

'It's amazing it's all in one place'

Evidencing the Social Value of Public Libraries



Research Team

This project was co-led by Dr Katherine Champion (Senior Lecturer, University of Glasgow) and Lindsay McKrell (Team Leader Libraries & Archives, Stirling Council). At the outset, Katherine was based at the University of Stirling; in December 2024, Katherine moved to the University of Glasgow and continued to provide academic leadership for the remainder of the project. Working together, Katherine and Lindsay jointly shaped the project's strategic direction, ensuring that the research combined academic rigour with practical relevance to public library service delivery.

The project benefited from dedicated support from two Research Assistants:

Zoe Norton, Stirling Council Libraries
(November 2023 – July 2024)

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(November 2024 – May 2025)

Academic advisory guidance was provided by Professor Steven Buchanan, University of Stirling, whose expertise helped refine the project's research approach.

Acknowledgments

This Project was supported by the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC)'s Public Library Improvement Fund

We would also like to extend our sincere thanks to the staff and library users at St Ninians Library, whose warm welcome, enthusiasm, and willingness to give their time were essential to the project. Their participation and insights greatly enhanced the depth and quality of the research.

The team further acknowledges the contributions of the Project Advisory Board, whose guidance, expertise, and ongoing support helped shape the development and direction of the work throughout the project's duration.

Introduction

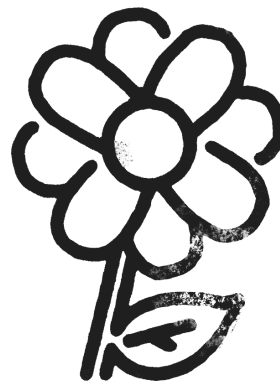
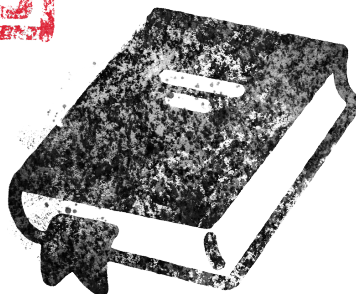
Public libraries are widely recognised as a vital form of social infrastructure: trusted, accessible civic spaces that support connection, learning, and resilience within local communities (Audunson et al, 2019; Klinenberg, 2018; Peterson, 2023). Free at the point of use, intergenerational and open to all, they provide inclusive environments where individuals can access information, develop skills, and participate in cultural and social life. A substantial body of research highlights their role in fostering social capital, cultural participation, and wellbeing, particularly for those who may face barriers to accessing other services (Goulding, 2004; Summers and Buchanan, 2018; Wojciechowska, 2020; Wojciechowska and Topolska, 2021).

However, the full extent of this contribution is often difficult to evidence. Conventional performance measures, such as footfall, book loans, or computer use, capture levels of activity but fail to reflect the relational, cumulative, and often intangible outcomes that define much of library value. As a result, there is growing recognition of the need for more nuanced approaches that can better articulate how libraries support individuals and communities in practice (Broad et al, 2019; Calvert and Goulding, 2015; Sorenson, 2021).

This project responds to this gap by developing a clearer and more nuanced account of how public libraries create social value in practice. Drawing on an in-depth case study of St Ninians Library in Stirling, it explores four interrelated domains of impact: social capital (the value of relationships and support networks), cultural enrichment (the way experiences expand and deepen our understanding of life), economic value (financial impact or benefit) and health and wellbeing (how physically and mentally healthy and happy people feel).



Building on this empirical work, the report also introduces a practical skeleton Social Value Toolkit designed to help library services evidence these forms of value more effectively. The toolkit combines routine data with qualitative methods to support credible, context-sensitive and proportionate approaches to evaluation. The toolkit should be seen as modular and customisable. Some library services have a particular drive to engage communities with environmental topics, encouraging making, growing, equipment lend and mend and sustainability. Equally, many libraries highlight their role as trusted providers of information, with activities promoting authoritative sources and safe internet use. Libraries are increasingly seen as civic spaces so tracking informative and discursive meetings organised by libraries and partners and engagement with them might be valuable. For those with an emphasis on health, bespoke questions could be arranged and use of relevant books and information and specific signposting noted as a result. The toolkit could be adapted to explore the value of these initiatives to those involved.



Background to the research

Public libraries across the UK have faced sustained pressures in recent years, including closures, reduced opening hours and ongoing financial constraints. In Scotland, the number of public and mobile libraries declined significantly between 2008 and 2024, reflecting wider challenges in resourcing, staffing, and long-term sustainability (Lynch, 2025). These changes raise important concerns about widening inequalities in access to information, digital resources and safe, inclusive public space, particularly in already disadvantaged communities.

Despite these pressures, libraries continue to play a vital role in supporting individuals and communities. Beyond their traditional functions, they provide spaces for social connection, informal learning, creativity, and everyday support. Research consistently highlights their contribution to social capital (Goulding, 2004; Peterson, 2023; Wojciechowska, 2020), cultural participation (Summers and Buchanan, 2018), economic inclusion (Gilpin et al, 2024), and health and wellbeing (Dolley, 2025). Importantly, many of these benefits are preventative in nature: reducing isolation, supporting confidence, fostering routine, and enabling access to opportunities before more acute needs emerge.

However, there are significant challenges in capturing and evidencing this value. Dominant performance measures, such as footfall, book loans, and computer usage, tend to prioritise quantifiable outputs, offering only a partial account of how libraries contribute to individual and community wellbeing. While financial frameworks such as Return on Investment (ROI) and Social Return on Investment (SROI) attempt to assign economic value to services (Broad et al., 2019; Libraries Connected, 2023), they are less able to account for the relational, cumulative and context-specific outcomes that characterise much of library use. Experiences such as trust, belonging, confidence, and reduced isolation are typically developed over time through informal, repeated interactions and resist straightforward measurement (Sorenson, 2021).

