

The library as place: A study of the experiences and perceptions of community libraries users in the Moretele local municipality.

By

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## Declaration

I declare that *The library as place: A study of the experiences and perceptions of community libraries users in the Moretele local municipality* 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.

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Date: 14/02/2020

## **Abstract**

In this dissertation I examine the public's use of two community libraries in the Moretele local municipality. My research focused on who uses the libraries, for what purpose the libraries are being used, and patrons' perceptions of the libraries. Data was collected using three methods namely interviews, observations in the form of seating sweeps and written patron surveys. The data collected show that the libraries play an important role in the information and social needs of the communities. They are highly valued for the resources they provide such as study space, books and photocopiers. The libraries are also greatly utilised by local communities, especially UNISA students, and function as public and third places. As public spaces they offer the community a space to meet, work together and discuss issues that are of importance to the community. As third places, the libraries offer ideal places for people, especially the youth, to play and socialise. I conclude that the libraries are irreplaceable spaces for the community and, therefore, not easily replicated elsewhere.

Keywords: public space, third place, community library, libraries, youth.

## **Isifinyezo esiqukethe umongo wocwaningo**

Kule-dissertation, ngihlola ukusetshenziswa ngumphakathi kwamalayibrari amabili omphakathi kuMasipala wendawo yaseMoretele. Ucwangingo lwami lugxila ekuthengi ngobani abasebenzisa amalayibrari, nokuthi bawasebenzisela ziphi izinhloso lamalayibrari, kanye nemibono yabantu abasebenzisa lamalayibrari. Ulwazi luqokelelwe ngezindlela ezintathu, okuyilezi, ama-interview, ukuqapha okwenzekayo ngendlela yokubheka ukuthi abantu bayisebenzisa kanjani indawo kanye nokwenza ama-survey abhaliwe kubasebenzisi belayibrari. Ulwazi oluqokelelwe lukhombise ukuthi amalayibrari adlala indima ebalulekile ngolwazi, kanye nezidingo zabantu emphakathini. Athathwa njengomthombo obaluleke kakhulu ngoba asiza ngendawo yokutadisha, izincwadi kanye nokwenza ama-photocopy. Amalayibrari abuye asetshenziswe yimiphakathi yendawo, ikakhulukazi izitshudeni zase-Unisa, kanti futhi abuye abe yindawo lapho lapho umphakathi ohlangana khona kanye nokuba yindawo yesithathu kwabanye abantu. Njengendawo yokuhlangana kwabantu, ahlinzeka ngendawo yemihlangano yomphakathi, ukusebenzisana kanye nokuxoxa ngezinto ezibalulekile emphakathini. Indawo yesithathu, amalayibrari asiza ngendawo enhle kubantu, ikakhulukazi intsha, ukudlala kanye nokuzihlanganyela nje khona ukubonana nokuxoxa. Ngiphetha ngokuthi amalayibrari yindawo isikhundla sawo engeke yathathwa ngokunye emphakathini, ngakho-ke, akuwona izinto indawo yawo engathathwa ngokunye noma ukwenziwa kwenye indawo.

Amagama abalulekile: indawo yabantu, indawo yesithathu, ilayibrari yomphakathi, amalayibrari, intsha.

## Tshobokanyo

Mo thutopatlisisong eno, ke sekaseka tiriso ya dilaaborari tse pedi tsa baagi ba setšhaba mo Lekgotlatoropong la Selegae la Moretele. Patlisiso ya me e ne e totile gore ke bomang ba ba dirisang dilaaborari, gore dilaaborari di dirisediwa mabaka afe, le megopolo ya badirisi malebana le dilaaborari. Go kokoantswe *data* go dirisiwa mekgwa e le meraro, e leng dipotsolotso, kelotlhoko ka go ela tlhoko go nna ga badirisi le ditshekatsheko tse di kwadilweng tsa badirisi. *Data* e e kokoantsweng e bontshitse gore dilaaborari di na le seabe sa botlhokwa malebana le ditlhokwa tsa tshedimosetso le loago tsa baagi. Di tsewa di le mosola tota ka ntlha ya ditlamelo tse di di tlamelang ka tsona di tshwana le sebaka sa go ithuta, dibuka le metšhini e e dirang dikhopi. Dilaaborari di dirisiwa thata ke baagi ba selegae, bogolo segolo baithuti ba Unisa, mme di dira jaaka mafelo a botlhe le a boraro. Jaaka mafelo a botlhe, di tlamela baagi ka sebaka sa go kopana, go dira mmogo le go buisana ka dintlha tse di botlhokwa mo baaging. Jaaka mafelo a boraro, dilaaborari di tlamela ka mafelo a a maleba gore batho, bogolo segolo bašwa, ba tshameke le go golagana. Ke konosetsa ka gore dilaaborari ke mafelo a a ka se emelweng ke sepe a baagi mme, ka jalo, ga go kgonege go dira ape a a tshwanang nao gope gape.

