Overdue

The stories of rural Southland & Otago librarians & library volunteers.

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Abstract

Research Problem: Rural librarians and library volunteers may be viewed as isolated and almost on the geographical fringes of the knowledge information profession. In New Zealand, rural librarians' stories have not been heard and continue to be underrepresented. Therefore, in this report I have sought to answer the question: "What are the experiences of Otago and Southland rural librarians and library volunteers?"

Methodology: I used an arts-based approach that utilised both textual and visual narrative methodologies. I recruited four rural Southland & Otago librarians and two rural Southland & Otago library volunteers through both previously established networks including closed community Facebook pages, and the LIANZA Otago/Southland committee representative.

Results: The findings in this report are presented as stories. They explore the everyday experience of Zoe Heriot, The Volunteers, Alicia Hull, & Barbara Gordon (not their real names). Woven throughout are a series of collages representing the photo documentation of rural Southland and Otago libraries. These findings are then viewed through the key themes of connections, collections, and conditions.

Implications: The methodology of narrative inquiry could have a big impact on LIS scholarship as the telling of stories have provided new understandings of the role that rural librarians and library volunteers play in their communities. Their stories can become vehicles of change. The evolution of librarians and volunteers can be seen through the promotion of inclusion and valuing diversity within rural communities including what may be perceived as sensitive topics like mental health and the LGBTQI+ community. This is critical if rural librarians and volunteers are to cater to their changing and evolving communities. Ultimately, the stories of librarians and library volunteers highlight the way the institutions of libraries are experienced by those who work in them.

Key words: Rural; librarians; volunteers; narrative inquiry

To my Grandmother, D.J. Marshall who gave my Mum, J.D. Sanderson the passion for words, for books, and for sparking imagination which in turn she shared with me

and

For Toby, even when you aren't, you are always a good boy.

Contents

Cover art by L.J Sanderson. Photograph of Patearoa Library, January 2020, Patearoa, Maniototo, New Zealand.

List of figures

Glossary of key terms

Cultural conditions: The strategic framework (2012-2017) suggests strong cultural conditions, are within communities that value our heritage and embrace diversity and creativity.

Economic conditions: For communities to have the greatest economic potential, they must be seen to have a competitive and proactive economy

Environmental conditions: In order to ensure positive environmental conditions. Libraries must support sustainable communities both financially and, in their practices, and systems

Experiences: In terms of this research, experience is defined in narrative terms, that is, experience is storied and co/created through the re/storying process. The experiences sought are those of the librarians in small rural libraries of Southland and Otago

Rural: Statistics NZ has developed four classifications based on census data that focuses on population and where that population is employed e.g. farming communities. The four levels of 'rural area' are:

- Rural with high urban influence
- Rural with moderate urban influence
- Rural with low urban influence
- Highly Rural/Remote

Rural Settlement: Further to these four levels of 'rural', is the difference between *rural centres* and *rural settlements*. *Rural centres* have a population of between 300-999 people. In 2013 New Zealand had 133 rural centres. *Rural settlements* or townships have a population between 200-1000 and are characterised by a visible town centre/structure with medium population density and have one or more public/communal buildings (church, school, or shop). In 2018 New Zealand Statistics recorded 400 rural settlements. This distinction is important when considering that libraries are communal spaces. They are most likely to be found within current or former rural settlements.

Social conditions: Emphasis on cohesive, healthy, safe, and resilient communities

1. Introduction

Flying past fake green pastures that should be sun baked brown
As we follow the river passing through clinging on towns,
A half day horse ride between them
River crossing, driving through the winding valley floor as the mountains grow,
The lake windswept blue
Each lake new, changing with the sun and shade
Hidden manuka valleys, wild thyme,
A blooming haze
In the twilight of the perihelion
(Research journal, 2020)

Tucked within the landscape of the above poem are rural libraries populated by rural librarians and library volunteers. Utilising an arts-based research methodology that incorporates both text and visual storytelling, in this report I explore the narratives of rural Southland and Otago librarians & library volunteers. Recently, the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) has recognised that telling stories is important in order to promote the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). There are 17 SDGs that range from poverty and inequalities to the environment, education, inclusivity, and partnerships. Indeed, the IFLA has gone as far as to create a storytelling manual. This signals the growing importance of stories generated by librarians about their role in their communities in creating change.

In New Zealand, the experiences of rural librarians and volunteers is a topic that has very rarely been discussed in the research landscape (Jenner, 2012). For me, the lightning bolt of inspiration for this topic came as far back as 2015 when I listened to the BBC world service report by Shapiro and Jokiranta where they described their search for small, often rural libraries in New Zealand. At this stage I had not even considered embarking on an Information Studies journey, nevertheless their report stayed with me. In their report, Shapiro and Jokiranta primarily focused on the buildings, in this research I have sought to discover the stories of the rural librarians and volunteers.

1.1 Finding rural libraries

Figure 1: Journey by L.J. Sanderson

A part of this research was to photograph and document as many rural libraries as I could. I know I have not been able to document every single rural library in Otago and Southland, but I tried. Finding rural libraries required a little bit of googling and reading the signs! The New Zealand Dictionary of Libraries is incomplete and lists only some of the larger rural hubs.

There are three types of library identified in this research:

1. Rural Hubs: Service centres that include a library and limited council facilities like the ability to register your dog and pay rates.
2. Public Rural Libraries: These libraries are solely libraries but draw on the resources of larger district or city libraries
3. Community Rural Libraries: These libraries are run and kept by the community with little or no council resources.

Libraries could be found in Returned Servicemen Association (RSA) buildings, in repurposed memorial or town halls, and in tin sheds. Later in this report is a series of three collages woven between the narratives that documents the physical places of the libraries. Many of the multiple journeys were undertaken with Denise Sanderson. When she drove, she allowed me to take photographs from the car as we flew through the rural landscapes of Otago and Southland. When I drove, she was a lookout for the yellow signs denoting a library.

1.2 Structure of this report

This report is divided into nine sections. Section one begins with a brief background, finding the libraries, and the inspiration for this research. Section two explores the literature, both international and New Zealand, this discusses conceptual ideas like librarians as catalysts of change within their communities. Section three and four are devoted to the research question and the theoretical

framework. Section five outlines the research design including the three forms of ethical considerations: procedural, narrative, and visual. In section six I describe the qualitative method I used for data collection, including recruitment and analysis. The findings are described in section seven. These are the stories of the participants; Zoe Heriot, the Volunteers, Alicia Hull, and Barbara Gordon [1]which are interwoven with the photographic documentation of Otago and Southland rural libraries. Afterwards, I discuss these findings using the thematic framework of connections, collections, and conditions. Finally, in this report I conclude with the significance of this research as well as some ideas for future research.

2. Literature Review

The literature about rural libraries and rural librarians has gone undeveloped both nationally and internationally. This section represents the core of the literature that formed the foundations and key justification for this research. Later in section eight, other literature is introduced as the findings unfold. I discovered that there are two important broad foci within the literature. Firstly methodologically, qualitative is predominantly used, yet, narrative is an underutilised research design. Secondly, there is a great concern with economic conditions: budget, staffing and such. This as a primary focus for rural library research has meant it has become insular. The research needs to move beyond economic conditions and weave them into the larger narrative that includes social, cultural, environmental conditions as well. Thus, the current literature has failed to capture the experiences of rural librarians or their role in shaping these core conditions of their communities.

2.1 The role of the rural library

Before I discuss the literature that relates to rural librarians it is perhaps useful to explore the role of the rural library.

> The library is the only place in many communities where people can access information that will help improve their education, develop new skills, find jobs, build businesses, make informed agricultural and health decisions, or gain insights into environmental issues (IFLA, last accessed 17/07/19)

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[1] Not their real names

In the above statement IFLA described the importance of libraries. One of the primary functions as researchers like Hoq (2015) has explored is that rural libraries are sites for promoting socio-economic development in rural areas. Hoq argues that there needs to be a holistic understanding of rural libraries around the world but singles out developing countries within Asia and Asia.

