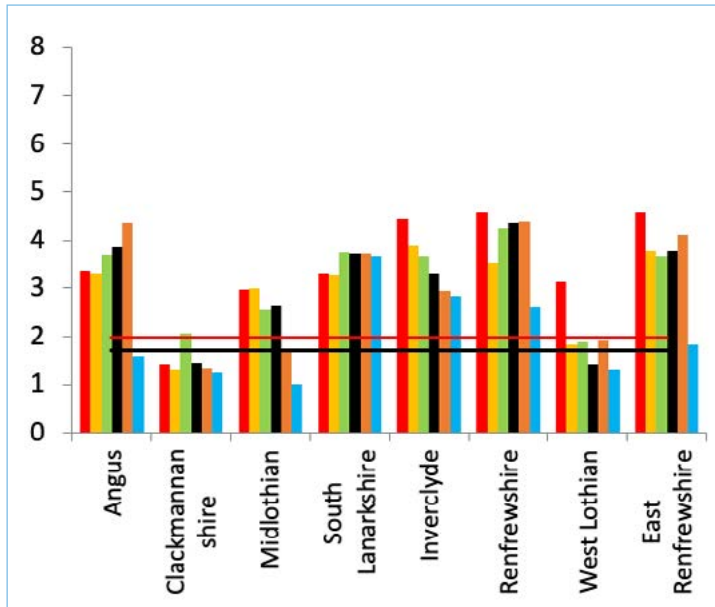
Variation Graph: Satisfaction

Range (2016-17) = 53% - 92%
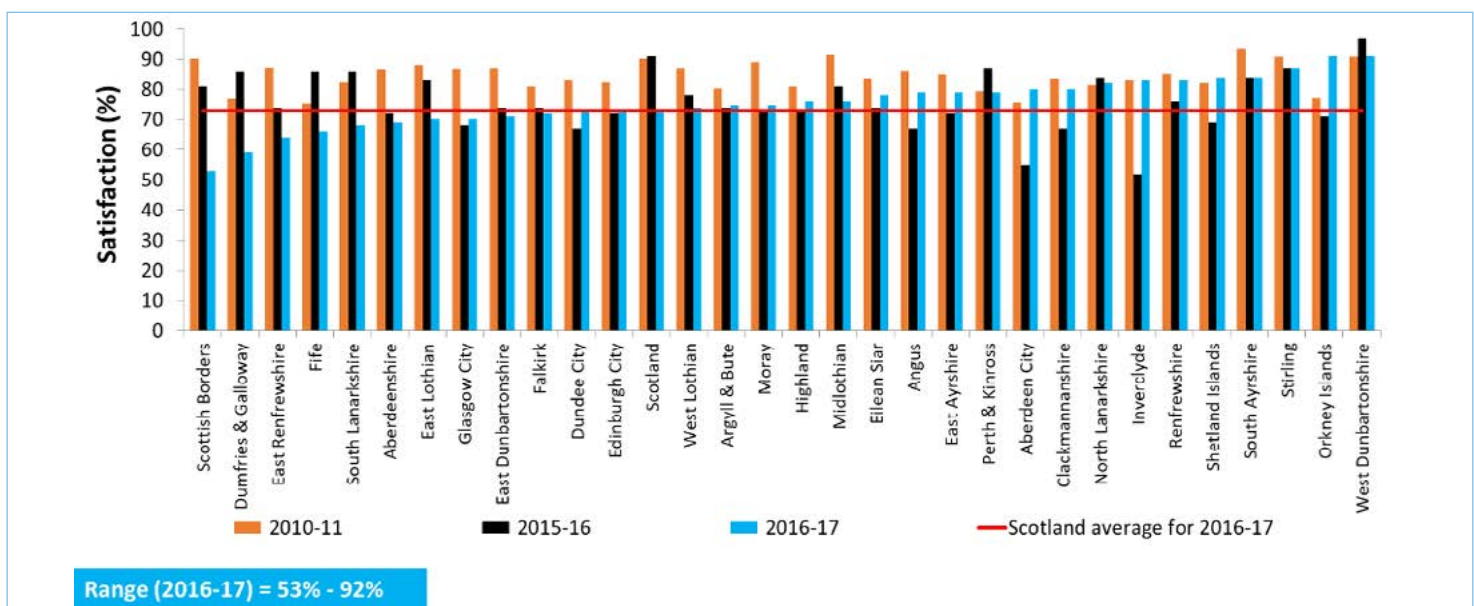
Sharing Practice—August 2018 Benchmarking Event

