

## **Information Literacy and Community: a UK perspective**

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“My vision is of a nation where no-one is seriously disadvantaged by where they live, where power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many not the few.”

Tony Blair, foreword: Social Exclusion Unit. (2001) *A new commitment to neighbourhood renewal*. London: Cabinet Office.

### **1. Introduction**

We have headed our article with a quotation from the British Prime Minister which seems to signal a deep commitment to the idea of equality and community. This paper presents our own, alternative, perspective on the UK. Not that we see Blair's vision as undesirable: however, we would question whether the UK Government's policy and practice tallies with the blissful vision that Blair describes.

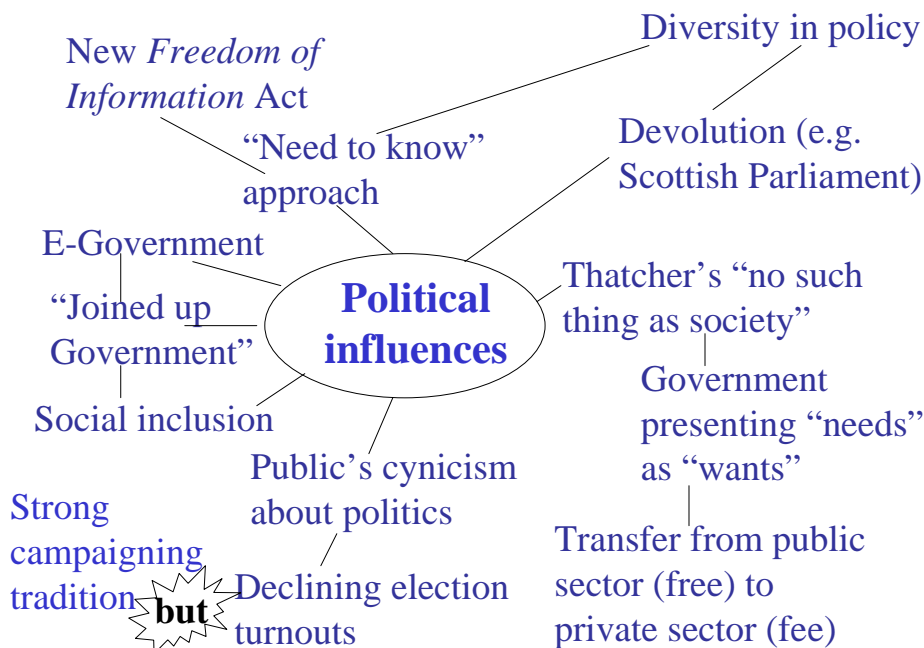
There are two main parts to this paper. We provide a personal view (in section 2) of the social, political, economic and technical forces that constitute a context for community, and therefore a means of interpreting information literacy in relation to community. This is supplemented by a more factual overview (in section 3) of Government initiatives concerned with community, learning and IT, and of developments in information literacy.

In the second part, we report the results of a pilot study (section 4) which examines information literacy within a localised community, and draw on a Government sponsored report (section 5) to provide another perspective on issues raised in the pilot survey. Finally, we identify areas for further research and draw conclusions.

### **2. Background: Influences on community and information literacy**

This section provides a brief PEST analysis of the UK situation, to provide a context for the discussion in later parts of the paper: i.e. it considers in turn Political and legal, Economic, Social and Technical factors. We are not economists, and this analysis is our personal one. For the first three factors we will illustrate the factors through a diagram and follow with a narrative explanation. First, we consider political and legal influences.

Figure 1: Political/legal factors



A characteristic here is the tension between, on the one hand, an apparent focus on social inclusion issues by Tony Blair's Labour Government (e.g. by setting up the Social Exclusion Unit) and, on the other, policies which seem to carry forward the agenda of the conservative government (such as contracting out or privatisation of public services). We have quoted Margaret Thatcher's infamous statement that "there is no such thing as society" which highlighted the Thatcher era's focus on success and fulfilment as an individual or family responsibility, rather than a responsibility shared by citizens. The mantra of "joined-up" Government has been stressed from the start of Blair's term in office: according to this there should not be contradictory policies and activities which hinder the UK economy and disempower UK citizens. For example, the Social Exclusion unit's remit "is to help improve Government action to reduce social exclusion by producing 'joined up solutions to joined up problems'". Later in this paper we will address the question of whether there appears to be a "joined up" approach to aspects of information literacy.