Recognising that rural New Zealand are predominantly agricultural, I explored a website that described five rural library farming initiatives in: Armenia, Colombia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Macedonia (Beyond Access, Last accessed 10/10/18). The website provided five snapshots from rural libraries and their primary use. In Macedonia for example, farmers used the library to gain access to government grants, while in Armenia online resources meant that farmers could become more productive and organic. Indeed, these are examples of how rural librarians can and do shape their social, economic, and environmental conditions because they can facilitate change

2.2 International Research.

A key idea within the international research is that libraries are at the heart of a community. This has been, in the international literature attributed to Hildreth (2007). In her article, Hildreth draws on rural figures for the United States and the research presented at the Association of Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL), She notes the challenges for rural libraries, these include; isolation, populations, mobility, finances, resistance to change and innovation. Already these bear a striking similarity to those challenges noted by Green and Fargher (2012) later in the New Zealand literature. Yet, to me, this signals an insular quality to the literature about rural libraries even across nations. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Hildreth, views rural libraries as catalysts to strengthen and unite communities.

In another American piece of research, Fischer (2015) explores the perceptions of rural and small-town librarians in a mixed methods survey. This research is so far the only survey described in the literature. Interestingly, Fischer notes that the quantitative material did not yield enough information to fully understand the challenges faced by rural librarians. I would argue, however, that qualitative information is critical to the understanding of the everyday lives of rural librarian. Indeed, the challenges faced by rural librarians are key to identifying social and economic pressures. Although in her key findings Fischer did make links between low budget and opening hours. Fischer paints a bleak picture Fischer found, with challenges of budget and staffing, despite

this, she concluded that the respondents: "demonstrated a strong will to succeed and a love the career" (p. 570).

Beyond even the love of career, Gustina's (2018) peer reviewed opinion piece powerfully suggests that rural American librarians have an obligation to facilitate positive change in their communities. Gustina is the only voice so far, that has suggested looking beyond the economic status of rural libraries, although she does critically examine these as well. She suggests that:

> When we fully appreciate our community as a set of independent actors within a system, and that systems can be impacted by massive action, then we believe that positive, transformative change is possible. The rural librarian, to catalyze change and facilitate the realization of community aspirations, will become an organizer who will measure progress by the prevalence of equitable social wellbeing. (Gustina, 2018, final para)

To be the catalysts of change, to realise a whole community's aspirations, this is the importance that Gustina places on rural librarians. Their importance is this significant because rural librarians are the heart of their communities (Green & Fargher, 2012; Hildreth, 2007).

2.3 New Zealand Research

There is limited research to draw on for the stories of rural New Zealand librarians and volunteers. New Zealand research spans a general report by Sutherland (2014), a book by Margaret Jenner (2005), and the clarion call of Green & Fargher (2012) for librarians' stories to be told. Beginning with the 2014 report by Sutherland, she examines the libraries of the Queenstown Lakes District which is a part of the province of Otago.

In this report, Sutherland defines the key terms presented in the glossary of economic, social, cultural, and environmental conditions. She used a mixed method approach to evaluate the service of Queenstown Lakes District library services. She suggests that there is a need for a culture change, one that values innovation and service (p. 50). For there to be a cultural change, I would argue that there needs to be an understanding of the lived experiences of rural librarians.

Margaret Jenner (2005), provided a brief history of 45 small. Her focus was predominantly North Island libraries however there are nine that focused on libraries of Otago and Southland. Jenner used historical information, both primary and secondary sources to describe the history of each

building. This book provides invaluable historical research about the buildings. However, it provides very little, if any information about the people who maintain and use the libraries.

In 2012, at the Libraries Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (LIANZA) conference, Green and Fargher called librarians to tell their stories. The stories of librarians' experiences move beyond the buildings in which the books sit and indeed the service they provide. The authors noted that small to medium libraries are at the heart of their communities. They suggest that councils need to hear the stories of librarians in order to demonstrate the value of the libraries. Further, that rural libraries and their councils can be conservative and slow to adopt change.

The authors suggest that telling stories helps to create connections within the community and as part of creating a library 'brand'. Finally, they listed key challenges these include limited resources, budgets, staffing levels, and reducing population. These challenges are similar in the international literature. Below is a concept map depicting the concepts discussed in this literature review. The next section explores the research question that came from this review of the literature followed by a discussion of my theoretical framework of narrative inquiry.
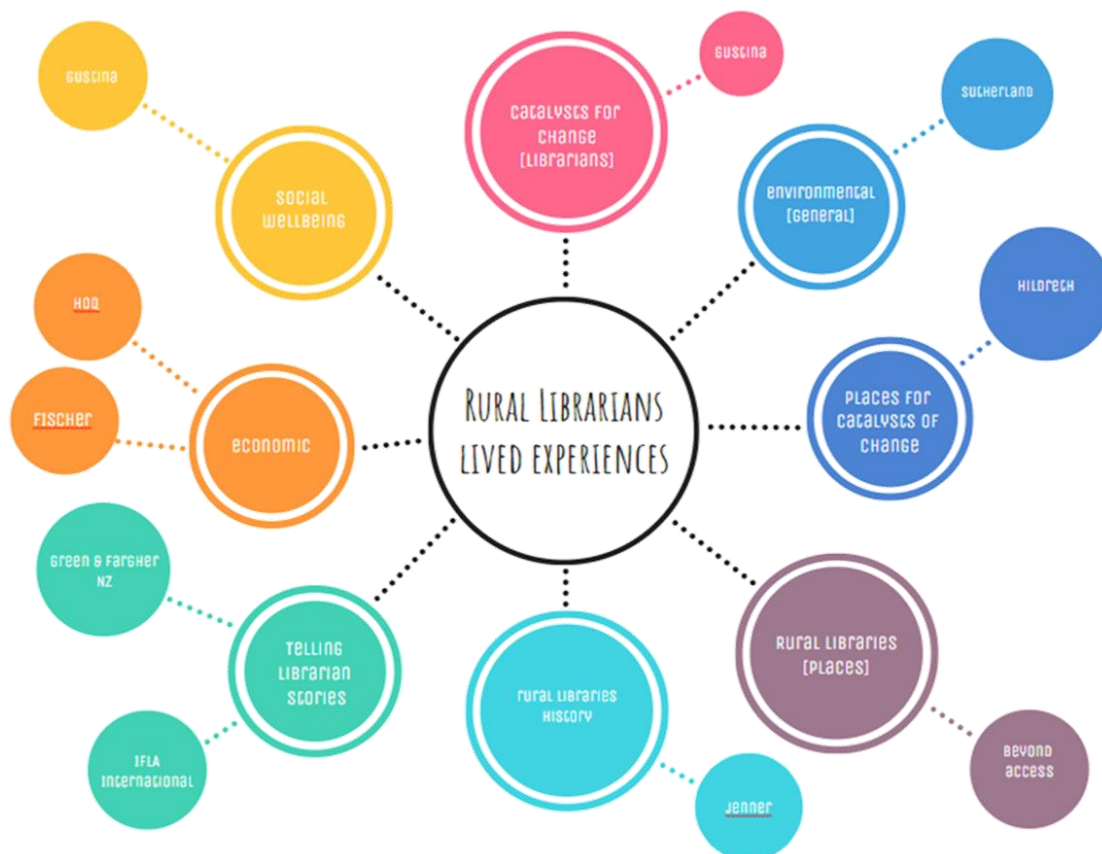

Figure 2: Literature review concept map by L.J. Sanderson

3. Research question

Considering the literature explored previously, the research question that I have chosen to explore is: "What are the experiences of rural Otago and Southland librarians and library volunteers?"

This is a purposively broad question. Due to the lack of current information about the experiences of rural librarians and volunteers in New Zealand, it is important to explore the multiplicity of their experiences. The international literature is inward gazing focused predominantly around the economic challenges. I would like to move beyond this, although I recognise that economic challenges potentially play a major role in the narratives of rural librarians.

4. Theoretical framework: Narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry does not have an established presence as a methodology in the research about librarians, despite the long tradition of storytelling (Calvert & Goulding, 2015). The experiences of rural Southland and Otago librarians and volunteers is at the heart of this research. It was important to choose a theoretical framework that not only keeps their experiences front and centre, but also does not impose strict boundaries of engagement. I have chosen Narrative Inquiry, as it is considered as both a methodology and method (Clandinin & Caine, 2007). Furthermore, there are many ways in which to 'do' narrative, so it provides an adaptable and broad theoretical framework from which to apply to this research.