Mafoko a botlhokwa: sebaka sa botlhe, lefelo la boraro, laaborari ya baagi, dilaaborari, bašwa

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## **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

EIFL-----Electronics Information for Libraries

IFLA-----International Federation of Library Associations

LCL-----Lebone Community Library

LIS-----Library and Information Services

NLSA-----National Library of South Africa

PFP-----Progressive Federal Party

SABDC-----South African Book Development Council

SPL-----Seattle Public Library

TCL-----Tshedimosetso Community Library

UNESCO----United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNISA-----University of South Africa



# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction to the study

### 1.1 Introduction

*“Every day, people of all ages and backgrounds from rural, suburban and urban communities across the country turn to their libraries to find jobs or go online, to get help with homework or complex research projects, to start on a business plan, connect with their kids or simply find space to relax. For every person who loves libraries, there is a story about what the library means to them”. -*

llovelibraries.org.

A public library holds different meanings to different people. For me the library means a fortnightly visit with my five-year-old son to play with the collection of toys and to borrow children’s picture books, about trains and cars. I am always on the lookout for Setswana children’s books to instil a culture of reading in my son, reading books in our home language is important. Books in African languages like Setswana are scarce compared to English books, and our local library has a collection of Setswana books. The library for us means easy access to books that are otherwise very difficult to find.

This dissertation is a story of two community libraries in rural North West province. It is an account of the activities taking place and how a libraries presence impacts the lives of community members; how patrons perceive and use the two community libraries. Specifically, it highlights the various uses of the library focusing on how it functions as a public space.

This introductory chapter will explain the rationale for the study. An outline of the dissertation will also be provided. The context within which the study is conducted will be introduced first. Following this is a detailed discussion of the theoretical background used in the study. This is proceeded by the objectives and rationale of the study. A brief background of the two libraries will also be presented. Finally, the chapter concludes by indicating the structure of the thesis as well as the main argument.

### 1.2 Context of the study

Significant research and information exists on how public libraries shape the lives of communities, see for example, Gaiman (2013), Fisher et al (2007), Leckie & Hopkins (2002), Johnson & Griffis (2009), Aabø, Audunson & Vårheim (2010) and Aabø (2005). Public libraries are said to be essential educational, commercial, and public establishments (Buschman and Leckie, 2007) because, along with collecting and distributing information, they offer people secure and accessible places to read, study, and socialise. Furthermore, the broader

community uses their physical spaces as meeting spaces (Harris, 2007). “Free at the point of use they create a sense of an equitable society, are highly valued by members of the community they serve and draw a diverse range of people” (Harris, 2007:146). Public libraries are some of the few enduring public spaces where people are not compelled to spend money when they spend time there (Derr and Rhodes, 2010).

Yet, despite this there are often attempts aimed at the privatisation of public libraries (Davis and Lafaive, 2005; Clark, 2011; Grigsby, 2018). Proponents of privatisation such as Davis and Lafaive (2005) state that public funded libraries are a burden on taxpayers who provide a service some do not use, and they are not really necessary because people will still have reading materials even if public libraries cease to exist. What Davis and Lafaive (2005) do not take into consideration is that libraries are not merely providers of books, they also offer other services to communities such as free internet and computers, and a place to study and socialise. Besides that, many people cannot afford to buy books, a public lending library is the only way many people can access free books (Clark, 2011). The South African Book Development Council (SABDC) (2019) states 58 percent of homes in South Africa do not have a single book to read for fun.

May (2011) makes a case for studying how people use of libraries. By researching how the physical spaces inside libraries are used by patrons we can get a better idea of how the needs of communities are met by libraries. Thus, the intention of this research project is to investigate how public spaces in the form of community libraries are used in South Africa, particularly in disadvantaged rural communities. It is hoped that it will provide the library sector and general policy makers, whether it be at a municipal, provincial or national level, a better understanding of how communities use and perceive libraries, and how libraries can be better equipped to fulfil the needs of the public. Additionally, findings divulged in this paper will impart useful information regarding the social aspects of community libraries. As a patron of one of the libraries, I became interested in finding out how other members of the community utilise the libraries. The general intent is to find out whether community libraries bring about the intended positive social and educational outcomes offered by their presence in communities. Specifically, the aim of this research is to investigate whether the two community libraries also function as a third place and if so to what extent are they being used as third places. Third places (which will be discussed in detail later) are according to Oldenburg and Brissett (1982), places where people primarily enjoy the company of others outside of workplaces and home.

### 1.3 Research Questions

This study looks at the perceptions and experiences of library users. The problem statement is as follows: What are the perceptions and experiences of library users of two community libraries in Moretele local municipality in the North West Province? To answer this question, the study focuses specifically on the following questions:

- Who uses the libraries?
- For what purpose are the libraries being used?
- And what are the library user's perceptions of the libraries?

#### 1.4 Theoretical framework

This research is informed by the concept of space/place and third places. What is a place? Is there a difference between a space and a place? The discipline of Cultural Geography, Human Geography in particular, arose as an alternative to environmental determinist theories, has wrestled to find answers (Rodman, 2003; Buschman and Leckie, 2007). Commenting on space/place debates in early geography, Buschman and Leckie (2007) define place as a man-made creation such as locations where people live, whereas a space is an already existing establishment, independent of human beings. In his definition of place Cresswell (2004:7) asserts that a place is simply a space that holds meaning – “a meaningful location”. Thus, space can be turned into place when people attach meaning to it. Yin-Fu Tuan (1977: 6) makes a distinction between space and place:

*“What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value... The ideas 'space' and 'place' require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place.”*

Thus, space is geographic while place is relational and interactive. Looking at how humans use libraries from a phenomenological and constructivist perspective, Templeton (2008: 207) remarks that:

*“[a]t the terminus of every deconstruction, at the end of every technological rainbow, at the nadir of every nostalgia, there are humans making sense and making place of their strangely familiar inheritance. They are appropriating, repurposing, sorting, assessing, and synthesizing their place because there is no apparent option and no graceful exit”.*

Similarly, Cresswell (2004) and Tuan (1977) are of the view that space can be turned into place, so essentially place is space with relationships overlaid. Speaking of public places and spaces and echoing the sentiments of Cresswell (2004) and Tuan (1977), Leckie and Hopkins (2002:332) state that regular users have intense feelings of connection, “such places are part of their community, part of their social and cultural fabric, places with special meanings to many people”. Place can be of interest to anthropologists who examine human relations interconnected to space and place and the possibilities places have.

There is also debate about place/space in anthropology, albeit at a slower pace compared to geography (Rodman, 2003). Rodman declares that anthropology trails behind geography in “reunifying” space and place. She writes that “the idea, well established in geography, that places produce meaning and that meaning can be grounded in place, has yet to attract much theoretical interest in anthropology” (2003:207). The study of space and place is indeed changing in the field of anthropology as stated by Low and Lawrence-Zuniga (2003) who note anthropologists have started to position aspects of space into cultural studies. Additionally, Low and Lawrence-Zuniga (2003:1) write:

*“[t]he most significant change for anthropology is found not in the attention researchers increasingly pay to the material and spatial aspects of culture, but in the acknowledgement that space is an essential component of sociocultural theory. That is anthropologists are rethinking and reconceptualising their understanding of culture in spatialized ways”.*

Most research concerning space and place in contemporary anthropology focuses on ethnographies of substantial communal areas such as “markets, housing projects, gardens, plazas, convention centres, waterfront developments, and homeless shelters” (Low and Lawrence-Zuniga, 2003:1) which illustrate urban processes small and large. Such studies shed light on the ability of anthropology in analysing the physical and figurative space of a city (Low and Lawrence-Zuniga, 2003).

Low (2009) observed that principal notions of ‘place’ and ‘space’ in geography create difficulties for anthropologists. She asserts that theories of space and place in anthropology ought to be concerned with technique and centred around the individual whilst allowing a sense of agency and new possibilities. “Social relationships” Low (2009: 34) writes “are the basis of social space, yet these relationships necessitate materiality, in the form of embodied space and language, to work as a medium of discussion or analytic device. These insights contribute to a multidimensional model of space and place that will accommodate anthropology’s ethnographic needs”.

Space and place go hand in hand, while space can exist without place, place needs space to exist. When human interactions occur in a space such interactions effectively transform space into place in which people attach special meaning. Understanding the activities that occur in a place from an anthropological viewpoint, in this case a library and how the library becomes a third place, is the premise of my study.

#### 1.4.1. The Library as a Third Place

The study of the use of space in libraries has emerged, in part due to Ramon Oldenburg and Dennis Brissett's "The Third Place". Oldenburg and Brissett (1982) make a case for the benefits of participation in "third places" defined as places that are not the home (first place) and the modern places of work (second place), but rather places like taverns and coffee shops where people primarily enjoy the company of others. When looked through this very basic definition, it would appear that libraries (traditionally with their focus on providing information) do not meet the standard of "third places" as (I assumed) most patrons do not visit the library with the sole purpose of finding company. However, Montgomery and Miller (2011:8) point to the fact that "those who spend time at third places also find comfort in seeing familiar strangers. These individuals may not interact, and yet spending time at the third place provides a common bond and a familiarity in their relationship".

Further in their characteristics of third places Oldenburg and Brissett (1982:270) state that:

*"A third place is a public setting accessible to its inhabitants and appropriated by them as their own. The dominant activity is not "special" in the eyes of its inhabitants, it is a taken-for-granted part of their social existence...It is a forum of association which is beneficial only to the degree that it is well-integrated into daily life. Not even to its inhabitants is the third place a particularly intriguing or exciting locale. It is simply there, providing opportunities for experiences and relationships that are otherwise unavailable."*

In other words, third places offer people a middle ground where they can go in and out with ease, all are welcome and treated equally. Information exchange, be it formal discussion or a casual chat, is the main activity. Third places are easily accessible to the broader community and usually found close to public transportation. Operating hours are outside the regular weekday working hours to cater for evening and weekend visitors. Clientele are relatively consistent and the activities and diversity in third places create a lively atmosphere. Subsequently, there is an innate feeling of attachment for frequent users (Leckie and Hopkins, 2002).

Considering what Montgomery and Miller (2011) say about third places, libraries meet the definition of third places. People visit libraries not necessarily to socialise, but the process of seeing familiar faces forms a sense of community. It is fair then to deduce that libraries (public libraries in particular) can be identified as third places. Peter Bromberg, a US librarian cited in Harris (2007:147), suggests “by the very nature of what they do, libraries offer people a third place, a place different from home or work, a place where people can come to learn, think, explore, play, reflect and socialise”.