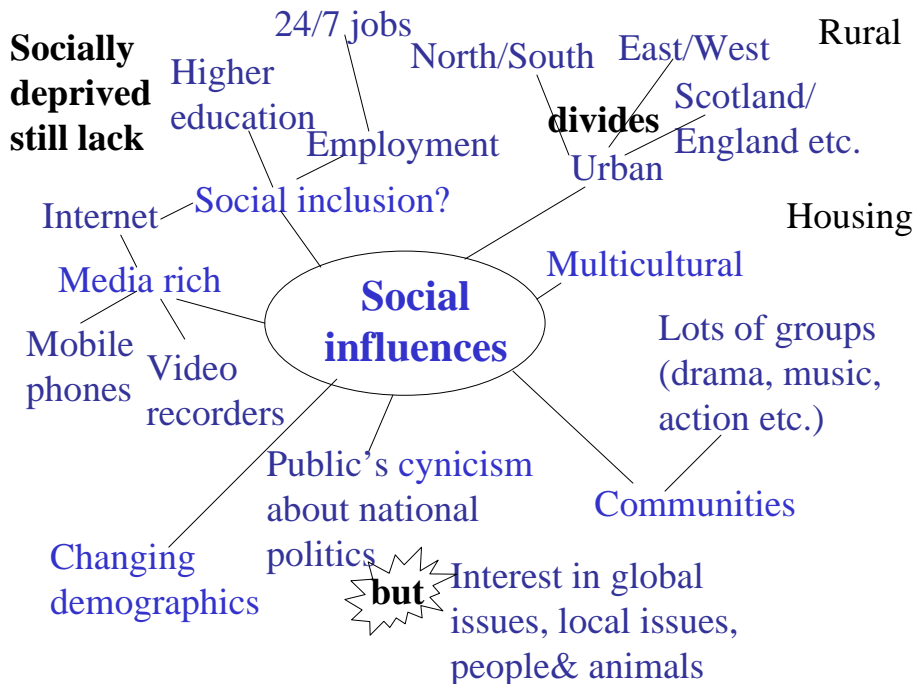
There is also a tension between, on the one hand, a Government commitment to more information and to e-government, and, on the other, the traditional British Government approach that citizens should only be allowed access to public information on a "need to know" basis. The new Freedom of Information Act (UK Parliament, 2000) will, for example, put pressure on public bodies to make their information better organised and more accessible (therefore, one might say, it encourages these bodies to be more information literate). The Information Commissioner (2001) has a remit to monitor compliance with this act, as well as the Data Protection Act. However, the Freedom of Information Act came under strong criticism during its progress through parliament, as it was felt that the Government was giving itself too much leeway to refuse access to information on the grounds that public interest would not be served by disclosure.

There are further, growing, tensions between emerging policies in the countries that make up the UK, following devolution of some powers to national parliaments. The Scottish parliament has the most power amongst these: the Scottish legal and education systems were notably different from those in England even before devolution and decisions are being taken on issues such as education and welfare that increase these differences further. Perhaps related to this trend to devolution is people's simultaneous engagement in local issues and disengagement from, and cynicism about, national politics. There is no compulsion to vote in UK elections and turnout in recent elections has been poor. An oft-quoted recent survey found that people esteemed politicians even less than estate agents. However, there is, for example, a strong interest in "green" issues (in both a local and global context). There is also a strong campaigning tradition in the UK, for example: Chartism in the 19th century, the trade unions and the early labour party in 19th - 20th centuries and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The last couple of decades have seen various campaigns to protect and improve educational and health services, and the anti-"poll tax" movement (during which much reference was made to the hatred of the poll tax which led to the Peasants' Revolt in the

14<sup>th</sup> century). Therefore lack of participation in formal elections cannot necessarily be taken as a signal of lack of interest in community issues.

The next issues we will consider are social ones.

Figure 2: Social issues



The UK is a relatively small country: very crowded in some parts (e.g. South East England), but also with sparsely populated and difficult to access areas (e.g. the highlands and islands of Scotland). There is diversity in terms of rural vs. urban, and also in terms of ethnic background, religion and language. There is, for example a well established British Muslim community. In terms of indigenous languages, Wales is a bilingual country, and there are communities of Gaelic speakers and support for Gaelic culture in Scotland. This linguistic and cultural diversity raises question of appropriate forms of information literacy. People from some cultural backgrounds, for example, might put a particular emphasis on the wise and ethical use of information, others might be more concerned about freedom of information.

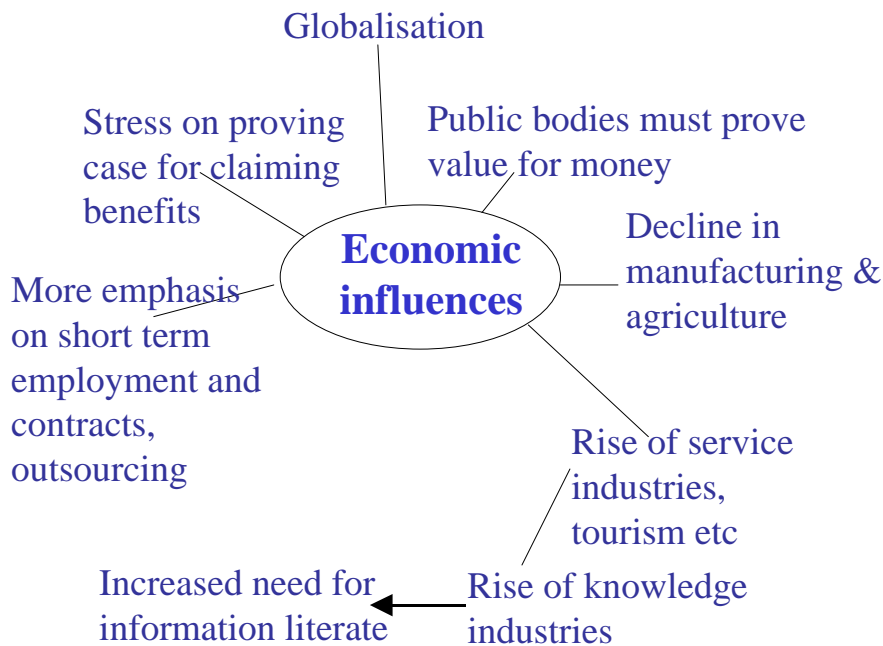
The UK is media rich, with a strong publishing industry. There is high penetration of TVs, videorecorders and mobile phones, and growing penetration of home computers and home access to the internet. Tools such as mobile phones are owned by people, especially young people, in a variety of social groups (certainly not just by the affluent) and are changing communication patterns. However, surveys have shown that the unemployed and those on low income will have less access to the internet and computers.

