



STATE OF SOUTH AFRICAN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES REPORT

Embracing New Frontiers

2021

Acknowledgements

This report compiled on behalf of the CHELSA Executive by Shirlene Neerputh (Chair), Ujala Satgoor (Immediate Past Chair) and Anke McCallum (Project Manager).

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COMMITTEE OF HIGHER EDUCATION LIBRARIES OF SOUTH AFRICA

WHAT IS CHELSA

The Committee for Higher Education Libraries of South Africa (CHELSA) is a registered non-profit organisation representing the interests of libraries in the public higher education sector. It is also a recognised community of practice of academic and research library directors by Universities South Africa (USAf).

VISION

To transform existing library practices in higher education to respond to existing and new realities and to lay the foundation for the development of a learning society.

MISSION

CHELSA strives through visionary and visible transformational leadership to ensure that the higher education sector is provided with optimal access to information for the purpose of learning, teaching, research and community development. CHELSA will support knowledge management practices in academic and research libraries.

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Hiddingh Hall Library, UCT

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Stellenbosch University Library

Glossary of Terms

DHET – Department of Higher Education and Training.

FTE – Full time equivalent: FTE student enrolments are calculated (a) by assigning a fraction to each course that represents the weighting it has in the curriculum of a qualification, and (b) by multiplying the headcount enrolment of that course by this fraction. FTE staff numbers are calculated in a similar way (Council on Higher Education, 2017).

King IV™ principles – A structured report that includes a code with additional, separate sector supplements for SMEs, NPOs, State-Owned Entities, municipalities and retirement funds. The King Code™ contains principles and recommended practices aimed at achieving governance outcomes.

LIASA – Library and Information Association of South Africa.

OA – Open Access is a publishing model for scholarly communication that makes research information available to readers at no cost, as opposed to the traditional subscription model in which readers have access to scholarly information by paying a subscription (usually via libraries).

SANLiC – South African National Library and Information Consortium.

Senate – A governance structure of a university comprising the professorate and nominated members of the faculty and various units within the university.

Standards – A document established by consensus and approved by a recognised body that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for activities and their results, aimed at achieving the optimum degree of order in a given context.

Third stream income – Also known as private income, this refers to all university income derived from sources other than state subsidy or student tuition fees. Sources can include donations or endowments; money earned through contract research or entrepreneurial activity; and income from investments (Council on Higher Education, 2017).

USAf – Universities South Africa is an association of South Africa's 26 public universities. USAf's primary mandate is to support its members in achieving their core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement, and creating an environment where universities can thrive and contribute effectively to South Africa's development.



Indumiso Campus, DUT

1. Introduction

The Committee for Higher Education Libraries of South Africa (CHELSA) is recognised by Universities South Africa (USAf) as a community of practice of academic and research library directors. As a registered non-profit organisation, CHELSA represents the interests of libraries in the public higher education sector.

The State of South African Academic Libraries Report with the theme “Embracing New Frontiers” is a broad overview of academic libraries within the context of a changing South African higher education landscape and its response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The notion of new frontiers speaks to shedding old restraints, unlimited opportunities, optimism and future orientation. This has been demonstrated by narrowing historical disparities amongst academic libraries through benchmarking, collaboration and the conscious adoption of standards of practice; cognitive underpinning of social justice, access and inclusion; consciousness of student experience and success; the impact of COVID-19 and the agile responsiveness of academic libraries thereto; as well as demonstrating the value of academic libraries to the teaching, learning and research endeavours of the university.

We envisage this report will:

- provide a snapshot of the investment made by the 26 public higher education institutions in their library facilities, resources and services;
- demonstrate to parent institutions the reality of libraries at the heart of the university and showcase academic libraries' value to the teaching, learning and research endeavours of South African universities;
- articulate the evolution, responsiveness and adaptability to technologies and trends impacting academic library practice;
- serve as a benchmarking resource for advancing academic library services and professional development;
- examine emergent trends in South African academic libraries;
- contribute to the South African and the international body of academic library and information services (LIS) literature;
- create a shared resource on the state of academic libraries in South Africa.

The report provides a synopsis of academic libraries in higher education in South Africa by focusing on the major areas that enable optimal functionality and alignment to institutional goals and mandates of South African universities. The report therefore addresses: the value proposition of an academic library, governance and administration, funding, facilities and infrastructure, collections management and development, human resources, partnerships and collaboration, international trends that are meaningful and

impact South African academic libraries, including responses to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

This report, commissioned as a project of CHELSA Executive and sponsored in part by the SALI Trust, is informed by data collected from a CHELSA online survey composed on Google Forms and directed to all 26 public funded higher education libraries during November 2020. A total of 20 members responded to the [online survey](#). The response rate of 76,92% serves as a credible reflection of the status of academic libraries in South Africa.

2. Context

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted all aspects of the social, economic, and technological spheres within higher education. The student protests of 2015-2019 challenged the continued unequal access to education, whereas the pandemic highlighted and exacerbated the persistent systemic inequalities prevalent within the South African higher education sector. While there was a widespread adoption of hybrid teaching and learning models and online modes of faculty and student communication, the inequalities were manifested by the persistent digital divide, differentiated access to resources and connectivity, and limited funding for higher education. While these continue to present increasing challenges for an ill-prepared South African higher education sector, the pandemic presented uncertainties in every aspect of work and life, further dividing an inequitable educational system (Pelletier et al., 2021).

Historical Context

In 2001, the National Plan for Higher Education detailed the restructuring of the South African higher education landscape, which up until 1994 was fragmented. This resulted in the merging of 'historically white/historically black' universities, technikons and colleges; dismantling the divide between universities and colleges; attempting to redress the educational imbalances at historically disadvantaged institutions; strengthening the link between teaching and research; aligning research with economic goals and creating environments for learners to "have access to quality education, and graduate with the relevant knowledge, competencies, skills and attributes that are required for any occupation and profession" (Council for Higher Education, 2000). It also emphasised the need for "uniform standards for infrastructure and equipment to support learning, promote equity and ensure that learners doing similar programmes in different institutions receive a comparable education", special programmes for "underprepared learners to help them cope with the demands of higher education", and for these programmes to be offered and funded at all institutions (HESA, 2014).

Institutional Demographics

The merging of the 36 higher education institutions originally resulted in 23 institutions: 11 traditional universities, six comprehensive universities and six universities of technology. Added to this, two new universities were launched in 2014 and a subsequent de-merging in 2015 of two universities resulted in a total of 26 public funded universities, including the open distance learning institution, Unisa.

Traditional universities are institutions that offer a broad range of general formative and professional programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels (Council on Higher Education, 2017). The following are traditional universities in South Africa currently (2021):

- North-West University
- Rhodes University
- Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University
- Stellenbosch University
- University of Cape Town
- University of Fort Hare
- University of KwaZulu-Natal
- University of Limpopo
- University of Pretoria
- University of the Free State
- University of the Western Cape
- University of the Witwatersrand

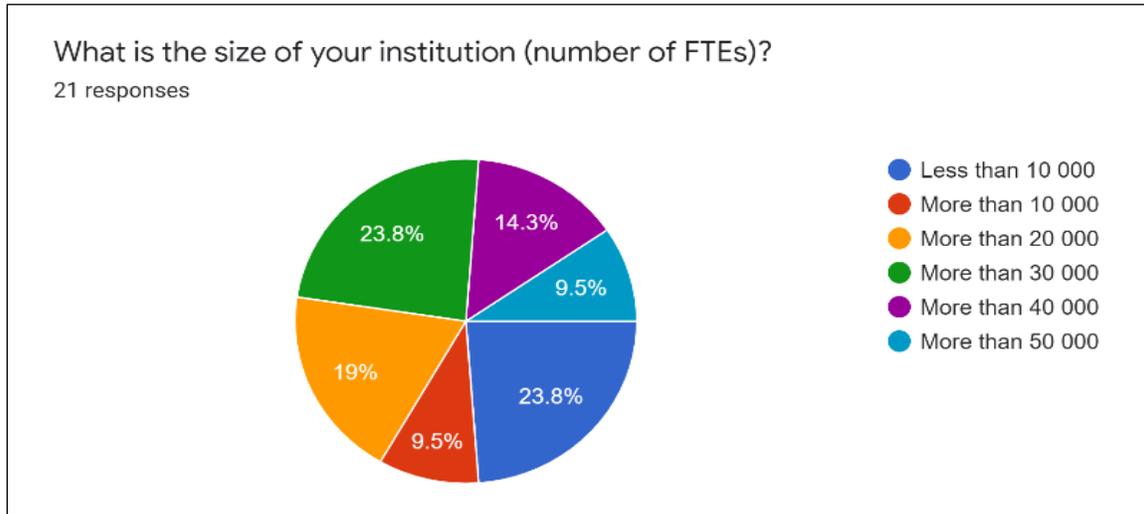
Comprehensive universities are institutions that offer the full spectrum of programmes, including vocational, professional and general formative programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The following are comprehensive universities in South Africa currently (2021):

