An Investigation Into The Professional Status Of Public Librarians In Cape Town

Mini Dissertation

Linda Ngaleka

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MAGISTER BIBLIOTHECOLOGIE in the Department of Library and Information Science, University of the Western Cape.

Supervisor: Prof. G. Hart

May 2010

DECLARATION

"I declare that **AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE PROFESSIONAL STATUS OF PUBLIC LIBRARIANS IN CAPE TOWN** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references"

Signed: ....

Date: ....*24 August 2010*..

ABSTRACT

The assumption in the international literature of librarianship is that public librarianship is a "profession" with a social mission to serve the cultural, informational and educational needs of the general public. However, in recent years there has been questioning among South African public librarians over their "profession". The South African journal and conference literature has recorded deterioration in public libraries as a result of shrinking budgets (for example Leach 1998). Scores of traditionally "professional" posts were frozen and clerical staff was seconded from municipal offices to run libraries (Hart 2006). Kagan (2002) warns that lack of professional identity among librarians might hinder the social role of public libraries in South Africa.

This project investigated the professional status of public librarians in Cape Town in terms of accepted characteristics or traits of a profession. And it examined public librarians' own understandings of the meaning of the concept "profession" and their perceptions of the work in terms of these understandings. The project examined the following questions:

- ➢ The meaning of "profession" and the characteristics of a profession.
- ➢ The pressures public librarianship has faced in South Africa since 1994.
- ➢ The present professional status of public librarians in South Africa in terms of the identified characteristics of a profession such as tertiary education and membership of professional associations.
- ➢ Cape Town's public librarians' perceptions of their professional status.

The project explored the problem and questions by means of a literature survey and questionnaire survey of the senior library staff of 98 branches of the City of Cape Town Library and Information Services (COCTLIS).

After 1994 the LIS sector had huge expectations but a gap in the 1996 Constitution made it difficult to fully function. The funding mandate in government structures is still not clear. However there have been positive developments such as:
- ➢ The birth of LIASA in 1997
- ➢ The 2004 inauguration of the National Council of Library and Information Services, which advises government on policy (South Africa. National 2001).

➢ The investigation by government in 2006 into the position of public libraries which documented the deterioration of public libraries and huge gaps in services highlighted in the KPMG and Jacaranda report and led to R1.3 billion grant for public libraries (KPMG and Jacaranda 2006).

➢ The LIS Transformation Charter, mentioned in the previous section. The Charter presents a vision for developmental services that will play a meaningful part in society. As reported in Chapter 2, it asserts that their staff should be "committed professionals" and "respected as such by their parent institutions, government bodies and user communities".

The study of public librarians in Cape Town made the following findings:

➢ 62% hold the minimum professional qualification, the B.Bibl degree or Higher Diploma in LIS.

➢ Only 14.5% hold postgraduate degrees and only 6% are studying for formal qualifications – all six for the first professional degree.

➢ 64% of the Cape Town respondents claim to have experienced professional mentoring from senior staff and 65% have engaged in some kind of professional development activity in the past two years.

➢ Only 26% are members of LIASA.

➢ Only 52% of their daily duties involves professional work and only 26.5% claim to use their professional education in their day to day work.

➢ A strong majority of 75% believe that in most public libraries there is no distinction between professional work and non-professional work and 85.3% believe that users cannot distinguish the professional librarian from other employees.

➢ Only 55.9% of the Cape Town respondents agree with the statement "My library service management treats me like a professional".

➢ 55% would not recommend librarianship as a profession to their children. One possible reason could be that they perceive it to be weak compared with other professions. They rank it eighth of 10, just above teaching and farming.

Despite the above worrying findings, the study's major finding was that 99% believe public librarianship to be a profession But this should be compared with the other findings such as:

➢ Only 17.9% believe that public librarians are recognised as professionals by the society at large.

➢ 86.8% believe that the image of the public librarian is low. There are several comments that librarians are seen as clerks and quite strong agreement that the female image of the profession contributes to its low status.

➢ 94% believe that general public does not understand that public librarianship is a profession.

The aim of the study was to gather information for COCTLIS managers, for COCTLIS staff on the ground and for the wider library profession. Hopefully it will contribute to a deeper understanding of public librarians and will contribute to the fulfilment of the mission of public libraries in South Africa.
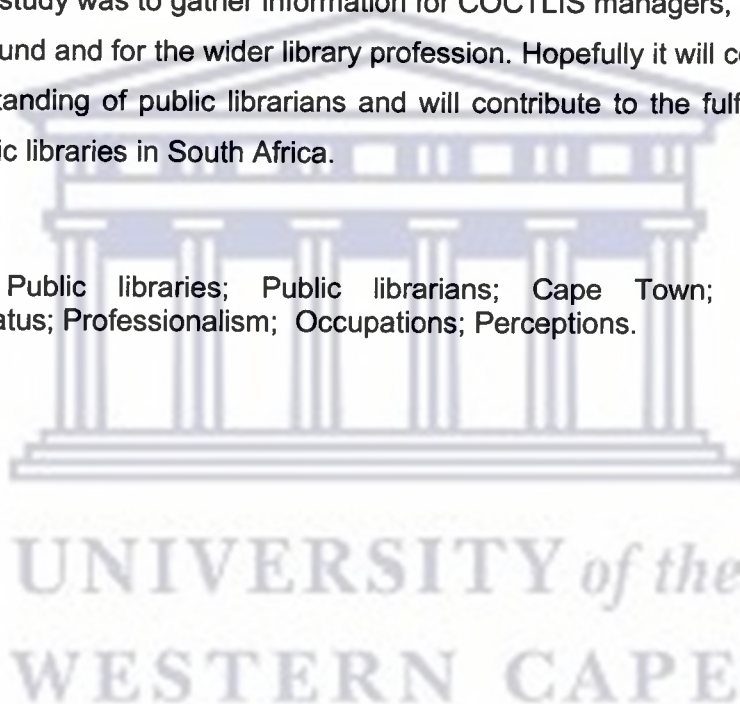
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank the heavenly Father for giving me the strength, courage, perseverance and health to complete this study. Words are not enough to express my feelings but I would like to offer my sincere gratitude and respect to my supervisor Prof. G. Hart for her patience, assistance, guidance and encouragement. You were my guardian angel on earth and I am privileged that in my lifetime I have worked with you.

To my mother and aunt thank you for being there for me. Both of you have taught me the other side of life, to realize that life is a school and I am here to learn. Without your wisdom I would not have the courage to face challenges in life.

To my daughter Ayanda Liyema thank you being my little girl, for questioning me when I had to spend less time with you. I know you did not understand but I had to finish it for you.

To my friends and cousins thank you.

To my supervisor at provincial services Ms Johanna De Beer and colleagues thank you for making this possible. Without your assistance this would not have been possible. I will always be indebted to you.

To City of Cape Town public librarians, I thank you all for the valuable contributions that you made to make this research study a success.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of the study is to investigate experience of professional status among public librarians in Cape Town. The South African and international library associations, such as the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA), the American Library Association (ALA), the British Library Association (LA) and the International Federation of Library Association (IFLA), declare public librarianship to be a profession. But my experience of eight years as a public librarian led to questions. This experience made me wish to explore the meaning of my work.

The project examines the following:
- The meaning of "profession" and the characteristics of a profession.
- The history of public librarianship as a profession. Since South Africa has followed the lead of the West, the focus is on public librarianship in the UK and the USA but the mission statements of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, which represents associations in 150 countries, are also of interest.
- The pressures public librarianship has faced in South Africa since 1994.
- The present professional status of public librarians in South Africa in terms of the identified characteristics of a profession such as education and membership of professional associations.
- Cape Town's public librarians' perceptions of their professional status.

1.2 Background and motivation

The UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1995) promotes the public library as "a living force for education, culture and information" which must maintain "professional standards of operation". The manifesto and the vision statements of library associations throughout the world are scattered with terms "profession" and "professional". They assume public librarianship to be a profession that serves the community and that has many of the same attributes as other service professions such as teaching and social work. However, there has been concern in South African conference and journal literature that public libraries have lost

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ground in recent years (for example Hart 2007; Witbooi 2007) and that the deterioration might be reflected in the downgrading of the professional status of public librarians (Kagan 2002). My experience as a public librarian in Cape Town in the past few years supports these concerns. It has made me question the value of the term "profession" and whether city authorities, library management and even my colleagues in public and other libraries share the vision of public librarianship as a profession.

Being a public librarian for the past seven years has been filled with positive experiences. I enjoy the challenges that librarians are faced with on a daily basis to contribute towards promoting different kinds of literacy like computer literacy and information literacy, lifelong learning and towards promoting social inclusion. I have become more sensitive towards community needs since we have to interact with all different age groups and with people from different backgrounds. The fact that I am a bridge between the community and the world of information and books excites me. Librarians are agents of social change.

However, according to Nilsen and McKechnie (2002), the lack of awareness of the value and complexity of their work frustrates public librarians. There is a lack of understanding of the role that public librarians play in personal and community development and in education. Many people have no understanding of who librarians are and what they do. Librarians have to face stereotypes such as buns and glasses, date stamps, sensible shoes, middle class, and introversion (Nilsen & McKechnie 2002: 297).

Doubts exist even inside the occupation as is shown in the Kagan's study of 2002 which found a "poor self image" and "inward focus"(2002: 9). Kagan, an American academic librarian, undertook his study as he believes the status of librarianship in South Africa affects its social role in the transformation of South African society. He claims that librarians need to talk as equals with the role players they rely on to fulfil their social mission such as policy makers and educators. In other words, librarians need the "clout" that society gives to professions in order to be able to fulfil their social role.

This study explores public librarians' own perceptions of their position since clearly their own attitudes and beliefs affect their relations with other role players. The research explores whether my vision of my work as a profession that serves

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the community is shared by colleagues. It examines the gaps between the rhetoric of librarianship and the reality on the ground in Cape Town's libraries as experienced by library staff. I hope it will serve to inform the library association, LIASA, Cape Town's library management and the library staff in general about the realities of professionalism in Cape Town public libraries.

The timing of the project is significant. In 2005, the Department of Arts and Culture announced that a conditional grant of R1.3 billion would be allocated to public libraries over a three year period to upgrade, improve and expand them – with the condition that further research work into the sector would be undertaken to guide the new funding. One result of the grant was that in 2007 the Western Cape Provincial authorities gave R9.3 million in order to curb the shortage of staff in libraries and to fill the many empty posts. The library director did an analysis of the minimum level of staff needed and the finding was that the staff currently in service was 740 with a shortage of 240 (Witbooi 2007). The Department of Arts and Culture grant shows a new recognition by government of the social role of public libraries. However, its success will depend on the commitment of public library staff and their capacity to bring about change.

1.3 Conceptual analysis and theoretical background

The concept of "profession" and the notion of public librarianship as a profession must be analysed.

The sociology of professions

A "profession" is a sociological construct that defines the occupational categories known as professions who have been given high status, prestige and position in society. An "occupation" is different in that it is a set of economic activities and it is mainly to earn a living. According to Savage (1994), there is a vast literature on professions in the discipline of sociology, which looks at professions as social groups and at the roles that professionals and professional associations play in society. There are different sociological theories of profession and each shows different views of the relationship between social groups and economic systems.

There are three theoretical frames for the study of professions:

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- ➢ Functionalism which sees professions as social institutions whose function has been to maintain stability and order. This approach takes a trait approach to professions in listing their characteristics and classifying them.
- ➢ The power approach which examines how the "organised autonomy" of profession comes out of the support of political, economic or social elites.
- ➢ The process approach which examines the circumstances and actions through which people in an occupation try to professionalise the occupation and themselves (MacDonald 1995: 2-14, Devarai & Ramesh 1999: 156).

The study of Cape Town's librarians relies on the first and third of these three frames. It uses the "trait" approach to explore whether public librarianship as practised in Cape Town might be indeed be described as a profession in functional terms. The study of the perceptions and views of library staff explores whether they themselves put any value on the notion of professionalism.

Professions in the West can be traced back to the classical world and their modern roots lie in medieval universities, which created the so- called "learned" professions of clergy, law and medicine (Abbott 1998: 2; Brint 1994: 26). Brint (1994: 27) lists the characteristics of these early professions as:
- ➢ High social status from their links to the upper classes.
- ➢ Specialised occupational tasks based on division of labour.
- ➢ A relationship with clients of trust & full disclosure.
- ➢ Significant levels of book learning, beginning with a classical education.

Law and medicine are still considered as the first tier or full professions, which other occupational groups aspiring to professional status are measured against. Nursing and social work are classified as secondary "caring" professions because their main primary commitment is the personalized care for their clients. These and teaching are classed as "mediative" (MacDonald 1995: 133) since their practitioners work inside large state structures and they mediate between the state and their clients. They have not gained the professional status of the "old profession" because of the following:
- ➢ They are employed within bureaucratic organizations.
- ➢ They follow the regulations of the organization which might be in conflict with the needs of the clients.

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➢ They have been identified as women's occupations.

➢ They work with individualistic theory about the causes of social problems and intervene at the level of the individual (Abbott 1998).

The stratification of professions serves both social and economic purposes. What MacDonald (1995) calls the "professional project" gives occupational interest groups social and economic benefits that derive from knowledge and qualifications rather than from capital and labour power. Savage (1994) describes a profession as a "network of strategic alliances among practitioners who share a core competence".

The process of professionalization has five phases. A group of people begin to do something full time that needs doing; associations are organised for discussion and support; professional education and assessment are developed to establish standards and to restrict entry to the profession; the protection of the state is gained by means of statutory bodies; licenses and regulation; and finally codes of ethics are developed to protect the public and to reinforce the professional status of the group (Brint 1994: 32).

A survey of definitions identified a number of characteristics of a "profession", for example:

➢ A body of people that specialises in a specific work function.

➢ Altruistic service. A profession accepts a responsibility to serve the public. It is guided by the concern for the client who comes to it for help.

➢ Distinctive qualifications from a tertiary institution, which lead to entry into the profession.

➢ Credentials through professional upgrading of skills.

➢ A substantial body of knowledge which can be transmitted to students wishing to enter the profession.

➢ Professional and practical skills based on theoretical knowledge but used to solve human problems.

➢ Associations of practitioners.

➢ Codes of professional conduct or ethics.

➢ Self regulation via professional associations.

Goode (1961: 308) claims that the two crucial claims for any occupation aspiring to professional status must be prolonged specialised education in a body of abstract knowledge, and service orientation.

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The professionalisation of librarianship

In 1876, one of the fathers of modern librarianship, Melvin Dewey, cited by Gates (1976) and Womboh (2002) wrote in the first issue of the *American Library Journal* that a librarian may "claim at last" and "without assumption" to speak of his occupation as a profession. His arguments rest on his vision of the social and educational mission of librarianship. His words, although old – fashioned, are similar to those in library association web sites today. He talks of education for the people, saying that the library is the school for ordinary people who have had no formal education. He links the "free library" to the "free school". Throughout the article he describes the librarian as an educator and his final words are: "the time is when a library is a school and the librarian is the highest sense a teacher. Will any man deny to the high calling of such a librarianship the title of profession?". He thus sees librarianship as a "calling" and through his or her knowledge of books a librarian is a "scholar".

In the same year, Dewey established the first library school in the United States. Also in 1876 the American Library Association and the American Library Journal were founded. In the same year Dewey published the first edition of his classification system and Cutter published *Rules for Making a Dictionary Catalogue* (Gates 1976: 72). These events marked the beginning of modern librarianship in the West, whose social mission might be described as the organising, managing and communication of information and knowledge in society.