This creates an ongoing tension between the richness of library value and the limitations of existing evidence frameworks. Consequently, much of what libraries contribute to community life remains under-recognised within formal reporting structures. Addressing this gap requires approaches to evaluation that are capable of capturing not only scale and activity, but also experience, context and change over time.

Methods Overview

This study adopted a mixed-methods, co-designed approach, combining a literature review, observation, analysis of routine data, structured sampling and short interviews to build a rounded and practice-grounded understanding of library social value.

- A literature review was first undertaken to examine how social value in libraries has been conceptualised and measured. The review focused on four key domains: social, cultural, economic and health and wellbeing, and informed both the conceptual framework and the methodological design of the study.
- An initial observational phase involved visits to fourteen libraries across the Stirling Council area to understand patterns of activity and informed the selection of St Ninians as a representative case study. More detailed observation at St Ninians focused on both organised activities and everyday use to select groups for further examination.
- Routine library data, including membership, visits, loans, digital usage and event participation, provided an important baseline for understanding scale and reach.
- To complement this, a structured sampling exercise was undertaken over a five-day period, recording both transactional activities and less visible interactions such as extended conversations, informal support, and unstructured use of the space. This enabled the study to capture aspects of library practice that are typically under-recorded.
- Finally, 31 short semi-structured interviews were conducted with a range of library users focusing on a Reminiscence group, Bookbug attendees and general library users as well as staff. These explored motivations for visiting, perceived benefits, and experiences of connection, learning and support.

Library staff and the Community Library Officer (CLO) played a key role in shaping fieldwork, supporting recruitment, and aligning research activities with the rhythms of library use. An advisory board provided ongoing input, helping to refine the approach and ensure relevance to policy and practice. Together, these methods enabled the study to move beyond quantitative indicators to capture the relational, cumulative and place-based dimensions of social value generated through everyday library use.

St Ninians Library, Stirling

St Ninians Library in Stirling was selected as a case study as it reflects the everyday functions and community value of local branch libraries across Scotland. Located within a mixed residential area with varied socio-economic characteristics, the library serves a diverse population and sits within a wider network of local services.

The library is based in the Mayfield Centre, a co-located community hub offering adult learning, wellbeing activities and support services. This setting creates a flexible, multi-purpose space where formal programmes and informal use overlap. Regular activities include Bookbug sessions for young families and groups for older adults, alongside everyday use such as borrowing, studying, accessing digital resources and seeking support.

As a result, St Ninians operates not only as a library but as a shared community space, supporting social connection, learning and wellbeing. Its co-location within a broader community environment also reflects a wider model seen across library services, where integration with local provision strengthens accessibility, participation and local relevance. In this way, St Ninians provides a useful lens through which to understand how libraries function as adaptable, place-based social infrastructure.