- Nelson Mandela University
- Sol Plaatje University
- University of Johannesburg
- University of Mpumalanga
- University of South Africa
- University of Venda
- University of Zululand
- Walter Sisulu University

Universities of Technology (previously known as technikons) are institutions that offer a range of programmes, primarily at the undergraduate level, that are vocationally and/or professionally orientated. The following are universities of technology in South Africa currently (2021):

- Cape Peninsula University of Technology
- Central University of Technology
- Durban University of Technology
- Mangosuthu University of Technology
- Tshwane University of Technology
- Vaal University of Technology

Higher education institutions are a large constituent powerhouse distributed across all 9 provinces in South Africa. The institutional demographics range between 10 000 to more than 50 000 students in size, with 23.8% reflecting more than 30 000 > 50 000 population. This demographic influences the size, structure and type of services offered by an academic library.



The restructuring of the higher education landscape also posed huge challenges for the merging of libraries at the affected institutions. The culture of learning and quality of education, as part of redressing the institutional imbalances, also impacted on the future of the libraries, their roles, responsibilities, resources, staffing and funding models. While many libraries sought best practices of successful mergers to inform the tasks and processes to follow, the reality of location, resourcing, staffing, qualifications and training, organisational structures and services influenced the levels of assimilation and transformation at these libraries.

Current Context

Academic and research libraries are increasingly playing a pivotal role in the support of teaching, learning and research. Technological advances; library space and design; new pedagogies; user behaviours, needs and expectations; new roles for library staff pre- and post-COVID-19 have emerged as strong transformative drivers for change in academic libraries. The national research imperatives and the demand for more quality graduates have also influenced how academic and research libraries respond and align themselves to these institutional strategic imperatives.

Core developments in technology have assisted academic libraries to execute transformation and align to institutional strategic imperatives by:

- enhancing the integration of access management services that allows for on-demand access to resources over a distributed networked environment;
- employing wireless technologies and changing procurement strategies to focus on networked-based information resources;
- incorporating integrated learning management systems with other non-library related systems such as finances, student registration, virtual research and learning systems, access systems, etc.;
- incorporating web-based discovery-to-delivery with support for related peripheral applications.

Due to the persistent socio-economic divide between students from historically advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds, information fluency has become an imperative for academic success. Academic libraries offer information literacy programmes that include library orientation programmes, basic library and research skills, an introduction to the online catalogue, the use of electronic databases, ethical access and use of information, including anti-plagiarism tools as well as reference management software and tools. Most libraries have embedded information literacy into course curricula or research programmes aimed at enhancing graduate success.

Digital literacy has been introduced to support students with media literacy, ICT literacy, digital scholarship, scholarly communications and online collaboration in an academic context. This enables students to participate in digital networks and use digital platforms ethically for learning and research; use digital tools and applications; navigate the e-learning environment; and participate in emerging academic and research practices in a digital environment. The incorporation of web tools such as social media, lib-guides, bibliometrics and other applications are considered as value-added services, or value-adding applications, to increase the visibility of institutional research output, communicate with students, and market the library.

South African academic and research libraries have recognised the importance of the global Open Access (OA) movement for disseminating knowledge and cultural heritage, as well as increasing the visibility of research outputs in the rest of the African continent and the world. Many academic libraries have spearheaded OA at their institutions via OA institutional policies and mandates, institutional repositories management, promoting OA international week as well as ensuring all 26 institutions are signatories to the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities. Open Educational Resources (OERs) and the openness toward research output, while enhancing learning and research, has proven to be of greater relevance in the pandemic era. Libraries have been the frontrunners in hosting and promoting open sharing – often collaborating with e-science or e-research by hosting and promoting published COVID-19 research.

These developments speak to the academic libraries' ability to balance core traditional services against new services and to allocate resources in response to new trends, future needs, and alignment to institutional priorities.



3. Value Proposition

The long-held notion of the academic library as the heart of the university is being challenged in the face of a changing higher education landscape and stakeholder expectations. As an asset of a university, libraries are increasingly expected to demonstrate their value within an institutional context. Through strategic alignment to the institution's mandate, academic library outcomes may now be linked to student experience and success rates (from enrolment to graduation), student engagement, teaching, learning, and research productivity.

In the past five years, academic libraries have concertedly focused on building partnerships and collaborations across the institution to best support teaching, learning and research strategies. Services and activities have been designed to enhance critical thinking and graduate attributes; promote a culture of reading and writing; inculcate information, academic and digital literacy skills; provide appropriate access to information resources, research and author support; utilise bibliometrics and altmetrics for research output analysis; host research data and research repositories for greater research visibility and accessibility. These have become tangible ways in which the value of the academic library may be measured.

The pandemic has fast-tracked multimodal methods of teaching and learning with an increased demand for online resources, services and communication, and access to OERs. New web-based library tools provide greater interoperability of technologies, especially between the online learning management systems and the cloud-based integrated library management systems, catalogue, and research support services. This is another demonstrable way in which the academic library is adding value to teaching and learning.

The efficacy of the services and systems of a 21st century academic library is contingent upon the competencies and skills of its librarians. South African academic librarians are engaging with the array of critical skills and competencies required for embedding library services in teaching and learning, and research services. International trends are adapted to institutional contexts and requirements. Some of these new skills include scholarly communications, institutional and data repository management, researcher profile management, data analytics, bibliometrics, research data management, OA advocacy, open publishing and publications, e-science, metadata and the use of bibliographic management systems, digital skills training, library training in literacies, POPIA; copyright and publications compliance, etc.

Challenges:

- Comprehending the value of the academic library within the university.
- Measuring the value of the academic library to teaching, learning and research.
- Demonstrating the return on investment.

Opportunities:

- Academic libraries can demonstrate their value in a rapidly changing environment via various mechanisms such as self and external reviews; engaging with international surveys such as LibQUAL which measures Affect of Service, Information Control and Library as Place; benchmarking and any other peer review mechanisms.

4. Governance and Administration

CHELSEA actively promotes compliance to the King IV™ principles for good governance, responsible financial management and accountability. Member institutions have therefore incorporated strategic planning and review for good governance, which enables libraries to align themselves effectively to institutional mandates.

As a critical asset of the university and partner to teaching, learning and research, an academic library is assigned fiscal responsibility and accountability to a university executive member. The survey revealed that all library directors report to a university executive member i.e. Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC). In addition, 85% indicated the existence of a Senate-appointed Library Committee, which meets either annually or quarterly. This Committee, most often chaired by the DVC and comprising representatives of the various faculties, related research support departments and student structures, consults with the Library Director and advises the University Senate on library policies, plans and strategies, funding, and future developments.

Key strategic areas of academic libraries include:

- Dynamic teaching and learning support;
- Enhancing research and innovation;
- Strategic partnerships and collaborations;
- Sustainability (financial, environmental, institutional) through good governance, leadership, and management;
- Enabling access to relevant and appropriate resources for academic success;
- Attracting, nurturing and retaining staff of high calibre;
- Maintaining an inclusive organisational culture and affirming a positive institutional environment.

Library organisational structures generally abide by the university's cycles and policies. However, over the last 5 years, library organisational structures have undergone a metamorphosis due to the new and changing roles of academic libraries and their staff. Now, all 26 higher education institutions have crafted a "fit for purpose" library organogram featuring formalised posts and clear reporting lines of authority. Continuous alignment ensures the organogram remains relevant to corresponding institutional operating plans.