Even though the word "profession" has since Dewey's time been used freely in the "professional" literature of librarianship, the more philosophical literature has continued to debate the nature of librarianship and its professional status (for example Goode, 1961). Traditionally, there are two approaches to the analysis of librarianship as a profession:

> ➢ Analysis of the attributes or traits of a profession.
> ➢ Assessing the extent to which librarianship possesses these attributes.

Thus, in one of the standard texts for library students in the 1970s, Gates poses the question: Is librarianship a profession? After asking the question he provides two chapters on what he calls the "two major steps that librarianship has taken towards the professionalization of their occupation and towards making themselves

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professional people" (1976: 76): the establishment of professional organisations and "library education".

As mentioned in the introduction, contemporary library association documents take for granted that librarianship is a profession. For example, according to the IFLA/ UNESCO Public Library Manifesto, professional staff are librarians that have a degree or post graduate degree in librarianship and information studies at a tertiary institution. Alex Byrne, former president of IFLA, (2004: 31), points out that IFLA has been concerned with both the development and promotion of librarianship since 1927 and has succeeded in gaining worldwide recognition of "the profession". International cooperation has been based on the idea of a shared conception of librarianship as a profession that practises the methods of library and information science within a broadly agreed professional framework. Professionals are expected to practise within their areas of competence and to continue to extend and maintain their competence throughout their professional lives.

In common with other professions, librarianship has evolved codes of ethics. These stress duty to the clients, societal responsibility, impartiality and accuracy. Core values are social inclusiveness, social justice and fairness and the fundamental human right to freedom of information (Byrne 2004: 32). According to Freeman (1996: 17), the code of ethics gives professionals a sense of direction on how to be a professional. Ethics also assist them with professional accountability and the core values of the profession.

Although the various library association documents promote librarianship as profession in terms of these attributes, there are more critical views. Womboh (2002: 258) points out that professional status comes from client and community recognition of the authority of the profession. Green (1994:19) argues that people in general have no clear understanding of who librarians are or what their profession is because the media and the community at large portray librarians in a negative manner. Another reason is that librarians try to be neutral on issues like funding and censorship and so are seen as passive or people who are trained or skilled but not professionals. Because librarians are not seen as professional, they have low status in their communities and organisations. This in turn leads to barriers to the use and value of librarians within an organisation. There is an ineffective usage of the skills and knowledge they have obtained.

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Abbott claims that the preoccupation with professionalisation is pointless. The "escalator" (1998:432) towards full professionalism never arrives. He claims that librarians should rather focus on the changing nature of the work they do and the changing needs of the people they serve. Social and economic change means that some areas of professional work are irrelevant and others are opened up. Other occupational groups compete. He says:

> The system of professions is thus a world of pushing and shoving, of contests won and lost. The image of "true professionalism" notwithstanding, professions and semi- professions alike are skirmishing over the same work on a more or less level playing field. There is thus no sense in differentiating professions and semi – professions; they are simply expert occupations finding work to do and doing it when they can (Abbott 1998: 438).

1.4 Research problem

The gap between the international professional literature and the South African realities underlie the research project. Kagan (2002) believes that professionalism will enable public librarianship to fulfil its social developmental role in South Africa. His research study found wide agreement among public librarians that the profession of librarianship in South Africa requires "upgrading" but his study does not explore in any depth what his respondents meant. As an American perhaps, he can assume that librarianship is a profession and that librarians aspire to professional status.

There is a need to examine what the beliefs of public librarians are and whether they value professional status and why. The study investigates public librarians' experience in terms of established attributes of professionalism and their perceptions of their professional status. Chapter 3 will return to the research problem and spell out the research questions and methodology used to answer these research questions.

1.5 Significance and limitations of the project

This study explores the gap between the rhetoric of public librarianship and the realities on the ground. Hopefully it has provided information that will encourage COCTLIS management to re-visit their policies and procedures regarding public

librarians. The study has given insight into librarianship as a profession and has made recommendations as to how public librarians can move forward.

The main limitation is that it is a study of one South African city. Its findings might not be generalised to other geographic areas. Another limitation is that it explores only the views of senior public library staff, the managers of public library branches. A richer picture would include the views of all staff. It would also include the views of library users and the people in their surrounding communities.

1.6 Ethical statement

At all times I have adhered to the ethical guidelines of the Research Committee of the University of the Western Cape. I have respected the rights of participants. I have obtained informed consent from my research participants based on adequate information on the project. Respondents were promised anonymity and participation in this research project was voluntary.

Permission to undertake the study was granted by COCTLIS management.

1.7 Definitions of key terms

Profession

Earlier sections show the problems in providing a simple definition of "profession". Definitions differ according to the sociological school of thought.

Most definitions, however, include list of attributes. Thus, in his definition Womboh (2002: 258) cites Flexner's six attributes that a profession should have. A profession is "intellectual" because it carries with it great personal responsibility to make choices and judgement. It is "learned" since it is based on a substantial body of knowledge which can be transmitted to students wishing to enter the profession. It is "practical" because the knowledge can be used to solve human problems. It also has techniques or skills which are taught and serve as the mechanism by which knowledge can be applied to the solution of problems. It is organised into an association of practitioners (e.g. LIASA) for professional purposes and lastly it is guided by the concern for the client who comes to it for help.

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Savage (1994) offers a more practical perspective when he argues that a profession is not an occupation but rather a "network of strategic alliances among practitioners who share a core competence".

Professionalism

Professionalism refers to more than the simple attribute of belonging to a profession. It refers to the exercising of professional judgement to meet the needs of clients or library users. This might sometimes come into conflict with the library's parent organisation's policies.

Librarianship

Librarianship is a very old knowledge-based occupation whose mission is to apply theory and technology to the creation, selection, organization, management, preservation, dissemination and utilization of collections of information in all formats (Reitz 2004: 403). Librarianship was first organised as a profession in the late 19th century.

Public library

A public library is a library set up with public funding for public use and for the public good (Feather & Sturges 1997). It is maintained by government authorities, at local, provincial or national level, to serve a geographic area or community. The UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1995) states that in principle the public library is free of charge. Most statements on public libraries stress their role in democracy and in a nation's literacy and information literacy. In South Africa there is an increasing emphasis on the role of public libraries in economic development and in social inclusion, social capital and social justice (Hart 2007).

Unfunded mandate

In South Africa there is uncertainty over government funding responsibilities and mandates for public libraries. Traditionally their costs were divided between the provinces and the local authorities. But the 1996 Constitution places them under the mandate of the provinces alone. No extra funding was provided for the provinces to carry out this mandate and most local authorities have continued to maintain their

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libraries. This means that most South African public libraries are operating under what is called an "unfunded mandate". The recent LIS Transformation Charter (South Africa: Department of Arts and Culture 2009) claims that the resulting uncertainty has hampered the growth of public libraries.

Public librarian

Traditionally public libraries are staffed by both professional librarians and by non-professional library assistants. The professional public librarian is a professionally trained person responsible for the care of a library and its contents, including the selection, processing and organization of materials and the delivery of information, instruction and loan services to meet the needs of its users (Reitz 2004: 403).

1.8 Outline of Chapters

Chapter 1 introduces the research project and explains the rationale behind the project. It has undertaken a conceptual analysis of key concepts like profession and professionalism and has provided the arguments for the professional status of librarianship.

The main purpose of Chapter 2 is to survey the existing research and professional literature on the status of public librarianship as a profession. It outlines the negative and positive factors that have impacted on public librarianship in South Africa since democracy in 1994. Chapter 3 provides the research questions and explains the data gathering methodologies used to answer the research questions. Chapter 4 summarises and analyses the data collected. Chapter 5 interprets the research findings in regard to the research questions and Chapter 6 reflects on the study and makes some recommendations for public librarianship.

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CHAPTER 2
PUBLIC LIBRARIANSHIP AS PROFESSION: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

A literature review is a summary of the literature relevant to a particular research topic (Bless & Higson-Smith 2004). Stangor (2007) claims that a literature review is an important part of the research process as it will allow the researcher to know what others have said about the topic and what research has been done previously. To have a successful project the researcher must have background information on the topic. Stangor (2007) further states that the literature review prevents duplication and also helps the researcher to avoid problems experienced by other researchers.

The survey of the literature shows two approaches: the "professional" literature coming out of library associations and conferences that aims at promoting the cause of librarian professionalism and a more critical reflective strand. The South African literature in recent years reveals concern over the deterioration of South African public libraries, which is often linked to the under–education and lack of professionalism of their staff.

The aim is to investigate the perceptions of professionalism among public librarians in Cape Town. This chapter focuses mostly on the South African literature but it begins with some international research

2.2 International views on professional status of public librarians

As described in Chapter 1, the documents and web sites of the main library associations present librarianship as a profession, the literature of public librarianship over the years is not so certain. The main concerns include:
- the negative image of librarians
- their low social status
- their own self doubt.

The Australian Cram (1991:4) argues that librarians are their own worst enemies because they tend to feed and support the negative image of themselves. She claims morale is low among public librarians and attitudes are negative. She claims the emphasis by the library profession has been on libraries rather than on the

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individuals running the libraries. This tendency neglects the cornerstones that make library services continue. Public librarians who have low self-esteem are normally shy, easily embarrassed, and eager to be approved of and easily influenced by social pressures. Cram points out that librarianship is a service orientated profession and that the librarian's most reward is serving the people.

In 1995 an empirical study was undertaken by Prins and De Gier on behalf of IFLA's Round Table of Managers of Library Associations (RTMLA) to investigate the status and image of the profession. The purpose was to identify the reasons for the poor status, reputation and image of librarians and then to give advice to IFLA's professional board (Prins and De Gier 1995: 22). The study involved questionnaires and interviews. The emphasis was put on less developed countries. The study found the following:

➢ The term "librarian" or "information specialist" are not very specific indicators of a profession.

➢ There are various opinions on what makes an occupation a profession.

➢ Many governments in developing countries do not recognise the profession. In some countries there are few public libraries.

➢ Librarians have problems in describing the important features of their job.

➢ The librarian's job is often seen as clerical and they are described as "introverts". Librarians have low status and a very restricted image. The low status comes from the lack of knowledge about the profession among public authorities and government.

➢ The profession has lost touch with changes in the society.

➢ The main duties of public librarians are invisible and librarians themselves could be the cause of their invisibility.

➢ In Africa a high quality professional training is needed as this would give them voice, power, and confidence to demand their rights. Only through higher levels of education librarians would be able to achieve their objectives to be recognised as professionals (Prins and De Gier, 1995: 30-31).

The RTMLA report points out that the problem of image, reputation and status has been a concern for many decades, especially in developing countries. For example, an IFLA pre conference in Japan ten years before in 1986 had come up with a resolution that they would take notice of the problem of low status of librarians, documentalists and information specialists in some of the third world countries. Various causes of the low status are pointed out such as poor quality service and

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weak education and training. It seems that a major problem facing the library sector is that many librarians do not see themselves as professionals. They do not see themselves in line with other professions such as medicine and law. There is no consensus on the professional status within the profession because it is difficult to describe the essence of the profession due to the diversity in the work done by librarians. One of the problems is that librarians' descriptions of their work show that much can be done by non-professionals, unlike other professions. Secondly, anyone who is in a library can call herself "librarian". Thirdly, librarianship is seen as a female profession. In some countries a woman's status is much lower than that of a man (Prins and De Gier 1995: 22). The report comes up with steps IFLA should take to resolve the problem, including creating standards that would relate to the status issue and circulating those standards globally and organising a pre conference session seminar on the "status of librarians" in a third world country.

The report in 2000 by Issak for the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) (2000) on the issues and problems of public librarians in 10 countries in Africa echoes these findings. The report describes poor services, declining budgets, lack of resources, outdated material, lack of planning and inadequate knowledge of the information needs of poor communities. Issak claims that the prevailing low quality of service has meant that "the African public has largely stopped using public libraries" (p. 22). She argues that public libraries' role in a country's development must be recognised by African governments and that the excuse that there are no well-qualified staff no longer applies. She adds that "it is especially important to motivate the staff and make them feel that they are valuable human resources" (p. 22). Issak's report describes South African library services as much better than the other nine countries in terms of the provision of resources, government commitment and the professional commitment of librarians. The chapter on South African public librarianship in Issak's report gives a useful picture of the situation at the end of the 1990s and will be returned to in a later section.

A panel discussion at the annual conference of the Ex Libris Association in Canada in 2002 shows that public librarianship in the developed world also faces challenges (Williamson 2002: 2). The discussion asked the question whether librarianship as a profession was heading for oblivion. During the 1960s in Canada there had been a huge demand for public librarians. Librarians had felt self-fulfilment and security in their chosen careers. But in the 1990s due to political pressure public librarians were experiencing difficult times, for example: wage freezes, loss of professional staff,

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municipal amalgamations, and the arrival of new technologies. The panellists all agreed that the real threats to the profession were:

- ➢ downsizing
- ➢ budget cuts
- ➢ low salaries and poor benefits
- ➢ the high numbers of part time workers.

In another Canadian article, Caidi (2006) points out that service professions are often associated with low salaries. A result is that employees are seen as working in them because they are no good at anything else. She claims that there seems to be a general lack of awareness of professionalism among both librarians and their communities at large. Libraries are thought to be easy places to work in, where there is no pressure or demands and no need for any intellectual intelligence (2006: 199).

2.3 Public librarianship in South Africa

This section reports on some of the work of the authors writing about South African public libraries since 1994. It outlines the development of public librarianship until recent promising events with a focus on staffing and professional issues. It includes a separate discussion of South African LIS associations since these are so important to the concept of professionalism.

Earlier, Issak's comments (2000) in the INASP report on the strength of South Africa's public librarianship compared with other African counties were mentioned. However, Hooper and Hooper's chapter on South African public libraries in the report (2000: 155-163) and the work of other writers give a different picture. Two main obstacles have been identified: the lack of proper planning and the lack of funding for public libraries. It is agreed that the apartheid era provided libraries only for a middle class and white minority and that the situation since 1994 has not yet much improved (for example Leach 1998; Lor 1998; Kagan 2002; Anderson 2005; Hart 2006; Ocholla & Bothma, 2007; Stilwell 2007; Witbooi 2007). With reference to the issues around professional staff, there is much comment on the loss of qualified staff in the 1990s, the appointment of under-educated and unsuitable staff, the lack of recognition of public librarians as professionals and on librarians' low morale.

The surveys of librarians by Stilwell in 1996 and Kagan in 2002 both comment on views of librarians about their role in social change in post-apartheid South Africa.

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Stilwell's study found positive attitudes among the professionally qualified staff within provincial library service structures towards a developmental and educational change in public library mission. However, as Hart (2005: 16) points out, her sample of respondents did not include public librarians working on the ground for local authorities, although she mentions some respondents' comments that municipal officials might be a stumbling block (Stilwell 1996: 183). Kagan's later study in 2002 examines South African librarians' opinions on their "social responsibilities", and it does include public library staff on the ground. Perhaps the passage of time had brought some disillusionment as his findings are less positive than Stilwell's and he comments that public librarians have doubts about their professional status which might hinder their social mission.

2.3.1 History of public librarianship in South Africa

Fourie (2007: 25) points out that South African libraries have gradually grown over a period of 150 years. They date back to the early 1800s. In 1803 in rural areas of the Cape Colony a public library had already been set up by Johannes Van Der Kemp of the London Missionary Society. Dick (2007: 13) states that in 1818 South African public libraries were financed by a tax on wine, which was introduced by Lord Charles Somerset in Cape Town. It is interesting that he says that at the time the main focal point of public libraries was on education and youth since there is much comment that public libraries in contemporary South Africa are mostly used by school learners and students (Hart 2006).