Stories hold power. They can convey understanding by transporting the reader or listener to a place they may or may not recognise. The telling of stories provides an emotional and physical space where the tellers can relive, retell, and even re-imagine their lived experiences (Bamberg, 2012; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Importantly, narratives can provide insight into participants' lives, and the wider society in which they live (Bertaux, 2003). This approach recognises that "individual biography does not bring with it the isolated individual, but rather the awareness of the individual within society" (Plummer, 1983). Narratives are also capable of producing social change as they provide the space between, where a shared understanding can be reached (Squire, 2008). Indeed, Gustina (2018) has described the role of the librarian as a catalyst for change.

For this research it was important to access stories that had not been told within the New Zealand LIS research landscape. Narrative has the power as both an advocacy tool and a catalyst for change,

allowing the stories within this thesis to become of greater ontological and epistemological concerns. The use of narratives ensures that the individual lived reality, or the storied experience, is the central focus of this research, in other words, "because, experience" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). Narratives are both holistic and person-centred (Bruner, 1987; Polkinghorne, 1991). Although person-centred research has the potential to be individualistic, narratives are also capable of producing social change as they provide the space between, where a shared understanding can be reached (Squire, 2008).

The use of narrative allows for insider stories of organisations such as libraries, as well as minority stories as they can help in the exploration of under or unrepresented lives (Squire, 2008). Rural librarians and volunteers may be viewed as isolated and almost on the geographical fringes of the knowledge information profession. In New Zealand, rural librarians and library volunteers' stories have not been heard and continue to be under and unrepresented.

5. Research design

In this section I describe how I conducted my research. Further to this, how I grounded my research in the ethical considerations that relate to producing a piece of narrative research and as such I begin this section describing the three strands of ethics: procedural, narrative, and visual. This is then followed by a discussion of the method, including recruitment and data analysis.

5.1 Procedural Ethics

There are three strands of ethical considerations. Firstly, the institutional or procedural ethics that are required from Victoria University of Wellington and are considered in preparation of research. There are key considerations like informed consent, confidentiality, contact, data storage. Secondly, relational or narrative ethics emerge and are fostered in contact with potential and recruited participants. They include power relationships and vulnerability. Finally, visual ethics, where I will discuss the three types of photograph, external, internal, and journal. In this section I examine the procedural ethics with the relational/narrative ethics discussed later, finishing with a brief overview of visual ethics.

Institutional/procedural ethics was gained from the Victoria University Human Ethics Committee #27868. In accordance with ethical guidelines, I have created information and consent forms

(Appendix A). Procedural ethics stresses the security of the raw material (transcriptions and photos), my research will be in a folder in my locked filing cabinet containing hard copies of narrative and interview material. All efforts were made to ensure that the data was kept safe and secure.

5.2 Narrative ethics

"Narrative Inquiry does not allow each of us to walk away unchanged from our experiences alongside each other and alongside our participants" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 142).

Narrative interviews and representations affect the participants, the researcher, and the reader. It would be a challenge to read the participant stories and not be changed. Furthermore, because of the transformative, and sometimes therapeutic nature of narrative (for participants), there is a "heavy burden of responsibility on the shoulders of the researcher" (Hunter, 2010, p. 45). Therefore, close attention must be paid to how the stories are told and analysed. As Elliot (2005) explained, it is the analysis of the stories that can do the greatest harm and undermine the integrity of the research.

In order to make sure that the stories told are those that the participants will be comfortable with, the research processes will be made visible with member checks, co-creation, and insurances that they can cease participation at any time. Member checks and co-creation were conducted via email. These play a large part in my commitment to the participants and were ongoing through the write up stages. If parts of stories needed to be changed, I was able to do so in an open and honest way that respects participants and their stories. Importantly, issues identified in this section, for example, confidentiality, continues throughout the writing processes and beyond (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

5.3 Visual ethics.

Firstly, it is important to note that although I have separated these strands out in order to explicate the ethical considerations, all strands are interconnected and share the same key considerations of informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity.

Clark (2012) notes that, consent is ongoing, continual verbal consent and reiterations of the purpose and how the photographs are going to be used is important. There are three types of photographs within this research project

1) Photographs documenting the public face of the library – what can be viewed from the street, I created a series of collages depicting these.

2) Internal photographs showing the spaces within. Only two participants did these are represented in circular colourised photos

3) Photographs documenting my journey to the rural libraries. These were produced in a geometric collage in the first section of this report.

Those photographs in the first category, the public face of the library fall into an ethical position of street photography, where "images that illuminate facets of society that aren't readily obvious to the naked eye" (Kennedy, nd). However, they do differ slightly in that I simply took photographs of the architecture and surrounds, only a couple had cars in them. By documenting many rural Otago and Southland libraries I have provided a broad picture of life as a rural librarian can be like. Because only four of these libraries have participant narratives, by documenting more than five also provides some sense of anonymity.

The second category of photographs, the internal photographs of the participants' libraries. These were captured by two of the librarians themselves in time to be considered for this report. I conducted a small ethical briefing asking participants not to take photos of people to ensure that privacy and anonymity anxieties are mitigated (Clark, 2012). They e-mailed me the ones they wanted to be considered as visually telling the story of their day. I cropped these into circular images and placed various filters over them to obscure any identifying colours and such. I sent back a photo release form. The participants loved what was done with their photographs. Therefore, in order to ethically honour their contribution, the two participants will be the only ones with a visual narrative. Finally, the third category of photographs were those that captured the essence of my journey, I created a geometric collage found in the introduction and got consent from Denise Sanderson who was pictured in two of the images.

6. Method

In the following sections I examine the method of how I conducted my research. First, I explore the broad context of qualitative research and interpretivism. I then examine the instruments of recruitment that I used to gain access rural librarians and volunteers. Finally, I detail how I collected and analysed the data.

6.1 Qualitative Research

"[qualitative research] draws on imagination—the ability to form images, ideas, and concepts of things both seen and unseen…" (Lutteral , 2010, p.8).

In order to draw on imagination, to form images, ideas, and concepts, qualitative research has certain criteria (Creswell, 2007; Lutteral, 2010). The criteria include a focus on participants and an emergent design. The researcher is the primary research tool, studying phenomena in their 'naturalistic settings' and often employing multiple methods of data collection (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research he suggested further, is holistic and takes account of the social-political context of the phenomena being studied. The researcher often uses an inductive approach to the analysis (Creswell, 2007; Lutteral, 2010). Lastly, in Creswell's criteria, qualitative research should add to the literature or provide a call for action (Creswell, 2007).

In this study I utilised all these aspects of qualitative research. Qualitative research, as Creswell (2007) submits, starts with an assumption and a problem. In this report, my assumption is that the rural librarians and library volunteers of Southland and Otago are catalysts of change within their communities. My problem is that there is no New Zealand research describing the experiences rural librarians. This has provided a glaring research gap, and combined with my interest, led to the development of my research question: "What are the experiences of rural Otago and Southland librarians and library volunteers?"

To answer this question, I have positioned myself as the research tool conducting qualitative interviews. I recognise that, as the researcher, I am both a "product and producer" of this research (Richardson, 1997, p. 2). To signify this, I will not use dissociative or anthropomorphic language for example writing in the third person or phrases like "this report examines", instead I use the personal pronoun of I.

In response to Creswell's argument, that qualitative research should either add to the literature or provide a call for action, the research I seek to conduct does both. It adds to the small body of research found within the scholarly research about rural librarianship. Creating an understanding of the experiences and the roles that rural librarians and library volunteers have within their community is important when exploring how they shape their local communities. In the next section I outline interpretivism, a key aspect of which is understanding.

6.2 Interpretivism

"…to bring us in touch with the lives of strangers" (Geertz, 1972, p. 16)

"To understand is always to understand differently" (Gadamer, 1970, p. 87).

Yanov (2014) describes interpretivism as characterised by research that seeks to understand the world of participants. Interpretive research starts with the supposition that reality is social and multiple. Interpretations of social and multiple realities are iterative and mediated through the experiences and interpretations of the researcher, participant, and the reader/or listener (Yanov, 2014). Critics of interpretivism describe it in general as a "kind of disengaged contemplation or philosophical navel-gazing" (Yanov, 2014, p.22). This is because it does not explore issues of power. However, the key strength of interpretive research is the unfolding, responsive nature that allows for an ebb and flow to the research process. The key to interpretive research is to create understanding or *verstehen*.