Challenges:

- Lack of involvement of faculty in library committees;
- Understanding the complex nature of an academic library;
- Library leadership development;

Opportunities:

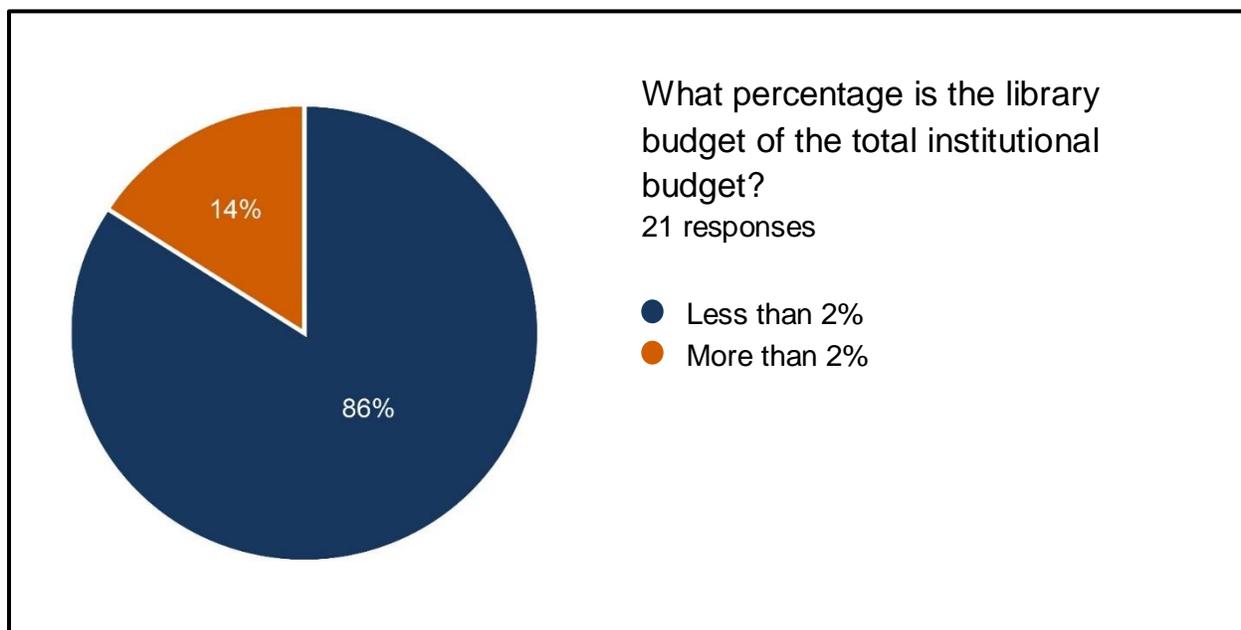
- Greater synergy in the governance of academic libraries is expected to emerge, which could work toward reducing the historical disparities;
- Library leadership may position the academic library as a partner within the institution through increasing awareness of the activities, services, practice models, future strategies, and new skills and competencies required for a new way of academic engagement;
- Fostering accountability and co-responsibility for the development of dynamic and relevant academic libraries;
- Adopting strategic thinking and planning for optimal efficiency, continued relevance and innovation.

5. Funding

The investment in academic libraries constitutes the value assigned to the role and place of the library in promoting and enhancing learning, teaching and research within institutions. However, universities are faced with the stark reality of the huge cost to fund and maintain academic libraries. This is exacerbated by national underfunding, declining budgets, demand for increased enrolment growth from government (Council on Higher Education, 2016), the impact of student protests, political and economic uncertainties, COVID-19, and the heightened demand for university accountability.

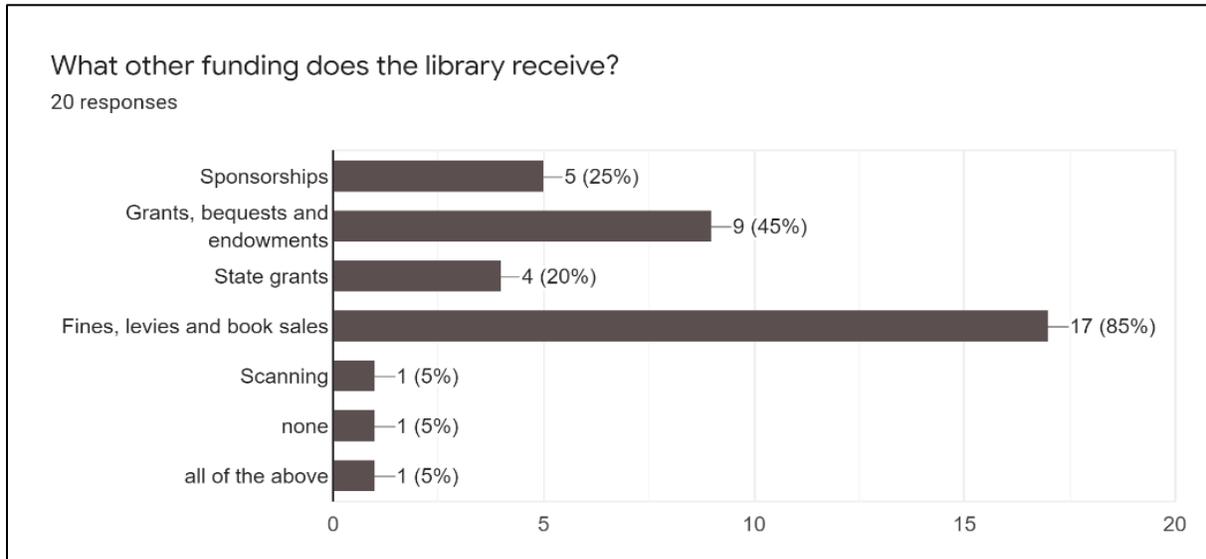
Council-approved institutional funding remains the main source of financial support for higher education institutions. Depending on the type of institution, the library budget is part of either the academic support (research and internationalisation) or support (student affairs, residences, IT, etc.) budgets. Academic library allocations primarily cover capital expenditure, operating costs, infrastructure and information resources budgets, with HR and IT forming part of institutional central funds. Accountability to the budget rests with the Library Director and all expenditures are tabled at designated library committee meetings or reports drawn to illustrate accountability and fiscal responsibility annually.

Depending on the size and type of institution, academic library budgets range from R30m to R160m (excluding Unisa). The survey revealed that the majority of libraries receive less than 2% of the total institutional budget allocation. Funds are supplemented by donations, sponsorships and other grant allocations.



Other Funding:

Some academic libraries have embarked on initiatives to generate additional income, especially in the area of digitisation. However, the majority of third stream funding flows either from grants or government select funds, bequests or donor funding to assist with library facility upgrades or to contribute to the resource collections to support teaching, learning and research goals. Library leadership has also sought innovative ways to overcome funding constraints by actively embracing OA.



The major expenditure for all academic libraries relates to the acquisition of print and electronic information resources. Over the years, the prospects for cost saving and technological advancement have signaled a relentless shift away from print and toward electronic resources (Spinella, 2008). Digital collections with various business models for library collections management are increasing because various tools are ensuring that procurement processes are optimised for the end-user. However, the affordability of subscriptions to individual journal titles as well as databases and books is significantly impacted by the volatile exchange rate, annual increases and 15% VAT levied on e- and print resources, books and web-based systems and tools. The advantage for South African institutions is the membership to the South African National Library and Information Consortium (SANLiC) which has played a pivotal role in negotiating subscription deals and agreements with publishers, thereby ensuring access to resources that would otherwise have been prohibitive or unaffordable. The power of consortial membership has resulted in cost avoidance ranging between 83% and 87% and having access to resources to the value of more than R5bn over the last five years.

In addition, the life cycle of academic libraries is managed by electronic resource management systems (ERMS). Customised search and discovery tools such as federated search engines are integrated with ERMS and library catalogues, thereby changing the user experience and providing better access to information resources and services: 24/7 from any location. Therefore, a contemporary academic library is a technology-enabled environment with technology-driven services designed for a dynamic user-centric experience – which comes at a huge cost.

Challenges:

- Declining library budgets based on a limited understanding of the value of the academic library as an ongoing expense and internal competition for limited institutional resources exacerbated by shrinking national subsidies;
- Declining library budgets have also brought the sustainability issue of quality higher education into sharper focus, including 4th generation adoption of technologies for enhanced learning, teaching and research;
- The global pandemic has contributed negatively to the budget deficit and has highlighted inequitable access to core university resources required for quality promotion of learning and research;
- Cancellation of subscriptions resulting in inadequate access to pertinent and critical educational resources, which directly impacts academic success and impedes the quality of critical citizenry in teaching, learning and research endeavours;
- Depending on the type of institution, South African library budgets may be similar or dissimilar to international counterparts.