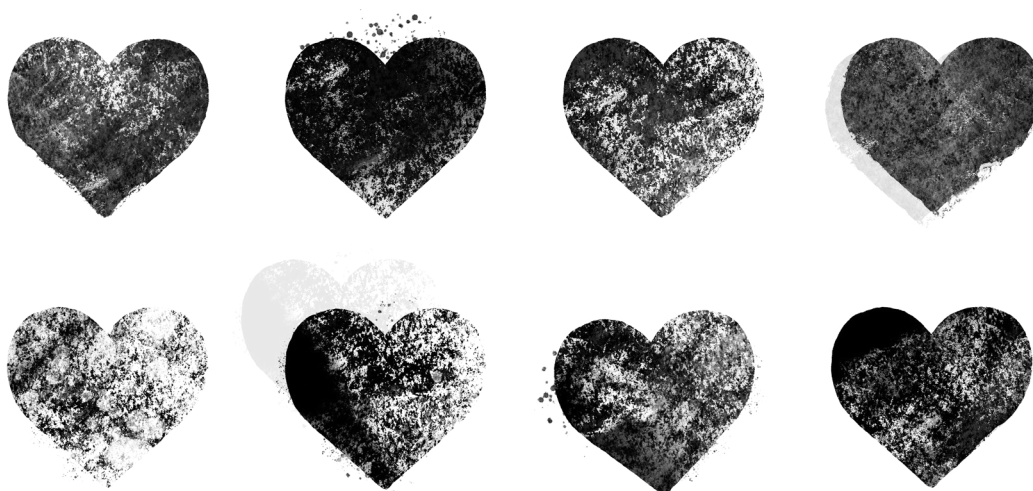


Figure 1 – St Ninians Library and the Mayfield Centre



Figure 2 – St Ninians Library

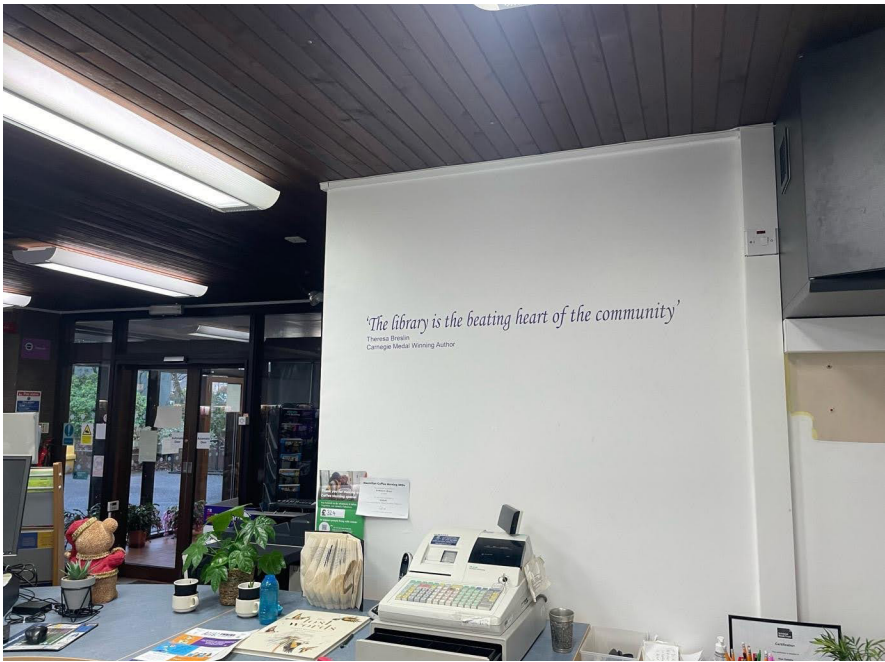
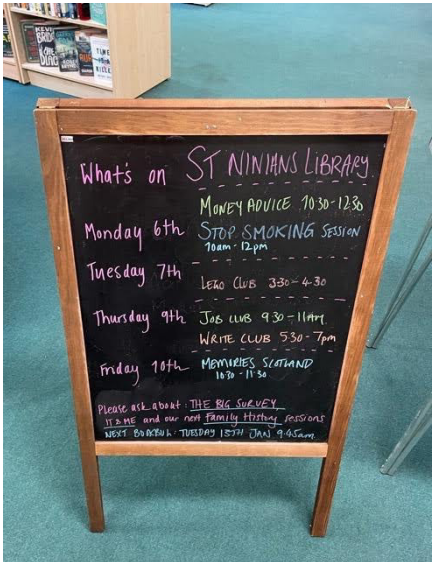


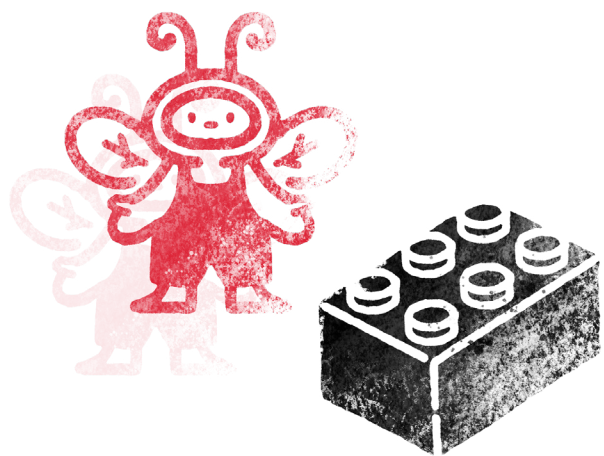
Figure 3 – What's on at St Ninians





Findings: Evidencing Social Value

This section presents the findings of our mixed-methods exploration of how public libraries generate social value, using St Ninians Library in Stirling as an illustrative case. The analysis draws on routinely collected operational data alongside observational insights and qualitative engagement with users and staff. Together, these sources help illuminate both the measurable patterns of library use and the more relational, experiential dimensions of value that are not easily captured through quantitative metrics alone.



Service Reach and Patterns of Use at St Ninians

This analysis combines routine library data with observation and user insights to build a fuller picture of how social value is created in practice at St Ninians. While usage data illustrates the scale and reach of activity, qualitative evidence helps reveal the relational and everyday dimensions of value that lie beneath these metrics.

Service Reach

Routine data show St Ninians to be a busy, well-used and broadly accessible service. With over 3,100 members and more than 27,000 annual visits, the library attracts a diverse, intergenerational user base. High levels of borrowing, alongside 440 events attended by over 4,400 participants, underline its role as both a cultural resource and a community hub.

The data also highlight the library's importance as a site of digital inclusion. Public computers, Wi-Fi access and staff-supported digital help are widely used, indicating strong demand for support with everyday online tasks. Taken together, these figures show a service operating at scale: providing access to books and learning, but also supporting digital participation, social connection and everyday needs.

Table 1 –St Ninians Library routinely collected quantitative data 2024-2025

Data	St Ninians
Registered members	3114
Users by Age: over 16	2111
Users by Age: under 16	1003
Users by Age: over 65	287
Active Members	1143
Visitor Count	27097
Book Loans	32789
Number of Books in stock	10460
Assistance with PCs	
Activities: Events	440
Activities: Attendance	4423
IT & Me	52
PCs Available	10
PC Usage	1368
Wifi Usage	2578
Hearing Aid Batteries	2724
Library Income	£1,358

Patterns of Everyday Use: Findings from the St Ninians Sampling

A five-day sampling exercise provides a closer view of how the library is used in practice (see Figure 4). It reveals not only routine transactions, but also the less visible, relational interactions that underpin social value.

Several patterns stand out:

- Learning and early years engagement: School and nursery visits were the most frequent activity, highlighting the library's role in literacy and education.
- Information and support: High levels of phone and email enquiries reflect the library's position as a trusted, accessible source of help and guidance.
- Informal and intergenerational use: Children's play, group activities and unstructured time in the space demonstrate the library's role as a safe, flexible environment.
- Relational interactions: Extended conversations with staff were a prominent feature, evidencing the importance of trust, recognition and informal support.
- Everyday practical help: Regular use of printing, scanning and device support shows how the library enables users to navigate administrative and digital tasks.

Although some activities occur at lower frequency, they remain significant—for example, support for older or more vulnerable users through provision of small health items or one-to-one assistance.

The figure below presents the full distribution of sampled interactions across the week.