While agreeing that libraries have some traits that are similar to Oldenburg and Brisset’s third place, Aabø et al. (2010), state that libraries cannot be restricted to third places only. They assert that as a gathering spot, the library is also a first place as it is connected to the activities of the home and family; likewise, it is used for work-related activities making it a second place. Not only is it a first, second and third place, Aabø et al. (2010) argue that the library also functions as a public sphere in the Habermasian sense. Jürgen Habermas’ (1991) concept of the public sphere is a space in society where everyone, regardless of social class, can participate in discussions of general public interest (Widdersheim and Koizumi, 2015). According to Habermas (1991), the public sphere is a product of democracy and, as per Bernier, Males and Rickman (2014), libraries are commonly seen as democratic community spaces. Elmborg (2011) says that libraries can become new democratic spaces where important discussions, between librarians and library users, about information and how it is used in people’s lives can take place.

Third places are public places. The library, being a third place, is also a public space. Characteristics of a library that make it a public place are listed by Templeton (2008). They include the notions that: the aims of the library are many and indefinite; the library serves wide-ranging members of the community; and information is deemed to be a public good. According to Leckie and Hopkins (2002:332), the library serves as an effective public place because “public life is produced and reproduced by social practices that transpire in specific places – public places – and the library is certainly one of those enduring and successful public places”. Aabø et al. (2010: 25) state that the library as a public sphere “is a place where people accidentally run into neighbors and friends, but it is also a place where a substantial proportion report being accidentally engaged in conversations with strangers. It appears to be a place where users are exposed to - the other, i.e., people with a background different from themselves”. Relatedly, Buschman (2003: 120-121) argued libraries operate as “disseminators of rational, reasoned, and organized discourse, as a source of verifying or disputing claims, and as a space for the inclusion of alternative views of society and reality”. Thus, public libraries bridge the gap between communities and discussions about social and

political matters by making their collections accessible; in this manner public libraries reinforce the public sphere (Buschman, 2003).

The theory of space and place rooted in cultural geography as well as Oldenburg and Brissett's idea of third places informs my study of two community libraries. Much of the theoretical framing presented here comes from Western scholars, and my study can contribute towards understanding whether these concepts can be applied to the South African context.

### 1.5 Background of the two libraries

It is useful to provide some background and a discussion of the design of the two libraries under consideration. It is noteworthy that both libraries were the first in their municipality.

The two libraries that are the focus of my research are relatively new to the communities that make up the greater Hammanskaal / Moretele area. Both libraries are in communities that, prior to 1999 when the first library was opened, did not have any library services. Tshedimosetso Community Library (TCL)<sup>1</sup> and Lebone Community Library (LCL)<sup>2</sup> are located in villages that fall under the Moretele Local Municipality in the North West Province (see Map 1 and Map 2). Moretele Local Municipality consist of 26 wards with 72 villages and four libraries. According to the 2011 National Census, the municipality had a population of 186,947, with most of the inhabitants being Setswana speakers. The Moretele Local Municipality encompasses of rural communities which fall under various Batswana tribal authorities<sup>3 4</sup>.

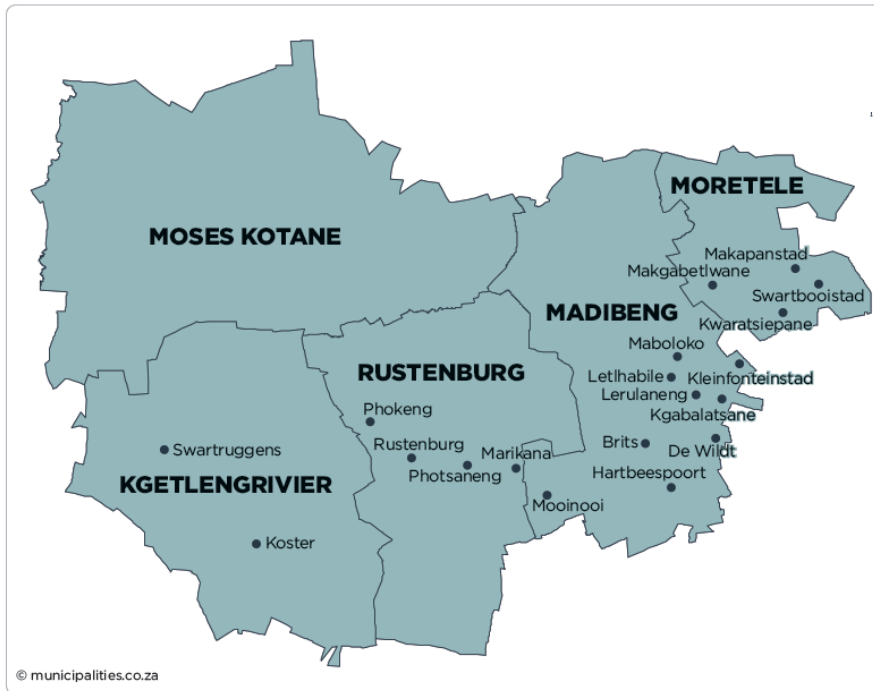
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<sup>1</sup> Not real name, name has been changed for the sake of anonymity.

