

**Homeless (rough sleepers) perspectives on public
libraries: Using Auckland Central City Library as a case
study**

by

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Submitted to the School of Information Management,
Victoria University of Wellington
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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'Homeless (rough sleepers) perspectives on public libraries: Using Auckland Central City Library as a case study'

(hereafter referred to as 'The MIS Research Project')

being undertaken by

Hao Zhang

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Topic Commencement: **23 June 2017**

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Abstract

Research problem

Homelessness has been a social problem around the world since 1980s. It has become an issue in New Zealand, especially in some big cities such as Auckland, Christchurch, and Wellington. It brings a lot of challenges to the libraries. Many library studies focus on initiatives and challenges of providing services for the homeless by public libraries. Little has been done from homeless perspectives on public libraries' services within New Zealand context.

Methodology

Eight in-depth interviews were conducted, with rough sleepers and former homeless patrons. Guided by the principles of phenomenology, this qualitative research describes their experiences, needs, and expectations. The same qualitative approach involving four more in-depth interviews were used with staff members. Thus, this study also analyses their perceptions regarding the services for homeless community.

Findings

Most rough sleepers or former homeless patrons who participated in this study feel the public library is a safe place to stay. Welcoming atmosphere, resources, and the variety available at Auckland Central City Library are the main reasons attracting them. Nonetheless, sleeping in the library has always been a major reason for using the library. The factors that motivate their library use are identified by their 1) needs for social life and 2) sense of belonging. Most staff members agree that involvement in the services for the rough sleepers change the dynamic between staff and the homeless patrons, but disagreement among the staff members still exist.

Implications

A larger scale of sample is required for further study and this research can be used as a guide. The expectations and suggestions from rough sleepers and former homeless patrons may be useful in reviewing policies and practices for public

libraries. The findings and discussion could be valuable for the wider library community regarding rough sleepers' perspectives.

Keywords

Public libraries, homeless, rough sleepers, staff members, New Zealand

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Introduction and topic statement

If you live in the Auckland CBD area, you wouldn't be surprised to see many rough sleepers and homeless around. They often come to Auckland Central City Library, and use the resources or attend clubs (Carnegie, 2015; Parker, 2016). Auckland Libraries was the first library in New Zealand to deliver targeted services for the rough sleeping community since 2015 (Bradley, 2016). Two years passed, and Auckland Central City Library is still offering the targeted service, but as they don't always come to talk to the staff and other customers, prejudice and simplification over the rough sleeping community still exist.

This study will examine the rough sleepers' perspectives on public libraries' service, from the point of view of homeless patrons from Auckland Libraries, using the Auckland Central City Library as a case study. The goal is to explore the real opinions, and needs from rough sleepers as customers to assist us as librarians to understand the reality of rough sleeping. Gathering staff members' voices will also be a key component of the case study which offers multiple perspectives to this project. It may bring questions/challenges to the core values/principles of librarianships such as accessibility and equity (Australian Library and Information Association [ALIA], 2016). Additionally, the feedback from rough sleeping customers and staff may be of great benefit to policy development and programme delivery within the New Zealand Public Libraries sector.

This research is needed because of a gap in the literature. Many studies have focused on the challenges or initiatives of providing services to homeless by public libraries in the world, but little has been done from the homeless' perspectives on public libraries' services within New Zealand context– what are the real needs of homeless patrons in New Zealand? Are our services relevant? Do we need to redefine the value of public libraries, and librarianship? If so, why?

Research context

Homelessness and libraries services

In April 2017, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) published the Draft IFLA Guidelines for Library Services to People Experiencing

Homelessness (2017) on its website. In this draft, it is pointed out that homelessness is a complex international issue which requires a better understanding and concrete steps to be taken regarding serving the homeless people. There are prejudices towards this group, and possible challenges existing in the libraries which need to be overcome for the homeless patrons. Thus, getting a good insight into the homelessness issues is very important for libraries to offer more efficient and sustainable services for all users, regardless of their social and living status (IFLA, 2017).

Homeless population in New Zealand

At least one in 100 New Zealanders were homeless according to the newest local research (Amore, 2016; Bazley, 2016; Davison, 2016; Price, 2016; Radio NZ, 2016). Although homelessness in big cities like Auckland, Christchurch, and Wellington is particularly an issue, it's a national problem (Amore, 2016; Bellamy, 2014; Furley, 2016). It needs various levels of government and other organizations together to solve the problem; good solutions, initiatives, and the services need to be bought to manage it.

Auckland Libraries and its homeless patrons

Auckland Libraries is the largest public library system in Australasia (Auckland Council, 2015a). According to Auckland Council's (2013) Library and Information summary, Auckland Libraries will engage closely with local community to make sure they act as learning hubs for people regardless of their background. At Auckland Central City Library, there are a lot of homeless patrons who are mainly rough sleepers (Bellamy, 2014; Bradley, 2016). In partnership with the Auckland City Mission, Auckland Central City Library started to develop targeted programming for the homeless and formerly homeless communities in 2015 (Carnegie, 2015). This involved setting up a series of hui with the rough sleeping community and initiating programming suggested by them. Currently there are three services for rough sleepers including Monday Movies, Wednesday Mission Book Club, and Friday Reading Revolution (Bradley, 2016; Parker, 2016). These sessions are also open to other patrons.

Definition of key terms

Homeless:

By using the online Collins English Dictionary, “homeless” means “having nowhere to live” (Collins English Dictionary, 2016a). According to ALIA (2016), minimum community standard to describe the homelessness spectrum in NSW includes marginally housed, tertiary homelessness, secondary homelessness, and primary homelessness. Homelessness in New Zealand is “officially defined as having no options to acquire safe and secure housing” (Bellamy, 2014).

This study will look at rough sleepers’ perspectives on public libraries’ services within the New Zealand context. Most of them are regular patrons who join the Book Club and Movie Club in Auckland Central Library. Their opinions of public libraries’ values may contain one or more of the following themes: safe, welcoming, inclusive, harmonious, or may be in an opposite way. The list is taken from ALIA’s report (ALIA, 2016, p.2) and is not exhaustive.

Rough Sleepers:

By using the online Collins English Dictionary, “rough sleeper” means “a homeless person who sleeps rough” (Collins English Dictionary, 2016b). According to Auckland City Mission (2016a), the most visible of homelessness in New Zealand are rough sleepers. The number of Central Auckland’s rough sleepers tops 200 for the first time since the count started in 2004 (Auckland City Mission, 2016b).

The Public Library Service:

A definition from the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) describes a public library as “an organization established, supported and funded by the community, either through local, regional or national government” (IFLA, 2001, p. 1). Its services are equally available to all members of the community (IFLA, 2001, p. 1).

According to Auckland Libraries: Te Kauroa- Future Directions 2013-2023 (Auckland Libraries, 2013), Auckland Libraries’ programme and services aim to inspire learning

and participation. It states that customers are put at the center in terms of their development approach.

Literature Review

THEME 1: THE HOMELESS AND THEIR NEEDS

Homelessness has been recognized as a social problem around the world since the early 1980s (Kelleher, 2013). It also brings challenges to libraries (McNeil and Johnson, 1996). Homelessness in New Zealand has also been acknowledged by the authorities and media which will be discussed in “Theme 4: New Zealand sector”.

In Hersberger’s (1999, 2002-2003, 2005) studies of the homeless, she focuses on exploring their everyday information needs and resources. She has taken out twenty-five in-depth interviews of homeless parents in her 2002-2003 study. Interviewees generally state that they use public libraries’ computers quite often, but resource assistance for them is limited. Facts about homelessness in Hersberger’s (2005) research also raises the issue of how to cater to different homeless groups’ different information needs as “the homeless are not a homogeneous population” (p. 199). It would be interesting to know whether public libraries consider their homeless patrons when providing information services in the digital era.

Mainly based on the statistics and materials from Hersberger’s (1999) publication, Ayers (2006) provides the background information of homelessness in the United States including the history, statistics, and two tales of homeless men in libraries. She points out that the homeless tend to gravitate to public libraries. For the homeless, library is a shelter or a gateway to a new life. However, Ayers’ conclusion is not based on her own practical research.

It is therefore important to know how the homeless see the role of public libraries in their lives and listening to them who may tell the different stories. It also raises the question of whether librarians need to rethink their responsibilities regarding designing the right services for the homeless. This is something that will be explored in the interviews.