Demographic characteristics include smaller household units (e.g. more single people and one parent families), and the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Europe. There are also different pattern to family life because of 24/7 jobs (more shift work, Sunday working etc) which means that, for example, families are less likely to eat together. There are implications for local engagement, with different kinds of people getting involved (there are fewer middle or upper class "ladies of leisure" around, spending their time "doing good"). Still there is a strong tradition of the local group (amateur dramatics, photography, ban the bypass, Women's Institute etc.)

There has been a big increase in participation in higher education over the past 25 years (from about 5% to about 37% of the population going into post-school education), but figures show that this means that the majority of middle class children now go to university, and there is still under-representation of those for lower income groups. As there has been a particular focus on information literacy in higher education, one might ultimately expect an more information literate general population, in line with the increased participation in higher education: as yet there may not be evidence of this.

Some relevant economic factors are summarised in the next diagram.

Figure 3: Economic issues



Margaret Thatcher started a drive to make public service accountable: as never before, national and local government-funded bodies had to prove that they were efficient, effective, and economic. The Blair government has continued this trend with, for example, the current emphasis on "Best value" in local government and the teaching quality and research assessment exercises in universities. This means that publicly funded bodies have to spend a lot of time recording, interpreting and justifying what they do, and applying for the next grant or benefit. Information gathering, information analysis, and presentation of information have therefore become more important skills to master.

In both the public and private sector there has been a trend away from "jobs for life" and towards short-term jobs. This has implications for lifelong learning: it is less likely that those on short-term contracts will be given phased and appropriate training, and if they want development they will have to take more personal responsibility for it. Short-term employment means more time spent applying for jobs: again, information literacy skills are relevant.

The decline of UK manufacturing and the rise of service and knowledge industries also implies a greater need for information literate employees. Globalisation, amongst other things, may demand more knowledge about, and ability to communicate with, those from other cultures, in order to trade with them successfully (or gain a job in a transnational company). The Blair vision of a "modernised" Government, and of a population at ease in a global information society implies an economy which has a skilled, flexible and information literate workforce.

We will discuss the final factors, Technological ones, more briefly, since they are ones which are already more familiar from the information and library literature. The internet has obviously had a big impact on how and where people find information, their expectations about information (in terms of format, access and cost) and their information behaviour generally. It also provides many opportunities for information and library professionals to hook into interest in search engines and websites, in order to educate people for information literacy. People (rather than books or journals) have always been a preferred information source. The internet (through chat and email), internet/intranet technology and mobile phones have made it much easier for people to use each other as information sources: not just friend and family but experts or fellow enthusiasts who they have never met physically. In the workplace, debate on networking within and between companies has (at least in large corporates) gone past the "how do we tie these bits of cable together" stage to questions of "how can we get people to use this network effectively": again, an opportunity to foreground information literacy as a key ability for employees.

### 3. Developments relevant to community and information literacy in the UK

In the PEST analysis we have argued that there are significant factors for change which would seem to demand more information literate citizens. In this section we examine developments which are relevant to information literacy and community, to identify what sort of debate is taking place, and what sort of education and development is being made available.

#### 3.1 Community, learning and IT

There have been a number of Government initiatives concerned with supporting communities, with lifelong learning and with wiring up the UK. This section is provided to demonstrate that there is ongoing activity in these areas, and to enable those who wish to learn more to follow up their interests via the various websites and substantial reports. We provide a short indicative review, rather than a detailed account of what is going on.

For libraries, the key official "wired" development is the People's Network (2001) which aims to have all 4300 of the UK's public libraries with internet connections by the end of 2002. There have been further stimuli, such as developmental grants for specific networking projects from Re:source (2001), which is funded by the Department of Culture Media and Sport.

In terms of learning, the Government has launched a number of initiatives which aim to encourage citizens to undertake learning (e.g. short practical courses, off- or online) and to foster the idea of lifelong learning. Those interested in finding out more can visit the Lifelonglearning (2001), National Grid for Learning (2001: an initiative combining learning and wired-ness) and Learndirect (2001) sites. The latter encourages potential learners to use one of their local accredited agencies to learn face-to-face or electronically, and has a register of courses. The Campaign for learning (2001) is sponsored by Government and by private-sector companies "to create an appetite for learning in individuals that will sustain them for life." It has organised events such as "Learning at Work" days. Scotland quite often has separate agencies fulfilling similar functions to the UK Central Government ones. Community Learning Scotland (2001) is the Scottish national community education agency and it has a remit which includes advising policymakers and promoting best practice. It is also worth mentioning the Open University, which is a respected, long-standing and successful deliverer of distance learning, nowadays with greater or lesser degrees of electronic mediation.