The concept of verstehen goes beyond simply understanding. It is created by exploring the complexities and multiplicities of social, cultural, and historical interactions (Lutteral, 2010; Goldkuhl, 2012). Verstehen comes both from outside and within influences, and it is the engagement with these influences that creates understanding (Yanov, 2014). So how can these complexities and multiplicities be understood?

6.3 Arts-based research

To understand the complexities and multiplicities further, I have also drawn on other aspects that fall under the umbrella of arts-based research (Sanderson, 2018). The other forms of arts-based research utilised in this report includes poetic inquiry and visual ethnography. The key visual ethnographic method that I have used in this report is the photo documentation which I have detailed in the research design. Poetic Inquiry is a form of qualitative research in the social sciences

that incorporates poetry in some way. Centred on the human experience (Prendergast, 2009), Poetic Inquiry has its roots in ethnographic, sociological, and anthropological research influenced by the post-modern turn late last century (Alder & Alder, 2008). I have used poetic inquiry in my previous research experimenting with shape and form including using blackout poetry (Sanderson, 2018). Here in this report, my use of poetic inquiry can be seen in my poetic journaling, ethnographic poem from Denise Sanderson and the use of poetic metaphors that I co-created with the participants who chose to do so.

6.4 Recruitment

I understand, because of my previous research experience that the recruitment and retention of research participants can be difficult (Sanderson, 2011; 2018). Rural librarian and library volunteers' experiences and perspectives had not been sought before therefore, this gap in the New Zealand research also means that the types of issues rural librarians and library volunteers faced were not known. I recruited four Southland and Otago rural librarians and two rural library volunteers. It was not easy. I had to use previously established networks and create some new in order to gain participants. I was supported by the local LIANZA representative as well as a district hub manager. Interestingly, when talking with the librarians and volunteers, it almost felt like they felt their jobs were not interesting enough to be described in a research context.

In Otago and Southland there are over 20 rural libraries spanning the Southland district, Gore District, Clutha District, Central Lakes District and the Maniototo. I documented 27 of them through photo documentation methods. This was important as I stated earlier, the Directory of New Zealand libraries is incomplete and does not take into account community led libraries nor any library outside of what is considered a hub library. In fact, the Directory of New Zealand libraries only cites six libraries in the Otago and Southland region (outside of the main cities of Dunedin and Invercargill).

Recruitment for participants began by advertising through LIANZA, but also through closed rural GLAM and community Facebook groups. A recruitment survey was considered however, because of past research, I found that participants often feel they have nothing more to add when it comes to the interviews. Figure 3 shows a map that I created which identifies rural libraries that I knew about prior to exploring this research.

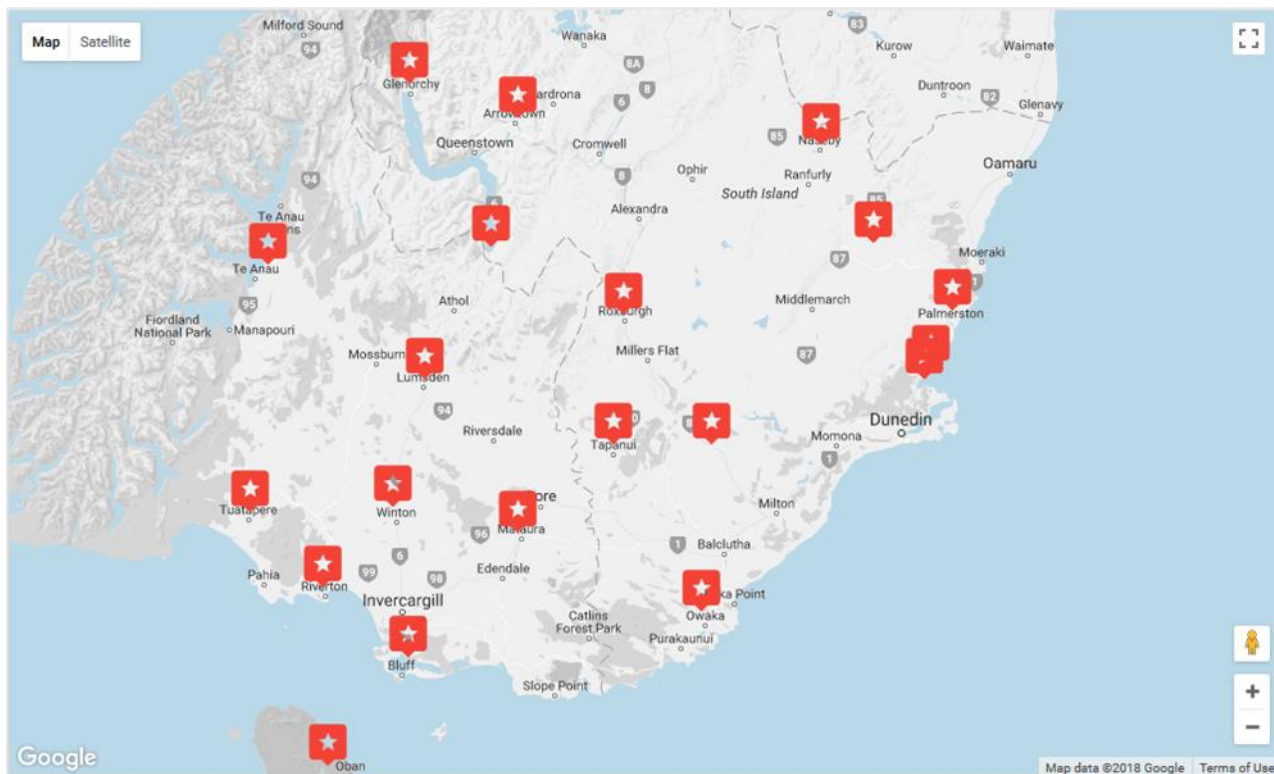Figure 3: Location of some rural libraries by L.J. Sanderson

The previous map can be compared to the Directory of New Zealand Libraries site map below (Screenshot, National Library, last accessed, 20/01/20). Beyond the major towns/cities, the Directory of Libraries only highlights six rural libraries in the Otago/Southland area combined.
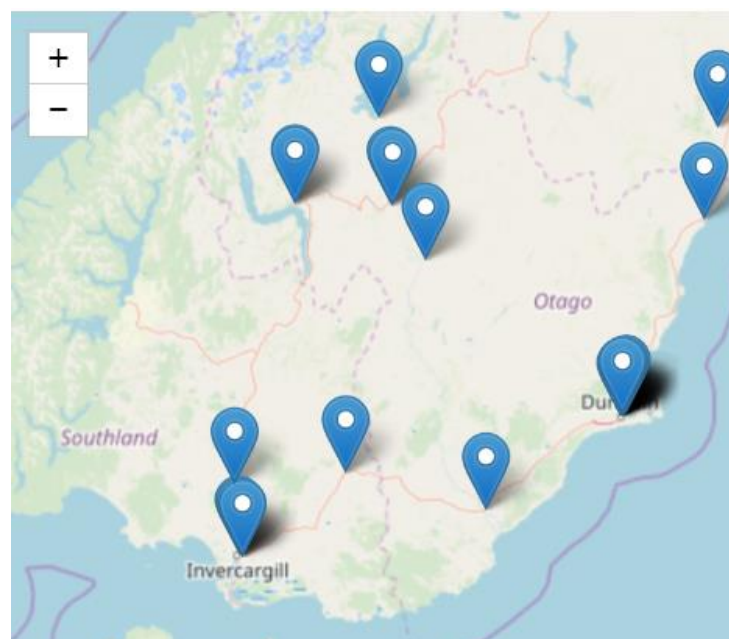
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Figure 4: National Library Screenshot of libraries in Southland and Otago

6.5 Data collection

I drove to the rural locations at a time and place that was suitable for participants. All interviews were held in the respective libraries. For this research, I sought to use two forms of data collection, narrative interviews and photographic documentation. The following sections briefly describe this before I explore how I analysed the data. Before I do, below is a simple timeline of the data collection.