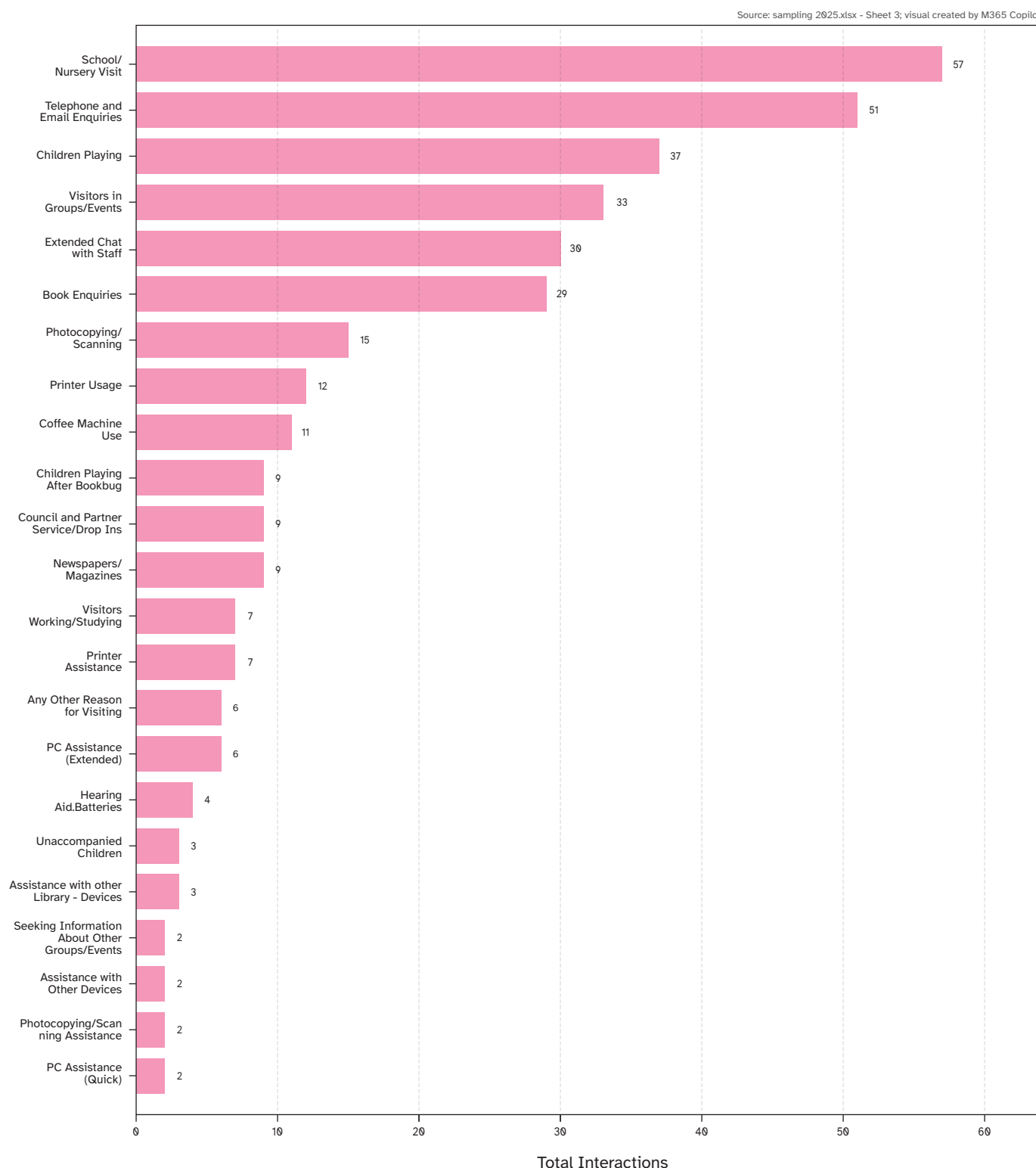
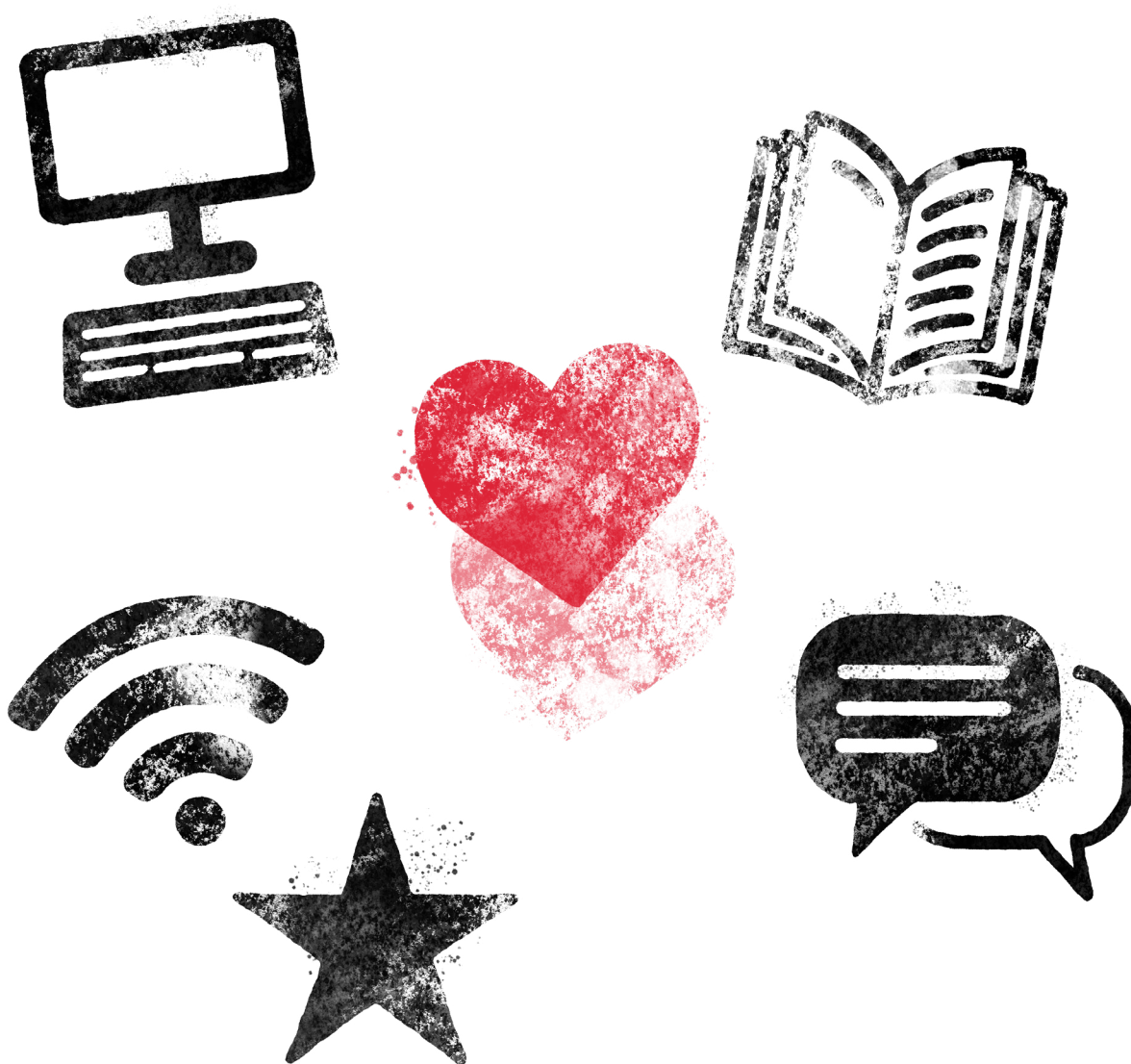