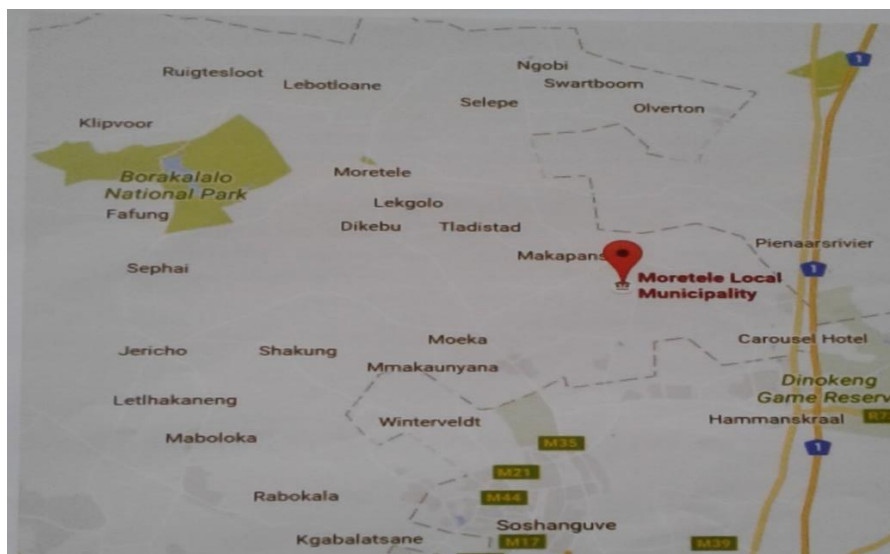
<sup>2</sup> Name has been changed for the sake of anonymity.

<sup>3</sup> "A tribal authority shall be established in respect of the black area assigned to the chief or headman of the Black tribe concerned...and...it shall generally administer the affairs of the tribes and communities in respect of which it has been established" (Black Authorities Act 68 of 1951).

<sup>4</sup> Post-Apartheid Tribal authorities still exist, coexisting with municipalities. For example, any new developments such as housing, sanitation, etc. the municipality wants to introduce in the villages that fall under Moretele local municipality must be approved by the various tribal authorities of each village. Deaths and births are also registered at the tribal authority, and anyone who wants to settle in a village must inform the tribal authority that will either grant permission or deny the request.



Map 1 North West Province municipalities



Map 2 Some of the villages in the Moretele local municipality

The two libraries were chosen to expand on the literature on community libraries in South Africa because; a) they are self-described as community libraries, b) they fit Mostert's, (1998) criteria of community libraries in that they are designed to be easily accessible to the entire community; membership is free to everyone; and the daily lives of community members are directly connected to them, c) they are located in rural areas which previously did not have access to library services and d) they were easy for me to access and I have been a member



of one of the libraries for three years. Moreover, according to conversations with the librarians of both libraries, there has never been any research done on libraries in the municipality. There is an information dearth that needs to be filled regarding these libraries and community libraries in general. One of the objectives, therefore, is to provide information that subsequent studies can add to.

### 1.5.1. Lebone Community Library

Lebone Community Library (see picture 4) is the first library in the Moretele district. It is also the smallest library among the four community libraries in the district. From my interview with the head librarian, I learned that the construction of the library was spearheaded by the youth of the village. A group of youth (including the head librarian) made a proposal to the provincial government then in the process of building libraries, for a library in the village. It was decided that a library would be built in the village. On the 7th of October 1999 Lebone Community Library was officially opened. The library has two librarians: the head and the assistant.

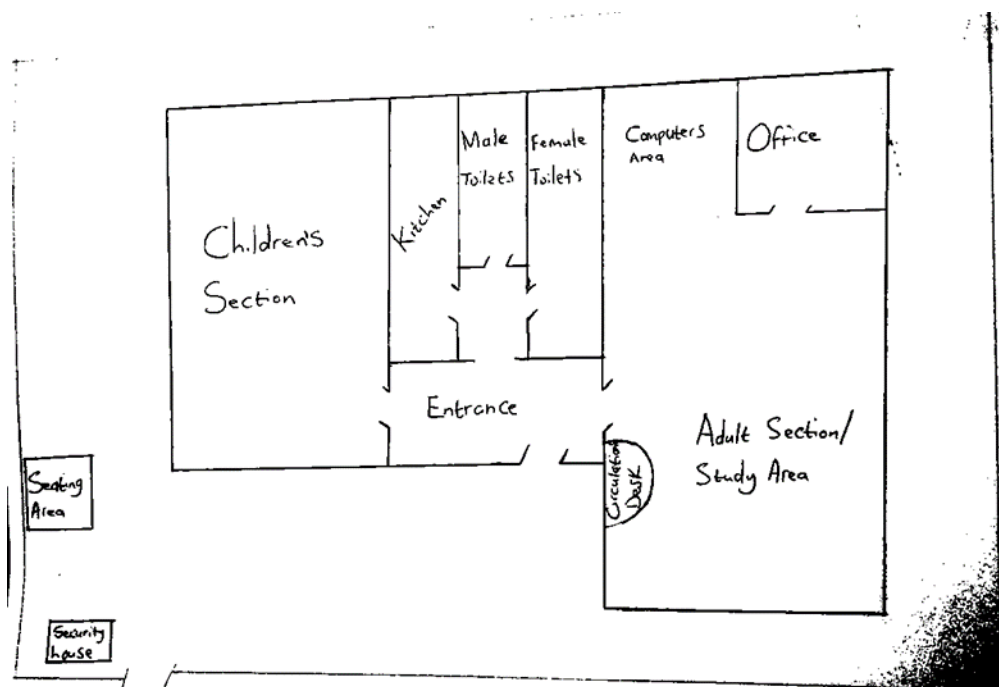


*Picture 1: Lebone community Library*

The LCL was built before the establishment of the Moretele local municipality. The municipality took over the library on October 2005. According to the head librarian at the LCL this is because the library was built with government funds and therefore was property of the state.

