Library Review 2019 – Funding and support arrangements for volunteer run libraries for 2020/21 and 2021/22

Appendix 1

New books report – an analysis of book buying for associate libraries

1. History of book purchasing for associate libraries

Volunteers took over most of the libraries during Q3 2014/15 and the Libraries Archives and Information Service stopped purchasing books at this point. If we look at total figures from 2012 they show a pattern of decline and stabilisation from 2017/18 onwards (Fig1).

Year	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Total issues	608,913	537,738	390,261	296,614	257,037	220,659	220,488

Fig1

Fig1 shows total issues based purely on the SCC library management system (LMS). The Table below (Fig2) shows issue figures if we add the issue figures from the volunteers own LMS systems to our own. It is also worth noting that due to methods of collecting the data we know that the volunteers own systems significantly underestimate the number of issues.

Year	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Total issues	608,913	537,738	390,261	296,614	279,869	265,751	265,088

Fig2

Sheffield Libraries and Information Service began to purchase books for the associate libraries during 2017/18 as part of the support package and as we can see in Fig1 the decline in issues is markedly lower than in previous years. If we look at Fig2 we can see the same pattern where some associate libraries volunteers acquired their own books from 2016/17 onwards. What we can certainly see is that where volunteer libraries have access to new books their issue figures are significantly higher.

2. The impact of purchasing new books

If we look specifically at when new books were purchased which was firstly during Q3 and 4 of 17/18 we can see a subtle but clear stabilising effect. The first graph (Fig3) shows Greenhill library where the red (upper) line shows the combined issue figures of their system and the Library services LMS. The Second graph (Fig4) shows Upperthorpe library which does not have its own system.
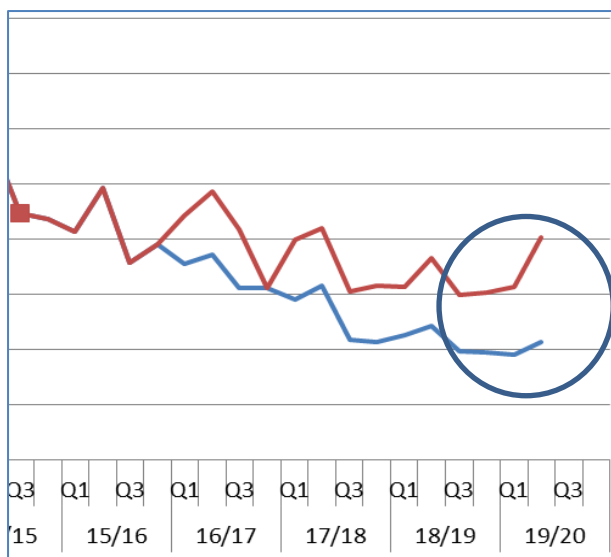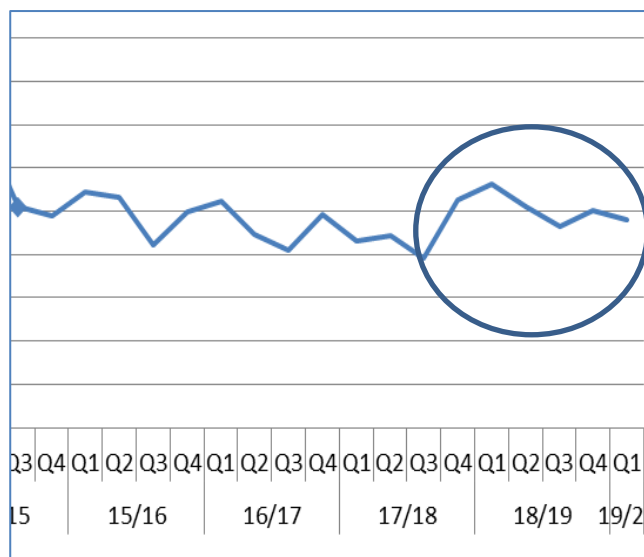
Fig3

Fig4

Fig3 shows that even a small number of new books purchased to the council LMS help slow the decline in issues, but the upper line shows that when larger numbers of new books are added via their won systems the decline can be reversed. Fig4 Also shows the impact that new books can have on book issues.

Where associate libraries have heavily invested in their own stock we can see a massive increase in book lending. During 2014/15 Walkley library issued 26,415 books, but during 2018/19 they issued 35,213 (See Fig5 where the red or upper line is the combined numbers of the SCC LMS and their own LMS).
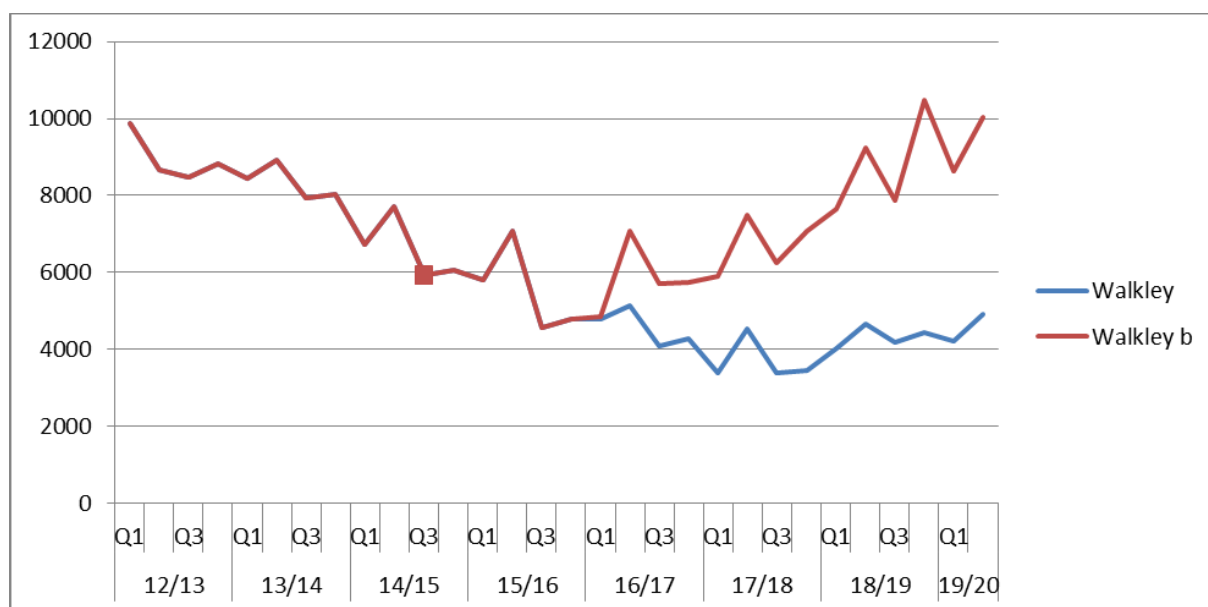

Fig5

It is clear that with strong investment in new books the associate libraries are fully capable of increasing their borrowing levels and reversing the national trend of declining issues. With continued access the Sheffield Libraries book purchasing systems the associate libraries can get a steady supply of quality new books and with funding for these books being available through the grant it can provide a consistency of supply outside of the risks and vagaries of fundraising and donations.