As regards community The Social Exclusion Unit (2001a), set up in 1997, not long after the Labour Government had come to power, has a "remit ... to help improve Government action to reduce social exclusion by producing 'joined up solutions to joined up problems.'" A key publication was a report (SEU, 1998) which proposed a national strategy for renewing neighbourhoods. Following this report, 18 Policy Action Teams worked on key topic areas (reports of two of these teams are cited later in this paper). A later document (SEU, 2001b) which confirmed Government's interest in regenerating neighbourhoods, was accompanied by the creation of a spinoff agency, the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (2001). The Community Development Association (2001) is a Government funded body which aims to "pioneer, study and promote new forms of community development". Acknowledging the variety of stakeholders in this area, the Standing Conference for Community Development (2001) is funded by the Home Office as an umbrella organisation which aims to bring together relevant public sector, private sector and voluntary groups "and thus promote and develop the ideas and techniques of community development."

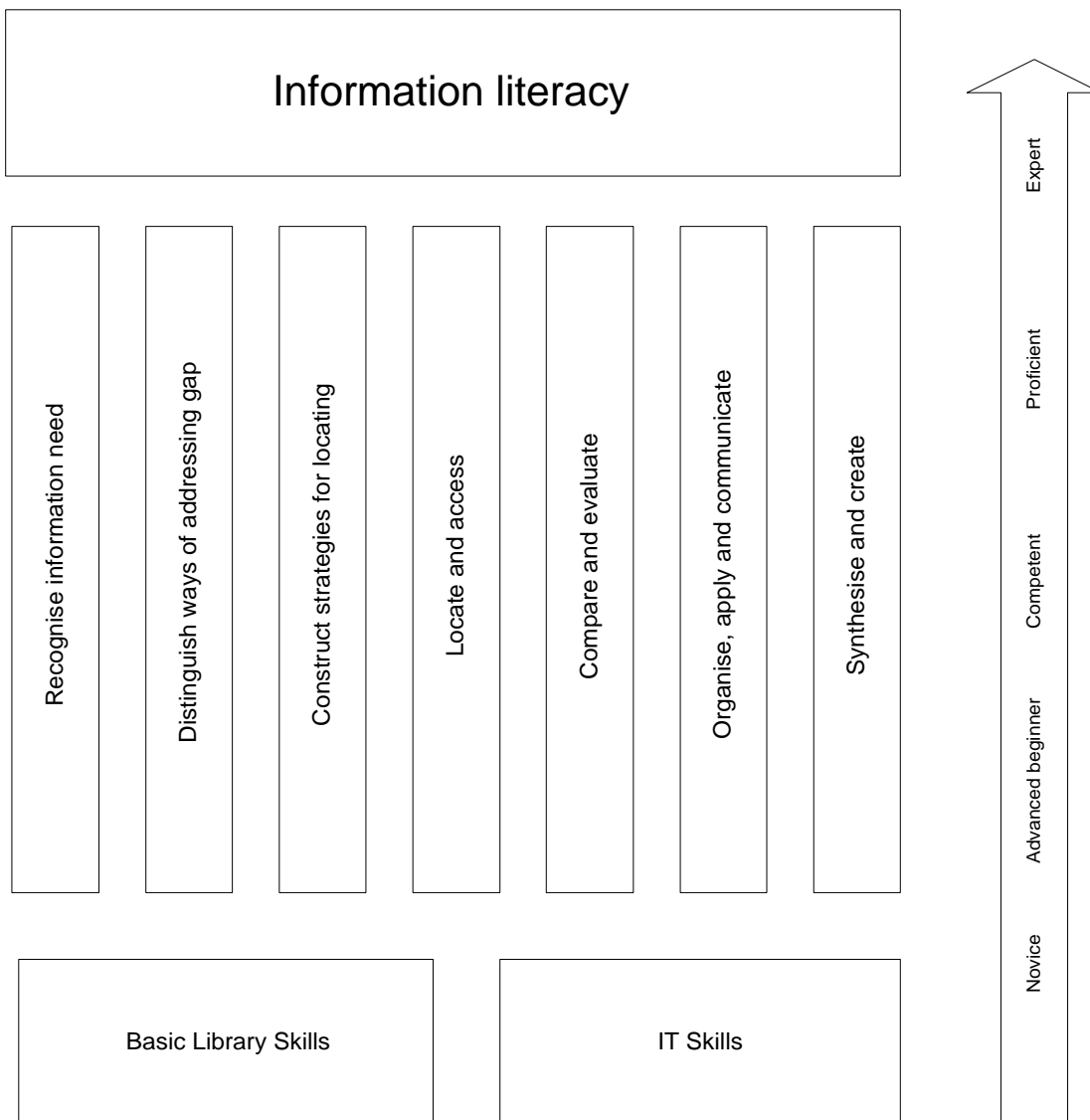
Finally, there have been developments in the area of UK community networking. Yu et al (1999) provide a review of the development of community networks in the UK. Pantry (1999) edits a volume with chapters outlining the history of online communities in the UK and giving case studies of online communities. Bodies concerned with community networks include Communities online (2001), a "not-for-profit organisation which promotes the effective use of ICTs in local communities." Also worth mentioning is the Community Media Association (2001), founded by groups which included social action broadcasters, media activists and academics. It is a partner in a number of projects involving community and digital media.