An audit was undertaken during the establishment of municipalities between 1998 and 2000 (Koma, 2012; White paper on local government,1998). This was done to determine which buildings and assets belonged to the government with the aim of using them. It is also during this period that much of the policy reform and development processes took place in South Africa (Koma, 2012).

As a result, after the establishment of municipalities between 1998 and 2000 the running of the LCL was taken over by the Moretele municipality from the local tribal authority. Before, the library was run by the traditional authority of the village who had absolute power over the affairs of the village. This is because “[i]n Bantustans, limited local government was established. Traditional leaders were given powers over land allocation and development matters in areas with communally owned land” (White Paper on Local Government,1998:13).



Map 3: Lebone community Library

The library is very small compared to Tshedimosetso (see map 4). It has two sections; the children’s section (see picture 5) and adult section (picture 6). The adult section has about five bookshelves with one shelf against the wall and covering two walls. The shelves take up a third of the room with reading tables and chairs using up the rest of the space. The last third is occupied by a small computer section on a corner, a small office, and the circulation desk. On the outside of the library on the left-hand side of the gate is a small corrugated roof shelter with a long metallic table in the middle and benches on either side. The library is not easily visible from the main road. It takes five to ten minutes to walk from the main road to the library

and that may be one of the reasons why it does not attract as many patrons compared to Tshedimosetso Community Library.



Picture 2: Primary school learners in the children's section at the LCL



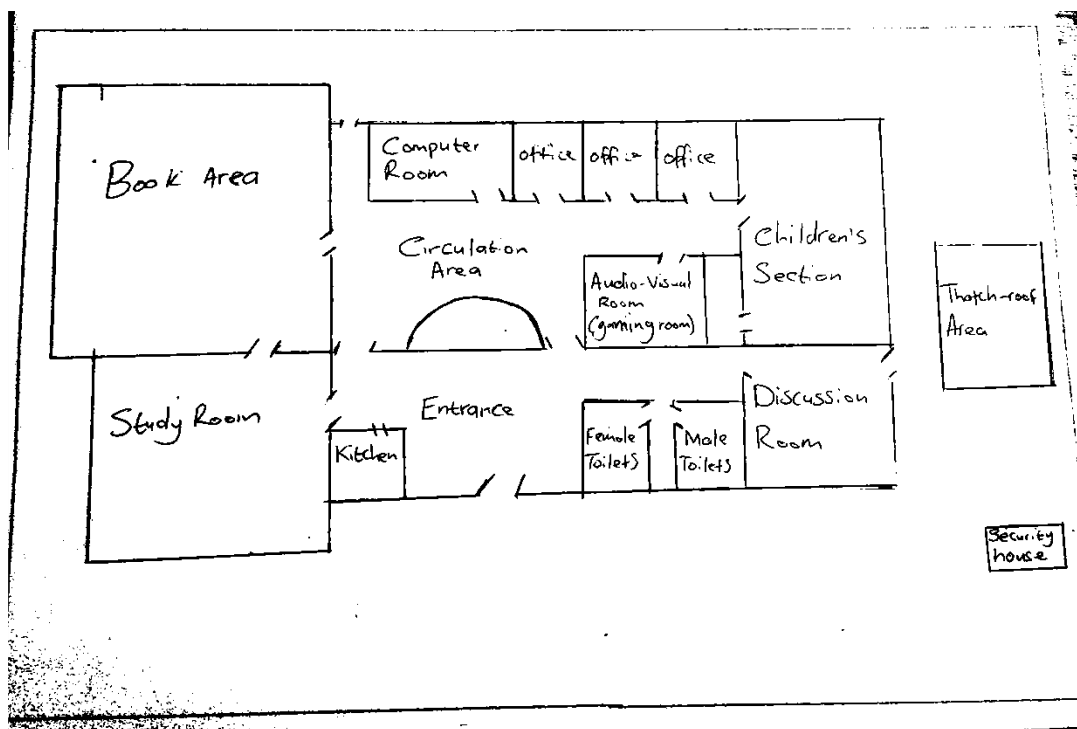
Picture 3: Adult section at the LCL

### 1.5.2. Tshedimoseetso Community Library

Tshedimoseetso Community Library (see picture 1) is less than ten years old; it was officially opened on the 24th of March 2012. Like the LCL, the TCL is the property of the Moretele Local Municipality. The municipality is tasked with the maintenance and employment of staff in both libraries. It is situated next to a busy main road that passes through many of the villages in the municipality, and it is easily visible. It is also the busier of the two libraries and has five librarians.