Kelleher (2013) also touches on how homeless people in the USA use libraries. She presents facts about homelessness in America especially in Michigan where homeless population is higher than the national average. Surveys were conducted with over 100 homeless individuals in central Michigan in 2009. The findings from this research seem very positive: most of participants value the libraries’ services; few participants reported using the library to sleep, and internet access seems to be very important to many of them.

The surveys’ results raise some interesting points surrounding homeless patrons’ identities and their perspectives on public libraries. The first is on the homeless as “problem patrons” (McNeil & Johnson, 1996); the challenges of serving the homeless. Auckland has similar situation in New Zealand regarding the homelessness which is shown in Figure 1 (Collins, 2015). In 2016, Auckland City Mission’s (2016b) media release revealed the new figure—200 of rough sleepers in central Auckland. Most of them are looking for work and housing (Auckland City Mission, 2016a, 2016b; Collins, 2015). Additionally, Figure 2 captures rough sleepers’ words which describe their on-street experiences in general (Auckland Council, 2015b).

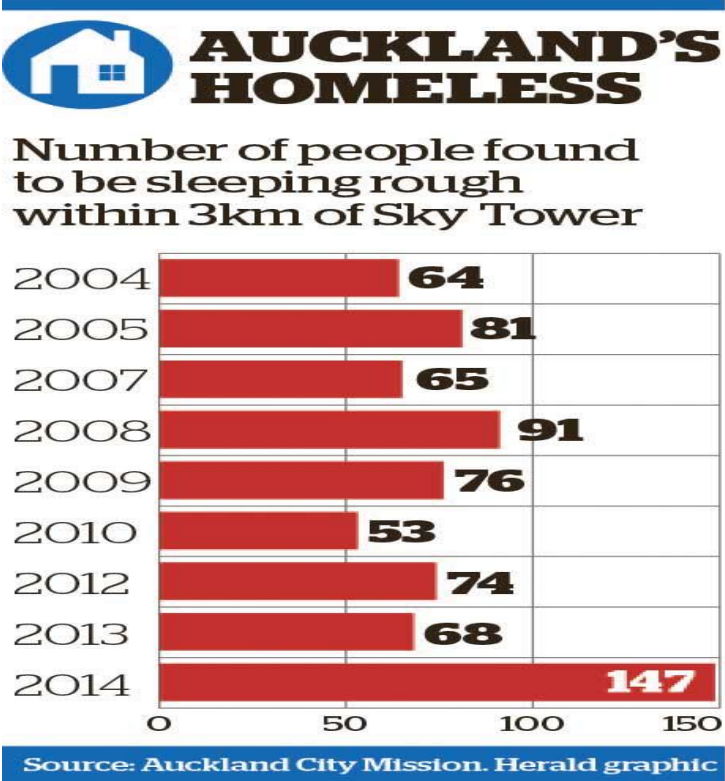


Figure 1. (Collins, 2015)

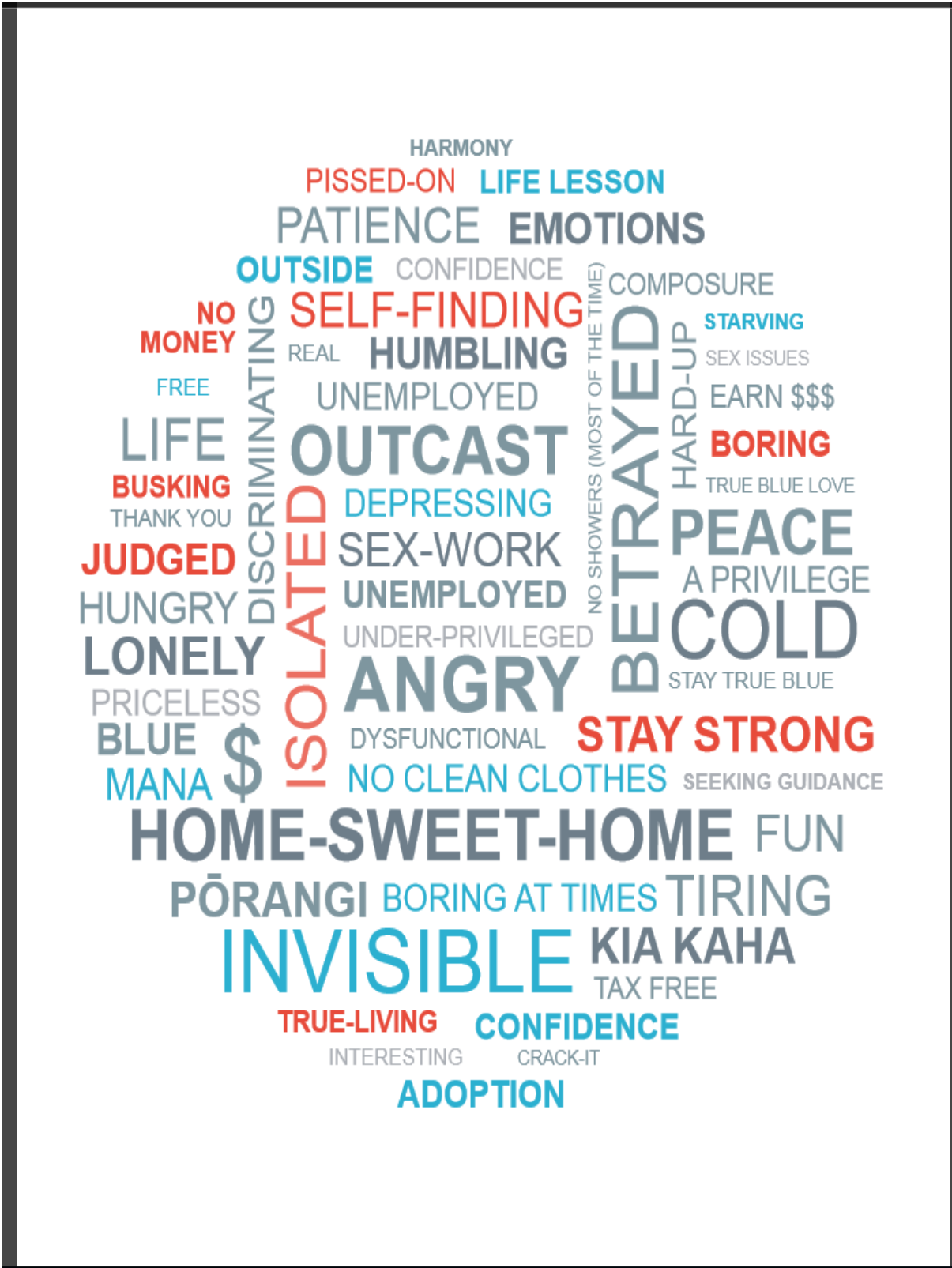


Figure 2. (Auckland Council, 2015b, p.9)

So, it is important to question -- are the homeless “problem patrons”? Are they challenging the public libraries’ services? Furthermore, exploring how homeless people themselves view public libraries is important as little information is known from previous library and the information science literature (Kelleher, 2013). This will be explored in the interviews as rough sleepers and former rough sleepers in Auckland will be asked how they view public libraries.

Homelessness and access to information in UK raise the same questions (Muggleton & Ruthven, 2012; Pidd, 2015). From an international perspective, Muggleton and Ruthven (2012) explore how homelessness affects access to information serving higher-level needs. They conducted 18 semi-structured interviews with homeless individuals in Glasgow. The study presents difficulties such as isolation that homeless are experiencing to meet the basic needs in their daily lives (Muggleton & Ruthven, 2012; Pidd, 2015). Homeless people are banned from using library by Manchester city council (Pidd, 2015). This news resonates the truism—the homeless as “problem patrons”. In the context of the proposed study, it is of interest to note that Auckland Central Library started organizing the Book Club and Movie Club for the homeless. It will be interesting to see if interviews results prove they are doing the right things for homeless patrons.

THEME 2: POLICY

Pidd (2015) interviewed a spokesman for Manchester city council about why the homeless was banned from using library. Although the report did not touch either the library service policy or council’s homeless service policy, “informal policies” are presented to the public. For the proposed study, it will be valuable to see if staff members who participant the interviews recognise any informal policies that may exist at their library branch regarding the services for the homeless.