Figure 4 – St Ninians Sampling Findings March 2025 (24th-29th March 2025)

Taken together, these findings show a library that functions as far more than a site of transactions or programmed activity. Crucially, much of this value is generated through small, routine encounters, brief conversations, informal support and shared use of space, that are rarely captured in standard metrics but are central to the library's social impact.

Understanding Library Value Through Lived Experience

Building on the observed patterns of use, the interviews provided deeper insight into how people experience and understand the Library's value. Moving from what happens in the space to why it matters, participants described a set of interconnected outcomes across four domains: social capital, cultural enrichment, economic value and health and wellbeing. While presented separately, these domains were experienced holistically. Participants frequently moved between them, highlighting how value emerges through everyday, relational practice.



Social Capital: Connection, Trust and Everyday Support

A dominant theme was that St Ninians was seen as a low-pressure, welcoming space where people feel comfortable, recognised and able to connect with others:

“Look around, there are so many kids playing around and people just come here. It is a place for community.”

(Interviewee 11, Bookbug)

The Library’s location within the Mayfield Centre creates an interconnected environment where users often move between activities and discover new opportunities organically:

“I was in an exercise class on a Friday morning. Came in to find out what was going on... And they happened to be knitting and crocheting on a Friday morning, which suits me perfectly.”

(Interviewee 17, Reminiscence Group, Craft Group)

“Because we’re here, people coming into the Library see us and maybe, oh, what you’re doing and then we’ll join”.

(Interviewee 18, Reminiscence Group, Craft Group)

Figure 5 – The Reminiscence Group and Mum’s meet up group at St Ninians Library



This visibility and openness enabled participation without barriers and supported the formation of social connections through chance encounters and shared activity. The Library was repeatedly described as a space of informal care - where people could talk, receive reassurance or simply feel less alone:

“When from time to time, things have been a bit stressful, it’s quite nice because it’s a safe group... Either somebody will give you a solution or they’ll just say they’re there... and that includes the librarians.”

(Interviewee 17, Reminiscence Group, Craft Group)

Over time, repeated participation helped build confidence and social ease:

“I’m not so quiet. I’m speaking. I used to be very quiet and not speak a lot, but I’m speaking... Just having the confidence to do it.”

(Interviewee 21, General Use, Book Group)

“When you walk in the door, you’re not anonymous. They know who you are. They say hello to you. They chat to you.”

(Interviewee 21, General Use, Book Group)

These interactions not only created new relationships but strengthened existing ones:

“One of the book club I already knew, but that’s quite nice. It kind of strengthens that friendship as well because you’ve got something else in common.”

(Interviewee 21, General Use, Book Group)

For those new to the area, St Ninians acted as an important point of integration:

“Well, I meet other people, I get out of the house, [child’s name] gets to meet other kids... I learn other nursery rhymes or songs because I don’t know them because I’m from abroad.”

(Interviewee 10, Bookbug)

“There’s an awful lot of people... who are not from this part of the world... who pop into the Library... and make connections, make friendships and the librarians are really, really good at kind of fostering that.”

(Interviewee 17, Reminiscence Group, Craft Group)

Figure 6 – Craft workshop for children in St Ninians Library with Transition Scotland



Participants also valued moments of intergenerational interaction:

“Sometimes... they bring the children in from the local primary schools and they... sing Christmas carols... that’s quite nice”

(Interviewee 21, General Use)

As one participant summarised, the Library offers both connection and purpose:

“Well, yeah, you’re mixing with other people, you’re getting out, you’re learning from other people as well and hopefully helping other people... that gives you a reason to get out.”

(Interviewee 18, Reminiscence Group, Craft Group)

Overall, there was evidence that the Library functioned as a form of social infrastructure supporting trust, belonging and mutual support through everyday interaction.

Cultural Enrichment: Learning, Exploration and Shared Experience

Participants consistently described the Library as a space for learning, creativity and cultural participation, where formal and informal learning sat alongside social interaction. For example the Adult Learning Coordinator noted how access to Library resources enabled flexible support for adult learners who visited the library from their sessions in the Mayfield centre:

“We can come into the Library and quite often we use the children’s section ‘cause they’re... simpler... and if there’s not the book there, I can say to [the Community Library Officer] can you find a book on this? And they’ll get it in.”

(Interviewee 19, General Use, Adult Learning Coordinator)

Another interviewee who attended the adult learning sessions had grown more confident and begun attending additional groups in the library:

“More confident, believe it or not. Yeah. I’ve got more confident with my reading and writing and yeah. Different things... I left school without any qualifications and I done that SQA. Fantastic... It’s things like that, that your children have confidence in you.”