*Picture 4: Tshedimoseetso Community Library (TCL)*



Map 4 Tshedimosetso Community Library

There are seven main sections in the library: the circulation or front desk, study area, book area, computer area, audio-visual room/gaming room, children's area and a discussion room. When entering the library there is a small kitchen on the left and toilets on the right. Next to the computer room on the right are 3 offices. The different sections inside the building are separated by glass walls. The staff offices, discussion room, toilets and kitchen are the only rooms with brick walls. This design as well as the strategically located sections (see map 3) accommodates the different needs of library users. For example, the study area is located far away from the children's section. When standing at the entrance at the front desk, the study room is on the left hand corner away from the entrance and closed off from the rest of the building with sliding glass doors, usually kept closed by patrons in the study area. To enter the study room, you must pass through the book area which also has glass walls and a door separating it from the front desk. The children's section on the other hand is located on the far-right hand side from the circulation desk. To get there one walks up a hallway passing the audio-visual room on the right and staff offices on the left. The children's section also has a glass door that are normally closed when children are inside. This way children can play in the children's section without disrupting the study area.

The computer room is in front of the circulation desk separated with glass walls and a wooden door; all of the computers easily visible from the circulation desk. The discussion room (picture 2) has two doors with one leading to the outside and facing the thatch-roof area. The thatch-

roof area (picture 3) is situated on the right-hand side of the gate and has roughly ten desks and chairs. According to one of the librarians, the thatch area was designed to accommodate the overflow of patrons during peak periods. However, it is also used by the public to hold meetings and presentations. Library patrons, particularly those who have come to study, use it to relax and socialise as well as eat their lunch. During my time at the library collecting data, the discussion area was being utilised as a security room. The security room at the gate was being renovated at the time. Therefore, patrons did not have access to the discussion room and instead used the thatch area for discussions.

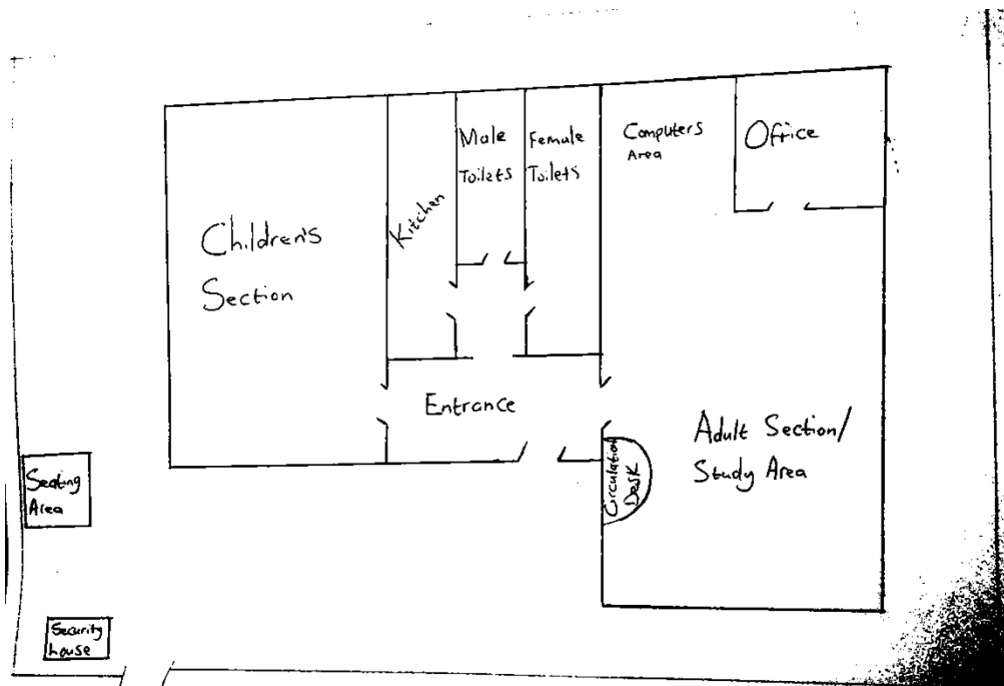


*Picture 5: Inside the discussion room*



Picture 6: Thatch-roof area, on far right, next to the main library building.









~~The~~ two libraries were established post-apartheid, in communities that had no libraries previously. The effect the presence of these libraries has on the communities has yet to be studied. My study of how community members use these libraries is, therefore, a small step in understanding their function in the lives of people living in the Moretele local municipality.

## 1.6 Conclusion

The purpose of the research project is to investigate community libraries, specifically the role they play as public spaces in South Africa. The focus is on whether the Tshedimosetso and Lebone community libraries function as a third place; in other words, to what extent are they being used as third places. It can be inferred that third places are public places, and libraries (particularly community libraries) can be equated to third places. This is because at the core of what they do, libraries provide a third place for people to study, think, research, play and socialise.

This chapter has presented an outline of my research paper by discussing the theoretical framework guiding this study including the context of the study and a brief background of the two community libraries in question. A brief statement on how my dissertation can enhance the literature on community libraries both in South Africa and internationally was offered. The chapter also provided the setting of the two libraries that are the focus of this research.

In Chapter 2 a review of the literature on public and community libraries is discussed. A description of the research methods used, and procedure is presented in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4 the outcomes of the study will be provided detail, while Chapter 5 completes the study by summarising the research findings, declaring limitations, and recommending future research questions.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. Introduction

In this chapter I examine some of the literature on public and community libraries. I also investigate how the library can be utilised as a place and space for young people, who are historically marginalised from the public sphere. In addition, I will look at the literature on libraries in Europe, North America and the African continent, and then narrow the to South Africa. The reason for this is to get a broader understanding of the general trends relating to the use of libraries around the world and then focus on the African and South African context.