Opportunities:

- Library strategies for rapid transitions to electronic resources and equitable access, such as embracing new and 4th generation technologies and OA initiatives (Coetsee, 2013; Raju, 2014), has triggered the need for open sharing of knowledge and resources;
- The global pandemic highlighted the opportunity for better and more effective sharing and resource provision;
- The return on investment and implications of maintaining a well-equipped and appropriately resourced academic library for academic success.

Pretoria Campus, TUT



Stellenbosch University



Digital Commons
e - Classroom



Stellenbosch University Library

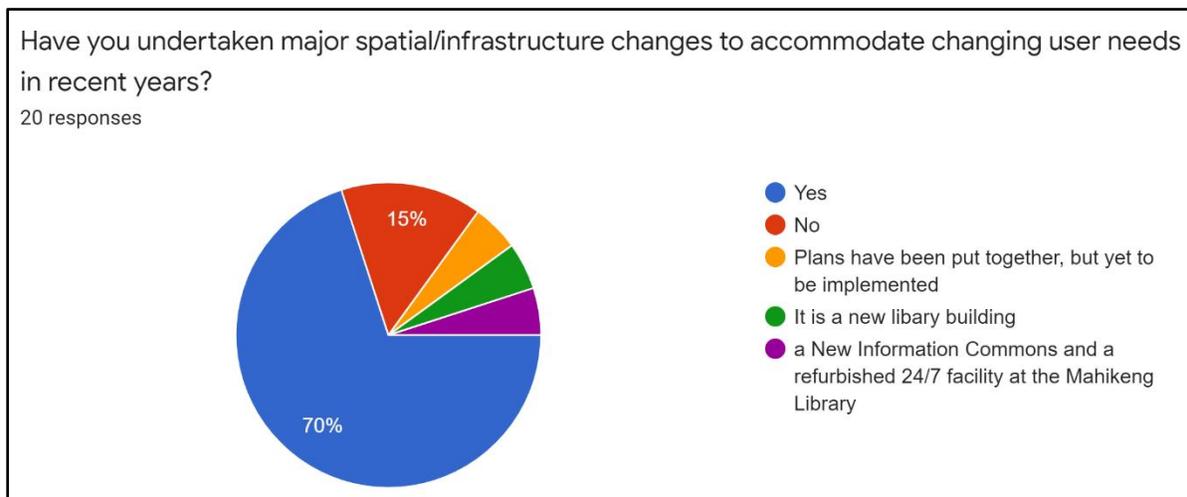
Riverside Campus, DUT

6. Facilities and Infrastructure

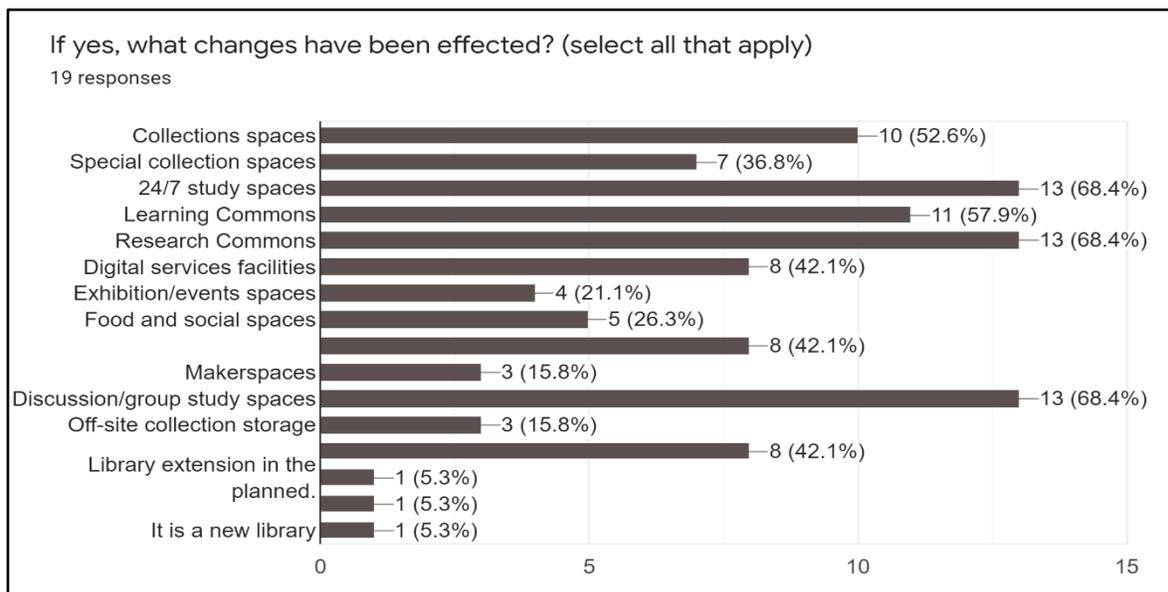
Academic libraries are responding to 21st Century higher education expectations and needs by transitioning to dynamic pedagogical, technological and learning-centric environments which best support teaching, learning and research endeavours. Drivers for change have been: "increasing student numbers, ubiquitous technology, the rise of the so-called digital native, changes to learning, teaching and assessment and of course the growth in e-information" (Dale, Beard & Holland, 2011:70).

Reimagined and reshaped open equitable spaces, and redefined facilities and infrastructure cater for diverse student learning styles and research needs such as Information/Knowledge Commons for undergraduates and Research Commons for postgraduates. Inherent in most new library infrastructural design plans are the elements of creative and critical thinking suited toward enhancing student experiences such as makerspaces and ICT enabled learning spaces, which aim to support innovation, critical and cross-disciplinary educational needs or foster a community. These initiatives are funded under either institutional capital projects or DHET Infrastructure Grants.

The survey has evidenced that South African academic libraries are responding to the evolving needs of a hybrid university based on responsiveness and flexibility; collections; access to ICT and multimodal learning technologies; service and customer focused strategies; varied and enhanced spatial and furniture plans to suit diverse student needs. The following provides a picture of academic libraries' spatial response to changing user needs.



More than 70% of member institutions in South Africa indicated that major infrastructural changes had been undertaken recently to accommodate equity of access, promoting student experience and success. The following illustrates the kind of changes effected in South African libraries toward creating more conducive environments:



With the advent of COVID-19, most collaborative learning spaces were reviewed and strict adherence to COVID protocols such as social distancing, wearing of face masks and hand sanitising were implemented. There was migration to varying degrees of virtual library services and/or real time chat services such as online student orientation/induction, video or web-based learning with tutorials/video conferencing and gamification facilities.

Libraries have also expanded their virtual footprint to include a web-based and social media presence. Most libraries have social media policies or ascribe to their institution's social media policies and procedures for social media risk management and compliance of the digital footprint.

Challenges:

- High cost of maintaining academic libraries as conducive physical spaces;
- Library infrastructure plans did not factor in COVID-19 protocols and its impact on current and future learning environments.

Opportunities:

- Academic libraries recreate and redesign spatial plans for more responsive risk and business continuity strategies.

7. Collection Development and Management

The provision of and access to vibrant value-laden collections, including special collections, remain at the epicentre of an academic library and its support for quality teaching, learning and research endeavours nationally and internationally. Various studies have shown that academic library collections and its management have had a significant impact in improving university students' achievements (in terms of their grades, research and user experience). Academic libraries showed considerable value for student support in learning by providing online access to relevant and core learning materials, including open resources. To this end, Hosono (2006) and Montenegro et al. (2016) argue that electronic resources are more impactful than borrowing services in the current time. Borrowing services declined considerably during the COVID-19 lockdown periods across all academic libraries in South Africa.