Ayers’ (2006) study is in the context of American Library Association (ALA) policy on library services for the poor. Fifteen policy objectives which were proved by the ALA in 1990 are listed in Ayers’ paper. Additionally, the ALA statement of libraries’ role in enabling poor people to participate in a democratic society is highlighted in the paper.

This raises many questions such as whether these policies and attitude would filter down to all libraries because the homeless may still be recognized as “problem patrons”. It raises the question of how “homelessness” is defined by libraries and librarians – should they be banned from using libraries or should they be treated equally? Are there related policies in Auckland Libraries? If yes, are they relevant or need to be amended? If not, is the Poor People’s policy on library services necessary? This will be discussed in the final report once interview results are analysed.

THEME 3: PUBLIC LIBRARIES’ HOMELESS SERVICES (INITIATIVES/CHALLENGES)

Most of the library and information science literature explores the potential services models and challenges for the homeless.

From public library policy’s perspective, Muggleton (2013) states that false assumptions and reify perceptions should be avoided. He points out that public libraries could serve homeless people in better ways such as extending inclusion, adopting a more relaxed attitude towards some challenging behaviours, take wider efforts, and so on.

Effective public libraries’ outreach to homeless people is explored in some research (Ayers, 2006; MacGillivray, Ardell & Curwen, 2010; Willett & Broadley, 2011). Ayers (2006) highlights “e-libraries” model in remote areas. Some public libraries in America built e-libraries to increase outreach services to the economically disadvantaged communities. Collaborations with other institutions also helps to close the gap in the Digital Divide (Ayers, 2006). Although this study was conducted ten years ago, this e-libraries model is worth testing in the digital era especially considering the digital services for the homeless. MacGillivray, Ardell and Curwen’s research (2010) research examines the main factors of three institutions -libraries, churches, and schools--that were part of homeless families’ lives. It is not a typical library literature, but outreach librarians may get ideas for their outreach services to homeless families from this study.

Some studies look at initiatives public libraries take to serve the homeless better. Hill's article introduces several innovative ways that public libraries offer to homeless teens (2016). This article focuses on one subpopulation of the homeless—homeless teens. Although there are challenges and barriers to maintaining the ALA's policy on serving the homeless, Hill (2016) points out that it is still possible to create effective library programs for homeless teens if public libraries work with other social service providers.

Comito (2015) also highlights the partnerships which helps libraries meet new needs from the homeless. Working with social workers, and raising funds from library's in-house café and local shops, Denver Public Library offered fun services to the homeless in September 2015. A not-for-profit organization Lava Mae, located in San Francisco has connected with The San Francisco Library since September 2015. Showers are provided on the Lava Mae's bus, which parks outside the library. At the same time, library's health and safety associates provide outreach services to the homeless who are waiting to use the showers.

Connections with other agencies to provide target services to the homeless become more and more important (Torres, 2015). In Torres' article, the idea of "working together" is highlighted. The feedback from patrons proves that bringing all the services at one spot benefit both patrons and the library. It will be interesting to find out the relationship between Auckland Central Library and City Mission in the proposed study regarding the Book Club and Movie Club services for the homeless. Where these studies explore the innovative ways to serve the homeless, the challenges public libraries facing are recurring. Bullard (2002) makes the point that the issues with problem patrons and reader rage will still exist. This point is from the controversial idea that the homeless are "problem patron" which receives growing emphasis in the library literature. In Bullard's article, she suggests that libraries should acknowledge the problem, and have a formal written code of conduct to define patrons' behaviours. Staffing, training, and communication, outside resources, local authorities and other ways are recommended in Bullard's article as well. In relation to the proposed study, library's policy and librarians' perspectives regarding the services for the homeless will be explored.

THEME 4: NEW ZEALAND SECTOR

Homelessness in New Zealand has been acknowledged widely by the authorities and media.

Bellamy's (2014) research on the homelessness in New Zealand gives us the background information of this topic. "Region Estimates" shows that homelessness is particular an issue in Auckland, Christchurch, and Wellington. Most of the homeless in this report are sleeping rough or living rough. This report resonates to the mainstream media's reports on this topic (Amore, 2016; NZ Herald, 2016; Radio NZ, 2016; Stuff, 2016). City Mission's (2016a, 2016b) regular media release highlights the problem in central Auckland area, especially the rising numbers of rough sleepers.

A project 'An insight into the experience of rough sleeping in central Auckland' was conducted by Auckland Council in 2015 (Auckland Council, 2015). In-depth, semi-structured interviews were carried out with thirteen people who were sleeping rough in central Auckland. This study may increase the understanding of the experience of rough sleeping, and help us identify the new opportunities to take innovative approaches to finding the solutions for the homeless. However, lacking the public library's context is the gap which will be explored in the proposed study.

Literature Review Summary

The four themes are generally related to homelessness issues within the public library context. Little has been studied from homeless' perspectives in the New Zealand Public Library sector. The project will give insight into how rough sleepers see Public Libraries and what their real needs from us are within New Zealand context. Results will show whether there is a gap between how Auckland Libraries may have intended their Policy on library services for homeless to be viewed and how it is acted upon in the library setting.

Interviewing staff members will provide insight into their perspectives on the services for homeless, and their understanding of homelessness. Interview results will provide the opportunity for comparison as well as discussion of the implications.

Study Objectives and Research Questions

The objectives of the study are formed through the following research questions:

1. What are rough sleepers' experiences in the public libraries in Auckland?
2. How do rough sleepers view public libraries in Auckland?
3. What do rough sleepers need from public libraries in Auckland?
4. What are the difficulties and challenges for rough sleepers to use public libraries in Auckland?
5. What are the experiences and opinions of staff from Auckland Central City Library's on serving the homeless?

These questions have been chosen because of the three main focus areas: the homeless patrons' experiences and views on public libraries' services, staff members' perspectives, and Auckland Libraries' relevant Policy. Gaining information from the three questions will fill a gap in New Zealand library literature on this topic, although the homelessness issues already attract authorities' and media's attentions. The purpose of this study is not to argue whether the homeless patrons are problem patrons or not. The aim is to test whether we are doing the right things for them. Furthermore, once published, it may influence Auckland Library policy's development in the future.

Research design

Methodology

This project will use a qualitative methodology in the form of case study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Auckland Central City Library has started Book Club and Movie Club services for homeless patrons since 2015. Considering the unique qualities of these two services there, Auckland Central City Library will be used as a case study to promote understanding of rough sleepers' real needs. The advantage of case study research is the depth of investigation, flexibility, uniqueness, and narrative reporting (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). The major limitation of case study is only one library is involved so the findings may not be generalizable to other situations (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). The challenges of case

study research are also mentioned “in terms that it can be viewed as an intrusion in subjects’ lives and can lead to a simplistic world view” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p.164).

In this case study, extensive data including interviews, observations, documents, and past programs records will be collected. Interviews will be in-depth, but carried out in an informal and friendly way (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). One-on-one interviews will be used in this study. The goal is to approach rough sleepers and former rough sleepers as customers in Auckland Libraries to get their perspectives on the services provided by the libraries. Restricting the research to homeless adults means time will not be used to get permissions from parents of homeless children and teenagers.

Interview questions will be related to the research questions and research problem. General questions and possible follow-up sub questions will be prepared in advance. List of questions will be limited to a small number. Questions which can stimulate an informative conversation will be used.

Observations, documents, and past records will also be used to collect data. As a staff member in Auckland Central Library, it is easy for me to conduct the free-flowing observations of the services we offer to homeless to collect data, especially after I started doing Movie Club for homeless in the library. Thus, documents and past records can be easily found and used for this study after gaining permission from Auckland Libraries.

The goal is to collect extensive data on homeless patrons, services provided by Auckland Central Library, and staff from Auckland Central Library.

Population and Sample

The case study in this project will focus on rough sleepers and/or former homeless patrons. As stated before, in-depth interviews will be carried out with them who were/are sleeping rough in Central Auckland. Ideally 6-8 people will be recruited to participate in the in-depth interviews.

Readers Service Team at Auckland Central City Library has agreed to be part of this study. This team has a close relationship with homeless patrons, and initiated

services for this group at Central City Library. Four staff members will be interviewed after gaining permission from Auckland Libraries.

Due to the limited period, only one subpopulation of homeless people—rough sleepers are selected in this research project.