Thus there are numerous initiatives relevant to information literacy and community. However, as will be indicated in the next section, they are not necessarily being identified explicitly by non-librarians as having an information literacy perspective.

### 3.2 Information literacy in UK

The UK has tended to lag behind Australia and the United States as regards developments explicitly about information literacy. Notable work has been carried out by the Standing Conference of National and University Libraries (SCONUL), whose Information Skills taskforce started by developing a model for information literacy (see Figure 4). Their framework for the *Seven pillars of information literacy* (Task Force on Information Skills, 1999) provides a progression from basic skill ("Ability to recognise a need for information") to the more sophisticated ("Ability to synthesise and build upon existing information, contributing to the creation of new knowledge"). We will be using this model later in this paper as a framework to analyse responses from the pilot study. SCONUL see the model being used in a number of ways, including programme design. The SCONUL Task force has run a conference on information skills (Corrall and Hathaway, 2000) and plans further initiatives (Johnson, 2001; Town, 2001).

Figure 4: The Seven Pillars of information Literacy



The UK's Joint Information Services Committee (JISC) has funded a number projects potentially relevant to information literacy education, such as JUSTEIS (Armstrong 2001) and the eLib (Electronic Library) projects. The Higher Education Funding Council for England & Wales and the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council have also backed various initiatives, such as a collaborative training and information project aimed at engineers (Joint and Kemp, 2000). A current project is "Big Blue" which is surveying information skills training in UK further and higher education (Manchester Metropolitan University, 2001).

Our own work, starting with development of a credit-bearing information literacy class at Strathclyde, University is described in Johnston & Webber (2000) and Webber and Johnston (2000). As an example of other work, Andretta (2001) describes a class at the University of North London delivered to undergraduates studying law.

Commentators on the undergraduate learning environment increasingly emphasise the use of information technology and the internet to achieve a variety of subject specific and generic skill learning objectives, including information skills. Use of IT was listed in the Dearing Report (National Committee Of Enquiry Into Higher Education, 1997) along with Learning to Learn, Numeracy and Communication Skills, as one of the four key skill areas for students in UK higher education. Information literacy is also rarely mentioned explicitly as part of the UK 'key skills' agenda (see Drew, 1998), although it fits readily within it (for example, information seeking and evaluation skills feature prominently in the programme specification of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2000)).

There has been work in the school library sector though not as developed as that is the USA. For example the Library Association's (2000) guidelines for primary schools contain a section on information literacy.

A study by information consultancy TFPL (1999, funded by the UK's Library and Information Commission (now Re:source: the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries) examined information literacy in the context of knowledge management in the workplace. This report comments on the need for companies to develop information literacy skills in their employees, noting that information literacy should be receiving the as much attention as information technology skills. They have continued their work with a more developed study of required skills for knowledge management. In general, there has been more published work on information literacy in an educational context than information literacy in the workplace. However, there is increasing research and practice, see for example Davies (2000) and Dale (2001). Mutch (e.g. 1997) has contributed to the debate on information literacy, including a workplace perspective.

In the public library sector there has been, possibly, even less explicit focus on information literacy, since "user education" has been less of a core role for the public librarian. This has been changing with the advent of public library internet access, as internet education for various sectors of the community has come to be seen as an increasingly important part of the public library's mission, stimulated by the *People's Network* funding.

### **3.3 Is this all being "joined up"?**

However, even with the increased role mentioned above, the emphasis in UK Government thinking is on the "T" rather than the "I" in IT. As an example, we will refer to a product of one of the initiatives referred to in section 3.1. The Social Exclusion Unit (2000a) Policy Action Team 16 reported on the digital divide and ways to close this gap (between the information rich and poor). The team notes "Retrieval difficulties" as an issue, saying that:

"The Internet poses a number of problems in terms of retrieval of information. There are also difficulties in finding the right material. It can take time and skill both to locate it and assess how useful it is. This can be frustrating and off-putting, particularly to a beginner."

However this issue is not addressed in the conclusions and recommendations to the report, where there is a vague exhortation to "support for new and existing users" and no mention of information literacy or how ICT training might help in identifying and evaluating information. The bulk of the report discusses the digital divide in terms of the technology, and neglects issues of information content, retrieval, evaluation and so forth. This is typical of the various reports and initiatives which have sometimes implied and information literacy agenda, but which have not made it explicit.

To summarise: we have identified a dynamic pattern of political, social and economic influences. We have also illuminated certain information relationships that include within them a growing body of relevant knowledge and expertise currently which could be identified as Information Literacy. However it is difficult to see if that academic/professional notion of Information Literacy is being consciously applied to increase the overall coherence and value of all of this information activity. There is no evidence that the Government is attempting to explicitly "join up" relevant initiatives to foster information literate citizenship. Perhaps further insight can be gained by a closer investigation which details the workings of the 'Information Society' within a localised geographical/community area..