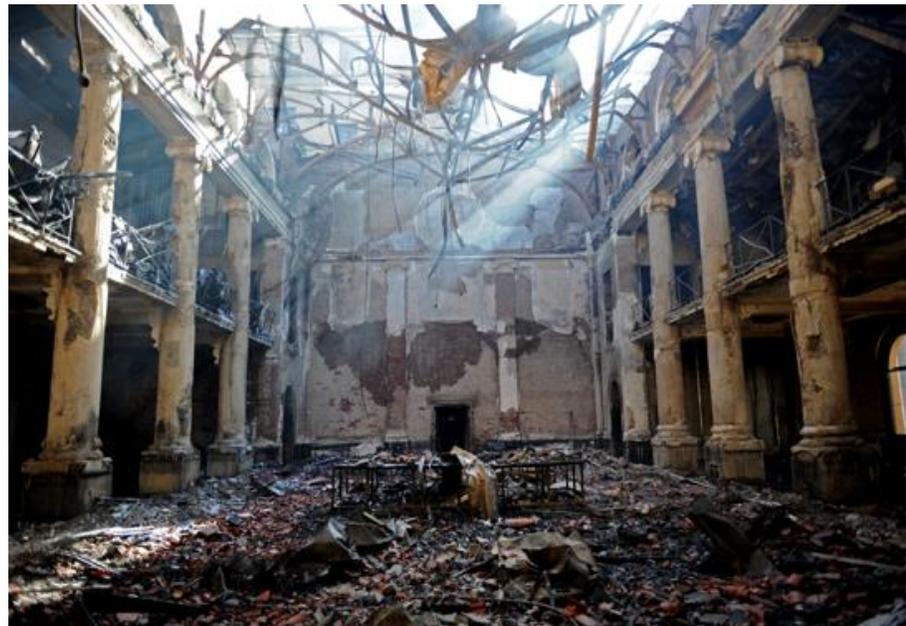
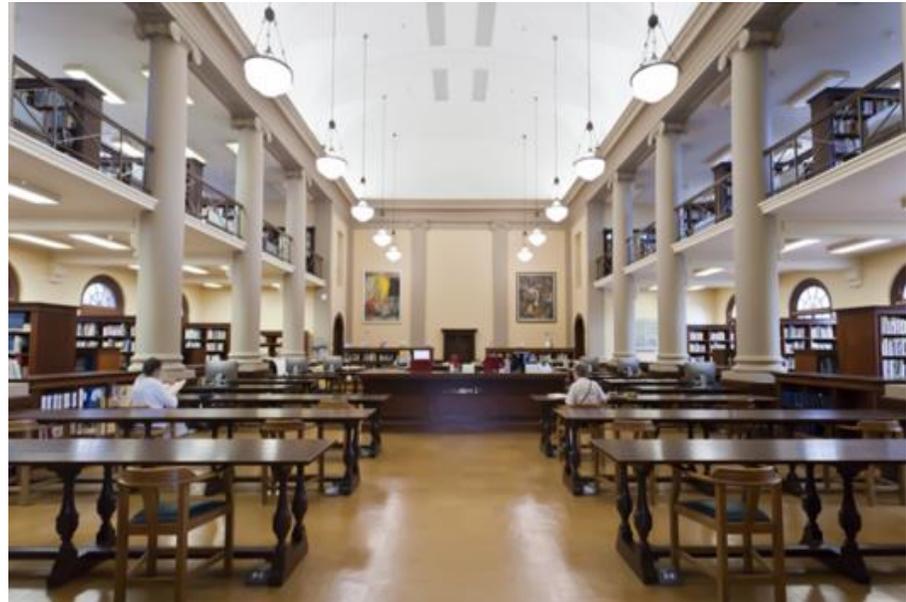
All academic libraries transitioned to procurement of over 70% e-resources, mainly due to a changed academic publishing environment and its subsequent financial implications on acquisitions budgets. Major and core university curricula and research resources are provided electronically to cater for both undergraduate and postgraduate support. The principles underlying the upward growth trajectory of e-collections was borne by the need for academic libraries to align their resources and services for equity of access, ubiquity of technology and connectivity, open sharing and access to research. Access to e-resources in online learning management systems across all 26 higher education institutions provided an additional advantage for equity of support for student-centered learning.

Academic libraries actively promote recreational reading as part of the intellectual advancement of students, with varying degrees of success. Recreational resources have however diminished in most collections, in preference to core curricular texts due to budget constraints or focused co-curricular programmes.

Cloud-based computing and adaptive library management systems were existent across all higher education institutions, which served as stepping-stones for incorporating and migrating to electronic resources. Academic libraries were in a good position to harness interoperability of systems and ICT enabled technologies to embed information resources (copyright compliant) within their institutional learning management systems such as ikamva, Blackboard, sakai, etc. This also engendered a new area of library specialisation, namely e-resources management, requiring the reskilling of librarians.

Special Collections contribute historical and contemporary value to the educational mission of higher education. The survey reveals that 80% of academic libraries host special collections of value. Given the recent fire (18 April 2021) that destroyed the UCT Jagger Library, a heightened priority is the protection of these Special Collections

according to accepted international preservation and conservation regulations and protocols, and national and institutional policies. The need for a national dialogue is urgent to address this priority by increasing conservators' preservation and conservation skills and providing training opportunities to obviate future damage to or the compromising of these valuable cultural heritage collections.



UCT Jagger Library fire and preservation effort

The digitisation of resource materials also grew substantially across all higher education libraries, with the emphasis on theses and dissertations being submitted mainly electronically to the institutional repositories. This is in alignment with OA policies, thereby ensuring broader access to, visibility and preservation of postgraduate/research output.

SANLiC¹ is a non-profit company that serves the interests of South African higher education libraries and national research council libraries. SANLiC facilitates affordable access to scholarly electronic information in support of the teaching, learning and research activities of its members through collective negotiations with publishers and aggregators and actively promotes the use of high quality, open access electronic information resources. It also works closely with member institutions on the following:

- electronic information resources site licensing;
- evaluation and management of electronic information resources;
- resource negotiation and procurement deals, including lobbying for OA deals;
- marketing and promotion of electronic information resources;
- training and development;
- communication, liaison and lobbying.

While there is a prevalence of open education resources and a shift to open publishing, there continues to be a heavy reliance on subscription-based resources because of the stringent academic and peer-review requirements for academic advancement and reputation. After an assessment of OA, the developments around transformative agreements and the impact on its business model, SANLiC issued a [statement](#) on 10 November 2020:

SANLiC holds the position that South Africa is not ready for transformative agreements and that transformational agreements must be explored to foster social justice and inclusivity. The influence of COVID-19 must be given serious consideration in developing a transformational open access strategy to ensure marginalised global south scholarship is accessible to the widest reading audience. Acknowledging that global south scholarship matters, there is a dire need for a fit-for-purpose model, a multi-pronged model that demonstrates inclusivity, a model built around social justice principles.

[The Framework for Publisher Open Access \(Transformational\) Agreements](#) will guide SANLiC's negotiations with publishers in the new future.

¹ <http://www.sanlic.org.za>

Challenges:

- To solicit buy-in for the changing nature of resource negotiation and adoption of the transformational stance based on the South African and greater African research context.

Opportunities:

- There is power and potential for USAf and the government to engage with OA agreements for core and crucial access to information resources. This issue is on the USAf agenda 2021;
- Collaboration and resource-sharing requires momentum for universities to effectively contribute meaningfully to the 21st century knowledge economy.



“Libraries need to shape research and policy on decolonisation. University administrators and researchers should be interested in knowing the nature, size, access, and usage of local collections. While many studies on IRs are prevalent and the use of open sources (e.g., Google Analytics, Piwik/Matomo [installed on-campus and not in the cloud]) for library usage analysis is increasing, academic librarians should lead research on their library collections’ access and usage, focusing on local collection and content usage in order to inform decolonisation research policy and decision making. It is encouraging that several university libraries in South Africa are paying attention to research and that the positions for research librarians are growing in number.” (Ocholla, 2020)

8. Human Resources

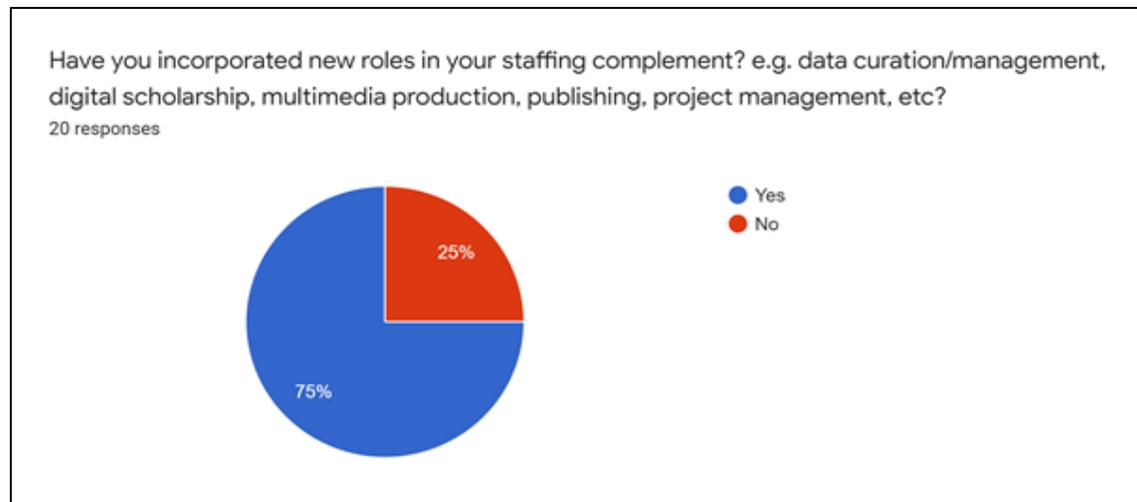
Academic libraries are embracing new frontiers to expand the role and function of librarians. Leadership in the sector are seeking or being guided by new developments in critical librarianship and skills enhancement. Web enabled technologies, online mediated learning environments, and new research and data mandates are creating opportunities for broadening social justice and renewed education and training. This new terrain in higher education expanded the role and scope of librarians and has prompted the redefinition and re-alignment toward innovative and embedded user-or learning-centric library services.