According to Mostert (1999: 19), South African public libraries have a long history and that history has been intertwined with politics, which has had a negative impact on the LIS sector. In 1948 the Nationalist government introduced new policies which led to the development of an advanced system of library services but which catered for only the privileged white minority. At the time there were other library service points for "non-white" race groups like Indians and Coloureds. The first library for all race groups was opened in 1974 by the Johannesburg Public Library, a move which was followed by other independent city libraries. Due to the unequal distribution of information sources, alternative information services were established in an effort to bridge the gaps between the advantaged and disadvantaged groups in society but these were mainly politically motivated (Mostert 1999: 20). Mostert cites the so-called Zaaiman report, commissioned in 1988 by the professional association, SAILIS, to investigate the role of libraries in socio-economic development, which, he

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claims, showed the passiveness of librarians in addressing the gaps within information provision across the country. The Zaaiman report had warned that, if librarians were to act as agents of development in touch with the real needs of their communities, fundamental changes in attitudes and approaches were required: for example, acceptance of the need to expand library services beyond the literate minority (Zaaiman, Roux & Rykheer 1988: 6).

South African public libraries are based on the Western library model which is aimed mainly at the middle-class and educated group. In a country where most people are illiterate this has created a problem. According to Mostert (1999: 20), services in this model are passive in nature because potential users have to come to the library in order to be rendered a service. Outreach and marketing programmes are aimed just at informing the public of services available. Mostert argues that the one major weakness of public libraries is that the real needs of the communities are not met and, until public librarians realize the needs of their respective communities, there will always be problems. Public librarians need to improve their skills and attitudes in order to meet the demands of the communities. These skills include:

- ➢ multi-lingualism - the ability to speak at least one African language
- ➢ cross cultural awareness
- ➢ ability to work in a team
- ➢ good communication and listening skills
- ➢ willingness and ability to interpret
- ➢ repackaging of and application of information to the user's situation.

Like Mostert, Fourie argues that librarians are not only keepers of books but rather supporters of education, standards of living and financial prosperity (2007: 26).

Before 1948, missionaries, white liberals and black intellectuals made efforts to bridge the gaps in the provision of libraries but these failed after the Nationalist government introduced the apartheid system. The apartheid system meant "developed" and "underdeveloped". This meant that black people would receive minimum service. Black intellectuals saw access to libraries as a need but the state believed that reading and provision for black people was a threat of radicalism from the black elite (Owens 2002: 54).

Kagan (2002: 5) points out that apartheid deeply affected the library and information profession in South Africa. The library associations at that time were based on racial

discrimination and did not challenge the government. During those years it was the elite and white South African librarians who had access to relevant and appropriate professional development opportunities. Kagan links the present low status of librarianship in South Africa to an inherited tendency to stress practical "skills" and "training" rather than "theory" and "education" (2002: 4). Librarianship is perceived as demanding training rather than professional education.

As democracy came, many South African librarians had hopes of transforming and democratising the profession and there were several initiatives to plan new models of service, for example the National Education Policy Investigation of 1992. But as several writers point out, the country had other priorities and the position of public libraries weakened in the 1990s (for example Hooper and Hooper 2000: 158; Stilwell, 2001: 203-204; Dick, 2002: 30; Kagan, 2002). Economic policies such as GEAR (Growth, Employment and Redistribution) put tight controls on public spending and throughout the country public library posts were cut back and frozen. Kagan points out that the potential role of libraries in achieving the priorities of government was not seen (2002: 1).

Kagan's research project in 2002 is a useful model for the researcher. It was based on two beliefs: that South African librarianship is in need of transformation and that a stronger insistence on the professional status of librarianship in South Africa would help it achieve its social mission (2002: 2). He states that it is only through transformation that the profession can meet its social mission. A transformed profession would make sure diversity issues in South Africa are addressed. Attention to diversity in the LIS profession would address past injustices and it would not only focus on gender and colour but also ethnic identity, sexual orientation and disability. According to Kagan (2002: 2), the low levels of professional education amongst public librarians hinder innovation. A stronger emphasis on a social developmental role would serve to improve the status of librarians and therefore provide them with a better standard of living, a more positive self image and career satisfaction.

Kagan's research had four foci: Africana librarianship, LIS education, professional status and professional development. He surveyed four groups: academic librarians, public librarians, librarians working for provincial library service and LIS educators. His study came eight years after South Africa became a democratic country and set out to look at what benefits the librarianship profession had received and what could have contributed to the problems clearly being experienced by the profession. After

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his follow up interviews he noted that many of the responding librarians had no idea that librarianship was a profession (p. 4-5) and that most believed that the profession needed to be upgraded. He found South African public library staff to be dissatisfied with opportunities for career development. One of the traditional traits of a professional is a certain amount of autonomy to make decisions but Kagan's study uncovered criticism of "top-down bureaucracy" in public libraries (2002: 9).

Some of Kagan's findings are echoed in Hart's research in 2005 in the Mpumalanga Province (2006: 56). She found that 65% of the library managers in her survey had no tertiary education and many had just been seconded from municipal clerical positions. The result is that the remaining professionally qualified staff see no benefit from their education. According to Hart, the low level of professional education of public library staff contributes to the rather low level of library services, since staff have little understanding of the social role of public libraries.

Dick (2002: 28) analysed the reasons why South African librarianship is still struggling to find a meaningful place in contemporary South Africa. He gives five misunderstandings that librarians have about themselves. These are: misunderstanding of the historical process, misunderstanding of social change, misunderstanding of professional change, misunderstanding of their intellectual role and misunderstanding of political change. He further argues that transformation of librarianship will take a long time and deeper professional self understanding. He points out that more insight into the historical process would allow South African librarians to adopt a professional and disciplinary alliance in order to highlight the importance of libraries and the value of their services at large.

Evidence of the insecure status of the profession must lie in the so-called "unfunded mandate" issue that was described in Chapter 1. Anderson (2005) points out that to understand the present situation of public libraries in South Africa it is important to know how they were managed and financed before 1994. During the apartheid era the Group Areas Act was introduced in order to limit interaction between groups. This division allowed white municipalities to be responsible for and manage big libraries which were financed by municipal rates and taxes. Black, Coloured and Indian municipalities could only generate little revenue which led to the disintegration of public libraries in these communities. Before the new formation of the South African Constitution in 1996 public libraries were poorly organised and divided according to race and this also affected the professional organisations. During the formation of the

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Constitution the LIS sector did not speak in one voice and its input was of limited value. Schedule 5 of the Constitution placed public libraries in the sphere of provincial government but no funding was provided in support. As a result, when the Local Government Municipal Structures Act, No 77 was passed in 1998, public libraries were left out. Public libraries are thus an "unfunded mandate". Even though there is no mandate, it is fortunate that most municipalities have continued to fund their libraries. However, their position is precarious. Witbooi (2007: 66) claims that this has caused much of the prevailing low morale and lack of direction.

Hart (2006) reports on widespread evidence of low morale among public librarians due to the prevailing confusion over funding and also the increasing demands from school learners. Her study in Mpumalanga uncovers uncertainty among public library staff about their work and social role. Without any direction from the profession or their organisation and with no increase in resources, they find themselves overwhelmed with school learners who, without access to school libraries, struggle with the demands of the transformed curriculum.

Witbooi's chapter on public libraries in the review of South African librarianship, published for the IFLA conference in Durban in 2007, summarises the reasons for the prevailing low morale. She points out that since 1994 the ongoing shifts in important issues such as funding, staffing, governance, and departmental alignment have demoralised staff (2007: 66). In another chapter in the same book, Stilwell's analysis of the future of LIS leads her to make several recommendations relevant to this MBibl study, for example:

> ➤ a culture of accountability in which LIS professionals play a key role
> ➤ steps to stop the "mediocritisation" of the profession through an increased role for the organised profession
> ➤ the empowerment of LIS professionals to release them from their library walls and to give them more influence
> ➤ an enhanced role for LIASA.

Stilwell talks of the importance of the "human element" and stresses the need for "an assertive, proactive, well-educated and trained profession" (2007: 216).

2.3.2. Events in South African public librarianship post 2005

Perhaps in response to the commentary in the professional literature and to pressure from the National Council for Library and Information Services (NCLIS) which was

inaugurated in 2004 after years of canvassing by the profession, in 2005 the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) allocated a grant of R1.3 billion over three years to upgrade, improve services and expand the library sector (Witbooi 2007: 67).

KPMG (PTY) Ltd with Jacaranda Intellectual Property Business Consultants were given the tender to develop a model for public and community libraries for how the money would be spent. Three phases were identified for the KPMG investigation: an assessment of public libraries in all nine provinces, the production of a funding model that might solve the problem of the unfunded mandate, and a plan of action with details of how to allocate the grant. The KPMG report (2006) highlighted the problem of shortages of skilled librarians. It reported that the Western Cape has the highest number of professional staff. According to the report, the low levels of qualified staff are compromising the quality of library services. In all provinces "general" staff are the largest part of the library staff. Reasons are:

➢ municipalities are unwilling to pay the higher salaries of qualified professionals owing to their limited budgets

➢ there is a huge shortage of skills at the senior level because many have left looking for greener pastures.

The DAC grant has funded new libraries and ICT. It has also led to scores of contract posts in public libraries. For example, in 2007 the provincial authorities of the Western Cape made available R9.3 million to local municipalities to appoint librarians and assistant librarians on a contract of three years. Although the DAC grant has improved the situation, evidence of its shortcomings is in a recent Cape Town newspaper report, which claims that that a budget cut of R4.9 million on the city's long term budget was on the cards (Lewis 2010). The implication for the city's libraries is that 30 contract posts will be cut and vacant posts which were advertised are being frozen.

The grant funded three other projects which are significant for the MBibl study, two of which are still incomplete at the time of writing. The first is the LIS Transformation Charter (2009), a project of the National Council of Library and Information Services (NCLIS). This involved a year-long investigation which identified the challenges facing the library sector, for example:

➢ inequality in the provision of libraries.

➢ lack of information resources in indigenous language.

➢ the unfunded mandate

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> ➢ the lack of norms and standards
> ➢ the low status of the LIS profession.

According to the Transformation Charter there is a national vacancy rate of 30% in professional positions, which affects service delivery. In some areas unqualified people have been appointed to professional posts, something that was highlighted by Hart in 2006. The vision of Charter is to provide legislation and policy guidelines for the transformation of the LIS sector in order to redress past unfairness, and to encourage social cohesion and economic development. According to the Charter (2009), libraries must be guided by norms and standards and must have a committed professional staff that is respected by all forms of government and communities. The vision statement in its introduction includes the following statement on library staff:

> Their staff are committed professionals and are respected as such by their parent institutions, government bodies and user communities. They are appropriately qualified and remunerated. They are engaged in continuous professional education and development. They have codes of ethics and are held accountable.

The concerns in the Charter and in the KPMG report over human resources led to an investigation (Demand for and supply of skills in library and information services, archival services and records management 2010: 61) into the education of librarians. Its first draft report confirms the concern over vacant posts and the risks to public librarianship from shortages of graduates. Another crucial initiative for public librarianship is the ongoing DAC-sponsored investigation into public library norms and standards which hopefully will lead to legislation and to the end of the uncertainty over public library funding (South Africa: Department of Arts and Culture 2007:13).

2.4 From SALA to LIASA

Walker (2007:179 -197) provides a useful outline of the history of professional LIS associations in South Africa since the 1930s. Her chapter traces the progression to the "fully representative" present body, LIASA.

The South African Library Association (SALA) was formed in 1930 after a conference of librarians in 1928. It started as an occupational association for everyone who

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worked in libraries or had an interest in libraries or everyone who worked in libraries including non professionals. In time it reviewed its membership policy to ensure that it met the requirements of a professional association. The association was now moving from an occupational to a full professional association. In 1933 the first issue of SALA's journal South African Libraries came out, the predecessor of today's South African Journal of Libraries and Information Science.

But at SALA's annual conference in 1962 it was decided to limit its own membership to whites. It would "assist members of other race groups to establish and run their own associations" (Walker 2007: 180). Walker says that this was to haunt the white mainstream profession which was from then on seen as a supporter of the Nationalist government and apartheid. The African Library Association of South Africa (ALASA) was born out of the SALA conference of 1962 and became the home of black librarians even after SALA was replaced in 1982 by the South African Institute of Library and Information Science (SAILIS) which opened its membership to blacks.

Kalley (2000: 201) points out that in 1980 when the South African Institute of Library and Information Science (SAILIS) took over from SALA the aim was to bring back black members who had been excluded by SALA and to try to amend the inequalities of the past. The Association's vision for the future was based on the needs of the LIS sector and individuals. SAILIS had no statutory power to redress the inequalities but it had expertise based on secured infrastructure through which change could both be encouraged and accomplished (p. 202). Even though SAILIS was never a statutory body SAILIS membership was often an explicit requirement when it came to the filling of vacancies in academic and public libraries. During the 1980s SAILIS took matters further by appointing an accreditation committee, which sent recommendations on its standards and guidelines for professional LIS education to be followed by universities. Because SAILIS had no statutory status, these initiatives could be ignored as it was not seen as a genuinely representative association (Walker 2007: 183).

In 1990 the Library and Information Workers Organisation (LIWO) was established, explicitly as an anti-apartheid and anti-capitalist association. It aligned itself with the various think-tanks promoting an alternative democratic society where information would be available freely to all (LIWO Executive 1992: 29). It established the journal Innovation.

With the end of apartheid in the early 1990s, and under the wing of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), SAILIS and ALASA were disbanded in order to form a new association in 1997 which was known as the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA). LIWO did not disband then but has done so since. Tise (2003: 3), who was elected as LIASA's first president, states that the formation of a new association was a difficult process because the old associations were concerned with financial assets, membership, professionalism, and representativity. The LIASA Constitution cited by Walker (2006) states that it "strives to unite, develop and empower all workers in the library and information field, in an organisation that provides dynamic leadership in transforming, developing and sustaining library and information services for all the people in South Africa". LIASA came to a sector which had been divided by previous apartheid laws. Black librarians had had less access to professional education and development than whites.

LIASA has not attracted a large membership. In 1998 it had 1068 members and in 2007 it had 1400 (Khomo and Raju 2009: 140). A study found in 2009 that only 30% of LIS workers in Kwazulu–Natal are LIASA members and, although LIASA aims to include all levels of LIS worker, it has not attracted so-called support staff (Khomo and Raju 2009: 145). One of the reasons for the low membership is the perception that LIASA does not address the industrial concerns and professional status of the LIS sector.

There were calls for statutory status for LIASA at its conferences from 2004 onwards. Statutory status is the gaining of a status through legislative processes. The advantages are that it would promote the discipline, set regulations on the entrance of personnel into the sector, determine standards for professional education and training and set standards for ethical and professional practice. The status would give LIASA full legal recognition as the only professional body for LIS. The calls led to an investigation into the way forward in regard to the representivity of the LIS sector (Raju 2005; 2006) then the appointment of a committee in 2009 (LIASA. Sub-Committee on Statutory Status 2009). Raju's paper at LIASA's conference in 2005 spelled out the options and the procedures that would be required to gain statutory status for LIASA. He also pointed out that LIASA needs to take into consideration the needs of members of a professional association such as the needs for belonging, security, personal development, communication, guidance on ethics and intellectual freedom (2006: 130). But Raju (2006: 137) further stated that statutory status coming

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from new legislation would have disadvantages: It would divide the LIS profession which LIASA had united. If it were registered as a statutory professional body then a large number of members would be left outside. He points out that statutory status might neglect the development of the profession as a whole. If instead LIASA registered as a trade union, which would have in any case statutory status, then it would ensure that everyone in the sector is represented by an organization that is familiar with the sector. Having described the various alternatives, Raju suggests the need for a referendum of LIASA members.