October 2019	*Recruitment begins*
November 2019	*Interviews & photo documentation begins*
December 2019	*Interviews finish & small photo documentation trips*
January 2020	*Three large photo documentation trips: Te Anau/Western Southland; Central Otago; Maniototo*

6.5.1 Narrative Interviews.

I conducted one on one narrative interviews with three of the rural librarians, with one librarian and two volunteers I conducted a group interview. As interviewer, I adopted the role of an open listener (Polkinghorne, 2007). Due to the nature of narrative interviews, I used a standardised, "Tell me about your experiences as a rural librarian" (Elliot, 2005). Following this I used prompts or comments to explore what they were saying (in greater or lesser detail). I used a narrative guide that acted as a very loose organising framework for the narrative interviews.

Narrative interview guide:

Please tell me the story about how and why you became a librarian?
Can you tell me about the heritage of your library?
Can you tell me about the economic conditions of the area and how you attend to them?
Can you tell me about how you connect to your community?
Can you tell me about your interactions with the local Council?
If I asked you to use a metaphor to describe yourself as a librarian what would you say you were like? (*adapted from* Glesne, 1997, p.207).

Narrative interviews typically are multiple. Thefirst interview is generally an establishing of rapport with the participant. Due to time, budget, and word limit I was only able to conduct one interview per participant/group.

6.5.2 Photographic documentation

I sought to document the places and spaces that the rural librarians occupy by taking digital photographs. I also created a visual journal within this dissertation documenting my journey/s undertaken to get the stories of rural librarians and volunteers. My aim was to enable the research processes to be more transparent as well as providing a visual understanding of the rural contexts. The photos were taken on my phone, a Samsung Galaxy S8. I conducted nine trips to gather photos of 27 rural Southland and Otago libraries. The total time taken on these trips was 38 hours. I shared the driving with my Mum, Denise Sanderson, who was with me for seven of the nine trips. She played an important role in enabling me to conduct this research. Written as an autoethnographic poem below is how she experienced the journey:

Snow flurries whirling along the tops
Togetherness; picnicking by the lake,
Bumping along a serpentine road stretching sinuously across the rugged land
Curiosity; what library and it's story lay around the next corner?
Cloud shadows dancing on the lake
Determination; to finish our task,
Cold, deep water beckoning on a hot, Summer's day
Scented, wild, purple thyme on the breeze
Satisfaction; another hidden gem found and recorded.
Ice creams under an umbrella.
(Denise Sanderson, Personal Communication, 2020).

Participants were also asked to take some digital photographs (on their own phones or digital cameras) that document their everyday activities, two participants did so and a selection of these have been included with their story (section seven). I chose three from each participant and then sent back how they were going to be displayed on a photo release form. I chose to display them differently by cropping them to circles and colourising them, for example one is greyscale so the unique colour scheme is not shown.

Importantly, the use of narrative and photographs although not as well established as narrative inquiry or even other forms of visual methodology individually, combined it is not completely unheard of (Harrison, 2002; Lee & Sergueeva 2017; Ownby 2013; 2017). Ownby's (2013) autoethnographic study situated the use of narrative as the 'anchor' for the image. The photo documentation has become a narrative anchor. As I am the producer of this research, like Ownby,

there has also been autoethnographic aspect as I have photographed aspects of the journey to take the photographs of the buildings, these were displayed in the introduction as a geometric collage.

6.6 Data analysis

As Creswell (2007) noted, data analysis is "not off the shelf, rather, it is custom built…" (p.150). Therefore, the framework for my data analysis is data led, developed and evolving throughout the research project. Further, when choosing a framework of analysis, Becker (1999) suggested allowing the material to 'speak to the researcher' as a way to decide what type of analysis to use. Although I did not know how the data will speak to me, I chose to use a flexible type of analysis, holistic content analysis. I also drew upon an arts-based research approach.

6.6.1 Holistic content analysis

A holistic content analysis seeks to encapsulate the narrative as a whole (Elliot, 2005; Lieblich et al., 1998). There are five distinct stages as described by Lieblich et al. (1998). The five stages as described by Lieblich et al (1998, pp. 62-63) are:

1. Read the material till a pattern emerges. They describe this stage as being intuitive.
2. Global impressions of the case put into writing including a focus on disruptive episodes.
3. Decide on foci or theme.
4. Mark in colours the themes reading repeatedly.
5. Follow each theme and transitions.

At the first stage I drew on Polkinghorne's (1998) *emplotment* to create standalone narratives that form the part of the findings. Briefly, emplotment is the process by which a research re/stories raw data to create a narrative by 'nuggeting' lines from the raw data and placing them in an order that signifies the beginning, middle, and end of the narrative. The importance of keeping a holistic and broad analysis is to respect the story that is told in a sensitive and ethical way.

6.6.2 Visual data analysis

At the very least the visual data 'tells' part of the everyday lives of the librarians through a visual representation and adding another layer to their narratives. Beyond this, the visual materials produced by the participants, engaged them in the research processes. The analysis for these images and the ones I created documenting the rural libraries directly relates to the holistic content analysis of the narrative.

7. Findings: The stories of rural librarians & library volunteers

In the following pages are the stories of rural librarians and library volunteers. Three of the four are single narratives, the story of the volunteers (section 7.2) however uses the voices of 2 volunteers and a librarian to form the story which was created during a group interview. Two participants stories use the photographic and poetic material that they created for this report. Participants' photographs have been cropped to circles to differentiate their work. The stories are formatted slightly different than the rest of this report with no spaces between the lines or paragraphs, this is to signal that they form the core findings of this report. Woven between the stories are a series of three collages depicting the libraries that I was able to visit for the photo documentation of Otago and Southland rural libraries. These provide both context and anchor for the narratives.

Figure 5: Collage of libraries

7.1 Zoe Heriot[2]

I am multicoloured ball
lots and lots of aspects to the job
working with kids
dancing around
I am the bouncy ball

Community libraries is what I love, I had been bored in some of my roles. What I love about community libraries is the variety. I commute and people say wow and they think that it's so long but it's a beautiful commute, it's just a lovely, lovely, lovely drive. Everyday you've got something different happening and it's also the contact with the community we know our patrons, a large proportion of them, some people come in daily or weekly. So, we know them really, really well. We share things with them, it's much more personal so, yeah much more friendly, much more personal and I have been very lucky in how the community has welcomed me here. Having a great team is really essential to the running of a good library.

We have a local heritage collection and some of the community has contributed to that. We have a close relationship with the museum, so they put a semi-permanent display within the library, and we have just started a small project with them.

We do have a big elderly population here; a lot of people retire here so one of the sad consequences of that a lot of our patrons have died or gone into nursing homes in that time. We see some very elderly people who totter in, barely able to walk and sometimes we see them getting more and more fragile and then sometimes we hear that they have died, that's sad. We also have a group of more younger, fit retirees and they are more active in the community and that's great. It's like any community, we have the whole range here. There are still a lot of people out there that don't use the library

We are in a little bubble here, but we are subject to all of the council policies and policy decisions. We are a council service centre as well. I really like it because it brings people into the library for other reasons that maybe they wouldn't have come in otherwise. Our funding comes from the larger library system and the council has squeezed the budget so that has impacted on us. One of the changes that has happened is that the previously the community librarian was able to choose the books herself but now all the buying is done centrally although we can request or earmark particular books, but it is up to buying team. Right at the moment I am thinking: where are our new gardening and cooking books – its summer!

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[2] Fictious librarian in Dr. Who

Being in a small community its always something unexpected happening like there was the day that a pig was running down the street and everyone was coming into the library to tell us about it or there was the time when a horse and cart overturned and someone came to report it first to the library! There was someone who was locked in the public toilets on the side of the road. That was the first time it had ever happened, I felt obliged to help. After I had notified the council I kept going back and forward. It was the police that managed to break the door and let the poor person out! So, there are always unexpected things going on.

Figure 6: Collage of libraries

7.2 Vox[3]: The Volunteers

We are all very passionate readers! We are our own best customers! I live two hundred yards that way and I live about two hundred the other way! If there is two or three of us in the library becomes a meeting place, because we know just about everyone.