#### 4. The pilot survey

This section describes a pilot survey carried out in November 2001, asking community groups in Sheffield to identify problems they had with information handling. The survey aimed to correlate facets of information handling with the dimensions of a formal model of information literacy: i.e. the SCONUL 7 pillars model. Sheffield is a city in South Yorkshire (geographically, in the middle of England). Although it provides a good quality of life for those of its citizens that have decent jobs (e.g. with relatively cheap housing, two thriving universities, sports and shopping facilities, and proximity to beautiful countryside), there are still significant areas of high unemployment and poverty: sufficient to be given "deprived" status by UK Government and the European Commission. The steel industry, which used to be Sheffield's mainstay, collapsed some years ago. As with other north English cities, there is ethnic diversity.

Our survey was undertaken using an email list of community groups in Sheffield, which represents in turn a subset of a larger database. The *Sheffield Help Yourself database* (2001) is maintained by Sheffield Libraries and Information Services and hosted by Sheffield University Department of Information Studies. There is also support from the European Regional Development Fund. The database contains 4500 records for local voluntary and community associations, can be searched freely over the internet, and is updated on a regular basis.

A further development has been *Sheffield Community Information* (2001), which has helped 200 local groups and micro businesses to learn about the internet, and in many cases to create websites. This is again part-funded by Sheffield Libraries, and has the Department of Information Studies providing hosting and advice. As part of this work, an email list of 70 organisations had been set up, and this was the list used to distribute the questionnaire. This is obviously a biased sample, since the sample use email and most have a website. However, as is seen below, even this small sample of Sheffield groups contains diversity in terms of aims and constituency. If, as is hoped, a larger study is undertaken with groups listed on the main database, this pilot study of comparatively "wired" groups should provide interesting comparisons.

15 community groups responded to the questionnaire. The focus of these groups included:

- drug abuse (two groups: help for abusers & support for relations of abusers)
- support for victims of sexual abuse
- youth support
- Asian music
- South American sport and culture
- Village Hall that was rented out and used as a community centre
- training & resource centre
- photographic club
- football supporters' club
- three groups concerned with quality of life or community in specific parts of Sheffield
- support for new mothers
- support for children with a specific disease

Thus although response was small, there was a good diversity of type of group. Four local micro businesses also responded (so that *in toto* there was a response rate of about 25%). In fact the company's responses showed interesting similarities with the responses of the community groups, but they have not been included in this analysis.

The first question asked of respondents was:

- *Have you ever had problems in finding or getting hold of information that could have been useful to your group/organisation?*
- *If "yes", can you tell me what the problems were?*

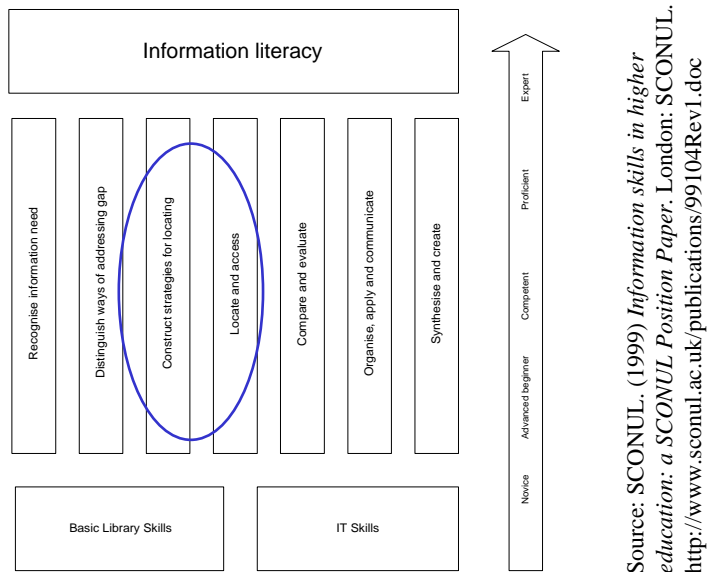
10 respondents said *Yes* and 5 said *No*. The problems they identified could be broadly classified as follows:

- Don't know where to find information - 5 mentions
- Don't know which information to choose - 1
- Information too expensive - 4 (books, training courses, addresses, expert help)
- Access denied to information - 1
- Information not sufficiently detailed/out of date - 2

Figure 5 identifies the pillars, on the SCONUL 7-pillar model, which we feel respondents were self diagnosing as problem areas.