The library and information services (LIS) sector is governed by a set of competencies and skills commensurate with post positions in an academic library. Generally, librarians hold a SAQA accredited LIS qualification with specific professional skills. At a practice level, the South African higher education libraries ascribe to the *LIS Professional Competency Index for the Higher Education Sector in South Africa* compiled by Prof J. Raju in 2017.² This index provides an objective competency framework for University Directors and professional LIS practitioners against a rapidly evolving digital and ICT driven academic library. This comprehensive spectrum framework on discipline-specific competencies combined with required generic competencies and personal attributes enable the provision of high-quality performance and efficient library service orientation at most academic libraries.

The current changing contexts within which academic libraries function and the impact of context-specific international trends on practice have necessitated emerging new roles and responsibilities toward teaching, learning and research and innovation services; student experience; and governance and leadership goals in higher education. Most librarian roles are evolving to reflect new ways of working and effect innovative practices that enhance the institutional profile and standing. New virtual service strategies, precipitated by COVID-19 and remote working, focus on enhanced ICT skills and immersion of software and tools for greater efficiencies toward embedded librarianship within a digitally mediated integrated learning environment.

75% of the libraries surveyed indicated they have incorporated new roles in their staff complement. This links to the review and repurposing of professional posts to correlate to institutional priorities and new services. This resonates with the 'change in skills' trend identified by the ACRL Research Planning and Review Committee as one of the significant trends in the *2020 Top Trends in Academic Libraries*.

² <https://openbooks.uct.ac.za/uct/catalog/book/LISindex>



Generally, librarian job descriptions are updated within a period of 3-5 years depending on institutional preference and process. Library posts are often benchmarked nationally or internationally for quality assurance. Job posts, titles and role descriptions of library staff range from support to professional and specialist posts, e.g. Faculty or Subject Librarian; Librarian: Instructional Designer; Research Data Management Librarian/Officer; Metadata Librarian; Institutional Repository Manager; Data Curation Officer; Librarian: Scholarly Communications. Titles or designations are dependent upon institutional preferences or recruitment guidelines.

Staff development is a strategic imperative for a library's success. By adopting this strategic mindset, it reflects a responsiveness to university staff development practices and opportunities, thereby ensuring the realisation of both individual professional and institutional goals and objectives. This is further informed by an institution's development plan that encompasses the Workplace Skills Plan and Employment Equity Plan as required by the Department of Labour.

The Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) is the SAQA recognised professional body for LIS. All practicing librarians are expected to register with the professional body and be assigned the designation "Professional Librarian". Critical to the award and retention of this professional designation is continuing professional development (CPD), which will enable a librarian to upskill and reskill for continued professional relevance. LIASA is in the process of re-imagining its professional academy which will concertedly develop the LIS sector in partnership with accredited library schools by offering continuous education and accredited training. This will allow LIASA to become more relevant and sustainable in the LIS sector. The LIASA Higher Education Libraries Interest Group (HELIG), one of the most active interest groups, focuses on the needs of academic librarians and trends in academic librarianship.

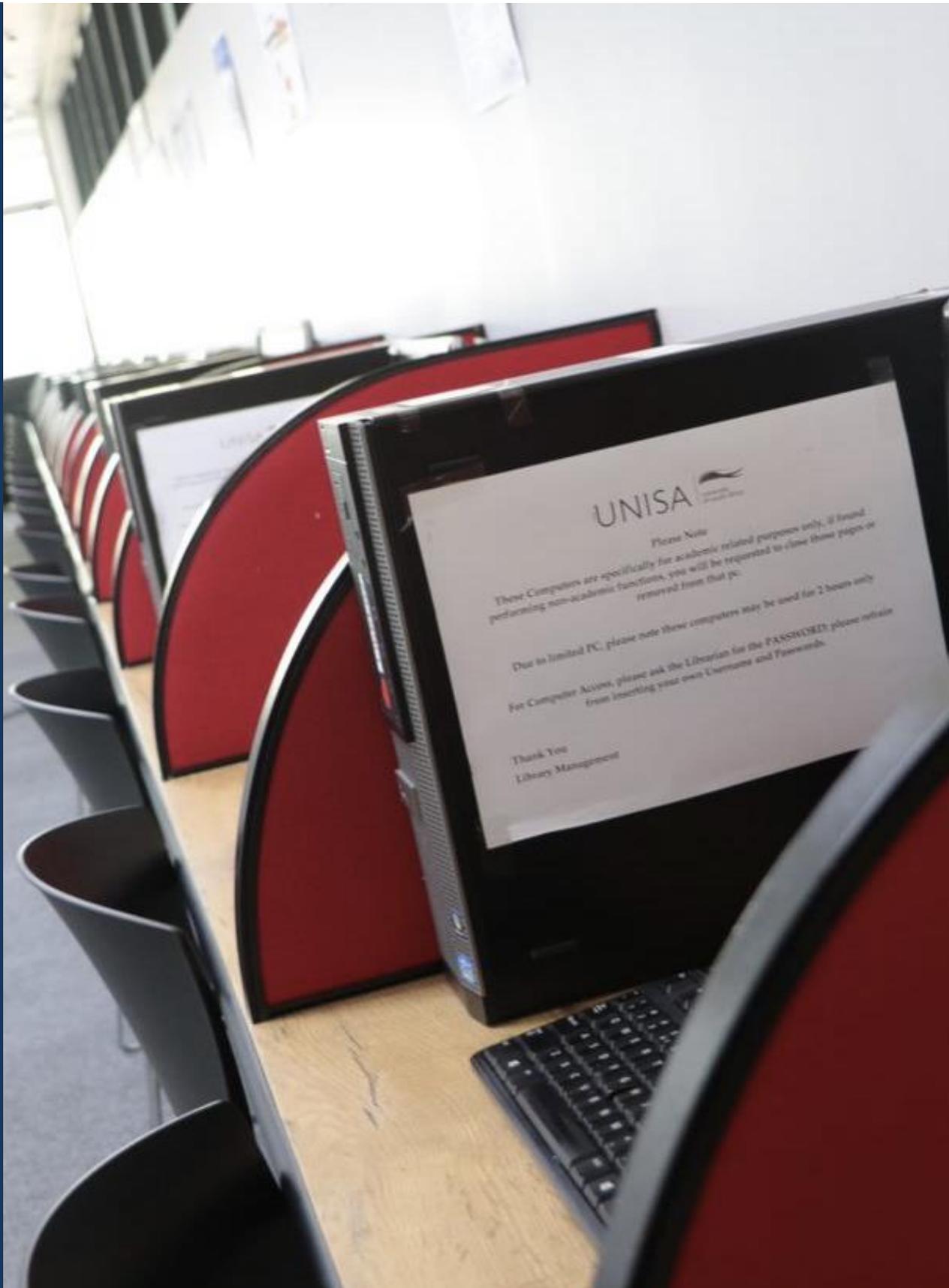
The COVID-19 pandemic has also heightened the need to focus on occupational health and safety (OHS) management. The mainstreaming of mental well-being in the workplace has resulted in greater support for staff well-being. Individual and group counselling services with a focus on emotional impact and managing grief and loss under COVID-19 have proven to be most effective. Staff development programmes have included equipping managers with basic skills in stress management; time management under lockdown conditions; and providing support for deceased staff families. Unfortunately, not many libraries surveyed indicated active programmes in place to support staff health and mental well-being.