The school built the library, the library was opened we started Wednesday from three to five and Saturday half past ten to half past twelve and that went on for a number of years, one, two, there were about four of us at the start. A couple have dropped off. Usually there is about four of us. There has been four of us for a long time.

There was a library run by a local lady run at the local hall, but it was a very small selection of books and they were very old books and then when we got this opportunity, we took it. And now the lady has just closed down, she wasn't opened regularly, we never knew when she was going to be open or not till we got there. So, this was a far better arrangement really. It just goes along, and the librarian does a schedule for us for the year and we go home and put it on our calendars and turn up on the day. We swap to suit, and the librarian doesn't get involved with that.

In the afternoon, on Wednesdays, it is perhaps more for the children, but anybody can come in. Then on the Saturday, well it just seemed like the logical day, because people are home from work. We may be here for a couple of hours you know sometimes we might sit here for the whole two hours and have nothing, have no one, and another day we might have five or six people. I think the wed afternoon was for convenience for parents picking up kids from school so they could do a joint effort. But the bus runs have changed now so a large group of them come flying in here at 3 o'clock. Some of them are very enthusiastic. The school uses the library during the week – the teachers have shown what to do, most times it's not too bad they have the odd, a bit of a muddle when we get here. The kids too here have a competition on who can reserve the most books from other libraries because we are all connected, 14 libraries and it cost nothing to bring them.

People just know it's here; we don't do a lot of advertising; we should do more. Usually they are in the mail, the local news sheet. We get along well with the council, there are school and council books here. There are quite wealthy people in the district and their workers aren't. Really stretched from one scale to another. This library its more the children than the adults. There are a few regular readers in the district but apart from that we couldn't convince them, we tried.

On a Saturday we go in and check for any reserve books and just put them aside for the librarian to pick up on a Wednesday, then if we get customers we get them and if we don't we sit and read a book or play code cracker. Winter is busier once the gardening weather starts people don't feel like reading cept me, or me. I enjoy doing it, I miss it if I don't come in. There is the odd Saturday where I think bugger, I've got library today. Just the thought of getting out of bed. But you can't be bored in a library, particularly if you are a reader.

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[3] I chose Vox for the pseudonym for the group of volunteers and librarian represented in this narrative because Vox is latin for voice but also is the name of a fictious librarian in the film Time Machine.

Figure 7: Collage of libraries

7.3 Alicia Hull[4]

I had worked in libraries, but it was my second career, when we moved finding a library job well there wasn't any, so I ended up going through to teaching. I absolutely loathed it! I was dreadful at it. So, we ultimately ended back up where we had started and this job came up, so at that stage we moved here for my job.

My job is more than the library too, it's a challenging role in the sense that it's both management, strategic, and operational. It's not big fish stuff, you are a tadpole in a puddle – you get a lot of chances, in my world, to influence stuff because you know, there's not many people working in the sector. The council bless them are quite happy to, so long as you build the trust with them are pretty much happy to leave you alone and do your own stuff.

So, there's been a library service here since the middle of the 1880s and it had a bit of a chequered history. It sat in a room or a wall in the back of the council chambers for a number of years it was opened in May 1914. The demographic here is varied. It is primarily rural, so we have a small population over a reasonably large geographic area. We have got quite a few little towns

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[4] Fictious librarian in Storm Centre played by Bette Davis

are quite different in terms of their flavour. Like most we have our aging population. The younger part of the population is holding its own at the moment.

Our big challenge here is stock rotation because we have the five libraries some of them have very low turnover. We have a fair budget but if we were to take the formula – if we did that the smaller ones would get bugger all it would all just come here. Goes on population and usage but I have tweaked it a bit. They are owned by us but then they are shared around so no one gets the cream.

Connecting to the community, I would like to say that we are really, really, proactive but we are not as proactive as we would like to be. We do have a Facebook page, which we use. We do, when we have events, we have an e-mail list that goes out to community groups and to schools and everything. We make use of the council radio ads I would say of the 12 monthly radio ads we feature regularly, and we have a little bit of a newspaper presence. We have always been a little bit shy of spending money on things like that. We are getting over that, but we are still not spend thrifts. Yet, the beauty of small rural libraries is the place of connection with the communities.

7.4 Barbara Gordon[5]

I am a steward
I make connections

I am a capital L librarian. I am essentially the only gay in the village here. When I came here no one knew what bisexuality was. I have had to educate my co-workers and I have done that both informally and formally. I did it informally by responding to a query and so since then I have actively pushed for queer representation in our collections. I was the person who got us involved in "out in the shelves" earlier this year. I am the one stop shop for queer questions.

I started off just as a regular library assistant where I got experience in everything. I spent 7 years as a library assistant, then my partner at the time came down close by and we spent 6 months long distance and I hated it and when this job came up I jumped at the chance to be closer to my family. I commute, 25 minutes door to door – I listen to podcasts on the way – I find it really good to have that break between home and work because I have time to put my work face on. I am doing like one and a half jobs at the moment, so on Monday mornings I am on the desk then at 11, *Appy* hour[6] happens, where anybody can come in and get tech help. So, I do that but otherwise I do collection management so not practicing.

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[5] Librarian by day, Batgirl by night
[6] Appy hour is what this library calls their walk-in hour to talk about computers and apps etc.

The library as a network didn't exist till the 60s. Our manager managed the small national library collection and she introduced the book bus. Each library started as a small part of a county council office. Our library is not in its original building and many of the ones around aren't because of the earthquake testing. Many were in old banks because of the vaults. Most libraries have dual roles as both library and council service centres. Here in particular we closed, and not only closed we moved twice, and we lost a lot of people and we lost them because we moved too far away. A lot of people here are retired and don't have the best mobility and getting here is a lot harder to get to so we lost that way. We lost a lot because when we moved, we didn't have a collection so when people turned up, we didn't have the books they needed, and they went elsewhere.

You would not believe how hard it is to talk to council about doing away with overdues or you know fine amnesties. It's like getting a blood out of stone. They genuinely think that overdue fines are a positive thing and it is almost impossible to convince them that it is a barrier to access. In general, the area is economically depressed because it is very primary – very dependent on the conditions more widely and in the centres you tend to have people who work somewhere in the area and so here we get a lot of shearing gangs. This town is the hub for pretty much the entire farming community. Those that have families here are generally not well off – we don't have instances of homelessness, but we do have people who live in their cars. We quite often get migrant workers who are living in their cars because it is almost impossible to get a house. Rentals are snapped up before they are offered. There is a weird kind of dichotomy of the people who use our services really need our services but the people who legislate our services don't. The community comes to librarians because it is someone they know, someone they trust. There is an inherent trust in the title of librarian. There is the cultural expectation of privacy and respect.

8. Discussion

In the previous section, the stories of rural librarians and library volunteers stood alone, in this section I now turn to the discussion of these narratives in the framework of the three major themes of: Connections, collections & conditions. Before I turn to the discussion of the findings it is important to note that the previous literature does not take into account library volunteers, these finding do. In the rural context, both council and community libraries rely on volunteers to provide library services that in cities would be paid.

8.1 Connections

"..the beauty of small rural libraries is the place of connection with the communities" Alicia Hull (Narrative, 2019)

The first major theme that can be found throughout the narratives is connections. Indeed, connections are the first point in which we can view the role of the rural librarian and library in a holistic manner (Hoq, 2015). Connections, with what all participants described as economically diverse communities, is a key role that rural librarians and volunteers have. There are many facets

to the theme of connections from building trust to outreach. Connections are the core component of what it means to be a librarian or as Barbara Gordon described when creating her poetic metaphor: "I am a steward, I make connections". The foundation of building connections is trust, is a key attribute described here by librarians and is essential for building connections. Barbara and Alicia both described building trust between both communities and councils.

Yet, connections with patrons can form by simply a passion for reading. Living 200 meters either side of the library, the volunteers, described the library as a meeting place and their enjoyment of being there because simply they are passionate readers. Concurrently, the Volunteers admit that there is not as much outreach as they would like, people simply "know they are there".

Outreach or lack of is also of concern for other small rural librarians. Alicia stated: "I would like to say that we are really, really, proactive but we are not as proactive as we would like to be." Although at her library they do utilise a number of ways to connect for example via radio and Facebook. Connecting with communities and community outreach in different ways can also happen through partnerships with other GLAM institutions. For example, Zoe describes how the library holds a small revolving exhibition from the museum. Another key aspect of making connections is creating inclusive libraries.