(Interviewee 16, General Use, Adult Learner, Craft Group).

Reading remained central, supported by staff recommendations and group discussion, which enabled library users to try new things:

“The book group I really enjoy because it makes me read different books and books that I would never pick up and read.”

(Interviewee 18, Reminiscence Group, Craft Group)

“You can have eight or ten people sitting and everybody is different... [the Community Library Officer]... says, ‘Right, this is the one that you’re reading this month’... enough copies are... ordered in for everybody.”

(Interviewee 18, Reminiscence Group, Craft Group)

For families, activities such as Bookbug supported early literacy, enjoyment and routine:

“She likes singing songs at home and stuff because of all this... She’s obsessed with reading... one of our favourite things is to come and get books out to take home.”

(Interviewee 14, Bookbug)

Engagement with local history and collective memory emerged as another significant cultural dimension especially for the Local History and Reminiscence Groups. Members described tracing historical records of family members and connecting with local histories. For others, family history work intersected with reminiscence activities and local archival material in unexpected and emotionally resonant ways. One Reminiscence Group member described the powerful experience of recognising herself and her family in an archival photograph of the 1953 Coronation brought into the group:

“She brought a picture in... I went, ‘that’s Main Street, that’s my mum and me’... My granny’s in the picture... I’ve got a copy of it... that was great. I thought it was great.... Yeah, my mum holding me with my bows in the hair”

(Interviewee 3, Reminiscence Group).

Participants emphasised the value of sharing stories across generations, particularly learning from older residents with long-standing ties to the area:

“She’s ninety-five... That lady has got a wealth of stories. She is so clever. Her stories were absolutely wonderful.”

(Interviewees 3 and 4, Reminiscence Group)

For those newer to the area, these groups provided an accessible way to learn about local history in a form grounded in lived experience rather than formal education:

“I’m not from Stirling... at the Reminiscence Group we read a lot about Stirling, I didn’t know... Some of the ladies... tell us fascinating things.”

(Interviewee 17, Reminiscence Group, Craft Group)

Across age groups and activities, participants repeatedly framed the Library as a space that “can open up your world” (Interviewee 3, Reminiscence Group). For some, this meant discovering new genres or interests; for others, it meant developing skills, building confidence, or feeling part of a shared cultural life.

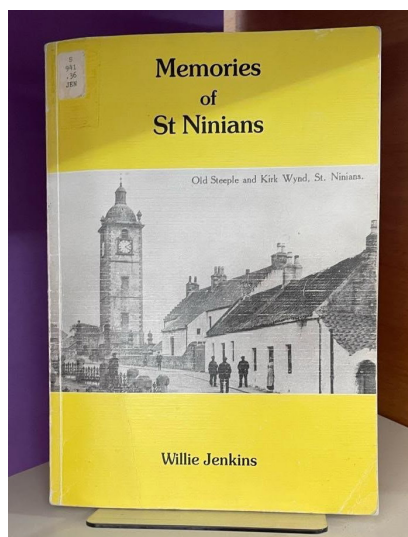


Figure 7 – Local history books at St Ninian’s Library



Figure 8 – Book displays at St Ninians Library

Economic Value: Access, savings and practical support

Participants consistently emphasised the role of the Library in reducing financial and practical barriers. Cost savings were a key theme:

“But those people, people who might not be able to afford to or just want to stay in the house, you could come here, pick a newspaper, sit at a table and read it, I think.”

(Interviewee 21, General Use)

“Borrowing a book is cheaper for me. It stops having clutter in the house as well.”

(Interviewee 21, General Use)

Free activities supported both affordability and social connection:

“And it’s just nice because you can go with kids from several ages... it’s one of the few groups where I feel it’s open to quite a wide range. And obviously it’s also for free, so that is fantastic as well.”

(Interviewee 9, Bookbug)

“It’s a fun activity... Because you know all this is free... Meeting new people... Mutual support.”

(Interviewee 7, Bookbug)

The Library also functioned as a warm, accessible, non-commercial space:

“So what’s great about here is that it’s never cold...I love the heat for children and elderly people. The toilet is so close to the Library.”

(Interviewee 1, Bookbug)

“It’s nice to come into a nice clean place and sit...”

(Interviewee 28, General Use)

Access to digital tools and practical assistance in using them were also seen as vital support for some in helping navigate some everyday life activities:

“So by coming here... hopefully someone will show me how to work this gizmo ... It’s much, it’s much easier when you come to a lesson and they do it slowly.”

(Interviewee 4, Reminiscence group, talking about using a banking app)

Overall, there was evidence of St Ninians reducing barriers to participation and supporting everyday life through access to space, resources and practical assistance.

Health and Wellbeing: Libraries as Lifelines in Everyday Life

Health and wellbeing benefits were a prominent and recurring theme across interviews. Participants consistently described the Library as a 'lifeline'. For many, the St Ninians Library provided a vital counter to loneliness and isolation. It offered a welcoming space where people could spend time without pressure and find comfort in familiar routines. A key mechanism through which wellbeing benefits were generated was the creation of routine and purpose, particularly for those who were retired, living alone or experiencing transition. Regular visits, familiar faces and ongoing activities gave structure to the week and a reason to leave the house:

“It gives my life a purpose... it’s just something that is very important.”

(Interviewee 22, General Use)

Participation in groups further reinforced this sense of purpose, offering opportunities to contribute, learn and connect in low-pressure ways. As with other domains, wellbeing outcomes frequently emerged indirectly, through everyday interaction rather than targeted support:

“Well, yeah, you’re mixing with other people, you’re getting out, you’re learning from other people as well and hopefully helping other people...that gives you a reason to get out.”