Libraries provide services for a wide variety of the population, with an increasingly modern, convenient and digital offer, ranging from 3D printing facilities, to providing access to a range of council services. Libraries are increasingly being utilised as a vehicle to delivering wider outcomes in relation to education, health and wellbeing, and inclusion. With increased pressure on budgets, the services are creatively using resources to increase community engagement, raise awareness of what libraries offer, and staying up to date with digital progress. It was widely agreed that the experience of libraries needs to be positive and relevant in order to encourage people to go back.

Partnership Working

North and South Lanarkshire libraries have developed The Healthy Reading Programme to make it easier to access mental health and well-being leaflets, books, CDs, DVDs and web-based support, in conjunction with element, Lanarkshire's mental health resource.

Stirling have two new mobile libraries which include space for a representative of partner agencies, such as fire safety and housing services, to come along and engage with the community.

Education Assistants in **South Lanarkshire** work with schools to promote the Reading Challenge. They host an awards ceremony for the school with the most starters and finishers, and award a cup. This has led to increased uptake and a healthy competition between schools. Library staff in South Lanarkshire also work successfully with the council's children services teams. A key to this has been having a strategic approach and clear objectives. Staff work together to develop a programme of events and activities branded under the ACE programme which provides an extensive fun-filled programme of Arts, Culture and Exercise activities for preschool, primary and secondary children aged under 16 years.

Falkirk have joined the Hurricane Book Club a remote book club that takes place online, but with special events in libraries to discuss the books, in bookshops and libraries across Scotland. At present, this is a joint project between **Orkney, Glasgow, Falkirk** and **Shetland**.

Digital

Libraries across Scotland are increasing their digital offer. In addition to the free computer and internet access available in most libraries, e-books, podcasts and social media engagement are becoming commonplace – with many libraries offering support to get online. Library staff recognise their digital eLibrary complements current ways of working by providing the service via a different route rather than replaces the traditional library model.

The mobile libraries in **Stirling** will be digitally equipped, and allow space for teaching library users to use tablets and other devices which allow access to online services within the libraries and beyond. The council are seeking to learn lessons from the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) who use mobile banking vans.

South Lanarkshire libraries digital offer has been revamped; 'active-e' encompasses a vast range of digital resources, allowing residents access to research papers, free driving theory test practice, and family history research software. Library members have access to both in-person and online training opportunities to improve their skills in basic digital access, tips on using your own digital device, and more specialised sessions such as learning to code. The library service aims to become a go-to resource for residents of the area to improve their digital skills.

An impact tool which has been developed by a student is currently being piloted in **Falkirk** and **East Dunbartonshire**, with the possibility of it being rolled out to other council areas if successful. The impact tool is on a web browser and gives users a chance to provide feedback with just a few clicks. It can be filled out on mobile devices such as tablets, and includes spaces where visitors can provide detailed feedback if they wish.

Library Love **Falkirk** is a blog and podcast showcasing fun events, competitions and reading challenges happening in local libraries.

Perth and Kinross have used visitor data to further understand the impact of their services, and how to improve further. A recent finding identified that 60% of their active users are regularly using more than one library.

Redesign

East Lothian have identified that standalone libraries are not working from a service or user perspective and where possible, these are being replaced with co-located libraries; for example, a new primary school is being built in Wallyford, and the library will be located there.

Tackling Inequalities (Economic and Geographic)

Nationwide, there is variance in the demand and need for mobile libraries. Further analysis would be beneficial to identify council areas who are particularly disadvantaged due to their geographical location. Social isolation, loneliness, and digital access are some of the issues faced by those living in remote areas.