The idea of inclusion and diversity is a major part of creating connections within the community. Inclusion is an amorphous and contentious term, in this report the concept is not tied to digital inclusion as is often the case in LIS scholarship, but rather recognising the rights of all to participate in a society where difference and diversity are valued (Gordon-Burns, Gunn, Purdue, & Surtees, 2012).

Barbara Gordon discussed in her narrative there often needs to be education around groups like the LGBTQI+ community. She described herself as a "resource", but in the one instant of coming out to her colleagues, in educating them, she sparked a discussion and became a catalyst of change. Her story emphasises how important rural librarians as a tool for implementing social well-being within their communities (Gustina, 2018). Furthermore, she showed how librarians need to be empathetic with diverse often hidden communities.

Philips (2016), in relation to cyberbullying describes how rural librarians can promote empathetic understandings in small everyday ways. By creating the space for LGBTQI+, Barbara was able

then to sign the library up for events such as "out in the shelves". This potentially allowed those who in small town New Zealand, could have felt uncomfortable coming in to find LGBTQI+ literature to access and celebrate their identity. Rural librarians are powerful catalysts of change and through their stories, it can be seen, that lasting change begins when inclusion, empowerment, and human interest unite (Gustina, 2018). Inclusion also straddles the next theme of collection as it speaks to how rural librarians build and maintain their collections, the key challenge of how to represent the community it serves and what resources are drawn on.

8.2 Collections

"Right at the moment I am thinking: where are our new gardening and cooking books – its summer! We want some really appealing stuff for summer, for our customers!" Zoe Heriot (Narrative, 2019).

Managing collections is at the heart of rural librarians' job. Authors like Procter (2020) have noted that library collections often reflect the dominant culture, this can be difficult in small rural communities that may not be inclusive. Therefore, it is important in rural libraries that they provide an inclusive collection, one that does not reflect the dominant culture, but rather diversity. Creating inclusive and diverse rural libraries can be difficult. As stated earlier, Barbara described how after 'educating' the staff she got her library involved in the 'out in the stacks' movement.

Inclusion of topics that could be deemed sensitive like those surrounding LGBTQI+ community or mental health in small rural libraries that may be staffed by librarians or library volunteers that know you well and know your wider family and friends it can be important to have the ability of self-checkout. Mathson & Hancks (2007) described the use of self-checkouts as a form of privacy regarding LGBTQI+ literature, it is also true of mental health literature. A librarian in this study discussed anecdotally during their interview how self-checkout increased the of the mental health collection in another rural library.

Inclusive and diverse collections in small rural libraries are even harder to build because those that are not hubs are often tied to what their larger hubs give them. Zoe Heriot describes (as quoted at the start of this theme), when you are a small rural library tied to a larger city library you often don't get to choose books for your community. Interestingly the larger city library has a roving collections development team. Yet, Zoe described the inability to choose books for the community as being frustrating at times. Alicia Hull described her stock rotation policy in which she tried to

ensure that none of the six rural libraries she was responsible for, got the 'cream' or the most popular authors. Then there is the problem of rebuilding a collection.

Loss of a collection like that experienced by Barbara and the subsequent rebuilding of their collection, has meant that they have lost patrons. The key reason many New Zealand libraries have had to shift is because earthquake testing has deemed the buildings unsafe. Rural libraries themselves can be close to one hundred years old. While main city centres have been earthquake strengthened, rural libraries may not be able to and therefore have had to move premises.

However, rehoming a library can be tricky as where the building is situated plays an important role in how patrons access the collection. If the location is inaccessible, patrons may choose to go elsewhere, therefore breaking the connection with rural libraries. Thus, collection management is closely aligned with creating connections and promoting the library as a resource. However, it is also directly related to economic pressures which is a core condition explored in the following theme.

8.3 Conditions

"There is a weird kind of dichotomy of the people who use our services really need our services but the people who legislate our services don't." Barbara Gordon (Narrative, 2019).

In this section I explore the economic, and cultural conditions (see glossary) that were discussed by the librarians and volunteers. Economic conditions are a key challenge and aspect that rural librarians and library volunteers must contend with (Hildreth, 2007; Fischer, 2015). This is not limited to New Zealand. However, it is often downplayed in the limited New Zealand literature.

The relationship that the participants had with their respective district councils highlights the different approaches taken. Councils are also important as they play an economic role in the experiences of the rural librarians. Indeed, Green & Fargher (2012) discussed how the stories of librarians in general would or create a space for local councils to understand the value of small libraries. The stories here show that there are a variety of attitudes towards the council, from the almost forgotten bubble to the deeply unhelpful.

Councils were considered to have been unhelpful around economic pressures. Economic pressures as Barbara discussed, can become a barrier to people accessing the library services. Rurality has

its benefits as the libraries are on the fringes and therefore librarians like Zoe and Alicia feel like they are in a bubble. However, only Alicia had the freedom to do what she wanted, within budget.

Cultural conditions in their stories were perhaps less defined. All stories talked about economically diverse populations. The heritage of the libraries was tied to the buildings that the librarians and volunteers occupied (Jenner, 2005). Alicia whose library had celebrated its 100th anniversary mapped out the history of the library service in her area. Further, Barbara discussed how the library service was created with the community in mind including the creating of a book bus service. Indeed, the buildings themselves play a major role in the cultural heritage of the rural library services. Interwoven with the stories were three collages, these represent the photo documentation of some Southland and Otago libraries. They are of tin sheds with roses growing up the side, old churches, and multipurpose or repurposed community centres, RSAs and such. Some of these buildings are approaching or are over a hundred years old. Yet, their history has also been neglected within research, Jenner's (2005) focus was on primarily North Island libraries.

The rural library in a sense is a cultural icon. Arguably, aside from their iconic cultural roles within the community, the spaces that typify a rural library – RSAs, churches and such are essentially white, patriarchal spaces. So, how can libraries over come their physical space to be or become inclusive places? Research conducted by Stewart and Kendrick (2019) described in a college library environment how non-heteronormative students did not have their information needs adequately addressed. In a rural library context, Barbara's story showed that by creating connections with minority and/or even hidden communities, rural libraries could be viewed as providing a space for belonging, being, and becoming (Broughton, 2019).

Ultimately, the library status as a community space, is one which no matter what economic hardships, or loss of building, rural communities have shown that there is always a need, a want, and place for the rural library. The sense of inclusivity of a library has less to do with the space that the library occupies and is more about the connections that the rural librarians and library volunteers make with their patrons.

Below is a visual summary (Venn diagram) comparing my findings in this report with those of the literature. The mint side (left) shows what is distinct in the literature (taken from the concept map in section two), the centre shows the findings that are consistent with the literature, and the pink side (right) shows my findings that are not found in the literature explored in this report.
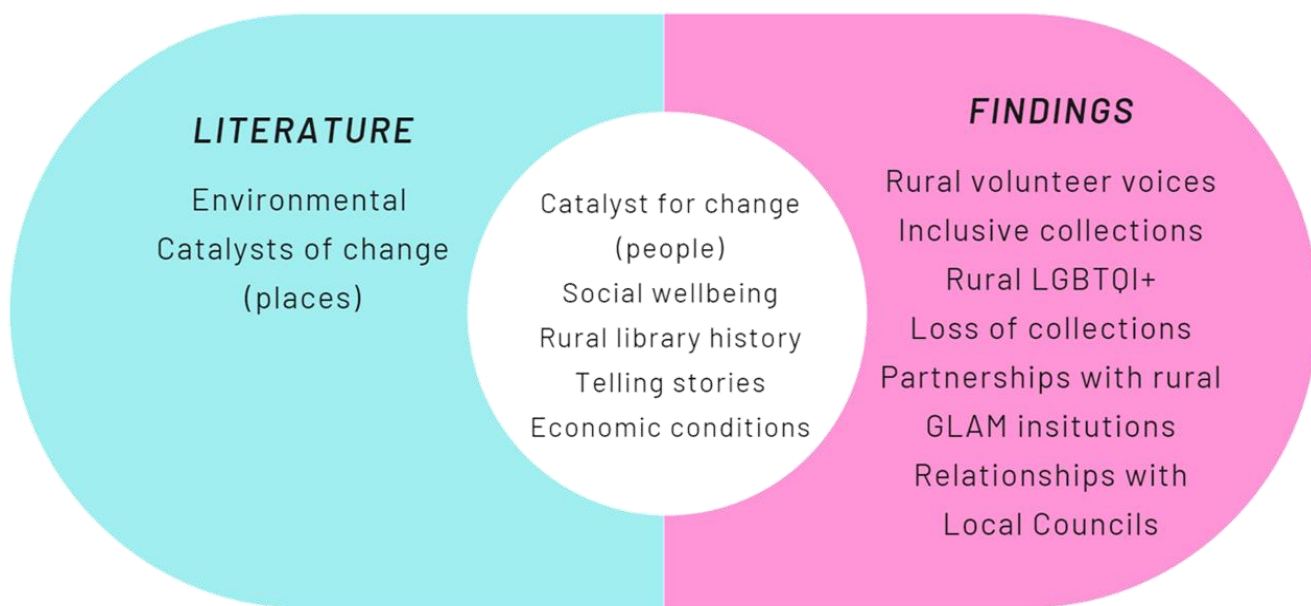
LITERATURE