In 2006, Raju, Stilwell and Leach (2006) conducted a survey of academic library staff in KwaZulu-Natal in 2006 to find out if a LIS professional association like LIASA could take on the role of a trade union – looking after both professional concerns and industrial concerns. It would make sense they say to unite all employees. Under the Labour Relations Act a union has the power to bargain with employers for better working conditions. The survey found that most respondents wanted an association to address the weak status of their sector. But while 46.6% support the professional association as an organisation most able to represent their industrial concerns only 19.9 wanted a trade union (p. 215).

Stilwell (2007: 204) states that LIASA's inclusiveness is both its weakness and its strength. It claims to be a "professional" body but includes members without professional qualifications and status. Her survey of the views of ten experts leads her to ask if it can be both a professional association and a trade union. She points out that LIASA's future will depend on its ability to promote ongoing learning among its members. Stilwell (2007: 216) further states that for libraries to move forward librarians need to be well trained, proactive, and assertive and to form a partnership with government in achieving the social mission of public librarianship.

The question is not resolved at the time of writing. LIASA's Sub Committee on Statutory Status circulated an information sheet in 2009, which describes the dilemmas. It says there is no unity within the South African LIS sector and this division impacts on service delivery. There are many voices within the sector representing the interests of the workers but it points out that LIASA is the only representative body for LIS professional interests. But it is a voluntary organization and as a result its membership is low. LIASA has a progressive constitution but again because it is a voluntary organization it cannot claim to represent or protect all within the sector (LIASA Sub Committee on Statutory Status 2009). The Sub

Committee reports that the Executive of LIASA believes that a statutory body would be a positive factor as it would ensure continuity and equity and in the process assist the profession to be more "focused". It says:

> a focused profession would increase credibility and command greater respect for the profession, for those that work within it and for the services that it provides. Enhanced credibility will naturally lead to an increase in prestige of the profession and the effect of that would be a positive growth of the profession.

In concluding this section on the South African professional associations, it must be pointed out that, while LIASA was establishing itself, South African public libraries were going through difficult times, as described in the previous sections, owing to:

- ➤ budget cuts
- ➤ loss of professional staff
- ➤ resulting closures of libraries.

LIASA's investigations into statutory status have to be seen in this context.

Stilwell's Delphi survey of ten "experts" (2007: 201) found that the funding of public libraries by government is the most critical issue. Stilwell claims that the direction of LIS will depend on LIASA and what it is able to do (p. 204).

2.5 Conclusion

The review in this chapter serves to guide the MBibl study. It has focussed on the South African picture but the first section shows that there are common issues across the world. It has highlighted:

- ➤ the key challenges facing public librarianship inherited from the apartheid era. These make up the background and context
- ➤ the arguments for professional status so that public librarianship can have the power it needs to achieve its social developmental mission. This is the point that Kagan made in 2002. However he found that public librarians themselves are unsure of their status
- ➤ the empirical studies of public library staff and others which show that the morale of public library staff is low
- ➤ the changes in the philosophy of public librarianship that might be required. Dick gives five reasons for the present weak situation of public libraries. All five relate to beliefs among librarians. It seems that in future public librarians

will need to develop new models of service which will move away from the Western model to a public librarianship that has an understanding of political processes, a more intellectual approach and adapts to the needs of specific communities. The LIS Transformation Charter of 2009 spells out a vision for a renewed profession

The authors all agree that for public librarianship to survive and to strengthen its position as a profession there has to be a change from all the different stakeholders. In the past five years there has been positive movement from national government who seem to have recognised the problems facing public librarianship. The recent investigations into the education of public librarians and into legislated norms and standards for libraries might improve their professional position. But much will depend on the librarians in charge of public libraries and what they believe.

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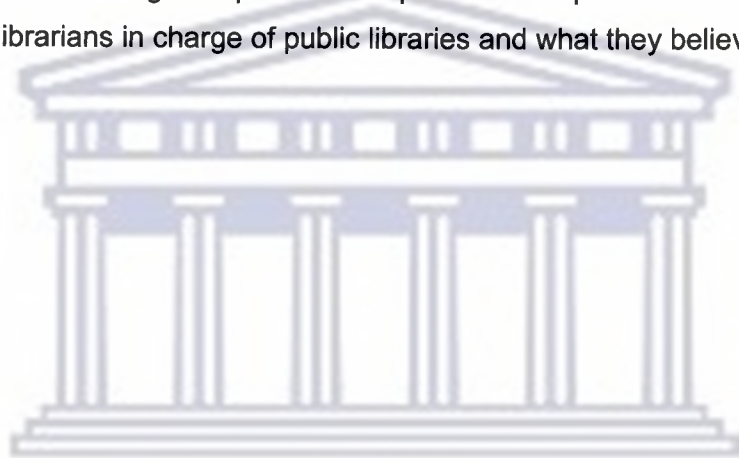
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The aims of this chapter are to return to the research problem to identify the research questions and to describe the methodology that was chosen to gather the data to answer these questions. The professional and research literature surveyed in Chapters 1 and 2 acts as the background for the investigation.

It was decided that a descriptive survey would serve the project's purpose best. A descriptive survey describes characteristics of the population under study (Powell 1997: 61). It allows a systematic and in-depth investigation and allows generalisation from a smaller sub-group to a larger (Busha & Harter 1980: 53). A study of one library system cannot statistically represent all public libraries throughout South Africa. But hopefully, the in depth study of one city's libraries will throw light on the research problem and will provide insight for the larger context.

3.2 Research problem and questions

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the gap between the international professional literature and the South African realities, many of which were described in Chapter 2, underlie the proposed project. The assumption is that professionalism will enable public librarianship to fulfil its social developmental role in South Africa. Kagan's study found wide agreement among public librarians that the profession of librarianship in South Africa requires "upgrading" but his study does not explore in any depth what his respondents meant. As an American perhaps, he can assume that librarianship is a profession and that librarians aspire to professional status. If professional status will indeed help the social mission of librarianship, then the research project might focus attention on the issues. It might make public librarians think about the possible problems, and come up with possible solutions.

There is a need to examine what the beliefs of public librarians are and if they value professional status, and why they do so. The proposed study will investigate public librarians' perceptions of their professional status and experience in terms of established attributes of professionalism. In Chapter 1 definitions of a profession

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were mentioned. The father of librarianship Melvin Dewey cited by Gates (1976) and Womboh (2002) wrote in the first issue of the American Library Journal in 1876 that a librarian may "claim at last" and "without assumption" to speak of his or her occupation as a profession.   Do public librarians still believe what Dewey said or have they become disillusioned in the way some writers in the literature claim?

The research problem and the reading of the professional and research literature led to the following research questions:

> What does the existing literature reveal about the status of public librarianship internationally and in South Africa?

> What are the factors that have impacted on the professionalisation of public librarianship in South Africa post 1994?

> How do public librarians experience their work in terms of generally accepted attributes of professionalism?

> How do public librarians perceive professionalism? Do they set any value on it? If so, why?

> Are public librarians members of LIASA? If so, what benefits do they receive from the organization?

The literature review in the previous chapters throws light on the first two questions and the survey of public library staff set out to examine the last three.

3.3 Research design and methodology

The research study is a quantitative questionnaire survey of the library managers of one urban public library system - the City of Cape Town's Library and Information Services (COCTLIS). The survey is a non–experimental, descriptive research method. In library and information science surveys are used extensively to understand attitudes and characteristics of respondents (Powell 1997: 57). The survey method was convenient for the researcher as at the time I worked in a city library and was able to send questionnaires via the libraries' courier services.

3.3.1 Sampling methods

The sampling took the population of the study to be the managers and senior staff working in the public libraries of the City of Cape Town. It assumed that these might be holding professional posts. District and head-office staff were not included. The

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desire was to explore the perceptions of staff working on the ground where the issues of professionalism are thrown into relief. As mentioned in Chapter 2, earlier research suggests that so-called "head-office" staff in the provincial libraries experience things differently from those working on the ground (Kagan 2002; Stilwell 1996). The target in the Cape Town study was the branch managers as they were assumed to be most directly affected by the kind of issues described in previous chapters.

There are 98 branch libraries in Cape Town – divided into six districts. Stratified sampling was required so that all six districts were fairly represented (Powell 1997: 74). The structuring of the six districts aimed at breaking down the historical barriers left by apartheid and each district includes a mix of historically white suburban libraries and historically black township libraries. The sampling by district thus hoped to achieve a spread across the languages and cultures of the city. Follow up was made by means of telephone calls and email. In the end, 68 responses were received. Table 1 shows the breakdown of respondents by the six districts and by the total number of libraries within the City of Cape Town.

Table 1: Sample by district

District	Total libraries in district	Sample of respondents	Percentage of sample
1	18	11	61.1%
2	20	14	70%
3	14	09	64.3%
4	15	13	86.6%
5	20	15	75%
6	11	06	54.5%
Total	98	68	

COCTLIS further classifies public libraries into three categories: city wide, regional and community libraries. There are only two large city-wide libraries. Each district has at least one largish regional library and a number of smaller community libraries. As will be shown in the next chapter, respondents from community libraries were the largest in my study as they form a large proportion of the population.

3.3.2 Data collection techniques

Having chosen the survey and sampling method the next step was to select a specific technique to collect all the necessary data. Early on it was decided the best way to gather data to answer the research questions was through a questionnaire survey of public librarians. Mouton (2001: 100) points out that the questionnaire is the single most common research tool used in the social sciences. This is due to its advantages as a simple, versatile and cost effective method of data collection. The disadvantages are that questionnaires do not allow the researcher to add any additional questions other than the set questions if he or she is dissatisfied by the respondents' responses.

Other writers give several advantages of questionnaires (for example Busha & Harter 1980: 55; Powell 1997: 90). Questionnaires, unlike face to face interviews, can reach a sample in a short space of time. They are designed in a way that makes it easier to collect and analyse data. They can also collect data in a short period of time unlike interviews. Respondents can give frank and anonymous answers without feeling intimidated. They can be completed in the respondents' free time but within time limits set by the researcher. But there are some disadvantages (Powell 1997: 91). They do not allow personal contact with respondents in order to make it possible for the researcher to gain sufficient knowledge about participants in a study. They do not allow respondent to ask about ambiguous questions. If the questions are poorly designed by the researcher, then they might bring out antagonism or the respondent might withhold responses. Lastly many questionnaires are not designed to find causes or reasons for respondents' attitudes, beliefs, or actions. Powell further adds that respondents are reluctant to mail questionnaires and low response rates result.

Surveys can use both qualitative and quantitative measures by including unstructured and structured questions. Unstructured questions make it possible for respondent to answer freely without having to select an answer from provided responses, whereas structured questions do not allow the respondent to move away from the provided answers. One important factor about structured questions is that they improve reliability, but, if worded poorly, then respondents will be forced to choose an incorrect answer. Also a respondent will be able to hide his or her ignorance (Powell 1997: 95).

The researcher first drafted a questionnaire under the guidance of her supervisor and using existing research. She then tried it out on a group of 10 students at the University of the Western Cape, all of them working in public libraries but none in charge of a library. The aim was to find out whether the questions were simple, relevant and straightforward for the respondents to answer. Positive feedback was received with some comments on how the questionnaire could be improved.

3.3.2.1 Questionnaire design

The questionnaire is provided in Appendix C. The questions are mostly quantitative. But some of the open-ended questions in the questionnaire gather qualitative data which add depth to the quantitative data. The mix of questions aims to gather information on attitudes and opinions of librarians about their professional status (Moore, 2000: 13). Respondents indeed used the invitations to add open comment to explain or add to their answers. There are 35 questions with a mix of closed questions, ranking questions, eight Likert scale statements, and six open–ended questions. Quite often the questions ask the same thing but in a different way. The aim is to look for confirmation and contradiction.

Section A (Questions 1 – 9) of the questionnaire gathers data on respondents' background profile. It highlights personal information such as gender, home language, designation, library district, library category and qualifications. It also provides information on why respondents became librarians, whether they are currently studying for formal qualifications and current number of years in the current designation. The questions thus gather data on some of the attributes of professionalism described in Chapter 1.

Section B (Questions 10 – 26) covers the professional issues affecting public librarianship. It reflects the issues that have been mentioned in the literature review, such as:
- views on the professional status of public librarianship
- perceptions of how society views public librarians
- respondents' ranking of public librarianship in comparison with other kinds of librarianship and with other professions
- LIASA membership
- their experience of continuing professional development

- experiences of professional mentoring

- differentiation of professional and non-professional work.

The final question in this section asks if respondents would recommend public librarianship to their children.

Section C (Questions 27 – 34) consists of eight Likert Scale statements, which are usually used to gather data on respondents' attitudes (Powell, 1997: 97). This section is meant to further probe respondents' views and perceptions on the professional status of public librarians. Some the statements overlap with questions asked earlier. The aim is to compare the answers to see whether there are discrepancies. One new angle is the statement probing if they feel that their management treats them as professionals – reflecting the point that professionalism implies some autonomy and independence. The final statement "More recognition from society that public librarianship is a profession would help public librarianship perform its social mission" tests their views on Kagan's assertion after his survey in 2002, which was mentioned in Chapter 2.

Section D is mainly for respondents to voice their own opinion about anything that might relate to the research topic which has not been covered by the previous questions.

3.4 Analysis of data

The data gathered by means of the questionnaire survey were entered on an Excel spreadsheet. Responses to the open-ended questions were analysed using qualitative techniques (Creswell 1994: 153). They were grouped and tabulated by unit of meaning or theme as will be shown in the next chapter.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explained the survey methodology, including the sampling and the questionnaire design. The summary and analysis of the resulting data will be presented in the following chapter.

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CHAPTER 4
SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary and analysis of the data collected through the questionnaire. The summary and analysis of the questionnaire responses provide the data that will answer the research questions given in Chapter 3. The design of the questionnaire was guided by the literature review and the research questions set out in Chapter 3. As described in Chapter 3, two copies of the questionnaire were sent out to 98 libraries of the City of Cape Town, addressed to "senior staff". Sixty-eight replies were received from the 98 libraries. It is important again to stress that the survey thus excludes more junior staff who might or might not have professional qualifications. A future study might include them.

The questionnaire survey gathered mostly quantitative data but it also included qualitative data by means of several open-ended questions. An EXCEL spreadsheet was used to summarise and analyse the quantitative data and the transcriptions of the responses to the open-ended questions were analysed and categorised by theme. The questionnaire data give insight into public librarians' perceptions of public librarianship as a profession.

4.2 Summary and analysis of responses to questionnaire

As described in Chapter 3, the questionnaire has four sections. Section A focuses on personal or biographical background of the respondents. Section B focuses on professional issues in order to get an understanding of the public librarians' opinions and in the process answer the research questions set out in Chapter 3. Section C is made up of Likert scale statements, which serve to throw light on some of the earlier questions. The final Section D asks respondents for any general comment that might not have been covered in earlier sections.

4.2.1 Section A: Respondents' personal information

This section consists of nine questions based on the biographical background of the respondents. Figure 1 shows that 82% of the respondents are female. The predominance of women probably reflects the gender breakdown of public library

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staff in the City and indeed in the country as found in the recent draft report on public
libraries (Department of Arts and Culture 2010)   .

Figure 1: Respondents' gender

N = 68
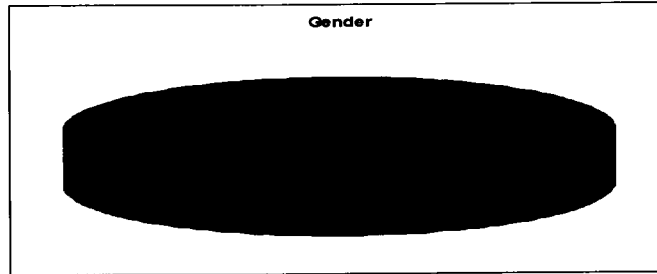
As shown in Figure 2, the main language groups represented in the survey are
Afrikaans (38%) and English (34%). The lower percentage of isiXhosa-speaking
respondents (24%) might reflect the lack of African managers across all South
African public libraries.