Figure 5: areas of information literacy where respondents indicated they had problems

### Areas where problem with own competence identified



Source: SCONUL. (1999) *Information skills in higher education: a SCONUL Position Paper*. London: SCONUL. <http://www.sconul.ac.uk/publications/99104Rev1.doc>

The second question asked of respondents was:

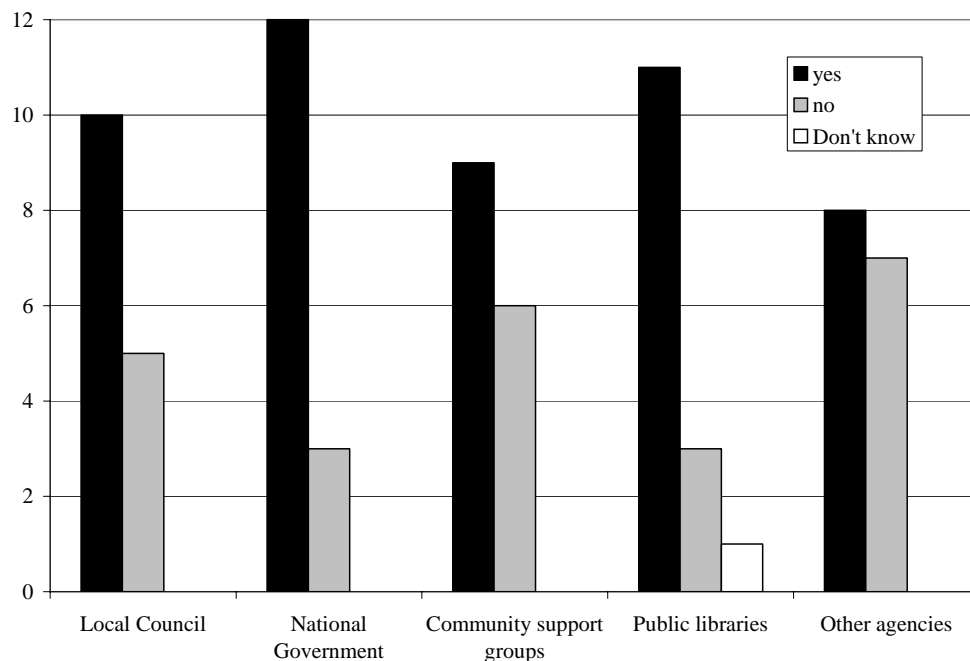
*Do you think any of the following could make it easier for you to find the information you need:*

- *your local council;*
- *UK Government & Government Departments;*
- *community support groups;*
- *public libraries;*
- *any other agencies, groups or companies*

*If you answered "Yes" to any of the above, can you say what you would like them to do*

Figure 6 shows the responses to the first part of this question.

Figure 6: Which agencies could make it easier to find information



As can be seen, in particular more was wanted from National Government. The types of *other agency* which were identified were:

- Grant giving bodies
- South Yorkshire Police, Health Service; Universities; Public transport
- Various national and local health bodies
- Regional arts associations
- National voluntary organisations, Charity Commission, Lottery Board, other funders

In terms of what these agencies could do

- Websites were mentioned 5 times: in terms of them being more user friendly; more navigable; having comprehensive information; being better organised/filtered websites ("I usually give up after 3/4 links because I haven't the time to keep going through endless trash")
- Ease of use of information and full access to information: including internet access in public libraries; "a one stop shop"; "really easy access to where we can get all types of support"

A key theme also seemed to us to be a wish for the agencies to make information more readily available, as the following quotations from respondents illustrate.

- "Local Council could have a more detailed and up to date database of Sheffield stat[istic]s by ward"
- "To be more open and transparent.... Not just to think about their own existence and jobs"
- "If they are not willing to provide relevant information, they should not set 'wish lists' which they expect us to work hard to try to complete only to get doors closed in our faces"

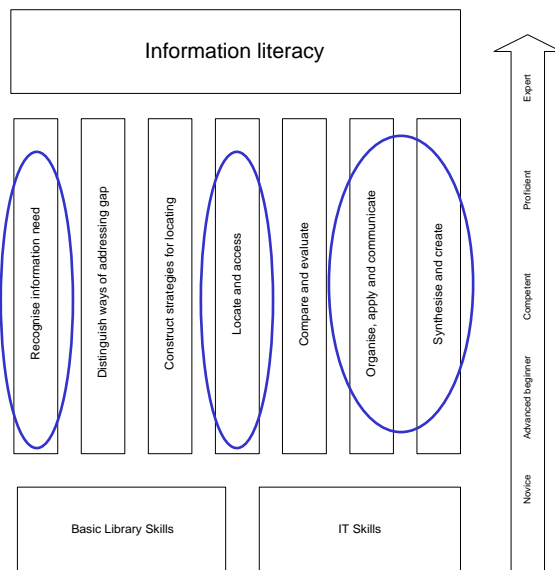
There was a desire amongst respondents to have more respect and focus accorded to them by these bodies

- "To think about [what] information groups will need ..."
- "Not always want to know why you want to know"
- "Be more ready to talk/communicate with small groups - have more intelligible information - employ staff who understand the needs of community arts groups"

We would therefore contend that the respondents were identifying areas of **information illiteracy** in the official bodies with which they had to interact (and in some cases this illiteracy was threatening the funding of these community groups, because the groups were not able to gather the information they needed to justify their continuation). We identify problem areas, again using the SCOUNL model, in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Areas where problems with information providers were identified by respondents

## Areas where problem with providers identified



Source: SCONUL. (1999) *Information skills in higher education: a SCONUL Position Paper*. London: SCONUL. <http://www.sconul.ac.uk/publications/99104Rev1.doc>

The respondents therefore seemed to be identifying a need for information literate organisations (in particular, public sector organisations) to interact with local groups. Seeking to validate these perceptions, we looked for other evidence of information illiteracy in official bodies. Fortunately for us, a relevant report had been produced by the Government's Social Exclusion Unit itself.