Environmental
Catalysts of change
(places)

Catalyst for change
(people)
Social wellbeing
Rural library history
Telling stories
Economic conditions

FINDINGS

Rural volunteer voices
Inclusive collections
Rural LGBTQI+
Loss of collections
Partnerships with rural
GLAM insitutions
Relationships with
Local Councils

Figure 8: Visual summary of findings

9. Conclusion & suggestions for further research

Overdue are the stories of rural librarians and library volunteers in New Zealand. The clarion call of Green & Fargher (2012) has sounded and been heard. In this report, I have sought to tell the stories of rural Otago and Southland librarians and volunteers. Their stories reflect building and maintaining connections, collections, and conditions.

There are many limitations to this study. It was very small study due to time restrictions and the scope of creating and doing research for such a purpose. Nevertheless, it has provided a foundation and shown there is great scope to develop and build on this study. For example, a longitudinal narrative study that explored more provinces would be able to trace ideas like inclusion and cultural diversity across the years. This would help guide library practice and policy, especially around issues of representation of diverse cultures that are both traditional and emerging. The literature has shown that there is a gap regarding the voices and experiences of rural library volunteers, it would be advantageous to garner their perspectives. Other ideas for future research include, looking at specifically the most isolated libraries in New Zealand, those that are island bound; Stewart, Waiheke, and the Chatham Islands. These isolated communities, particularly Stewart Island and the Chatham Islands are often overlooked in terms of both research and services.

Related to the small sample size is the key idea of confidentially and anonymity. Scholars like Davidson and Tolich (1999) have discussed how in "small town" New Zealand it is impossible to guarantee complete anonymity to participants in research. This poses an interesting conundrum within this research, I have a small sample size, who are communities of literally small towns. I did ask participants to choose a pseudonym, but no one came forward with one, therefore I chose fictious librarians from movies and television. Finally, the issue of photographs identifying their library. Only two participants took photos, and I have honoured them in the findings. I chose to crop them to circles to identify them as participant taken. Further to this I colourised them to obscure any unique colour schemes.

A note on the methodology.

The methodology both the theoretical lens and the method I used, was predominantly taken from narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry allows us to view lives and experiences as storied. Conducting a narrative interview was a way explore the everydayness of the lived experience. As an approach Narrative was open enough so any sensitive topics that the participants wanted to talk about could be done so freely. A limitation on this project has been time, as one interview produced only the tip of what could be explored using narrative techniques. Despite that, I discovered rich and engaging stories that have not been heard in LIS scholarship in New Zealand. Narrative inquiry as a methodology, both theoretical and method, should be considered more widely for LIS research, especially surrounding story gathering about issues of digital inclusion, LGBTQI+ community, and other marginalised and isolated communities. Stories ultimately help provide an understanding of how institutions like libraries are experienced by those who work in them.

Lara J. Sanderson, Victoria University, 2020

Word Count:10,550.

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Appendix A: Information & Consent forms

VICTORIA
TE WHARE WĀNANGA O TE ŪPOKO O TE IKA A MĀUI
UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

Overdue: The lived experiences of rural Otago and Southland librarians

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

You are invited to take part in this research. Please read this information before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to participate, thank you. If you decide not to participate, thank you for considering this request.

Who am I?

My name is *Lara* and I am a Masters student in *Information Studies* at Victoria University of Wellington. This research project is work towards my INFO580 Report.

What is the aim of the project?

This project is to explore the lived experiences of rural Otago and Southland librarians. Your participation will support this research by providing a narrative that has rarely been heard and demonstrate your role in relation to the social, economic, cultural, and environmental conditions of your community. This research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee #27868.

How can you help?

You have been invited to participate because you are a librarian in a rural library in Otago or Southland. If you agree to take part, I will interview you at a place and time that suits you. I will ask you questions about your experiences as a rural librarian. The interview will take between 30-60 minutes. I will audio record the interview with your permission and write it up later. You can choose to not answer any question or stop the interview at any time, without giving a reason. I will also ask if you would like to take photographs on a digital device to illustrate your everyday experiences as a rural librarian. You can withdraw from the study by contacting me at any time. If you withdraw, the information you provided will be destroyed or returned to you.

What will happen to the information you give?

This research is confidential. This means that the researchers named below will be aware of your identity, but the research data will be combined, and your identity will not be revealed

in any reports, presentations, or public documentation. However, you should be aware that in small projects your identity might be obvious to others in your community. Also, you may wish to be identified and named in the final report this is entirely up to you.

Only my supervisor and I will read the notes or transcript of the interview. The interview transcripts, summaries and any recordings will be kept securely and destroyed on *February 2022*.

What will the project produce?

The information from my research will be used in INFO580 Report and any related academic publications and/or conferences*.*

If you accept this invitation, what are your rights as a research participant?

You do not have to accept this invitation if you don't want to. If you do decide to participate, you have the right to:

- choose not to answer any question;
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;
- withdraw from the study by 20th December 2019;
- ask any questions about the study at any time;
- receive a copy of your narrative which will use transcribed material
- be able to read the final report if desired via the link to the Victoria depository.

If you have any questions or problems, who can you contact?
If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact:

Student:	**Supervisor:**
Name: Lara Sanderson	Name: Jennifer Campbell-Meier
University email address: sanderlara@myvuw.ac.nz	Role: Programme Director of IST Programmes.
	School: School of Information Management
	Phone: 04 463 5349
	jennifer.campbell-meier@vuw.ac.nz

Human Ethics Committee information

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research, you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convenor: Dr Judith Loveridge. Email hec@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 6028.

Overdue: The lived experiences of rural Otago & Southland librarians

CONSENT TO INTERVIEW

This consent form will be held for *5* years.

Researcher: Lara Sanderson, School of Information Management*,* Victoria University of Wellington*.*

- I have read the Information Sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions at any time.
- I agree to take part in an audio recorded interview.

I understand that:

- I may withdraw from this study by 20th December 2019, and any information that I have provided will be returned to me or destroyed.
- The identifiable information I have provided will be destroyed on February 2022*.*
- Any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisor.
- I understand that the findings may be used for an INFO580 Report and any resulting academic publications and/or presented to conferences].
- I understand that the recordings will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisor.
- My name will not be used in reports and utmost care will be taken not to disclose any information that would identify me

- I would like to receive a link to the final report and have added my email   Yes ☐   No ☐ address below.

Signature of participant: _____

Name of participant: _____   Date: _____

Contact details: _____

Research Project Title: Overdue: The lived experiences of rural Otago & Southland librarians.

Researcher: Lara Sanderson, 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 or photographs I have provided) from this project, without having to give reasons, by e-mailing sanderlara@myvuw.ac.nz within a week.

I understand that the photograph in the box below may be used for illustrative purposes.

I agree this photo may be used for (please tick one):

☐ INFO580 Report only (open access deposited at Victoria University)
☐ INFO580 Report and presentations
☐ INFO580 Report, presentations, and other publications (including print & digital)

Signed:

Name of participant:
Date:

Appendix B: Advertising materials