Data collection

The purpose of this study is to find the rough sleepers' perspectives on public libraries' services, and get some staff members' voices. Thus, in-depth interviews were chosen to get deep answers as “they are well suited to asking about polarizing, sensitive, confidential, or highly personal topics” (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013, p.117). Additionally, audio-recording was chosen as a tool to document the interviews with permissions from the participants (Guest at al., 2013; Leedy & Ormrod, 2015).

Based on the general interview typology, and scope and structure of an in-depth interview guide quoted in Guest at al. (2013), I decided to do semi-structured interviews with my participants. Data was collected from eight interviews with rough sleepers, and four interviews with staff members from Auckland Libraries.

I use descriptive questions at the beginning of the interviews as a warm-up for both the participants and the interviewer. Additionally, structural questions and comparison questions followed to discover more information and provide illumination to answers the participants have already given (Guest at al., 2013; Leedy & Ormrod, 2015).

The semi-structured interviews with rough sleepers and former homeless patrons included the following four areas of questions:

1. General questions about using public libraries
2. Questions about using services at Auckland Central City Library
3. Questions about personal expectations from public libraries and librarians
4. Other comments

The interviews with staff members focus on different perspectives which are based and drawn from the literature review:

1. General questions about programmes/events for homeless patrons
2. Questions about interaction, and participation
3. Questions about personal interests/needs
4. Questions about libraries and librarians' roles in homeless patrons' lives
5. Other comments

One-on-one interviews were carried out at a meeting room or on site at Auckland Central City Library. Staff members' interviews were carried out in the first week of March as it is easy for me to arrange a time with each of them at work. Following their interviews, I approached five rough sleepers and former homeless patrons at library who were willing to participate in the interviews. Colleagues from the library also helped me find three more former homeless patrons who participated in the interviews.

All interviews were recorded using my cell phone, and saved in my computer with a password access protection. All the participants had been given the participant information sheet (Appendix 2), and signed the participant consent form (Appendix 3). Copies of the interview schedule are included in Appendix 4 of this report.

Limitations

The pool of people participating in this study is not a diverse group who may be generally high-functioning. Thus, the results of this project could be more broadly applied to homeless populations in general if a larger sample was surveyed.

Ethical Considerations

Considering human participants' involvement in my research project, Victoria University of Wellington's School of Information Management Human Ethics Committee will be approving my research. I will also seek approval from Auckland Libraries through work email as I will conduct interviews with Auckland Central City

Library's staff members. The reply from Auckland Libraries will be submitted as written approval.

Throughout the research process, I made sure the interviews were conducted within the ethical guidelines which emphasize the principles of respect for persons and autonomy. Interviews' participants were asked to sign a consent form which outlined the research's ethical guidelines, along with an information sheet for participants are included in the appendix of this report.

Data analysis

Approach to Data Analysis

Interview data and observation notes will be content analysed using the theories and framework from Hersberger's studies on the homeless and information needs (1999, 2002-2003, 2005):

5. The homeless are not a homogeneous population. Thus, they have different information needs depending on their individual backgrounds.
6. The library's attitude of "worthy" versus "unworthy" users.
7. Not all of the information needs of the homeless can be met by public librarians.
8. Librarians' attitudes are the primary issues in the context of providing services to the homeless.
9. Treating the homeless as "problem patron" is discrimination.
10. Libraries are a safe place in which to better the lives of the homeless.
11. Developing relevant policy at local and national level is an important goal.

Considering the proposed study is within New Zealand public libraries context, a new pattern may emerge.

Transcribing the data

Following the transcription of the interviews, the emerging themes were categorized using a grounded theoretical theory (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). Due to the limited time frame, the researcher took notes and wrote down important points about the data using the constant comparative method of analysis (Glaser & Strauss, cited in Leedy

& Ormrod, 2015). After comparing the data for each interview, previous theories were reevaluated (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The themes of rough sleepers' public libraries' experiences and their use of Auckland Libraries' services, combined with staff members' feedback, continued to expand in depth. Opinions and ideas were identified which generated more themes and categories. Based on these, the theoretical basis of the research has been shaped.

Transcriptions began at the early stage which gave the researcher enough time to move from open coding to axial coding (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). The researcher used transcriptions to capture the details of my in-depth interviews. However, I waited until the end of the transcription process to look at library programme's statics and documents which might bias my interpretations of data.

Once all the data was collected, the themes and categories were analyzed relating to the library information literature reviews and external factors.

Findings

Rough sleepers and formerly homeless patrons' interviews

RQ1: Using public libraries

Firstly, the three rough sleepers and five formerly homeless patrons were asked to talk about their user experiences at public libraries. Their responses to this category were summarized in the five following sections:

- a) General demographic characteristics
- b) Library membership/regular patrons
- c) Central City Library
- d) Sleeping in the library
- e) A safe place

- a) General demographic characteristics

At the time of the interviews, the three rough sleepers were residing in the Auckland CBD area. The five formerly homeless patrons currently have housing, but they have experienced long periods of homelessness before. Seven of the interviewees are

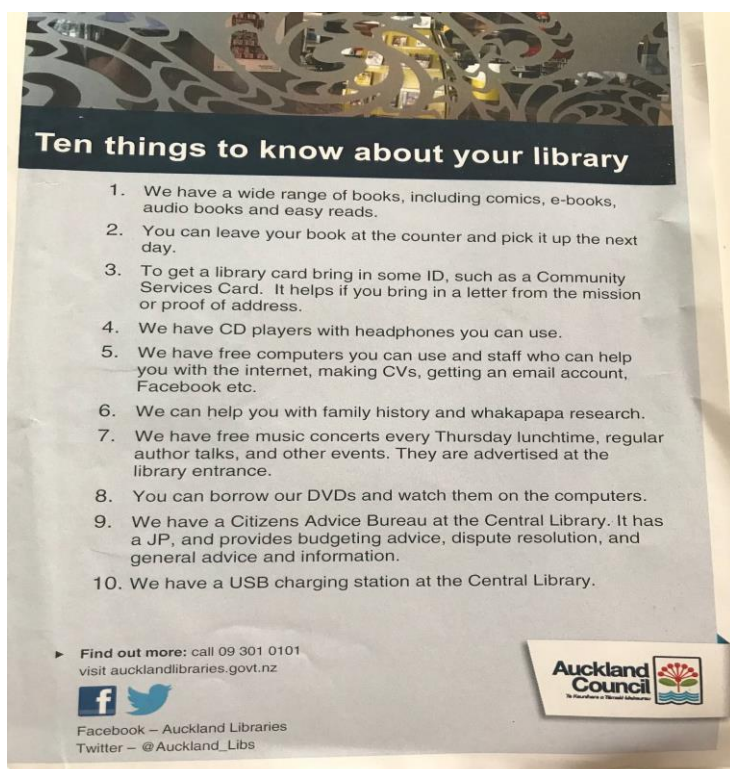
male and one is female. Only one participant is in his early 20s, the rest of them are approximately aged 30-50 years old.

b) Library membership/regular patrons

According to the homelessness research in library literature, there are barriers for homeless patrons in using the library resources. These barriers should be removed as many homeless have interest and enthusiasm for libraries (Combat Poverty Agency, 2004; Willett & Broadley, 2011). This is reflected in the interviews; i.e. seven of them have library membership, and one does not but he still visits the library every day. Two of them had their local libraries' memberships before moving to Auckland. Some participants use the free computers to search for jobs and housing information. Some love reading the books in the library, or taking the books out. All of the resources in the library help them keep updated with things.

“Keep you connected, you know.” –One formerly homeless patron said.

Additionally, Auckland Libraries have changed their conditions for membership which removed barriers for the homeless. Previously members were required to show photo ID and proof of address, but now (as seen in the flyer below) a community services card and a letter from Auckland City Mission will suffice.



One of the formerly homeless patrons mentioned in the interview that becoming a library member is fascinating because “Membership is free” — if the person lives in Auckland, they can get a free membership card from Auckland Libraries (Auckland Libraries, 2017). Furthermore, holding a Library Card means a lot to some of the homeless people (Lawry, cited in Kelleher, 2013). For example, another formerly homeless patron said, “I enjoyed being a library member because you got the library card!”

c) Central City Library

It has been observed that central libraries in big cities can often be a hub or shelter for the homeless community (“Central Library Recognized for Services to Homeless”, 2011; Fraga, 2016). When asked about the library they visit the most, all the participants say Auckland Central City Library. One of them also visits two community libraries because they are closer to where he lives. They gave plenty of reasons of why they visit the library; as mentioned in the above, resources and the facilities at Central Library are the main things attracting them to visit frequently. Additionally, it is easy to access, and they can meet with people and friends.