Libraries continue to provide activities for all age groups, and groups with particular needs. Many libraries are providing Bookbug sessions in different languages for example in Polish (**East Lothian, Perth & Kinross**) in Gaelic (**East Lothian**) and in British Sign Language (**Fife**). **East Lothian** piloted Bookbug sessions in care homes for the elderly, which were a huge success, and a positive experience for residents and staff.

Fife have purchased a Tovertafel, or magic table, which is a game for people with moderate to severe dementia, encouraging them to instinctively participate in order to stimulate both physical and social activity. This will be located in Kirkcaldy library, and will be available to book out, or access during drop-in sessions. **Fife** are also offering other dementia-friendly activities including a disco and film screenings.

Perth & Kinross organised a three-day summer school for teenagers called Robot Wars, which successfully promoted the library, engaged parents and children and made a small profit. The Book Club programme in **South Lanarkshire** is targeted at the early years (0-16 years). Although the programme is open to all, staff have identified that children from deprived areas are least likely to engage.

In the Garnock Valley area of **North Ayrshire**, the Makerspaces programme is providing opportunities in libraries where the community can come, have fun and learn together. The area is rural, with poor transport links, and is amongst one of the lowest income areas in Scotland. With a view to reducing inequalities, several target groups were identified and invited to participate in various activities. These groups include young people, low-income groups, under-qualified/unemployed people, people with disabilities, and elderly residents. Successful sessions have included inter-generational knitting groups where experienced knitters share and pass on their skills with younger members of the community; this has resulted in blankets being knitted and donated to homelessness charities. In order to maintain the success of Makerspaces in the area, a social enterprise strategy is being drawn up, practice is being shared with other library services, and groups are working towards being self-sustainable.

Workforce

All the library services rely on the creativity and innovative suggestions of their staff to expand the reach and relevance of libraries to their local communities. Education Assistants at **South Lanarkshire** suggested 'Wee Scientist' sessions; an opportunity for 3 to 5 year olds to participate in accessible science related activities in their local library.

Some councils still offer a local library delivery service which brings books to those unable to access the library. In some cases this is carried out by permanent staff, but increasingly volunteers are essential to the continuation of this service.

Volunteers are making a difference in **North Ayrshire**, supporting the launch day and meet-up evenings of Makerspaces. Volunteers are making use of 3D printing technology within libraries and have the opportunity to work with children through the STEM Ambassador programme.

Marketing/Re-thinking Image of Libraries

Libraries are no longer just places to read books quietly; rather they are dynamic spaces shaped around the community. Library services recognise the role of local community groups in bringing people into the library, and continue to provide a space for groups to meet. Traditional activities such as book clubs continue to attract residents, but some libraries are offering new and different types of activities which reflect a wide variety of interests to hopefully engage more local people, adults as well as children. Some examples include **Aberdeen City**'s 'Of Dice and Men' board game group, an adult's colouring book group in **Glasgow**, a sewing machine group in **North Ayrshire,** and the monthly Coatbridge 'Philosophy Café' in **North Lanarkshire**.

In **Perth & Kinross**, their annual 'Jump into Libraries' Days aim to place libraries at the heart of their local communities. These family friendly fun days aim to showcase the very best that libraries offer and encourage greater uptake of library services. Also in **Perth & Kinross**, in conjunction with the wider Dog Friendly Perthshire initiative, residents are welcome to bring their (well-behaved) dogs into the library on Fridays. The Library service recognises the role that dogs play in providing support and companionship to many people across Perth and Kinross and the help they give to a number of people in social situations; these 'Dog Friendly Fridays' aim to encourage local people who normally wouldn't access the library to visit.

Dundee's Connections Suite offers a range of materials to support those with additional needs or sensory impairments. This includes Makaton and British Sign Language materials as well as information and resources to support reminiscence sessions and activities.

North Ayrshire are developing a display of knitted poppies, which encourages people to come into the library to view, drop off, or purchase knitted poppies.

Stirling Council's well established annual book festival continues to attract community engagement, and sells out every year.