Figure 2: Home language

N = 68
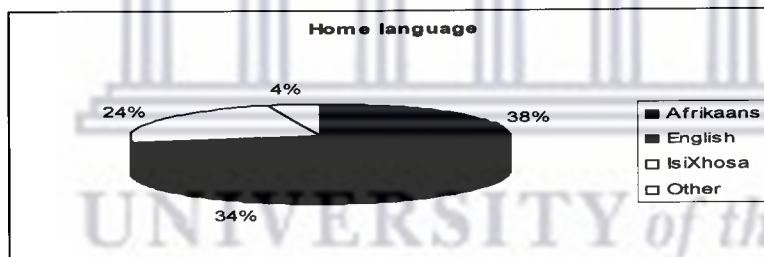
Table 1, on p.30, provides a breakdown of the respondents by the six library districts.
In common with all South African cities, Cape Town is made up of historically
advantaged "white" suburbs and historically "black" townships. The city re-structuring
since from the 1990s has tried to cut across these barriers and the library districts
include a mix of communities.   The table shows that all districts are fairly
represented, although only six responses were received from the 11 libraries in
District 6.

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Table 2: Respondents' library districts

N = 68

Library district	Total No. of libraries	Responses
1	18	11
2	20	14
3	14	09
4	15	13
5	20	15
6	11	06

Another way to group the libraries in the City of Cape Town is by so-called cluster or category. There are three categories: 74 community libraries, 22 regional libraries and two city wide libraries. The two city wide libraries are in District 1 and 5. The clustering might be significant for the research problem as each category has its own staffing policy. According to COCTLIS's staff policy community libraries must have seven staff members comprising of one senior librarian (Librarian in charge), two librarians, one full time assistant librarian, two part-time assistant librarians and one library aid. Regional libraries must have 17 staff members comprising of one principal librarian, five librarians, four assistant librarians, four part time assistant librarians and three library aids. City wide libraries must have 41 staff members divided into one chief librarian, two senior librarians(librarian in charges), five librarians, nine assistant librarians, 14 part time assistant librarians, one secretary, five library aids and two workers (City of Cape Town Library and Information Service Task Team on Staffing Standards 2006).

Table 3: Respondents by library category

N= 68

Category	Total No. of libraries	Responses
City wide	2	4
Regional	22	11
Community	74	53
Total	**98**	**68**

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As already mentioned, the questionnaire was addressed to full time librarians-in-charge and "senior" library staff. COCTLIS policy requires that all libraries must have professional staff members to meet the needs of the community. Entry level for all professional posts is a B.Bibl degree or Higher Diploma (City of Cape Town Library and Information Service Task Team on Staffing Standards 2006). Figure 3 gives the breakdown of respondents according to position. Whereas the majority (86%) are either librarians or senior librarians, 7% are assistant librarians. The researcher can only assume that the reason why assistant librarians completed the questionnaire is that in some libraries there are no senior librarians nor librarians or the senior staff passed the questionnaire on.

Figure 3: Respondents' designations

N = 68
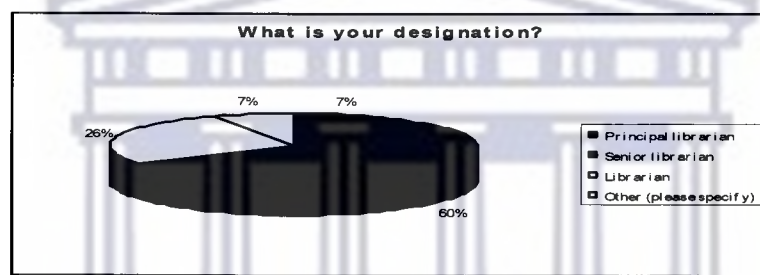
Answers to Question 9 show that the average length of time in their present designation is eight years. The median number of years is five, which means that more than half were appointed to their position since 2005. Before that, as the post-apartheid city was being restructured posts had been frozen. The median figure shows that the libraries are being managed by relatively inexperienced staff. One weakness of this questionnaire is that it only asked about number of years in the respondent's current designation. It would have been interesting to see whether those who have moved up were coming from outside or promoted from within the public library service.

As shown in Table 4, as to be expected of a survey of library managers, the majority of respondents hold the generally accepted minimum professional qualification, the B.Bibl degree or Higher Diploma in LIS (61.8%). Ten (14.7%) hold postgraduate degrees. Eight (11.8%) hold the three-year Lower or National Diploma in LIS, which were designed for para-professionals. The figures for the urban library service of Cape Town compare well with those provided in Hart's study of library staff in a rural

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province, which found that only 30% of library managers had the minimum professional qualification (2005: 146).

Table 4: Respondents' qualifications

N = 68

Qualifications	Responses	%
M. Bibl / MLIS	01	1.5
B.Bibl / LIS Hons	09	13.2
B.Bibl Degree / Higher Diploma in LIS	42	61.8
Lower Diploma / National Diploma in LIS	08	11.8
Bachelors Degree	02	2.9
Matric	04	5.9
Other	01	1.5
Void	01	1.5
Total	**68**	**100**

Answers to Question 7 reveal that the four respondents who are studying for further formal qualifications are all enrolled for the B.Bibl degree, the minimum professional qualification. Three of the four hold professional posts.

The rather low number of respondents either with postgraduate degrees or studying towards them might be explained by the current lack of incentives or recognition for postgraduate study within COCTLIS. Comments in answer to other questions suggest also that the prevailing poor remuneration might make managers on the ground reluctant to study further. Hart's respondents in a study of rural public libraries expressed similar feelings (2005: 147). It would be interesting to see if postgraduate qualifications are required of the district and head-office managers.

The open-ended Question 8 asks why respondents became librarians. The responses are divided into nine themes in Table 4 presented in order of frequency. The most common reason is a love for books but next in importance is the lack of career options open to respondents. As one puts it, "... at the time there were not many opportunities. It was either be a teacher, social worker or librarian." Although there is no explicit mention of gender or race issues, in apartheid South Africa these can be assumed to have played a role as job and career opportunities were restricted.

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Table 5: Why respondents became librarians

N = 20

Themes	Selected quotations
Passion for books	"Loved books" (Qr 17). "I was addicted to reading and visited the library 3 times a week"(Qr 39).
Job availability & limited options	"When I was young I made a decision, at the time there were not many opportunities, it was either be a teacher, social worker or librarian. I chose librarian"(Qr 32). "Circumstances. I needed work" (Qr 67). "It was the only course available at the time due to late application" (Qr 12). "Vacancies were always available in libraries and I felt I could work in the field as I had always been a library user" (Qr 18).
Childhood experiences	"I always wanted to be a librarian when I visited the library at the age of 6 with my brother. I was addicted to reading and visited the library 3 times a week. I then knew what I wanted to be when I grow up a librarian"(Qr 39). "I grew up in a community where there were no libraries and I saw the need" (Qr 28).
Mentor influence	"It was recommended by my teacher"(Qr 22). "Started as a student and then I came to realise that I was good at the job. I enjoyed the work and I had a very good librarian to start with who helped me see beyond the library work"(Qr15).
Wish to serve public	"I like helping people and I like knowing I can help. It's a bit of an ego thing really"(Qr 23). "Passion for reading and helping people through reading empowerment" (Qr 41)
By chance	"I didn't really. I got a summer job and realized I liked working with books" (Qr 46)
Intellectual demands	" I love learning and reading, as well as helping people"(Qr 19).
Sharing of information	"Love to share information" (Qr 17).

4.2.2 Section B: Professional issues affecting public librarianship

The purpose in this section of the questionnaire is to explore respondents' views on and experiences of public librarianship as a profession. It has 17 questions, five open ended.

Question 10, an open–ended question, requires respondents' opinions on the problems or challenges facing public librarians in Cape Town. Table 5 reveals the themes identified and some selected responses in order of frequency.

Table 6: Challenges facing public librarians in Cape Town

N = 13

Shortage of staff	"Lack of staff" (Qr 18).
	"Maintaining staffing levels at libraries so that they can perform to the standards required as regional, community or satellite libraries is a constant problem. Libraries have to reduce opening hours and services as staff are not replaced or there is a long delay before replacements" (Qr 43).
	"Insufficient staff to separate/ divide works between professional and non – professional staff i.e. Qualifications" (Qr 47).
	"Shortage of competent staff" (Qr 48).
	"Skills shortage is one major problem, experienced librarians are reaching retirement age and the new generation of librarians (mostly young and qualified) do not have inexperienced. But I think if they can start thinking seriously about advancing their skills this can change. Another challenge is that of qualifications required for entry in librarianship. City policies stipulate that one needs to have a B.Bibl degree /B. Tech to be employed as a librarian, but we have people who are still doing their B.Bibl degree but who are employed as librarians. There is a lot of discrepancies that need to be addressed" (Qr 49).
	"Shortage of skills is one major problem as experienced librarians are leaving the public libraries" (Qr 68).

Lack of funds	"Lack of funding for books and staff, as a result most of the libraries are not fully operational" (Qr 11).
Public librarians' attitudes	"Our own attitudes and lethargy" (Qr 7). "Lack of commitment. Staff attitudes. No future growth" (Qr 28). "Lack of professionalism by librarians themselves. Lack of standards. Lack of accountability for service provided. Poor quality librarians chummed out by some library schools – an embarrassment to the profession"(Qr 38). "lack of professional recognition" (Qr 29).
Uncertainty caused by the unfunded mandate issue	"Unfunded mandate" (Qr 41). "The unfunded mandate: are libraries a provincial function or?" (Qr 42).
Autocratic management	"Lack of real input from staff on the ground. We have a very dictatorial management. Computer systems different. Uncreative approach to problems i.e. Staffing" (Qr 15). "bad upper management" (Qr 46).
Lack of knowledge	"Lack of information from the communities as to what the library is about, and the fact that we have to deal with semi if not illiterate…communities. For us to function well we have to teach our communities what the library is about" (Qr 54).
Lack of marketing strategy	"A clear marketing strategy to promote the service" (Qr 23).
Lack of learning culture	"Instilling a learning culture in South Africa. Educating the public about the value of libraries. Maintaining libraries as centres of tranquillity – many people are completely unaware of the correct way to behave in libraries" (Qr 21).
Managing change	"Old staff incapable of embracing new ways of thinking"(Qr 23).

The replies hold several comments significant for this study and that are echoed in responses to other questions. For example, shortages of skilled staff, caused by the exodus of experienced staff in recent years, mean that professional staff are kept from professional work – a point that will be returned to. The resulting reductions in community libraries' hours and lack of skills among staff might well affect the quality of service offered and so might be contributing to the lack of understanding of the profession that so many refer to here and in later questions. It is a kind of vicious cycle. The problem of the "unfunded mandate", which was described in Chapter 1,

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must affect the professionalism of South African public libraries. If local authorities are unwilling to "own" them and fund them, the morale of their staff must suffer. As pointed out in Chapter 1, one of the attributes of a professional is a certain amount of autonomy or independence from government and employer. The rather vague mention of "autocratic management" and a few other comments on weaknesses in top management in Table 6 has to be connected to the answers to the later Likert-scale Question 31, which show that just over half of respondents feel that they are not treated as professionals by their management.

Several respondents refer to a lack of professionalism and apathy among public library staff. The fact that almost all respondents are qualified professionally holding professional posts might be relevant here. Are they referring to themselves or to lower level staff? The comment has to be seen in the light of the responses to the next question that reveals that 99% of respondents believe that public librarianship *is* a profession. It is difficult to reconcile the two perspectives. If such a huge majority believe that they are professionals then why do they say that public librarians' lack of professionalism is a problem? The findings of the next few questions might throw light on the question.

Questions 12 and 13 are linked. Question 12 reveals that 52 respondents (77.6%) feel that librarians are not recognised as professional by society at large. This echoes comment in the international literature, as discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2 (Cram 1991; Williamson 2002). Respondents are then asked to suggest some ways to improve the standing of public librarianship. Thirty-one answered the question. Table 7 analyses the themes.

Table 7: Changes that might improve the status of public librarianship

N = 31

Themes	Selected quotations
Marketing of public librarianship	"Campaign of what librarians do other than stamp books e.g. Collection development, illiteracy, programmes, etc." (Qr 18). "Have to be more professionals, make public aware that we don't just stamp books all day" (Qr 39) "A change in awareness to the public that librarianship is a profession i.e. We are qualified people with experience

	and talent which is not always recognised" (Qr 45). "Career guidance at high school level would expose children and parents to the profession" (Qr 22). "The idea that the society have of a library is someone with grade 12 or even grade 10 that stamps books behind the counter. The technical and administrative skills are forgotten. General knowledge and peoples skills are the main key to be a good librarian. Librarians should have a key role in the government then the society will acknowledge librarians" (Qr 43).
Change in public librarians' attitudes	"We have to change our attitude "just a librarian" attitude" (Qr 17). "Librarians themselves must assert themselves"(Qr 56). "The mind set of public librarians before society can actually recognize us we the public librarians need to change our mindset, perceptions and be vocal" (Qr 60).
Raise entry standard	"Raise entry standards & criteria/ requirements with pay equity" (Qr 7). "I think the employer must restrict the entry into librarianship to ensure that only the qualified people are employed as librarians. If people want to pursue this career and is they take it seriously enough they must go and study. This happens in all the other profession; you do not just go and assist a doctor to become an assistant doctor. You study for it!" (Qr 56). "People with qualifications should be the first priority. Assistant librarians should be encouraged to have a diploma" (Qr 20).
Professional association membership	"Membership to a professional organization a compulsory" (Qr 8).
Competitive salaries	"Competitive remuneration packages to attract & retain right professionals" (Qr 17).
Draw clear distinction between librarians and library assistants	"Treating librarianship as a profession by making sure that only people who studied librarianship are given the title "librarian" and a clear distinction being given between

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	people who assist in the libraries and those who are qualified e.g. for a teacher to be a teacher one has to obtain a Diploma or a degree in teaching. That must be applied to librarians" (Qr 11).
Recognition from government	"Recognition must come from government level, scholars and teachers must explain the role of librarians and the qualifications needed to run a library" (Qr 34).

Many of the comments pick up the comments in the previous table. Strong threads are:

> ➤ The need to educate people in the mission of public librarians. It seems that society might see public librarians as clerks who stamp books all day.
>
> ➤ The need to change public librarians' attitudes. Public librarians are not seen as assertive enough or pro-active.
>
> ➤ Insistence on high entry standards. From the respondents' responses the researcher can deduce that employers need to make qualifications a priority when appointing staff. In the restructuring of the city in the 1990s, standards were lowered and under-educated staff were appointed to run libraries. Recently COCTLIS has returned to its old policies. However, the layer of professional staff is thin.

Question 14 asks respondents if some of the generally accepted attributes of a profession apply to their own experience. Figure 4 shows the four to gain the strongest positive response are service orientation, the existence of a body of specialised knowledge and theory, the requirement of tertiary education, and a professional organization.