One formerly homeless patron highlighted the staff when she talked about the library she often visits:

“This one. I think just the variety here. Staff. You know you get to know the staff. And, uh, pretty much the fact that very welcoming”.

The two rough sleepers who are currently sleeping rough in the Auckland CBD area said they just come to Auckland Central City Library every day. “Because it is the closest library, and it is very useful.”

d) Sleeping in the library

Another important thing for rough sleepers is sleeping in the library, based on the responses from the interviews, although prejudices and assumptions towards homeless people have misled library policy development in the past (Ayers, 2006; Muggleton, 2013; Ruhlmann, 2014).

When asked how he used the public library in the past, the rough sleeper said “sleep.” Reading is not his thing. He does use other resources in the library such as the computers, look for jobs, and housing information, but sleeping in the library is still an important thing for him. He also pointed out that sometimes they were told off for sleeping by the security guard. “This is non-fair treatment”. Another rough sleeper responded that sometimes they just need ten or fifteen minutes nap to refresh their mind which they think should be supported by the library.

A formerly homeless patron’s answer may explain why they choose to sleep in the library:

“You know when I was homeless, I had nowhere to go. I came here (the Central Library), read a book, keep warm, out of the wind. Or go to the Auckland City Mission for food. And I came here.”

e) A safe place

According to the homelessness and library literature, the library is a safe place for homeless patrons to stay (Ayers, 2006; Hersberger, 1999, 2002-2003; Hersberger & Columnist, 2005; Hill, 2016; Kelleher, 2013; Ruhlmann, 2014). All the participants agree with that.

One formerly homeless patron said he did not have problems in the library. “Good staff members” were highlighted by another formerly homeless patron. In his opinion, the librarians at Auckland Central City Library understand and culturally sensitive which made him feel safe and comfortable. Another formerly homeless patron finds coming to the library is like having an easy day for her. “You can just talk to people, meet people”, she said.

RQ2: Using services at Auckland Central City Library

As mentioned before, currently Auckland Central City Library is offering three clubs for rough sleepers which are also open to anyone from the community. One of the clubs—Friday Reading Revolutions is a quite new service, so the questions are mainly focusing on the other two services –Monday Movies and Mission Book Club

which have been going on for nearly two years. Their responses to this category were summarized in following three sections:

- a) Personal involvement in the initial planning
- b) Motivations to join in
- c) Feelings when joining in

a) Personal involvement in the initial planning

In some library outreach studies, it is pointed out that developing partnerships with relevant organizations is important (Willett & Broadley, 2011). Thus, in the second part of the interviews with rough sleepers and formerly homeless patrons, their personal involvement was raised as an important question.

For two formerly homeless patrons, it is not necessary to be part of the initial planning. One of them is happy to go along with any ideas. The other one said getting involved is not the thing for him. The rest of the participants are willing to give some inputs if they were asked to, especially two rough sleepers think they should be part of the planning as they have some knowledge and thoughts to give.

One formerly homeless patron who had been part of the initial planning for Auckland Central City Library said, a lot of ideas came out of the hui they had with the library three years ago. Monday Movies and Wednesday Book Club are the outcome from the partnership between the homeless community and the library. When talking about the homeless community's involvement in the initial planning, he pointed out:

“People put a lot of energy to do this. They come here with wide attitude. They come here to be involved, have voice that they don't have anywhere else. And that's really important for them.”

b) Motivations to join in

Homeless have a lot of needs which cannot all be met in the library (Hersberger, 2002-2003; Hersberger & Columnist, 2005; Kelleher, 2013). They do not just come to the library to sleep, but often come to read for entertainment and use the Internet (Kelleher, 2013). Although library may be a shelter for some homeless people, it is

also a gateway to a new life (Ayers, 2006). These findings are partly reflected in this research, but participants also expressed their desires to use the library resources just like any other patrons.

- *Socializing*: All the participants said they are keen to interact with other people when they join in on the Monday Movies or the Wednesday Book Club. One formerly homeless patron said he likes listening when club members talk about authors and books. The knowledge is quite profound. "I find it is really amazing. People don't understand what homeless know". Some other participants mentioned they like to talk to people and meet friends when they join in. This kind of social communication is what they need.

- *The environment/Variety*: One rough sleeper responded that he likes the environment in the library. Especially when he comes to the Monday Movies, he feels loved and respected. Another rough sleeper highlighted the variety in the library. He said every time when he comes to the library he has a different experience which is quite interesting.

- *Librarians*: Both Monday Movies and Wednesday Book Club are hosted by library staff. One of the rough sleepers mentioned the librarians he meets each time he joins the Monday Movies is the main reason for him. He loves the communication with the staff which makes him feel like he is being treated fairly.

- *Showing a positive life attitude*: One formerly homeless patron explained his motivation, "My motivation is just to get up every day, just do something. I don't want to be lazy." One rough sleeper said he wants the homeless people off New Zealand's streets, so he comes to the library and joins the clubs to show people his positive life attitude.

- *Free coffee*: Library provides free coffee and snacks before the movie and book club. It may not be the main reason for people but one rough sleeper mentioned it as a bonus for him to join in.

- *Free educational opportunity*: One formerly homeless patron highlighted the educational aspect of Monday Movies. He said for homeless people there are not

many facilities for them to go and watch movies. The library gives them free access to the screening which allows learning to happen.

c) Feelings when joining in

In the homelessness and library literature there is not much attention paid to the homeless patrons' feelings. Thus, this question was highlighted in the interviews. Half of the participants did not respond to this. One formerly homeless patron's answer may explain— "I guess there is not much feeling. It's all based on trust."

Two rough sleepers responded differently. They said when they come and join the Monday Movies they feel good. Coming to the library allows them to feel very comfortable and they appreciate that. One of them emphasized that he feels a sense of belonging and respect. He feels like he is part of the team and part of the community.

RQ3: Personal expectations from the library

Little study has been done from homeless patrons' perspectives in library literature. Thus, responses from the participants on this question may help develop a better understanding of the rough sleeping community.

- *Smile*: When asked their expectations from the library, one rough sleeper said "Smile!". He comes to the Auckland Central City Library every day. For him this is the only thing he wants to see when he walks into the library.
- "*Somebody is doing a good job*": Talking about expectations, one formerly homeless patron admitted he does have expectations from the library. He thinks Auckland Libraries is doing a good job, especially the staff. His information needs are always met under librarians' help. This impressed him.
- "*I don't expect too much*": One formerly homeless patron's response may represent some other participants. He said he doesn't expect too much from the library. For him, the library is a place to relax. He can use the space and borrow some books.

RQ4: Suggestions/Recommendations to the library

- *More flyers and posters:* One rough sleeper is hoping there are more other organizations' flyers and posters in the library which could give them information or support for the rough sleeping community.
- *More events:* "So much going on in the library", said a formerly homeless patron. He is hoping more events can be held to cover the wider community.
- *Opening longer:* Two of them suggested that extending libraries' opening hours would be a significant impact on Auckland Central, not just for the homeless community but for everyone. "Overseas libraries can open until midnight. It might be a bit ambitious for New Zealand, but I would definitely like at least a couple of more hours during the week", said one formerly homeless patron.
- *Another security guard:* There are incidents happening from time to time in the library. One formerly homeless patron said if Auckland Central City Library could have one more security guard that can help.
- *More welcoming and inclusive:* "I know a lot of homeless don't cause trouble," said one formerly homeless patron. So, he suggested that the library's facilities may stretch a little and be more welcoming and inclusive for everyone.
- *Changing the library's role:* One formerly homeless patron claimed that now the community is looking at Auckland Central City Library as a main facility for general purposes: "It is not just a library, because you are accommodating the whole community."

Staff members' interviews

Four staff members have been agreed to participate in the interviews. Based on their responses, five categories are summarized in the following sessions:

RQ1: Staff's involvement and observations

Over the past twenty years there has been several studies focusing on effective public libraries' programmes for homeless people (Hersberger, 1999; Hill, 2016;

Miller, 2011; Willett & Broadley, 2011). Most of the services have library staff's involvement which give them better understanding of the homeless community. Additionally, partnerships with other organizations are highlighted in some studies. These are reflected in this part of the research, which is based on the answers from three participants being involved in the services for rough sleepers.