(Interviewee 18, Reminiscence Group, Craft Group)

The informal and supportive environment of St Ninians was particularly important for those experiencing anxiety or low confidence. Participants described gradually building comfort and familiarity through repeated visits, often starting with one activity and extending their participation over time. In this way, the Library acted as a safe entry point into wider social engagement.

For families with young children, wellbeing benefits were closely tied to early years activities such as Bookbug. These sessions supported not only children’s development and confidence, but also parental wellbeing, offering routine, reassurance and opportunities for social connection. Parents and carers emphasised the importance of having a space where they felt welcomed and supported, particularly during early parenthood, when opportunities for connection can be limited:

“She’s two and a half ... she really likes [the Library CLO] she feels very, very much at home in the Library... you feel a bit like part of a community.”

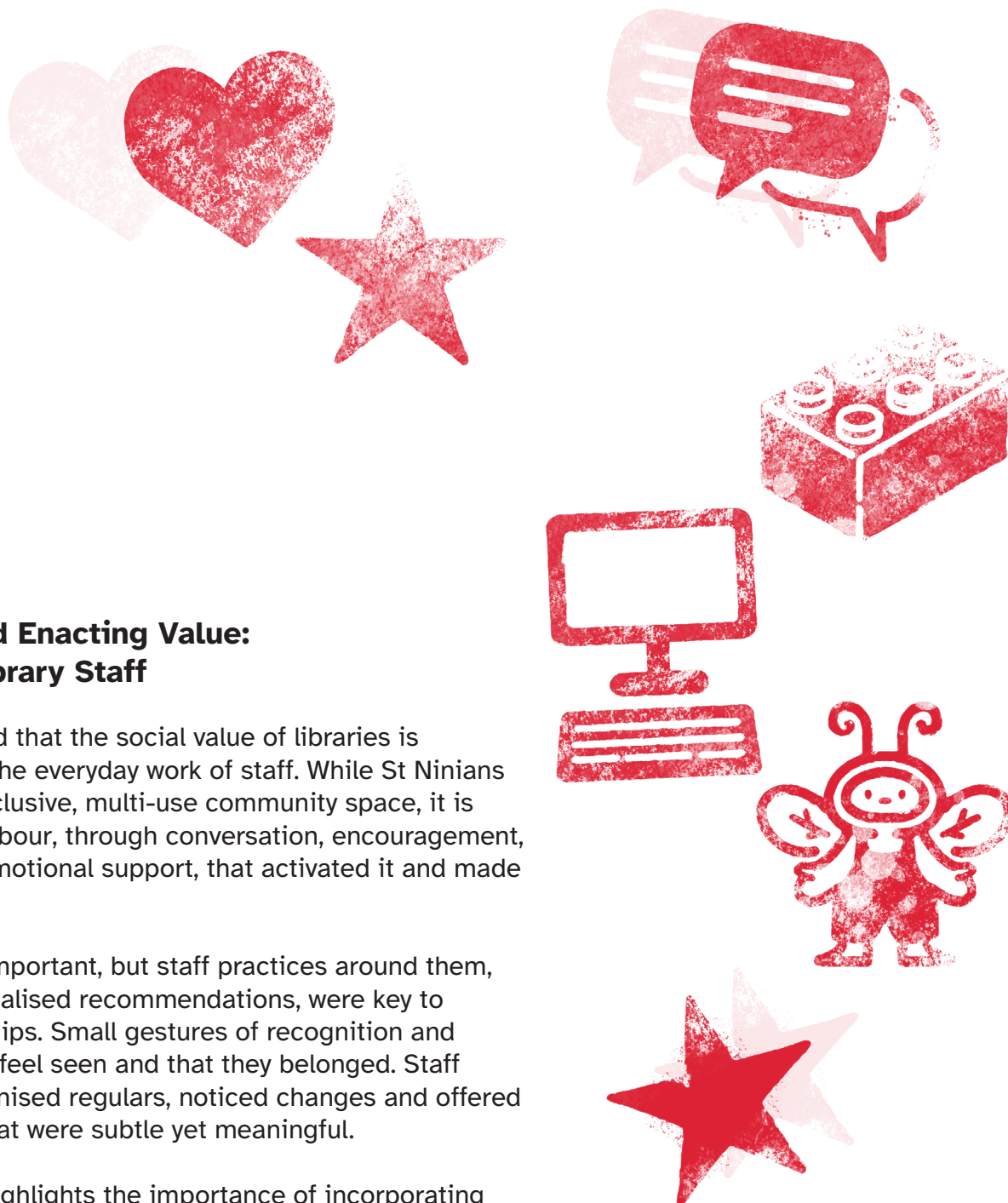
(Interviewee 9, Bookbug)

More broadly, participants highlighted the value of the Library as a calm, non-commercial, and inclusive environment. Across interviews, wellbeing benefits were rarely described in dramatic terms. Instead, they emerged as small, cumulative effects: feeling less alone, having something to look forward to, being recognised by staff or having a space to spend time safely. Over time, these experiences contributed to improved confidence, social connection and emotional resilience. By creating inclusive, low-barrier environments that foster routine, connection and belonging, St Ninians helped sustain wellbeing in everyday life and reduce the likelihood of more acute needs developing.

Key Findings across Value Domains

While economic, cultural, social, and health and wellbeing domains can be distinguished analytically, they were closely interconnected in practice. Economic value extended beyond cost savings (e.g. free access to resources) to support dignity, independence and opportunity. Cultural value, expressed through reading, learning and creative activities, was often intertwined with social connection and confidence. Social value arose from everyday interactions between users, staff, and the space, while health and wellbeing benefits were linked to reduced isolation, improved mental health and a sense of routine and purpose.

Across all domains, value developed cumulatively rather than through single interactions. It grew over time as users became familiar with the space, built relationships and increased participation. These findings highlight libraries as vital social infrastructure, where small, routine interactions generate meaningful long-term benefits. Because these impacts emerge gradually and relationally, they are best captured through qualitative approaches such as staff reflections, user narratives and observational insights, which reveal forms of value that quantitative measures alone cannot fully capture.