Figure 4: Experience of attributes of a profession

N = 68

These are the generally accepted attributes of a profession which in your experience applies to public librarianship?
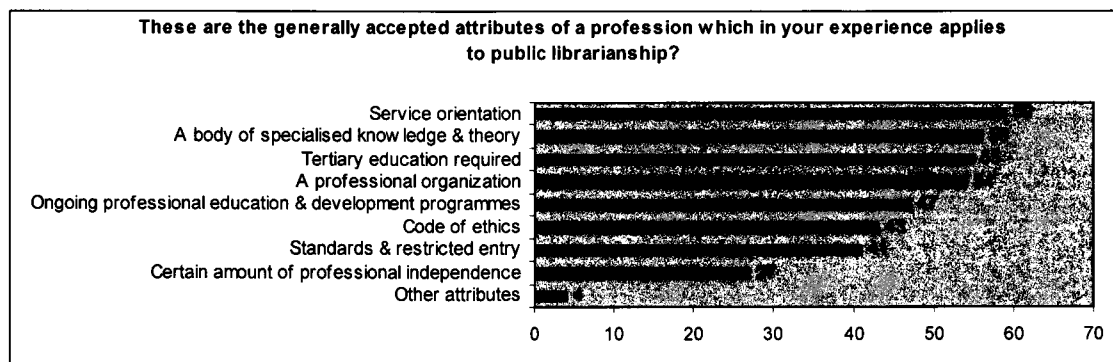
Codes of ethics, standards and restricted entry and certain amount of independence from employers and government were the other attributes mentioned. The figure raises some questions. For example, despite the positive response to the existence of a professional organisation, answers to a later question reveal that only 26% of respondents belong to LIASA. Another contradiction is the gap between, on one hand, the acceptance of the need for tertiary education and a body of knowledge and theory and, on the other, the low proportion of respondents studying towards higher degrees.

Question 15 continues the line of questioning by asking respondents what they understand by the term "professional status". The question relies on their theoretical knowledge rather than their day to day experience. Perhaps this open-ended question should have come before the last question as respondents might well have been prompted by its list of attributes. The responses are summarised in Table 8 in order of frequency and reveal clear understanding of the generally accepted meaning of "profession".

Table 8: Meaning of "professional status"

N = 26

Themes	Selected quotations
Tertiary qualifications	"Professional status implies formal tertiary qualifications" (Qr 21).
Service orientation / image	"The way of doing things and the way you portray yourself as a service provider in your area of work and show some expertise" (Qr 11).
Code of ethics	"That we are governed by rules & legislature dictating our

	behaviour & professional stance & outlook towards the public and the service we render to all sectors of the community" (Qr 33).
Specialised knowledge and theory	"Being seen as a person who has acquired specialised knowledge through study, who applies this knowledge according to certain standards and levels" (Qr 10).
Ongoing professional education	"Competent skills and ongoing learning" (Qr 48).
Performing of professional tasks	"Ability to perform professional tasks assigned and gets recognition you deserve" (Qr 9).
Recognition by society of expertise	"Recognition of certain expertise in order to execute a particular function" (Qr 34). "and recognition of society as a whole" (Qr 21)

Again social recognition and a service orientation are strong threads. The responses confirm the lack of attention to the concept of professional independence. An interesting difference between the findings of the two questions is the stronger recognition in the later more theoretical question that professions are ruled by codes of conduct and ethics.

As already mentioned, only 26% of respondents belong to LIASA. Question 17 asks them what benefits they get from this membership. Table 9 presents the responses by theme and in order of frequency. Networking, job opportunities, attending conferences, being in touch with innovations & trends in the profession and sharing of information are mentioned.

Table 9: Benefits of LIASA membership

N = 18

Themes	Selected quotations
Networking	"sharing of information and experience with fellow colleagues"(Qr 34).
Job opportunities	"Receiving emails and latest vacancy adverts"(Qr 45).
Attending conferences	"Apply to go on conferences and courses. Contribute your knowledge and expertise to LIASA" (Qr 39).

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Innovations & trends in the profession	"Being able to discuss matters that affect librarians. Getting an opportunity to learn & transfer skills and be more updated on the new developments" (Qr 68).
Sharing of information	"Seeing what is happening else where in other libraries. Seeing what other libraries are doing – sometimes one gets good ideas from them"(Qr 40).

One respondent perceives LIASA to have a bias towards academic librarianship, saying: "LIASA as a body does not really address specifically public library needs e.g. slogan for library week usually too academic". He/she goes on to claim that LIASA is not seen by the "rank and file" to offer any benefits (Questionnaire 38).

One of the hallmarks of professionals is the wish to keep up with latest developments in the field. Figure 5 summarizes responses to the question asking how respondents keep up. The most common way by far is through their organisation's workshops and courses with 65 of the 68 respondents listing these. And 51 claim to read professional journals and books. The other options receive far fewer ticks.

Figure 5: How respondents' keep up with the latest developments in public librarianship

N = 50
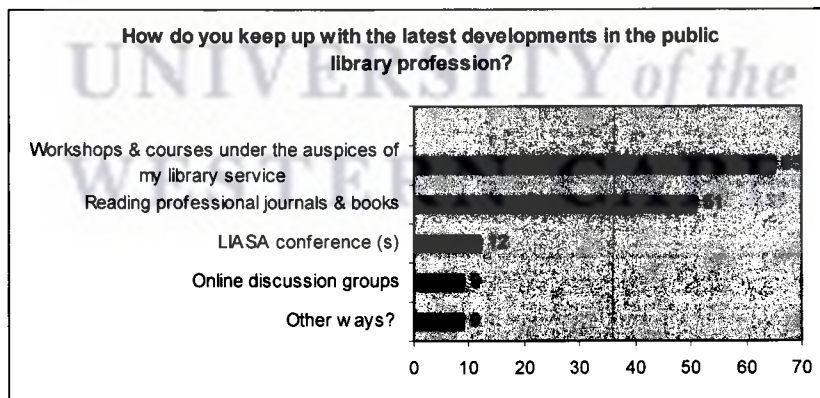
Sixty-four percent of respondents claim to have had professional mentoring from more senior staff, another hallmark of professionalism. This is significant given the comments scattered throughout the responses on shortages of competent staff after the retirement of experienced staff.

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Question 20 is a key question as it asks how much time each day respondents spend on professional work, that might have been part of their professional education. The average percentage reported is 52%. This finding indicates a gap between the "notion" of professionalism and experienced reality.

As shown in Figure 6, 44 respondents (65%) report that they have done some courses in the past two years to enhance their professional development. They might well be the COCTLIS workshops mentioned by a large majority in an earlier question. These workshops are usually skills training workshops which will be returned to later. The finding matches the 69% in Question 14 in agreement that ongoing professional education and development is an attribute of a profession. The rather high percentage (35%) who have not been involved in ongoing professional education suggests the need for a follow-up question asking for reasons

Figure 6: Professional development

N = 68

During the past two years have you done any courses to enhance your professional development?
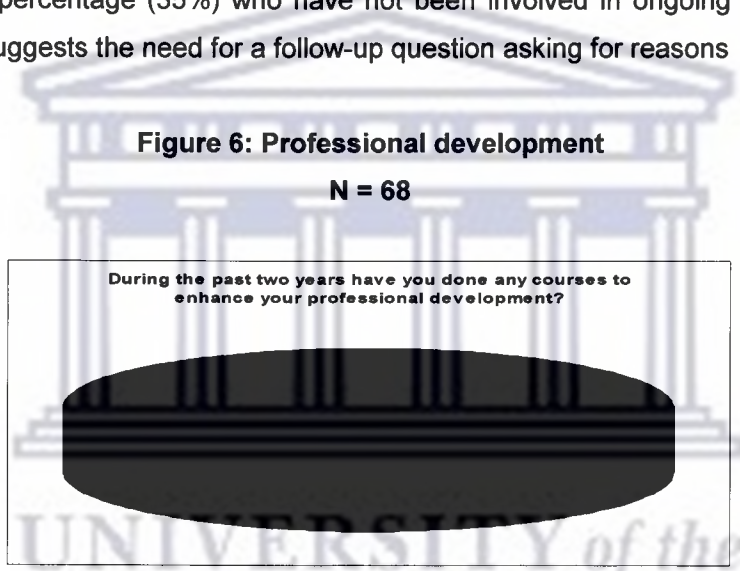
Questions 22 and 23 pick up the comments in the literature, as discussed in Chapter 2, on perceived differences in status between public and academic librarianship (Kagan 2006). In common with the international research, the finding is that 62% of respondents feel that there is a difference in status. Figure 7 reveals that public librarianship is ranked third out of the four categories provided. The finding echoes earlier research that questioned the self-belief of public librarians (Kagan 2002; Hart, 2006).

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Figure 7: Ranking of librarians

N = 43

If you "yes" to Quesstion 22, please rank the kinds of librarians according to status. (1= Highest, 4 = Lowest status)
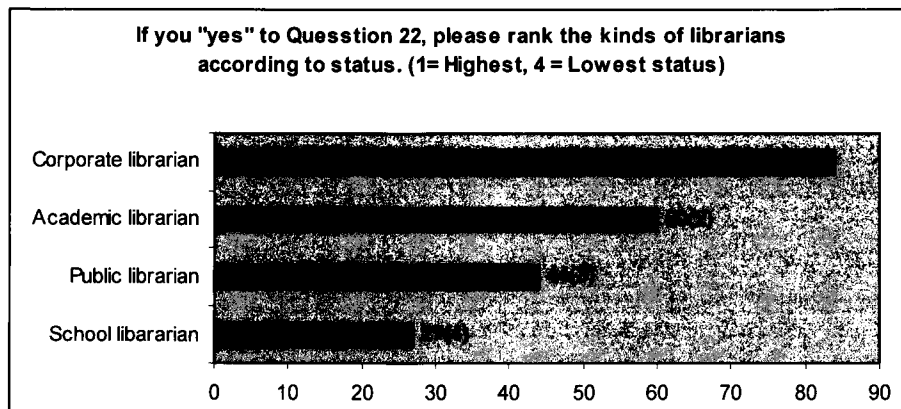
Figure 8 shows that respondents see librarians in eighth place out of 10 professions, just above teachers and farmers.

Figure 8: Ranking of professionals

N = 65

Please rank the given list of professionals from 1-10, in order of occupational prestige/ status. (1=Highest, 10=Lowest)
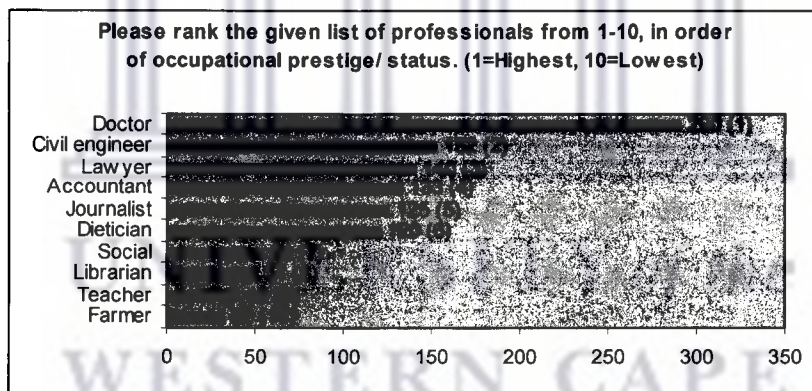
As shown in Figure 9, there is close agreement among the respondents on the three leading negative influences on the status of public librarianship:

➢ the low visibility of the profession

➢ librarians are seen as clerks

➢ the lack of distinction between professional and non-professional work.

This agreement might be linked to the findings of earlier questions that society does not understand what librarians do and that only 52% of the working week is spent on professional work. Both are connected as the public cannot be expected to

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understand that some staff are "professional" when they see everyone doing the same work.

Figure 9: Q24

Negative influences on public librarianship

N = 59
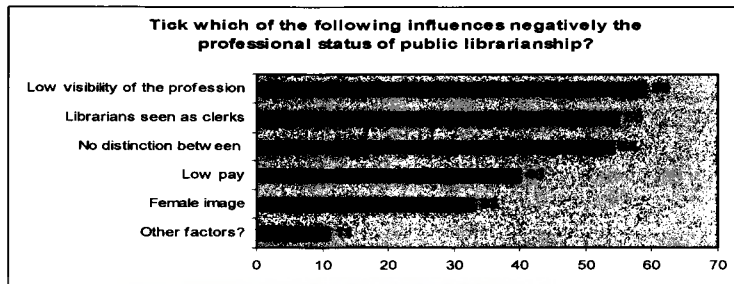
Figure 10 gives the telling figure that 55% of the respondents would not recommend librarianship as a profession to their children. It is pity that there is no follow-up question to ask for reasons. But it might be that the lack of societal recognition outweighs the strong belief evident among respondents in the value of public librarianship. At the beginning of this sub-section a question was asked about the contradiction between respondents' firm conviction that they are professionals and their reported experience of their social world in public librarianship. Perhaps this last question in Section B sums up the ambiguities.

Figure 10: Librarianship and respondents' children

N = 68

4.2.3 Section C: Likert Scale questions

The Likert scale questions in Section C mostly look for confirmation of the findings of earlier questions. They serve to triangulate data across questions. Figures 18 to 25 summarise the data.

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As shown in Figure 11, 64.7% of the respondents report that they do use their professional education. An earlier question found that on average they are spending 52% of their time on professional duties.

Figure 11: Question 27

N = 68
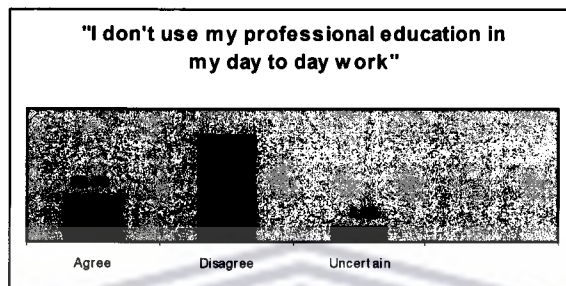
Figure 12 confirms the general agreement that public librarianship lacks social status.

Figure 12: Question 28

N = 68
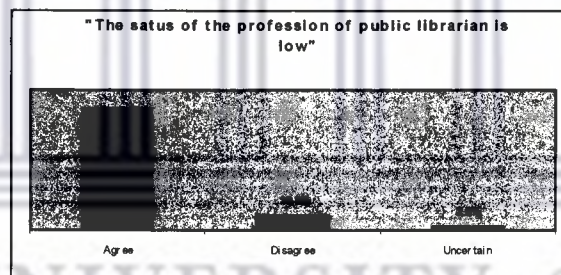
Figure 13 shows almost 52% feel that LIASA is not doing enough to improve the status of public librarianship. Since Question 16 found that 74% of the respondents are not members of the LIASA, it might be asked how LIASA will be able to improve the status of the profession if public librarians are not members.

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Figure 13: Question 29

N = 67

"LIASA is not doing enough to improve the status of the profession"

Agree   Disagree   Uncertain
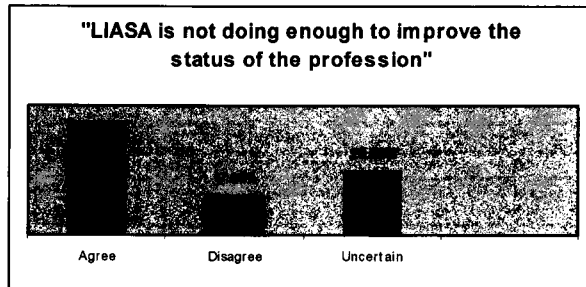
The numbers in Figure 14 confirm the general agreement that the lack of distinction between professional work and non professional work is a negative influence on the profession. Comments in response to Question 10 suggest that the shortage of staff leads to the overlapping of duties.

Figure 14: Question 30

N = 67

"In most public libraries there is no distinction between professional work and non- professional work"

Agree   Disagree   Uncertain
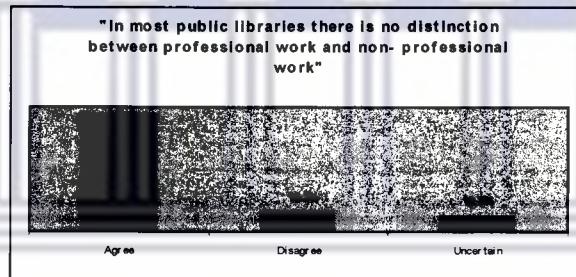
According to Figure 15, just over half of the respondents feel their management is treating them as professionals. It is noteworthy that 32.4% are "uncertain".