- *Staff's involvement:* Three of the staff members who participated in the interviews have been involved in the services for rough sleeping community for a while. The involvement gives them both good knowledge of the programmes and the background information. An important point they made is although these services were developed as targeted programmes for the rough sleeping community, they are open to anyone just like any other programme in the library.
- *Partnership:* Speaking of the initial planning of these services, they all mentioned the partnership with Auckland City Mission, and the rough sleeping community. Auckland Central City Library held a hui with the rough sleeping community two years ago, which a lot of good ideas came from. One staff member highlighted it as a "lounge hui" because Auckland Central City Library is considered as a lounge to people who live on the streets. The co-design idea is also reflected in Wednesday Book Club. The Book Club was initially set up by the Auckland City Mission but is now hosted by library staff with the Mission providing snacks. Reading Revolutions is different as it was brought to the library as a finished package by a charity.
- *Participants:* The participants of Monday Movies and Book Club are slightly different. For Monday Movies, most of participants are male rough sleepers or formerly homeless patrons in their late 30s, 40s and 50s. Averagely there are 20-30 people coming in every week. Based on one staff member's observations, occasionally some women and teenagers join in. They all have some knowledge of movies. Compared to Monday Movies, Book Club is a smaller group of readers and book lovers, but there is still variety in them. Some of them are rough sleepers while some are not. Additionally, they bring new people with them. Some people may just come once and don't come back.
- *Interactions:* Interactions here not only refer to the participants but also between the staff and the participants. Most of the participants are keen to interact with each other

and some of them are already friends outside the library. For those who did not know each other before, friendships have got stronger since they have come in.

Interactions between participants and staff members who are hosting the clubs are frequent. This helps build a good relationship between rough sleeping community and the library staff. It helps with the conflict management, and misconception towards homeless patrons. It also increases the knowledge, and the connection between the community and the staff. "I think a few years ago a lot of the staff would talk about homeless people in quite a derogatory way, and I think that doesn't happen much anymore", said one staff. As a result, it builds the trust within the community.

- *Reasons that people joining in:* One staff member pointed out that Auckland Central City Library plays a unique role in CBD area because it accepts everyone from the community. The welcoming atmosphere makes the library a comfortable place for anyone from the community. Although library and Mission provide free coffee and snacks prior to the sessions, no one comes in particularly for food. Another reason is these routines (joining in the clubs in the library regularly) are important for those rough sleepers to feel they have a life, and they have things to do.

RQ2: Meeting homeless patrons' needs

According to the homelessness and library literature, homeless community has different sub-populations who have different information needs, but not all their needs can be met by the public librarians (Ayers, 2006; Hersberger, 1999). All the participants agree with that. "They are such a mixed background of people. You can't just put a label 'homeless' on them", said one staff. She pointed out that some rough sleepers are hugely intelligent. Once they come to the Book Club, they have a lot of information in their head. They can just recall facts and figures, completely unlike what people may expect from a homeless person.

Like any other groups in the community, homeless patrons do have different information needs. Although their needs cannot be all met in the library, there are other ways to offer help. One staff member pointed out that, many homeless patrons are looking for housing, and jobs information. They want to know their rights, and the benefits they can get. The library doesn't offer the consultation services on those

things, but librarians often help them get onto the computers, and find information online to a certain extent. Another staff member also mentioned the Citizen Advice Bureau in the library is a good combination service at Auckland Central City Library. Thus, this goes back to the importance of “Partnership” based on the staff’s observations in RQ1. Library may not be able to help with any needs from the homeless community, but it can help connect people with other organizations’ services.

RQ3: Library’s and librarians’ roles

In librarians’ culture, there are some personal attitudes and biases when faced with serving the homeless which goes decades back (Ayers, 2006; Hersberger, 1999; Hersberger & Columnist, 2005; Muggleton, 2013). Treating homeless patrons as “problem patrons” has been a common phenomenon in the library (McNeil & Johnson, 1996). Based on this background information, four staff members all reflected their jobs and their relationships with colleagues when it comes to serving the homeless patrons. Library’s role in this area is also discussed.

- *Disagreements between staff members:* When facing the services for the homeless patrons, there are still different attitudes among the staff members. “Could you go, and deal with one of your homeless people”, recalled one staff who is involved in services for the rough sleepers regularly. Of course, there are other staff members who quite often go out of their way to help homeless patrons. Treating homeless patrons as normal customers can be challenging for the staff, although they do not even necessarily need help or other special treatments sometimes.

- *Reasons behind it:* At Auckland Central City Library, there was the rough sleepers’ training specifically done for the staff. Thus, staff members who have been working there for some time might get the chance to know the rough sleeping community. One of the staff who had that training said, “it was really educational and the sense that it made you stop and think about your pruderies, and your preconceive ideas”. For the inexperienced staff, it might be challenging for them to deal with the homeless patrons. Additionally, incidents of thefts at Auckland Central City Library paint the homeless patrons in a bad light. All these factors can lead to the misconceptions, simplifications or assumptions over homeless patrons. Another staff

member also pointed out that treating homeless patrons as “problem patrons” is deep-rooted in the librarian culture.

- *Staff's attitude is changing:* One staff member noticed that staff attitudes have changed in the last ten years, although it is a long way to go. The targeted programmes at Auckland Central City Library for the rough sleeping community gives staff opportunities to talk to the community which may help staff get better understanding of the community. But the volunteered interaction between staff and homeless patrons is still not common.

- *What they have learned:* Auckland Central City Library has taken the challenges from the community, and turned it into relationship building. This involves the co-design and services developing for the community, with the community. All the staff members been interviewed said treating homeless patrons is just like treating any other customers. “It’s all perception. Library is a place for everyone. Don’t make assumptions”, all of them said.

RQ4: Rough sleeping community and public libraries

According to Ayers’s (2006) research, homeless patrons find library is a safe place and a shelter to stay which becomes a gateway to a new life. When asked whether library is a safe place for homeless community, three staff members agree. One staff member argues that library should not be the only place to better anyone’s life, but libraries fall into a spot in people’s needs whether they are not homeless or not. Another staff member claimed that library’s role is not to better people’s lives, but compared to some public places it is a safer place for homeless patrons to stay.

When asked about developing relevant policy at national and local level, they have different opinions. One staff member doesn’t think the policy should be specific about the homeless, because the library should treat every patron the same regardless of their backgrounds. Two staff members strongly agree that relevant policy is a good thing to have; to refer to. Having resources such as funding is highlighted by another staff member: “It is a good thing to recognize it at a national level, because rough sleepers and homeless people are all over New Zealand”.

RQ5: Other comments

After the discussions, all the participants made some comments:

- *Changes for the programmes:* One staff member said she would like to organize literacy programmes for homeless patrons. “I’m sure we could provide space for it, and support for. We’re not the teachers, but we could facilitate”, said she. She thinks it can make a huge difference in their lives if they can read--reading signs, reading forms, just some basic things like these.
- *Giving them a voice:* Two staff members both mentioned the importance of partnership which is a key when dealing with the homeless community. Rough sleepers often have a lot of decisions made for them. Or they are interpreted in a certain way. It is better to use those connections in those partnerships to design the best programme or let them design themselves. Homeless patrons can have a voice. The library does not have to be the one to drive everything.
- *Can library do more?* One staff members said, based on the feedback from the rough sleeping community, the most things they want are shower and lockers. Movies, or book club are something they want, but they mostly want somewhere to live. “I would like to see in the future, everyone has a home because that’s all central and local governments should work towards”, said the staff.

Discussion

The goal of this study is not to argue whether homeless patrons are “problem patrons”. It aims to explore the real needs from the rough sleepers coming to the library, and let the staff member reflect on the services for the homeless community. Although the sample of this research is not large, this study has been able to give rough sleepers a voice which opens a window for people to get to know them. Additionally, staff members’ feedback resonates to rough sleepers’ interviews which give a deeper understanding of this topic.