Challenges:

- Registration with the professional body LIASA;
- Active promotion of professionalism and continuing professional development linked to performance management, new roles and areas of development.

Opportunities:

- Library leadership must recognise the value of professional registration and drive the development of a re-imagined and proactive professional cohort of academic librarians;
- Embracing critical librarianship and ICT skills and competencies within a digitally mediated educational environment.



Phyllis Ntantala
Collaborative Library, Unisa

9. Partnerships and Collaborations

Academic libraries function within highly professionally connected environments in and beyond their individual institutions. This may be in the form of membership to international professional associations and regional consortia, and library directors and/or staff serving in leadership positions on national and international professional boards or committees.

At an institutional level, many libraries have concertededly worked at developing strategic institutional partnerships with Student Affairs, the Physically Challenged Unit, ICT, Research, Alumni and Development Offices, and most importantly, faculties.

Professional associations include LIASA, AFLIA, IFLA, SCECSAL, IATUL and IARU.

*The Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA)*³ is the SAQA recognised professional body for the library, information and related sectors. LIASA was launched on 10 July 1997 with a vision of being a dynamic association of excellence for the LIS sector in South Africa by uniting and representing all institutions and people working in libraries and information services.

*African Library and Information Associations and Institutions (AFLIA)*⁴ is an independent international non-governmental organisation which pursues the interests of library and information associations, library and information services, librarians and information workers and the communities they serve in Africa. It was established in 2013 with a vision as the trusted voice of the African library and information community in Africa's development. AFLIA's mission is to empower the library and information community to actively promote the African development agenda through dynamic services that transform livelihoods.

*The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)*⁵ is the leading international body representing the interests of LIS and their users. Founded in 1927 in Edinburgh, Scotland, IFLA aims to:

- Promote high standards of provision and delivery of LIS;
- Encourage widespread understanding of the value of good LIS;
- Represent the interests of their members throughout the world.

³ <https://www.liasa.org.za/>

⁴ <https://web.aflia.net/>

⁵ <https://www.ifla.org>

The most active LIS consortia in South Africa are SANLiC (already referred to in section 7), CHELiN, and SEALS.

*The Cape Higher Education Consortium (CHEC)*⁶ represents the four public universities in the Western Cape: Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT); Stellenbosch University (SU); University of Cape Town (UCT); and University of the Western Cape (UWC).

The Cape Higher Education Library Network (CHELiN)⁷ is a project of CHEC. CHELiN's purpose is to provide optimal access to information and quality information services for all participating institutions, enhancing those possible in any single institution, and to develop additional partnerships where they will further contribute to meeting the needs of users.

The Eastern Cape Higher Education Association (ECHEA) was founded and the South East Academic Libraries System (SEALS)⁸ was incorporated as an academic library cooperative project during 1996. SEALS became a formal academic library consortium in 1999, under the auspices of ECHEA, with the vision to create a virtual library for the Eastern Cape to promote and enhance information literacy, education, research and economic development for all who need it.

The SEALS mission is to foster improvement in accessing information resources and to support and enhance high standards of teaching, research and scholarship in member institutions by promoting resource sharing. Member libraries include Nelson Mandela University Library and Information Services (previously Port Elizabeth Technikon, University of Port Elizabeth, Vista University, Port Elizabeth and Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University); Rhodes University Library; University of Fort Hare Library and Walter Sisulu University for Technology and Science Library and Information Services (previously Border Technikon, Eastern Cape Technikon and University of Transkei).

Challenges:

- Strategic partnerships need focused leadership to harness the potential in equity of access.

Opportunities:

- Strategic partnerships and collaborations provide mechanisms for inclusivity, social justice and sustaining the relevance and value of the academic library in 2021.

⁶ <https://chec.ac.za>

⁷ <https://chelin.ac.za>

⁸ <https://www.seals.ac.za/>

10. Academic Libraries and their Response to COVID-19

The pandemic challenged academic libraries into a new normal that enabled them to emerge as beacons of hope in a time of crisis. Libraries stood strong and unshakeable in function and form based on their cloud-based solutions, virtual services and embedded librarianship principles to support curricula reformulation, research, and an enhanced online student experience. CHELSA conducted a survey to ascertain the nature and scope of responsiveness of academic libraries to the pandemic. The final report is available [here](#). The following are ways in which academic libraries displayed their agility and responsiveness:

- All academic libraries transitioned to an intensified or complete virtual service with staff working from home according to various team formulations and an increased presence/embedded presence on their institutional learner management systems;
- Risk and business continuity plans guided library operational/virtual services plans for enhanced academic support and cloud-based access to resources;
- The existing cloud-based integrated library management systems, and the interoperability of library systems to SASSI and various learning management systems enabled the libraries to respond faster and function more effectively than their academic counterparts;
- Libraries optimised publishers' free extended access to e-resources and OA to COVID-19 research and resources;
- Materials in alternative formats to print were acquired, namely e-books and scanned chapters and articles (within copyright) via inter-library loans;
- Informal/non-traditional communication channels were used for communication with library staff, students and academics. These included WhatsApp for Business, Facebook Messenger, MS Teams, Zoom, Student WhatsApp Groups, as well as Instant Chat/Chatbots/Libchats and LibraryApps. Communication with users also took place via email, scheduled online sessions with a librarian, and telephonic support;
- Access to library web pages and information resources was zero rated as part of the institutional agreements with mobile providers;
- Learning support services included remote and online support via guides, online training, information literacy training, webinars, online consultations and workshops, appointments via online booking, redesigned virtual library tours, self-help videos, and recording IL videos for replays;
- Research support services included scan and email, managed loans, online consultation and browsing, online research support tutorials and events;

- Innovative ways of ensuring access to print material included curbside pickups, request and pick-up by appointment, offsite book collections and mobile delivery of print materials, and the delivery of books to staff via courier. Drop-boxes off campus were available for materials to be returned while automatic book renewals applied to materials in circulation.

Challenges:

- The adaptability of staff to a changed way of working within a personal context;
- The use of technologies, web-based platforms and associated skills and competencies.

Opportunities:

- Embracing boldly new and sustainable online trends, services and modes of user experiences;
- Recognise and acknowledge the position of the academic library within the academic project;
- Research the effects of the pandemic on academic libraries to ascertain the full spectrum of impact and value for academic success;
- Investigate the success of virtual services for social justice and the advantages/disadvantages of its inclusion in both libraries and higher education institutions.

11. CHELSA Academic Library Standards Framework

South African academic libraries have to a large extent functioned independently and practice/facilities have been influenced by global trends, the positionality and type of parent institution, and historical factors. In the absence of standards, the disparities amongst academic libraries persisted and the determination of an academic library standards framework was identified as a CHELSA corporate project during the 2016-2018 term. The development of the framework commenced as a collaborative process in 2018 with a 15-member Working Group, which met at a 2-day workshop (03-04 September 2018) at the Durban University of Technology (DUT). The Working Group comprised the following members:

Becker, Deborah	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
Mahlangu, Nomoya	University of Johannesburg
Mathe, Zanele	University of Mpumalanga
McCallum, Anke	CHELSA
Mhinga, Rhandzu	Tshwane University of Technology
Molawa, Segametsi	University of South Africa
Moyo, Mathew	North-West University
Mulaudzi, Mushoni	University of Venda
Ncoyini, Samuel	University of Fort Hare
Ndzingani, Qukeza	Walter Sisulu University
Neerpath, Shirlene	University of the Western Cape
Raubenheimer, HulDAH	University of the Free State
Satgoor, Ujala (Convenor)	Rhodes University
Vos, Louise	North-West University
Webster, Lucille	Durban University of Technology
Zambri, Janet	University of the Witwatersrand

The final framework, as a collective initiative, reflects the South African higher education LIS context and best practices. The following nine key principles applicable to the South African context were identified by the Working Group and the 10th principle ensures international alignment of the Standards Framework itself and creates the mechanism for self and peer review:

1. Governance

Through strategic planning, libraries align themselves to institutional mandate for greater effectiveness, clarity of purpose and roles, and continuous improvement.

2. Infrastructure

As the intellectual commons of the university, libraries ensure its fit for purpose for all.

3. Broadening Access

Libraries facilitate physical and virtual access for academic discovery and intellectual development.