Figure 15: Question 31

N = 68

"My library service management treats me as a professional"

Agree   Disagree   Uncertain

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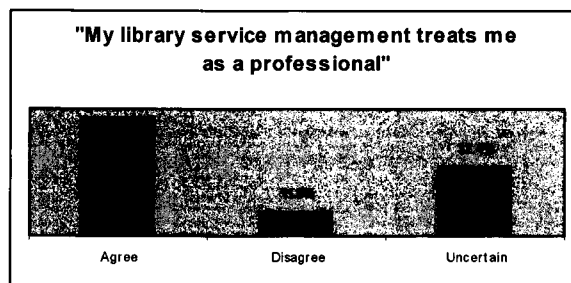
Figure 16 confirms findings in other questions. Almost all respondents agree that the general public does not recognise them as professionals.

Figure 16: Question 32

N = 68

"The general public does not understand that public librarianship is a profession"
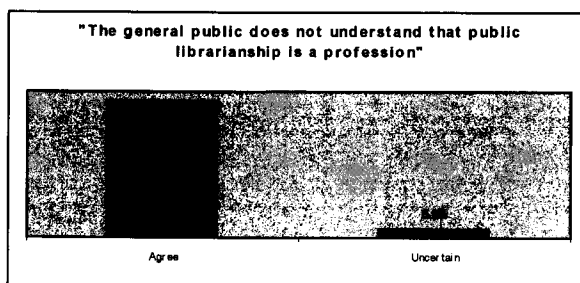
Figure 17 confirms the strong belief evident elsewhere that the public cannot distinguish professional from non-professional. This must lead to fundamental questions over the nature of public librarianship, which will be returned to

Figure 17: Question 33

N = 67

"Users of libraries cannot distinguish the professional librarian from other employees"
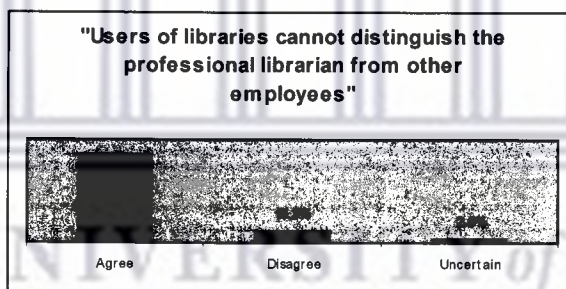
The final statement probes beliefs on the need for public librarianship to be a profession in order to fulfil its social mission. In Chapter 2, Kagan was quoted as saying that low levels of professional education and the resulting low status of library staff hamper innovation (2002: 2). The comment was made earlier that the ongoing education mentioned by respondents is probably mostly skills training. Kagan makes the point that South African public librarians are trained in skills rather educated intellectually and philosophically. Kagan also claims that in countries where librarians' status is low, they cannot maximise their potential societal benefits as they lack credibility. Figure 18 shows that 75% of respondents agree with Kagan. Responses to earlier open-ended questions suggest that public librarians themselves

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have to take some responsibility for their low status. Respondents believe a change of attitude among public librarians, more assertiveness, and better service delivery should come before they can expect recognition from society at large

Figure 18: Question 34

N = 68

"More recognition from society that public librarianship is a profession would help librarianship perform its social mission"
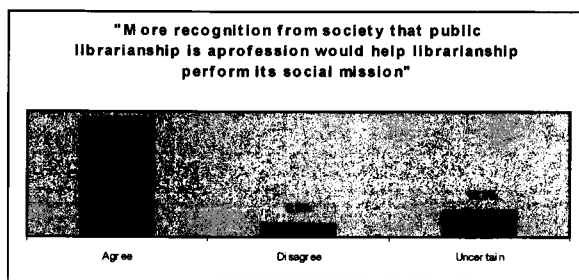
4.2.4 Section D: Comments by respondents

In the last section of the questionnaire respondents are asked to comment about anything which might be related in the research topic. Only 19 respondents answered this question and eight themes were identified.

Table 10 shows that many of the themes identified are points which respondents highlighted before. But some new points can be identified for example: some congratulations on the researcher's research topic and criticism of professional librarian education.

Table 10: Question 35

Please add any free comment relevant to my investigation into the professional status of public librarians

N = 19

Themes	Selected quotations
Comment on the research topic	"Very interesting topic and good luck" (Qr 39). "A good topic! Looking forward to seeing a completed thesis" (Qr 46).
Librarianship not recognised by society	"I love being a librarian and people still look down on you when you tell them what you do" (Qr 39). "In South Africa especially where housing and rising costs

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	are important and relevant issues, the government it would seem underestimates the significance of the role of the librarian in society"(Qr 37). "Our profession is really not taken seriously due to librarians that are not qualified. Public librarians are also not pro-active as there are very few that belong to LIASA" (Qr 46) . "The only reason I am studying for a professional qualification is to qualify for a working visa for somewhere else. In South Africa a degree is meaningless as we all do the same work except for the L.I.C. who does hectic paper pushing" (Qr 46). "In my opinion the public tend to judge a profession by its remuneration" (Qr 22).
Emphasis should not be put more on qualifications in order to preserve standards	"We must guard against valuing certificates above inspired service. We must avoid rigid rules that suppress individuality or initiative in order to preserve standards. We must encourage diversity of thought & performance, we must celebrate all who add lustre to our profession by being a little different and enhancing the solid foundation of professionalism" (Qr 7).
Roles in the different designations not clearly defined	"If you take an example of a developed country you will find out that the librarian is treated as a professional in his/ her own right. It goes with the level of literacy and the importance attached to libraries in general. What is happening in our libraries is that the roles are not clearly defined mainly because our libraries are always short staffed so the roles overlap. You will get professional roles being performed by people who might not necessarily be professionals" (Qr 11).
LIASA role	"LIASA is trying hard to put Librarianship in a map as other professions"(Qr 54).
Librarians multi skilled	"Public librarians are multi qualified. Head librarian is human resource officers, accountants, project managers, teachers and policy enforcers" (Qr 62).
Public librarians' own responsibility	"This profession is not taken seriously even by the people who are in it. Why would one work as a librarian for 20

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	years without any qualifications but never make an effort to undertake any form of formal training (as a self development and career development initiative to advance knowledge and skills). We always say that our objective as librarians is to promote lifelong learning but we do nothing about our own education" (Q 58).
Library schools not training students adequately	"Library school do not prepare students for the challenges of the profession & the management functions they have to fulfil as in-charges at a library because faculties are under pressure to produce student numbers. They often select totally unsuitable candidates & the profession suffers when these people enter the job market" (Qr 38)..

The thoughtfulness and care in the comments provide evidence of the respondents' passion for their work. Their quality also provides evidence of the value of the research topic.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a systematic summary and analysis of the data gathered. The respondents are mostly professionally qualified and they hold senior positions. Their strong belief in the social mission of public libraries comes through and their wish for more recognition. They understand what a profession is and believe that public librarianship is a profession.

But there are some puzzling inconsistencies. It seems that their social context and experiences on the ground are less than "professional". Their comments suggest that librarians themselves might at times have to take responsibility for their weak position.

The last Likert scale statement has to be highlighted. Professionalism is more than financial reward or social status. Public librarianship requires recognition because it can then fulfil its social mission.

The following chapter will interpret the data in the light of the research questions which were given in Chapter 3.

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CHAPTER 5
INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 has presented the summary and analysis of data that were collected from the survey of senior library staff in Cape Town's public libraries. This chapter discusses the findings relevant to the objectives of the study and its research questions. Based on this discussion conclusions are drawn.

The objectives of the study were to gain insight into librarians' perceptions of public librarianship as a profession and perhaps to make them aware of the broader issues. It had five main questions:

> ➤ What does the existing literature reveal about the status of public librarianship internationally and in South Africa?
> ➤ What are the factors that have impacted on the professionalization of public librarianship in South Africa post 1994?
> ➤ How do public librarians experience their work in terms of generally accepted attributes of professionalism?
> ➤ How do public librarians perceive professionalism? Do they set any value on it? If so, Why?
> ➤ Are public librarians members of LIASA? If so, what benefits do they receive from the organization.

5.2   Discussion of findings in terms of the research questions

The findings are discussed in terms of the objectives of the study and the corresponding research questions.

5.2.1 What does the existing literature reveal about the status of public librarianship internationally and in South Africa?

The literature reviewed in Chapter 1 and 2 shows that since the late 19th century librarianship has claimed professional status. It has the generally accepted attributes of a profession that were described in Chapter 1. But the literature also shows that there are doubts. As Womboh (2002) points out, professional status comes from

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client and community recognition of the authority of the profession. Green (1994) argues that people in general have no clear understanding of who librarians are or what their profession is because the media and community at large portray librarians in a negative manner. Other reasons for the low status is that librarians are seen as passive and they do not fulfil the intellectual role expected of a profession.

These comments are echoed in the South African literature. Chapter 2 describes the concerns in the late 1990s in the South African conference and journal literature that public libraries were losing ground and that the deterioration might be reflected in the downgrading of the professional status of public librarians (for example Leach 1998; Kagan 2002; Hart 2006; Witbooi 2007). The sector was employing unqualified and under-educated workers as professional staff (Hart, 2005). It seemed that the new democratic government did not recognise the importance of libraries.

The profession was fractured by race which made difficult to voice the problems within the profession. South African library associations had been racially based and the strongest association, SAILIS, had been seen as supporting the white nationalist government. The efforts to unite librarians in a professional body in the late 1990s were difficult (Tise 2003) but in 1997 LIASA came into being and it is widely recognised as the voice of the organised profession in South Africa. But Chapter 2 provides evidence that LIASA has not succeeded in attracting a large membership. Khomo and Raju's study in KwaZulu-Natal (2009) and this study in Cape Town indicate that it might claim to represent less than one third of people working in the LIS sector. Of course this would change if it were to gain a more formal legal status.

Chapter 2 outlined the more recent initiatives to strengthen the standing of public librarianship, including:
  ➢ The government sponsored LIS Transformation Charter which asserts the professional status of public librarians
  ➢ Government's funding of investigations into librarian education and norms and standards for public libraries. Both should have a positive impact on the staffing of public libraries
  ➢ The growing support for statutory status for LIASA.

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5.2.2. What are the factors that have impacted on the professionalisation of public librarianship in South Africa post 1994?

In South Africa there have been both negative and positive factors which have impacted on the professional standing of public librarianship. Chapter 2 outlined these. South Africa became a democratic country in 1994 but since then change in the LIS sector has been slow. The reasons for the slow pace include shortage of staff in public libraries and shortage of funds (Lor 1998; Leach 1998; Witbooi 2007). After 1994 the LIS sector had huge expectations but a gap in the 1996 Constitution made it difficult to fully function. The funding mandate in government structures is still not clear.

However there have been positive developments:
  - ➢ The birth of LIASA in 1997
  - ➢ The 2004 inauguration of the National Council of Library and Information Services, which advises government on policy (South Africa. National 2001).
  - ➢ The investigation by government in 2006 into the position of public libraries which documented the deterioration of public libraries and huge gaps in services highlighted in the KPMG and Jacaranda report. The subsequent R1.3 billion grant for public libraries (KPMG and Jacaranda 2006).
  - ➢ The funding model for public and community libraries by KPMG services and Jacaranda Intellectual Property Business Consultants (KPMG and Jacaranda 2006).
  - ➢ The LIS Transformation Charter, mentioned in the previous section. The Charter presents a vision for developmental services that will play a meaningful part in society. As reported in Chapter 2, it asserts that their staff should be "committed professionals" and "respected as such by their parent institutions, government bodies and user communities".

5.2.3. How do public librarians experience their work in terms of generally accepted attributes of professionalism?

In Chapter 1 the accepted attributes of a profession were described, such as: a body of knowledge and expertise, specialised tertiary education, a professional association, continuous professional development, service orientation, and, so on. Chapter 4 gives evidence that respondents in this study agree that that these are the attributes of a profession.

The survey gives a mixed picture on respondents' professional attributes and their experience of professionalism. It finds that 62% hold the minimum professional qualification, the B.Bibl degree or Higher Diploma in LIS. This compares favourably with the 35% found by Hart (2006) in the rural province of Mpumalanga. Sixty-four percent of the Cape Town respondents claim to have experienced professional mentoring from senior staff and 65% have engaged in some kind of professional development activity in the past two years. This last finding probably has to be modified as the question did not distinguish between "professional" development and ICT training courses which might not be regarded as "professional" development. It is noteworthy that only 14.5% hold postgraduate degrees and only 6% are studying for formal qualifications – all six for the first professional degree. Only 26% are members of LIASA.

The findings on their experience of professionalism in their daily work are striking. Only 52% of their daily duties involves professional work and only 26.5% claim to use their professional education in their day to day work. A strong majority of 75% believe that in most public libraries there is no distinction between professional work and non-professional work and 85.3% believe that users cannot distinguish the professional librarian from other employees. These perceptions might explain the lack of interest in furthering their education that was indicated above. Hart's study in another province (2005: 135) found evidence that public librarians were abandoning their studies because of unhappiness at seeing unqualified people being promoted from cleaning and clerical jobs to what had been regarded as professional positions in libraries.

The finding that only 55.9% of the Cape Town respondents, all managers of public libraries, feel able to agree with the statement in Question 31, "My library service management treats me like a professional" might throw further light on how public librarians experience professionalism. A profession expects a certain amount of professional autonomy for its members even if they fall under government structures.

The finding that senior librarians spend too much of their day on non-professional work echoes some comment in the international literature. Both Cram (1991) and the Round Table of Managers of Library Association (Prins and de Gier 1995) claim that the result is that many librarians do not see themselves as professionals. There is no consensus within the profession because it is difficult to describe the essence of the

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profession due to the diversity in the work done by librarians. They point out that the descriptions of their work by many librarians reveal that much of it can be done by non-professional clerks. This cannot be said of other professions. They also say that, unlike other professions, librarianship allows anyone who works in a library to call himself or herself "librarian". The Round table (Prins and de Gier 1995) also points out that librarianship is seen as a female profession which lowers its status in many countries.

The next section will discuss respondents' beliefs about and perceptions of professionalism. But it is clear that they must be seen in the light of their day-to-day experience.

5.2.4. How do public librarians perceive professionalism? Do they set any value on it? If so, why?

The finding that public librarians do not use their professional skills and knowledge has to be seen in the light of the finding that 99% of the respondents believe that public librarianship *is* a profession. The findings of several questions show they agree that generally accepted definitions of a profession apply to public librarianship with the service orientation of librarianship seen as the strongest professional attribute.

However 55% would not recommend librarianship as a profession to their children. One possible reason could be that they perceive it to be weak compared with other professions. They rank it eighth of 10, just above teaching and farming. MacDonald (1995) states that law and medicine are still considered as the first tier or full professions, which other occupational groups aspiring to professional status are measured against. Nursing and social work are classified as secondary "caring" professions because their main primary commitment is the personalised care for their clients.

The major finding is that 99% believe public librarianship to be a profession but this should be compared with the other findings such as:
  ➢ Only 17.9% believe that public librarians are recognised as professionals by the society at large.

➢ 86.8% believe that the image of the public librarian is low. There are several comments that librarians are seen as clerks and quite strong agreement that the female image of the profession contributes to its low status.

➢ 94% believe that general public does not understand that public librarianship is a profession.

The low visibility of the profession and the lack of distinction between professional and non-professional work are mentioned often as hindrances to professionalism in the responses to the open-ended questions.

These findings echo previous research in other parts of the world. For example, Nilsen and McKechnie (2002) comment that the lack of awareness of the value and complexity of their work frustrates public librarians. They claim that there is a lack of understanding of the role that public librarians play in personal and community development and in education. Many people have no understanding of who librarians are and what they do and they have to face stereotypes such as buns, glasses, sensible shoes, date stamps, middle class and introversion.