### 5. Better information?

Better information (Social Exclusion Unit, 2000b) is a report by one of the Policy Action Teams (PAT) set up by the Unit. This report aimed to investigate the adequacy of the small-area statistics gathered by various local and national Government Departments and agencies, in order to meet the needs of Government in policy, planning and delivery of services, and to aid local communities themselves.

The Action Team was highly critical. They identify a need for more neighbourhood data, with more granularity e.g. more detail on ethnicity. However, they go beyond this to expose serious information management problems in Government bodies. The Action Team note that poor information has led to ignorance about local problems, local trends and policy impact, to poor allocation and use of Government resources, and to duplication in data gathering. A few quotations give a flavour of their comments.

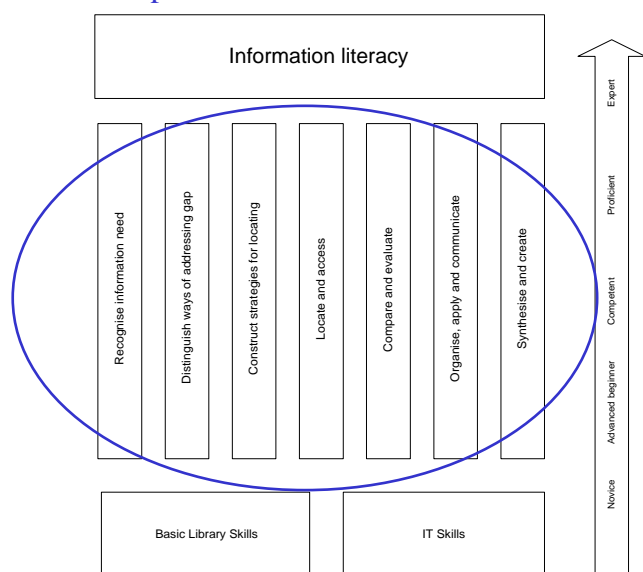
“The PAT’s work has repeatedly uncovered examples of waste and duplication because of poor ‘information about information’. Few policy makers and service managers are aware of what is already available and from whom.” (p18)

“The common theme that emerges from this chapter is the lack of leadership on joined up data issues across government and hence the lack of overall government strategy, either at national or local level. ... In the absence of clear leadership from government, there has been considerable duplication of effort, a waste of resources, no clear guidance for using data, lack of information on what is currently available, inadequate national standards on quality and no development of an adequate skills base to utilise and interpret the data. This in turn has led to cultural barriers being erected, such as fear of information, suspicion of its use and the hoarding of data by Government departments.” (p23)

Once more using the SCONUL framework, one can identify criticisms in the *Better information* report which could be matched with each of the seven pillars (Figure 7): for example, poor skills in locating and evaluating information, inability to decide wisely which is the right information to create or synthesise. We would diagnose these ills as **advanced information illiteracy**.

Figure 7: Areas where we think *Better Information* identified problems with information providers

### Areas where problem with providers identified by *Better information report*



Source: SCONUL. (1999) *Information skills in higher education: a SCONUL Position Paper*. London: SCONUL. <http://www.sconul.ac.uk/publications/99104Rev1.doc>

## 6. Further research

Another theme which emerged, which we have not dwelt on in our paper, but which seems to engage with points raised by other speakers at the conference, is that information literacy might most engagingly be fostered by active participation. Community groups seemed to be learning "7 pillar" skills by creating, organising, applying and communicating their own information (e.g. by creating and maintaining their web sites). As it is, information literacy is unlikely to be foregrounded as a learning outcome from such activity. However, it could be used more explicitly, and perhaps with greater impact than a short "locate and access" type training session of the more traditional type.

In terms of the findings from our pilot, further research could include:

- Survey of all the groups on the Sheffield database
- Survey community librarians to identify their perceptions of community groups' information problems
- Action research with some of the groups, to explore issues concerned with the whole 7 pillars model

## 7. Conclusions

When we started our pilot study, we thought our results would say something about the information literacy of people working in community groups. Although this *was* one of the outcomes, we feel that the stronger message (and one which merits further investigation) is that information literate Government is needed to enable groups to be information literate themselves. Indeed, given the relative resources of national and local government (on the one hand) and community groups (on the other) it is chastening to think that it is the resource-laden party which has the biggest problem. The public sector agents professing interest in community action are less information literate than is consistent with their espoused values and policy. A clear message from our own small survey and the Social Exclusion Unit's Policy Action Team is that information literacy needs to be up-valued in order to further democratic aims. If, for example, relevant information is not being collected, organised and evaluated, excellent community projects may die (because it cannot be proved that they "work"). Without a clearer focus on information literacy it is difficult to see how the UK Government can bring about Tony Blair's vision of "no-one seriously disadvantaged by where they live ... power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many, not the few."

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