Supporting and Enacting Value: The Role of Library Staff

Our research found that the social value of libraries is inseparable from the everyday work of staff. While St Ninians functions as an inclusive, multi-use community space, it is staff's relational labour, through conversation, encouragement, recognition and emotional support, that activated it and made its value tangible.

Books remained important, but staff practices around them, particularly personalised recommendations, were key to building relationships. Small gestures of recognition and care helped users feel seen and that they belonged. Staff consistently recognised regulars, noticed changes and offered support in ways that were subtle yet meaningful.

The project also highlights the importance of incorporating staff knowledge into evaluation. At St Ninians, this was exemplified by a physical scrapbook created and maintained by the CLO alongside a digital virtual scrapbook hosted by Friends of the Mayfield. Together, these resources documented activities, relationships, and patterns of participation over time, offering a rich insight into the everyday life of the Library and supporting interview discussions.

More broadly, tools such as scrapbooks, photo logs or digital archives can support evaluation, strengthen institutional memory, and better reflect the relational nature of library work. Recognising these forms of staff knowledge as evidence is essential to understanding and demonstrating the full value of libraries.

Figure 9 - The Physical Scrapbook (Documenting a charitable fundraising afternoon tea including members of the Adult Learning Group and Reminiscence Group)

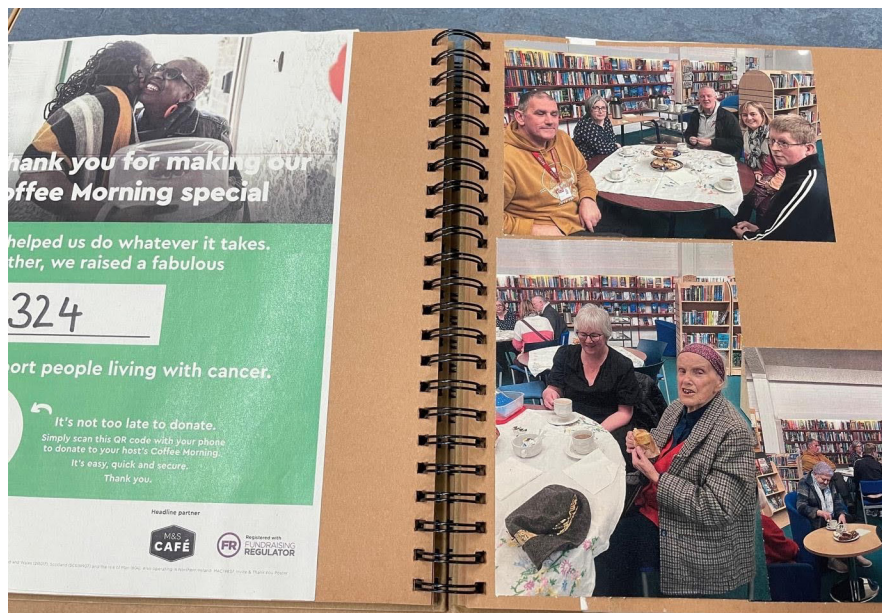


Figure 10 - The Physical Scrapbook (Documenting sewing machine training sessions and cushions created from recycled babybox mats for Bookbug)



Figure 11 - The Physical Scrapbook (Documenting the Friends of the Mayfield, Mayfield Secret Garden community meeting)



Reflections, Conclusions and Implications for Evidencing Library Value

This case study of St Ninians highlights both the depth of value generated by public libraries and the challenges of evidencing that value within existing frameworks. While routine metrics, such as footfall, loans and computer use demonstrate scale, they cannot capture the relational, cumulative and often intangible outcomes that define library impact. Confidence, belonging, reduced isolation and wellbeing emerge gradually through repeated, low-pressure interactions shaped by local context and sustained by staff knowledge.

A central insight from this research is that library value is inherently interconnected. Economic, cultural, social and wellbeing outcomes are not experienced separately but produced together through everyday use. Crucially, this value is enacted through the relational labour of staff: small acts of recognition, conversation, encouragement, and care that make the library a meaningful and trusted space. Much of this work remains invisible within formal reporting systems, despite being fundamental to outcomes.

The study also underscores the importance of qualitative and co-designed approaches. Ongoing dialogue with staff and library professionals strengthened the analysis and ensured it remained grounded in practice. Methods such as interviews, observation and staff-generated materials, including the St Ninians physical scrapbook and its digital counterpart hosted by Friends of the Mayfield Centre, proved vital in capturing the rhythms, relationships and cumulative nature of participation. These forms of evidence illuminate mechanisms of change that quantitative data alone cannot reveal.

Several key implications emerge:

- Social value is multidimensional, relational and place-based;
- Qualitative evidence is essential for capturing how change happens;
- Prevention, for example by reducing isolation, is significant but difficult to measure using standard metrics;
- Staff knowledge is a critical but under-recognised form of evidence;
- Evidence-gathering must remain proportionate and embedded in everyday practice to be sustainable.

Taken together, these findings point towards the potential value of a more practical and flexible approach to evidencing library impact - one that brings together existing quantitative data with qualitative insight and context-rich narrative.

In response, the following Social Value Toolkit (presented as an accompanying insert) offers initial suggestions of a framework for doing so based on our research at St Ninians. Rather than a fixed model, it is intended as a provisional and adaptable set of tools that can be refined over time, supporting library services to experiment with ways of capturing and communicating their social value in forms that remain grounded in everyday practice and staff capacity.

This toolkit is intended as a starting point rather than a finished model. As it is currently being piloted, its strength will come from collective learning across the sector. We encourage library services, practitioners and partners to share their experiences, adaptations and reflections on evidencing social value in practice. These insights will be vital in refining and strengthening the approach over time.



For further information or to get involved, please contact:
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