When recruiting the participants for this research project’s interviews, one rough sleeper was surprised to hear that a library staff is doing a study like this. He kept asking whether it is an ongoing project because he wants to be heard. Although this study has not given the answer to such questions, what it has shown is a sincere dialogue with rough sleeping community which they desperately want. One staff member mentioned that homeless patrons are quite often told to do something because they do not have a voice. Thus, this community is used to the decisions made for them. It explains that most of the rough sleepers and formerly homeless patrons are keen to talk.

Talking to your homeless patrons, just as talking to any other people from the community would benefit both sides. They want to give inputs if needed. This comes to a point highlighted in the staff members’ interviews- “Partnership”. Four staff members are all impressed by the partnership with other organizations and the rough sleeping community’s involvement in the initial planning phase. The community gave many ideas some of which were developed into services at Auckland Central City Library. Two years passed. Services are still going, and new programmes are being added in. It turned the challenges into building the community. What Auckland Libraries has learned on this journey will help the wider library community to serve the homeless patrons better.

Furthermore, the findings point to a reluctance to be labelled “homeless patrons” by rough sleeping community. All the rough sleepers and formerly homeless patrons expressed their wish which is fair treatment. They do not expect too much from the library. They do have different information needs compared to other patrons.

Nevertheless, they feel there is still prejudice and assumptions over homeless patrons. This is reflected in the staff members' interviews. One staff member pointed out that there are still some staff that assumed anyone that behaves badly is homeless. "I don't think we need to think homeless as an exception. Staff don't know who is homeless, and we don't need to know", said one staff member.

Staff's reflections here point to the public library's role in the community. One staff member mentioned, the public library is a place for everyone because they are community based. In the library literature, public library is described as a safer place and a shelter for homeless patrons. This can be true, but a formerly homeless patron claimed that the rough sleeping community sees Auckland Central City Library as their lounge. It is not just a library for them, but it is also a main facility for general purpose. This may represent a lot of people from the rough sleeping community. Acceptance of their library's view and aspirations of self-determination can be interpreted as a new fundamental theory to define the public library's role in the community. Additionally, it raises some questions of what else public libraries can offer to the community.

The stories staff shared in the interviews are reflective of recommendations in Willett and Broadley's (2011, p.668) research-- staff training "in awareness and skills (through partners) in order to ensure staff have a knowledge of relevant issues". Staff members who have been through the rough sleeping training at Auckland Central City Library found that it was educational. It made them think about their prejudice, and preconceive ideas. For all the rough sleepers, and formerly homeless patrons in the study, librarians are one of the reasons they come to Auckland Central City Library. The development of staff's awareness helps build a good relationship between the staff and the homeless patrons. The data from the staff members' interviews suggests increasing tolerance levels and better understanding of homeless community at Auckland Central City Library. It could be lead by the staff members' involvement in the services for the homeless patrons.

Based on this study, the progress of that relationship appears to be selective rather than radical. Again, it is not only the library's responsibility. The data suggests that the situation of rough sleeping community is not necessarily getting worse if all the stakeholders could work together at both national and local levels. Three staff

members in the study think it is important to develop the policies or get the funding to support the homeless community in the library. Another staff member in the study makes a clear statement:

“The increase in the population (rough sleepers) has a lot to do with government policies. I would like the government policies to change.”

Given this political environment, it is doubtful whether public libraries can accommodate all the challenges rising from the homeless community. What is clear, however, is that good practices and ideas are emerging for serving the rough sleeping community on the Auckland Central City Library’s two-year journey. The homeless patrons’ voice in this study also gives the implications for what the library and other organizations can do for them. There is much further to go, to learn and to explore with the community, for the community.

Direction for future research

Due to the limited time, this study only includes a small scale of sample. Possible future research could consider using different methodologies such as survey or group interviews which will provide a larger sample to work on.

The rough sleeping community is the focused group in this study because most of the homeless patrons at Auckland Central City Library are rough sleepers. However, there are other subpopulations in the homeless community which may be different from rough sleepers. Considering the possible different needs of diverse groups in the homeless community, future studies can focus on other subpopulations' needs within the homeless community.

Additionally, other regions in New Zealand could be included in the future studies. This time only Auckland Central City Library was used as a case study, but it is believed other big cities such as Wellington and Christchurch may have different cases and stories to be explored. This will help the library and other agencies to come to better ideas regarding the services for the homeless community.

Further studies might also examine other organizations and government's involvements in serving the homeless community. An exploration of the relevant policies' changes and developments will be helpful to understand this topic better.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significance of giving rough sleeping community a voice to express their real needs from public library. It also reveals a number of the issues which have raised from the conversations with the staff members.

Throughout the in-depth interviews with rough sleepers and formerly homeless patrons, their experiences at public libraries, especially using services at Auckland Central City Library were exposed to the wider community. Their participation in this study reveals that this community is desperate to be heard because they do not have a voice. Although their information needs cannot be all met at the library, they do not expect too much from the library. What they need is fair treatment; they do not want to be labelled as “homeless patrons” because they are just like anyone else in the community. Prejudice and misconception makes them angry.

Nevertheless, they are grateful for what Auckland Central City Library has done for them. Two years ago, under the partnership with Auckland City Mission, services for rough sleepers were developed at Auckland Central City Library. Two years passed. Those services are still going on, and new programmes are under way. In the interviews, it was quite often heard people saying, “Auckland Central City Library is cool”; “Someone is doing a good job here”. They see this library not just a library. They call it their “lounge”. It is because Auckland Central City Library has turned the challenges to a relationship building.

The staff members’ reflections also approve that getting staff involved and giving relevant training give them good knowledge of the homeless community. It helps develop a better understanding between two sides. Positive outcome is staff’s attitude has changed in the past ten years, based on the staff’s observation in this study. One staff member pointed out that, as librarians, they do not need to know who is a homeless patron in the library. Whether they like or not, they need to treat everyone coming to the library in a same way. But disagreement between staff members when facing the services for the homeless patrons still exists. Treating homeless patrons as “problem patrons” has been rooted deeply in the librarian’s culture. The proof from this study suggests that librarians’ attitude need to change, but it is hard.

The feedback from the rough sleepers, formerly homeless patrons, and staff members also raise a question of public library's role in the community. Is public library just a library or does it need to change its role? Can it be a facility where it can be used to accommodate needs from everyone in the community? What more can public library offer to the homeless community?

These questions also lead to the policies changes or development at both national and local levels. If public libraries need support from other stakeholders to fulfill its promise to the community in the current political environment, it is a big challenge to achieve this goal especially as they are faced with other challenges such as the budget cuts and closure.

This study cannot give all the answers. However, what people appreciate, and have learned on the journey with rough sleeping community at Auckland Central City Library will surely give tips for the wider library community to design the right services for their clients.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: AL's approval

Hao Zhang: INFO 580 - Hao Zhang

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Hao Zhang: INFO 580

Greg Morgan

Mon 6/03/2017 5:07 p.m.

To: Hao Zhang <Hao.Zhang@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz>;

6 March 2017

Hao Zhang: INFO 580

On behalf of Auckland Council's Libraries and Information Department, I am giving approval for Hao Zhang's research topic. Rough sleepers' perceptions of libraries, with our central library as a case study, will be a valuable area of study. It has the support of Hao's managers.

We understand that our library service will be identifiable through this project. Our outreach to homeless people has already featured in media copy, and we intend to present on this topic at the LIANZA conference this year. We know that standard ethics protocols will apply to protect individuals, and have no hesitation in supporting the research. This is an important topic. The sensitivity will be carefully handled. Several of us will assist Hao as she progresses.

Please contact me if you require further information: greg.morgan@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

Regards,
Greg Morgan

Dr Greg Morgan | Pouārahi, Hua Matihiko me ngā Auahatanga
Head of Digital Solutions and Innovation

Ngā Pātaka Kōrero o Tāmaki Makaurau - Auckland Libraries
Ph 09 890 7471 | Extn 46 7471 | Mobile 027 244 1569 | Fax 09 307 7741
Auckland Council, Bledisloe House, 24 Wellesley Street, Level 5 North, Auckland
Visit our website: <http://aucklandlibraries.govt.nz>

<https://mail.aklc.govt.nz/owa/>

7/03/2017

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet



SCHOOL OF INFORMATION MANAGEMENT
TE KURA TIAKI, WHAKAWHITI KŌRERO
LEVEL 5, RUTHERFORD HOUSE, PIPITEA CAMPUS, 23 LAMBTON QUAY, WELLINGTON
PO Box 600, Wellington 6140, New Zealand
Phone +64-4-463 5103 Fax +64-4-463 5446 Email sim@vuw.ac.nz Website www.victoria.ac.nz/sim

Participant Information Sheet

Research Project Title: Homeless (rough sleepers) perspectives on public libraries: Using Auckland Central City Library as a case study

Researcher: Hao Zhang, School of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington

As part of the completion of my Master of Information Studies, this study is designed to investigate what the homeless patrons - rough sleepers' real needs regarding using the public libraries. Rough sleepers and formerly homeless patrons will be interviewed to find out their perspectives on public libraries' services. Library staff will also be interviewed to gather multiple perspectives. Victoria University requires, and has granted, approval from the School's Human Ethics Committee.