Respondents were asked why they became public librarians and nine themes were found. The most common reason was "passion for books" but next in line was the lack of career options. As one puts it "at the time there were not many opportunities". He/she claims that only three options were available to blacks: social work, teaching and librarianship. Although there is no explicit mention of gender or race issues, one might speculate that in apartheid South Africa these have played a role. In apartheid South Africa library services were mostly to be found in the white suburbs and schools making it impossible for the non white groups to be exposed to libraries. But on the other hand, the absence of libraries might have motivated some respondents as indicated in the words of one respondent, "I grew up in a community where there were no libraries and I saw the need".

In terms of the purpose of the research project, it is significant that 75% of respondents believe that more recognition from society that public librarianship is a profession would help librarianship perform its social mission. Kagan (2002) argues that it is only through transformation that the profession can meet its social mission and in the process it will improve the status of public librarians by providing them with a better standard of living and improving their self image and job satisfaction. A transformed profession would make sure that diversity issues were addressed and

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would correct the past injustices of the apartheid government. Diversity would not only focus on gender and colour but also ethnic identity, sexual orientation and disability status. Dick (2002: 33) further points out the need for public librarians to "exercise their intellectual responsibility roles and broaden their understanding of librarianship itself". He points out that transformation is inevitable as a result of deep social dynamics but it will be unpredictable and should be assisted by librarians working together.

5.2.5. Are public librarians members of LIASA? If so, what benefits do they receive from the organization?

In Chapter 1, the existence of a professional association is cited as a hallmark of a profession. Watson (2000) sees membership of a professional association to be an obligation. He says "in any profession there is a need for acceptance of a philosophy that binds individuals together around a set of common goals. Professionals have an obligation to their countries, to themselves as individuals and also to those who participate in the same professional endeavour" (2000: 7).

Like all the other professions, the library profession has requirements that need to be fulfilled in order to be recognised as a profession. One of these requirements is that LIS workers should be members of LIASA since it is the only recognised national body for all sectors of librarianship.

The study finds that only 18 (26%) of the respondents are members of LIASA. This seems low considering that they are all managers of the city's libraries. It shows a contradiction to answers to Question 14 where respondents were asked to choose general attributes of a profession and 54 respondents said a professional organization was one of the attributes. In Question 17 the 18 who claim to be LIASA members list the benefits they receive from being a member as:
  ➤ networking
  ➤ job opportunities by word of mouth and messages
  ➤ exposure to innovations and trends
  ➤ sharing of information

The questionnaire did not ask respondents why they do not belong to LIASA which is a pity. Responses to the Likert scale statement in Question 29 show that only 18% of the respondents disagree with the statement "LIASA is not doing enough to improve the status of the profession". This finding might indicate that the perception that

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LIASA has been weak in its advocating for the profession might be the reason why 74% of respondents are not members of the LIASA.

According to Gruen, Summers and Acito (2000: 36), increase in and maintenance of membership are very important in measuring an association's performance. In 2002 Kagan (2002) stated that "it is not surprising that LIASA still has a relatively small membership compared to the universe of possible members". He claimed that that there were "widely divergent views of its current worth and potential for the future" (2002: 5). He found that reasons for librarians not joining included:

➢ LIASA was not seen as a professional body because it was open to all
➢ the lack of service previously provided by SAILIS
➢ lack of accreditation mechanisms
➢ lack of a need to join for career advancement
➢ most librarians unable to attend meetings due to lack of financial resources and
➢ shortage of staff in public libraries.

It is interesting to compare Kagan's findings in 2002 with Khomo and Raju's in 2009. Their survey in KwaZulu Natal found that people were not joining LIASA for the following reasons:

➢ ignorance of LIASA's existence
➢ LIASA's high fees
➢ perceptions that LIASA membership offers no benefits
➢ perceptions that LIASA is biased towards professional staff
➢ perceptions, especially among non-professional staff, that LIASA does not address industrial concerns (Khomo & Raju 2009: 146).

The debates over statutory status and trade union versus professional association were described in Chapter 2. But it seems that a "chicken and the egg" situation might exist. It will be difficult to argue for this status as its membership is low but it cannot grow its membership without the status.

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5.3 Conclusion

The study set out to investigate the professional status of public librarians in Cape Town. The key positive finding is that public librarians do believe that public librarianship is a profession. This is good news given the difficult times it has undergone. They understand the attributes of a profession and acknowledge that that their work has some of these attributes. They reveal commitment to the social mission of public librarianship.

But there are contradictions. The key negative finding is that they are not seen or treated as professionals by society, by their communities, their users and perhaps even by their own library management. They spend too much time on clerical work and there is little distinction between professional and non-professional work. There is strong agreement that their lack of status affects negatively their effectiveness in term of the mission of public librarianship. They claim that the profession is invisible.

The respondents make some clear recommendations to improve the situation which will be discussed in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 6
RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents recommendations from the research study. The recommendations are divided into two. firstly, recommendations are directed towards library practice and the profession and secondly they are directed to further research. At the end of the chapter some final conclusions are drawn.

6.2 Recommendations

Literature reviewed in Chapter 2 shows that librarianship is indeed a profession. But, the authors all agree that for public librarianship to survive and move forward it needs to strengthen its position as a profession. The problems that are faced in South Africa are similar to the problems faced in other countries. The recent improvements which have been made in the LIS sector do show that there might be a better future but much will depend on how public librarians adapt to the changes.

6.2.1 Recommendation for library practice and the profession

The study suggests the following:
- ➢ COCTLIS, the City of Cape Town and the profession as a whole should educate society at large in the role of public libraries. The need for marketing is the strongest recommendation from respondents.
- ➢ Library management should allow professional staff to be professional librarians before employees.
- ➢ Public librarians should change their negative and passive attitude towards their profession. Respondents say that librarians must assert themselves.
- ➢ Public librarians should take a more pro-active role in improving the LIS sector. Public librarians should be willing to adapt to change.
- ➢ There should be a clear distinction between the duties performed between different designations. Respondents make this point firmly. The duties performed by professional librarians should be more of a professional nature than clerical.

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- Respondents are clear that public librarianship must demand tertiary level and professional education to enter it. As in other professions further studies should be encouraged. Employers should motivate public librarians to have post graduates degrees by providing incentives and time off.
- Public librarians should be members of LIASA in order to have a strong voice in the sector while making sure that issues regarding public libraries are addressed accordingly.
- LIASA should have an advanced marketing strategy to win back old and attract new members. It perhaps needs to consult a marketing company.
- LIASA should have sessions with members to identify gaps within the organisation.
- Public librarians should try to speak the language of politicians in order to market their profession. The issue of the unfunded mandate of public libraries has gone on too long.
- COCTLIS should have a mentoring programme for new staff to address the lack of competency and experience. Several respondents comment on the lack of professionalism and skills of new recruits.

6.2.2 Recommendations for future research

The M.Bibl project had limitations and leaves some gaps for future research, for example:

- A limitation of the study is that it did not have views of assistant librarians and management. Perhaps a future broader study might include them.
- The study's findings on public misconceptions about public librarians indicate the need for research in the public's attitudes to and perceptions of public libraries.
- Research is needed in the reasons for the low LIASA membership among professionally qualified public librarians in Cape Town. One study was recently done in KwaZulu Natal (Khomo and Raju 2009) but it included all levels of staff and all sectors of librarianship..
- Research will be needed to investigate the impact of the norms and standards relating to professional staffing of public libraries once the government investigation that was mentioned in Chapter 2 is completed.
- Research is needed in the capacity of library schools to educate the large numbers of professionals that might be required in the future.

6.3 Conclusion

I hope that the study will have a positive influence on public librarians. The literature reviewed shows that librarians are passive and they allow other people to make decisions for them. This tendency creates problems for them since most of the people who make decisions have no idea about the importance of librarians. The literature shows that libraries are based on the Western model; maybe the time has come for an African model as suggested in the LIS Transformation Charter. The apartheid era has badly affected the LIS sector but as we cannot change the past, I hope that we can identify the negatives and learn from the positives in order have more effective and relevant LIS in all communities. Public librarians are critical of their own professionalism but feel restricted by the amount of clerical work demanded of them.

The new developments in the LIS sector, like the new funding of public libraries by government, the Transformation Charter, the promised legislation over norms and standards and the possible statutory status for LIASA, show that there could be a bright future. But for all these developments to be successful the sector will need to work as a unit. Discouraging factors mentioned by respondents are the negative perceptions of public librarianship in society. The finding that 55% of the participants would not recommend librarianship to their children is worrying. LIASA has a big task ahead and they will need everyone in the sector to participate in moving forward. Most of the participants became librarians because they had a passion for books and serving others. If public librarians could build on that passion then the future of public librarianship would be brighter.

One respondent's words must conclude the dissertation:

> We must guard against valuing certificates above inspired service. We must avoid rigid rules that suppress individuality or initiate in order to preserve standards. We must encourage diversity of thought and performance, we must celebrate all who add lustre to our profession by being a little different and enhancing the solid foundation of professionalism.

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APPENDIX A: LETTER OF REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

FACULTY OF ARTS

University of the Western
Private Bag X17
Bellville 7535

South

Dept. of Library & Information Science
Tel: [021] 959 2137
Fax: [021] 959 3659
S Stroud (Secretary): sstroud@uwc.ac.za

20 April 2009

The Director
City of Cape Town
Directorate: Community Services
Department: Library and Information Services

Dear Madam

RE: Request to Conduct Research

I kindly ask you to allow me to administer a questionnaire in your institution in June 2009. I am currently completing my M. Bibl degree at UWC. As part of my course, I am required to produce a mini-thesis, and this involves conducting an investigation. My research is entitled **AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE PROFESSIONAL STATUS OF PUBLIC LIBRARIANS IN CAPE TOWN.**

The study is done under the supervision of Professor G. Hart from the Department of Library and Information Science, UWC.

The success of this study relies on the information that will be gathered. Please be assured that the information gathered will be used strictly for the purposes of the study and confidentiality and anonymity is assured. Participation will be voluntary. The survey will consist firstly of a questionnaire sent to the senior library staff to public libraries across the library districts.

Yours sincerely

Linda Ngaleka
Cell. No.:   079 490 515 0
E-mail address: 9526377@uwc.ac.za

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FACULTY OF ARTS

University of the Western Cap
Private Bag X17
Bellville 7535

South

Dept. of Library & Information Science
Tel: [021] 959 2137
Fax: [021] 959 3659
S Stroud (Secretary): sstroud@uwc.ac.za

15 June 2009

Dear Colleague

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE PROFESSIONAL STATUS OF PUBLIC LIBRARIANS IN CAPE TOWN.

I kindly ask you for some minutes of your time to answer the attached questionnaire. I am currently completing my M. BIBL degree at UWC. As part of my course, I am required to produce a mini- thesis and this involves conducting an investigation. My investigation will be done by means of a questionnaire sent out to senior librarians in Cape Town's public libraries. After some years of working in public libraries, I have become interested in professional issues and my research project is entitled **AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE PROFESSIONAL STATUS OF PUBLIC LIBRARIANS IN CAPE TOWN.**

Ms Ninnie Steyn, Director of Cape Town's Library & Information Services, has approved the project.

The success of this study relies on the information that will be gathered by means of the attached questionnaire. Please be assured that the information gathered will be used strictly for the purposes of the study and confidentiality and anonymity are assured. Participation is voluntary. The study is done under the supervision of Prof. G Hart from the Department of Library and Information Science, at the University of the Western Cape. Her email address is ghart@uwc.ac.za.

Once you have completed the questionnaire, please return it to Linda Ngaleka Room 203 Cape Provincial Library Services via the provincial weekly combi.

Yours sincerely

Linda Ngaleka
Cell. No.:   079 490 515 0
E-mail address: 9526377@uwc.ac.za

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AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE PROFESSIONAL STATUS OF PUBLIC LIBRARIANS IN CAPE TOWN

To be completed by permanent fulltime librarians-in-charge and senior staff

Your anonymity is assured. All answers are confidential.

Section A: Background & personal information

1. Gender

Female		1
Male		2

2. Home language

Afrikaans		1
English		2
IsiXhosa		3
Other (Please specify)		4

3. Library district

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

4. Library cluster

Community library		1
Regional library		2
City wide library		3

5. What is your designation?

Principal librarian		1
Senior librarian		2
Librarian		3
Other (please specify)		4

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6. Name your highest formal qualification

M.Bibl / MLIS		1
BBibl / LIS Hons		2
B.Bibl Degree / Higher Dip LIS		3
Lower Diploma / National Diploma in LIS		4
Bachelors Degree		5
Matric		6
Other (please specify)		7

7. Are you studying for a formal qualification at the moment?

Yes		1
No		2

8. What made you decide you wanted to be a librarian?

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....

9. How long have you worked at this library in your current designation

.... years

Section C Professional issues

10. In your opinion, what are the major problems or challenges facing public librarians in Cape Town?

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....
....

11. Do you believe public librarianship is a profession?

Yes		1
No		2
Don't know		3

12. Do you believe that public librarians are recognized as professionals by society at large?

Yes		1
No		2
Don't know		3

13. If you answered "no to question 12, please state some changes that you believe might improve the status of public librarianship.

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....

14. These are the generally accepted attributes of a profession. Which in your experience applies to public librarianship? (Tick as many as you feel appropriate).

A body of specialised knowledge & theory		1
Tertiary education required		2
A professional organization		3
Ongoing professional education & development programmes		4
Service orientation		5
Certain amount of professional independence (from employers & government)		6
Standards & restricted entry		7
Code of ethics		8
Others? Please specify		

15. In your own words what do you understand by the term "PROFESSIONAL STATUS?"

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16. Are you a member of LIASA ?

Yes		1
No		2

17. If you are a member of LIASA, what benefits do you get from being a member?

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....
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24. Tick which of the following influence negatively the professional status of public librarianship. (Please tick as many as you feel appropriate)

Low pay		1
Female image		2
Librarians are seen as clerks		3
Low visibility of the profession		4
No distinction between professional and non-professional work		5
Other factors? Please specify		6

25. Please rank the given list of professions from 1 - 10, in order of occupational prestige/ status. (1 = highest; 10 = lowest)

Profession	Rank
Accountant	
Civil engineer	
Dietician	
Doctor	
Farmer	
Journalist	
Lawyer	
Librarian	
Social Worker	
Teacher	

26. Would you recommend librarianship as a profession to your children?

Yes		1
No		2

Section C   Likert Scale statements

Please state your opinion on the following statements. Feel free to add any comment after each.

27. "I don't use my professional education in my day to day work".

Agree		1
Disagree		2
Uncertain		3

28. "The status of the profession of public librarian is low".

Agree		1
Disagree		2
Uncertain		3

29. "LIASA is not doing enough to improve the status of the profession"

Agree		1
Disagree		2
Uncertain		3

30. "In most public libraries there is no distinction between professional work and non-professional work"

Agree		1
Disagree		2
Uncertain		3

31. "My library service management treats me as a professional"

Agree		1
Disagree		2
Uncertain		3

32. "The general public does not understand that public librarianship is a profession"

Agree		1
Disagree		2
Uncertain		3

33. "Users of libraries cannot distinguish the professional librarian from other employees"

Agree		1
Disagree		2
Uncertain		3

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34. "More recognition from society that public librarianship is a profession would help public librarianship perform its social mission"

Agree		1
Disagree		2
Uncertain		3

Section D: Please add any free comment relevant to my investigation into the professional status of public librarians

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Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire

Please return to Linda Ngaleka
Room 203 Cape Provincial Library Services via the weekly provincial combi
By 22 July 2009

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