4. Funding

Optimal and responsible use of funding for well-resourced academic libraries.

5. Human Resources

Libraries attract and retain suitably qualified, skilled and competent staff who are agile to change and responsive to institutional and user needs.

6. Collections

To provide seamless access to collections in all formats, that are well-balanced, support the scope and depth of the teaching and research mission of the institution.

7. Collaborations and Partnerships

To advocate, advance, educate and promote the role and value of the academic library through active engagement with internal and external stakeholders.

8. Educational Role

As a partner to teaching and learning, libraries develop and support information fluent students who are able to discover, access and use information and knowledge resources and tools effectively for academic success, research and lifelong learning.

9. Quality Assurance

Libraries imbue quality in all processes, procedures, facilities and services, adopts monitoring and evaluation for greater effectiveness and efficiency, and utilises statistics for informed decision-making.

10. Standards Framework

The CHELSA Standards Framework is aligned to ISO, and adoption thereof will enable South African academic libraries to engage in peer review to ensure equitable access and effectiveness.

The purpose of the Framework is to:

- Provide an evaluation mechanism and benchmarking tool for South African academic libraries;
- Assist in planning, design and development of library services;
- Assist in determining whether resources are adequate;

- Serve as a tool to identify strengths and select areas for strategic and operational improvement.^{9,10}

The Framework will serve as a guiding document to:

- Eradicate the resource and facility disparities amongst academic libraries;
- Set the standards for academic librarianship and library practices including strategic planning, good governance, advocacy, and accountability;
- Ensure an equitable and quality user experience across all libraries;
- Advance the role of academic libraries as partners to the teaching, learning and research endeavours of South African higher education institutions;
- Ensure best practice, introduce benchmarking for continuous improvement, equitable access and services across all academic libraries.¹¹

The CHELSA Academic Library Standards Framework was finalised and submitted to the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) Technical Committee (TC) 46 (Information and Documentation) in November 2019 for consideration as a prospective standard. The CHELSA Chairperson presented the *CHELSA Academic Library Standards Framework* to the SABS TC Committee on 30 April 2020. The response of the TC to the Framework was extremely positive and it was unanimously recommended to serve before the National Standards Committee. The discussions with the SABS Executive elicited that should the Framework be developed as a South African National Standard, copyright would be ceded to SABS and access would be behind a paywall. It must be noted that SABS recognises the importance of the *CHELSA Academic Library Standards Framework* and recommended that CHELSA engage with DHEST and USAf for the Framework to be adopted as a formal document guiding practice.

⁹ Guidelines, Standards and Outcome Measures for Australian Public Libraries, July 2016 Final Draft. <https://read.alia.org.au/guidelines-standards-and-outcome-measures-australian-public-libraries-july-2016>

¹⁰ CHELSA Academic Library Standards Framework, November 2019 Final. <https://chelsa.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/academiclibrarystandardsframework.pdf>

¹¹ CHELSA Academic Library Standards Framework, November 2019 Final. <https://chelsa.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/academiclibrarystandardsframework.pdf>

CHELSEA joined key stakeholders in objecting formally to the Copyright Amendment Bill of March 2019, on the grounds of constitutional reservations. The Copyright Act No. 98 of 1978 (as amended) has no provisions for museums and galleries, nor for persons with disabilities. Given there are no provisions for libraries and archives, nor education and research in the Act itself, the Bill does not address the needs of research and academic libraries in the 21st Century, including responding to unfolding Fourth Industrial Revolution developments. The exceptions in the Bill permitted in the current legal in the print environments, does not extend to the digital environment, such as resource-sharing, interlibrary loans, preservation, replacement of works, etc. The ramifications has far-reaching consequences for the digital library environment and the open science/ research agenda of the country.

12. Open Access: A Challenge to the Academy

Academic libraries are the initiators and leaders in the frontiers of promoting Open Access (OA) via policy, process and new services that ensures social justice and underpins the visibility and reach of research outputs at South African universities. The call for OA is driven by the prohibitive cost of subscriptions and the unfair distribution of and access to research. The notion of sharing and making knowledge accessible to all shapes open learning and the knowledge economy; and the availability of new digital technologies present publishing alternatives.

Open Access as an issue came into existence for two main reasons: the expense of subscriptions to bundled journal databases (known as 'the serials crisis'), and simultaneously, a movement arguing for publicly funded research to be made available freely to the public who had paid for it (premised on the existence of the Internet making this possible in ways previously impossible). These two reasons are aligned with different philosophical approaches: one economic and the other democratic. As access to journals has moved from print to online, there has been a move from accessing individual titles to accessing bundles, whether or not all the individual titles included in that bundle are wanted. Over the past decades, prices have skyrocketed, with average spending on journals rising by 302% from 1986 to 2004. (Czerniewicz and Goodier, 2014)

The scholarly communication revolution, embraced by several academic libraries, has started to impact significantly on services and practices in member institution libraries from open access to e-science as well as open data, open science, and research data management practices (eight institutions reported that they provided research data management services).

Although all South African higher education institutions are signatories to the Berlin Declaration on Open Access, it would appear that the response of researchers has been slow. The majority of researchers are apprehensive about OA publishing and instead prefer FAIR (findability, accessibility, interoperability, and reuse) data principles because of concerns about the misuse of openly shared data. However, data management policies are in place in most higher education institutions in South Africa to drive open data mandates.

Furthermore, reliance of South African researchers on mainstream subscription journals for access to research in their field as well as incentivised publishing in these journals necessitates continued subscriptions by academic libraries at a huge cost to universities. Current academic research publishing practice is influenced by the need to publish in "core" peer-reviewed journals for promotion, personal recognition and tenure. Institutional evaluation emphasis on peer review and high impact/ranked journals has enabled publishers to capitalise and influence the cost of subscriptions, thereby

restricting access to those universities that can afford such costs. Ironically contributors, reviewers, members of editorial boards, etc. to most of these journals are academics at these universities who are now confronted by the soaring costs of subscriptions. The move toward transformative agreements (contextual, cost neutral when combining subscriptions and article processing charges (APCs), transparent with full disclosure and immediate access upon publication) are at present high on the SANLiC and USAf agendas with strong representation at negotiations of subscription to the big 5 databases (ScienceDirect, Emerald, Wiley, Taylor and Francis, Web of Science).

The past few years have seen significant developments between libraries and publishers, from major deal cancellations to new transformative agreements as evident by the University of California cancelling its Elsevier subscription in 2019. As more institutions begin to consider this route, available resources to guide the process include SPARC's "Big Deal Knowledge Base and Big Deal Cancellation Tracking", University of California's "Negotiating with Scholarly Journal Publishers Toolkit", "Guidelines for Evaluating Transformative Open Access Agreements", and "Guide to Transitioning Journals to Open Access Publishing". cOALition S by Plan S and Transitioning Society Publications to Open Access (TSPOA) provided pathways to OA with the aim of providing relevant resources/experience working in collaboration with society publishing partners to develop a sustainable OA model (ACRL Research Planning and Review Committee, 2020).

The value of OA sometimes gets lost in bureaucratic squabbling and regulatory nitpicking, but generally there is little dispute about its merit. OA is beneficial for:

- research universities as their rankings and impact measures improve;
- funders whose missions of creating and sharing knowledge are realised;
- the research process which sees efficiencies, immediacy and transparency;
- the development imperatives of universities and societies at large as the scholarly resources of universities are made available to all.

Given that OA is now a mainstream issue in the global North and policy-driven in Latin America, what is the way forward for South Africa?

13. Conclusion

Academic libraries are in a powerful, provocative space in 2021 to become critical players in university institutional strategies for embracing new, multimodal and vibrant ways of teaching, learning and research in South Africa. The concept of effective embedded and critical librarianship will bear fruit for strengthening the mission of all 26 universities in South Africa. This concept should be taken further in pushing the frontiers of the academic library in particular, and the LIS sector in general.

Critical librarianship acknowledges and then interrogates the structures that produce us as librarians, our spaces as libraries, our patrons as students, faculty and the public. It is grounded in “a librarianship that ... disrupt[s] the status quo, that centers a commitment to social justice and social change... and that grapple[s] directly with the problems of power concentrated in the hands of only a few” (ACRL Research Planning and Review Committee, 2020).

Academic libraries are at the crossroads of disruption, paving a next-generation pathway for harnessing the power of critical librarianship, which contributes to critical citizenry in South African academia.



Durban University of Technology

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