I am inviting rough sleepers and formerly homeless patrons, and library staff who work for Auckland Libraries to participate in this research. They will be asked to take part in a thirty-minute interview individually. The interviews will be held in a meeting room in the Central Library. Permission will be asked to record the interview, and a transcript of the interview will be sent to participants for checking.

Participation is voluntary, and you will not be identified personally in any written report produced as a result of this research, including possible publication in academic conferences and journals. All material collected will be kept confidential, and will be viewed only by myself and my supervisor, Dr Brenda Chawner, Senior Lecturer of Library and Information Management. The research report will be submitted for marking to the School of Information Management, and subsequently deposited in the University Library. Should any participant wish to withdraw from the project, they may do so until four weeks after the interview, and the data collected up to that point will be destroyed. All data collected from participants will be destroyed within two years after the completion of the project. Participants are emailed the summary of the research results once the research report has been submitted if they have expressed this wish and have provided an email address.

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project, please contact me at zhangphyl@myvuw.ac.nz or telephone 02102852166, or you may contact my supervisor Dr Brenda Chawner (Senior Lecturer of Library and Information Management) at brenda.chawner@vuw.ac.nz or telephone 04 4635780. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the School of Information Management Chair Dr Philip Calvert, email philip.calvert@vuw.ac.nz or telephone 04-4636629.

Hao Zhang

Appendix 3: Consent to participation in research form



SCHOOL OF INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

TE KURA TIAKI, WHAKAWHITI KŌRERO

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Participant Consent Form

Research Project Title: Homeless (rough sleepers) perspectives on public libraries: Using Auckland Central City Library as a case study

Researcher: Hao Zhang, School of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I may withdraw myself (or any information I have provided) from this project, without having to give reasons, by e-mailing zhangphyl@myvuw.ac.nz or calling 021-02852166 (Hao Zhang's cell phone number) until four weeks after the interview.

I understand that any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and their supervisor, the published results will not use my name, and that no opinions will be attributed to me in any way that will identify me.

I understand that Auckland Libraries (AL) will be identifiable as AL are the only public library in New Zealand running programmes for the homeless.

I understand that the data I provide will not be used for any other purpose or released to others.

I understand that, if this interview is audio recorded, the recording and transcripts of the interviews will be erased within 2 years after the conclusion of the project. Furthermore, I have the opportunity to contact Hao Zhang after the interview by email or phone call to check the transcripts of the interview (transcripts provided in a formal written way or explained on the phone) and make corrections to it if needed.

Please indicate (by ticking the boxes below) which of the following apply:

- I consent to information or opinions which I have given being attributed to me in any reports on this research, so long as I am identified only by my role.
- or**
- I consent to information or opinions which I have given being attributed to me in any reports on this research, so long as I am identified only by a pseudonym

- I would like to receive a summary of the results of this research when it is completed through email or mail.

- I agree to this interview being audio recorded.

Signed:

Name of participant:

Date:

Appendix 4: Interview sheets



SCHOOL OF INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

TE KURA TIAKI, WHAKAWHITI KŌRERO

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Questions for rough sleepers/formerly homeless patrons

- It is acknowledged that there are no right or wrong answers. Answers are purely your experiences and opinions

A. General questions about using public libraries

Q1: *“Are you a regular patron at Auckland Libraries? When did you become a library member? What do you like being an AL member?”*

Q2: *“Which library do you visit most of the time? Can you explain why?”*

Q3A: *“How did you use libraries in the past?” (e.g. borrowing books)*

Q3B: *“How do you use libraries NOW?” (e.g. using public computers, joining in Clubs)?*

Q3C: *“What are your general experiences at libraries? Do you see libraries as a safe place for you to stay? Comparing Q1B and Q1C, are there any changes in the way you use libraries?”*

B. Questions about using services at Auckland Central City Library

Q4: *“Have you heard of Book Club and Monday Movies for homeless at Auckland Central City Library?”*

Q5: *“Were you involved in planning these two services? If yes, to what extent? If not, do you think you should be part of the initial planning? Why?”*

Q6A: *“Do you attend any of these two clubs? If yes, what is your motivation of joining in? Are you keen to interact with each other or make friends? And what is your feeling when you participant in the club?”*

Q6B: *“If not, why?”*

Q7: *“Are these two services you are expecting from libraries?”*

Q8: *“What other services at Auckland Central City Library do you use?”*

Q9: *“When do you need help, do you go to the staff?”*

C. Questions about personal expectations from public libraries and librarians

Q10: *“What do you expect when you come to the libraries?”*

Q11: *“What suggestions would you make to improve AL’s services?”*

D. Any other comments?

Questions for staff who run or organize programmes/events for homeless patrons

- It is acknowledged that there are no right or wrong answers. Answers are purely your observations and opinions
-

A. General questions about programmes/events for homeless patrons:

Q1: *"Tell me about the programmes/events for rough sleepers/homeless patrons you're involved in"*

Q2A: *"Do the programmes/events you're involved in deliberately target rough sleepers or general homeless patrons? Why do you think this is?"*

Q2B: *"If yes – why and how? Has it always been this way since it started? Why/why not? What has changed?"*

Q3: *"Do your programmes/events attract a variety of homeless patrons? If yes, why do you think this is? If no, are there other ways to meet their needs in the library?"*

B. Questions about interactions, and participation:

Q4: *"Were homeless patrons involved in planning these services initially? If yes, how? If no, what is the reason?"*

Q5: *"Are those homeless patrons attending your programmes/event keen to interact with each other? "*

Q5A: *"If yes- to what extent? If no- what is the reason do you think?"*

Q6: *"Do staff interact with homeless patrons attending the programmes/event? Can you tell me a bit more about what you have observed?"*

Q7: *“Have you noticed whether there are “regulars” at your programmes/events? Why do you think this is?”*

Q8: *“Are there particular reasons they come and participate? Can you tell me a bit more about what you’ve observed?” (For example, are they catching up before they come and participate in the programmes/events? Or are they coming for food, and the leisure time during the programmes/events?)*

C. Questions about personal interests/needs:

Q9: Points about homeless patrons’ needs:

“The homeless are not a homogeneous population. Thus, they have different information needs depending on their individual’s backgrounds. Not all of their information needs can be met by public librarians.”

Refer to Q9Points: “Do you believe these are true based on your experiences organizing/planning programmes/events? Can you tell me more about it?” (For example, have homeless patrons expressed their needs or expectations from libraries to you? Are there any challenges for you as a librarian to meet all their information needs? Why?)

D. Questions about libraries and librarians’ roles in homeless patrons’ lives

Q10: Points about libraries and librarians’ attitudes:

“Library’s attitudes of “worthy” versus “unworthy” users; Librarians’ attitude is the primary issue in the context of providing services to the homeless; Treating the homeless as “problem patron” is discrimination.”

Refer to Q10 Points: “Do you agree with those points regarding serving the homeless patrons? Have there been disagreements between you and your colleagues over homeless patrons? What is your understanding of librarians’ roles?”

Q11: Points about libraries’ role in homeless patrons’ lives:

“Libraries are the safe place to better the homeless’ lives; Developing relevant policy at the local and national level is an important goal.”

Refer to **Q11 Points**: “Do you think that is true? Why? Do you agree that developing relevant policy is needed? ”

E. Any other comments

Q12: Point about homeless population

“The population of rough sleepers in Auckland has doubled in the past 10 years” according to Auckland City Mission.

Refer to above information. “Are you aware of this fact? How do you think this will impact public libraries in the future?”

Q13: “After thinking about our interview, is there anything else you want to comment on? Is there anything may consider changing for the programmes/events you’re involved in? ”

Word count: 10,000