There is a significant amount of literature on the importance of libraries in the lives of communities. Libraries are said to be places of learning where people turn to in pursuit of information or answers (Harris, 2007). The library is a “civic institution with a cultural mission deemed so vital to our collective well-being that it has been publicly funded by the taxpayer for much of the last 150 years” (Leckie and Hopkins; 2002:326). Moreover, Harris (2007) asserts public libraries are essential cultural, economic, and social establishments. Along with collecting and distributing information, libraries are ideal reading, learning, and socialising places. In their 1994 Manifesto of public libraries, the *International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA)* partnering with the *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)* lists the ways public libraries can assist communities. These include:

- Making relevant information technology resources available to the public for free
- Teaching and helping people to find information, therefore creating communities that are well informed.
- Delivering programs that are specially designed to support communities to develop reading and learning lifestyles.
- Fostering relationships within the community and between people, groups and government.

Both of these organisations highlight the importance of public libraries in communities, particularly in communities that are disadvantaged.

Four major types of libraries exist today (Cornell University Library, 2017): academic libraries which operate in colleges and universities; public libraries serving cities and towns; school libraries which serve primary and high schools; and specialist libraries in institutions, such as hospitals, museums, the military, public and private business, and the government. Buschman and Leckie (2007) state these various types of libraries played an important role in collecting and disseminating knowledge.

## 2.2. A Brief History of Libraries

Libraries have existed in various forms in different places and time periods. The royal library of ancient Mesopotamia (668-627 BC), for elites, to the cross-cultural scholarly library of Alexandria (300 BC), private libraries of Greek philosophers (500 BC-323 BC), cathedral libraries of Historical Britain (1300s), personal libraries of scholars and families in Timbuktu (1493-1591) and university libraries of Colonial America were major libraries, but not necessarily for public use (Buschman and Leckie, 2007; Casson, 2001; Singleton, 2004). Contemporary public libraries have their origins in the early twentieth century when Andrew Carnegie - an American philanthropist- supported cities and towns throughout the United States of America to create their own libraries (Lor, 1996; Rochester, 1996; Rochester, 1999).

Over time, the Carnegie Corporation extended its mission of developing public libraries to other countries under British rule. It established a fund for the British territories and colonies in the 1920s and 1930s to Australia, Canada, South Africa, and New Zealand (Rochester, 1996). Along with South Africa, Kenya and Rhodesia are two other African countries where grants were awarded by the Carnegie Corporation to establish libraries (Rochester, 1999).

## 2.3. Libraries in Africa

The history of contemporary libraries in the African continent is directly connected to colonialism. There is an exception in manuscripts from Mali precede European colonization of Africa. The golden age of Timbuktu, between the fourteen through to the sixteen centuries, saw a flourish of Islamic scholarship along with books/manuscripts and libraries (Singleton, 2004, Farouk-Ailli, 2009). These libraries seem to be private collections belonging to individual scholars and families (Hunwick, 2004, Singleton, 2004, Farouk-Ailli, 2009,). According to Singleton (2004) there is not any indication that public libraries ever existed.

Apart from the private libraries of Timbuktu, library development in Sub-Saharan African was/is influenced by European and American library models. However, it must also be pointed out that the continent possesses rich oral traditions, in which people (elders and griots) were the 'walking libraries' of communities (Finnegan, 2012). Oral traditions are considered to be oral literature by Finnegan (2012:27) who declares that "oral literature is only one type of literature, a type characterized by particular features to do with performance, transmission, and social context". The underlying supposition is oral traditions are literature and the people who transmit them are like libraries handed down to subsequent generations.

The major criticisms of contemporary libraries in the continent is that they still are primarily (a) situated in administrative centres; they are out of reach to the majority of African people and (b) they were created on a Western model; they, therefore, do not cater to the needs of African people (Dent & Yannotta, 2005; Odi, 1991; Alemna, 1995). For example, Alemna (1995) declares that rural communities are not provided with adequate services as public libraries are almost exclusively based on written materials and does not provide a natural place for rich oral tradition to be accessed. Raju & Raju (2010: 5) agree with Alemna that indigenous knowledge is an important resource in the lives of rural communities in the continent and needs to be "recorded for posterity". Moreover, Alemna concludes that "in many African countries, the library service left behind by the colonisers, while useful to an educated elite, is of much less utility to the mass of the people" (Alemna, 1995: 41). The majority of Africans are not able to read the books stocked by libraries as most of them are written in European languages and books are largely donated and reflect an American and European worldview (Dent and Yannotta, 2005). Christine Stilwell (1989:264) declares that the library's collections "were imposed, not negotiated". Cram (1993) also discussed that libraries in Africa were created to expand the values and traditions of the West, and not to conserve the documentation and communication traditions of Africans. Following on this, Odi (1991:597) wrote:

*"The libraries that were established at the administrative headquarters and the reading rooms that were established in the rural areas...were stocked with reading materials that had little relevance to Africa. Thus, Africans' first experience of a library conveyed the image of a foreign-oriented institution that in no way reflected African tradition. The effect of this image is the bifurcation of African society into an urban-rural, elite-mass, and modern-traditional dichotomy."*

In his 1995 book, "*Libraries in Africa: pioneers, policies, problems*", Anthony Olden presents another issue regarding the development of libraries and librarianship to black people in the continent. Olden (1995) points out that the areas where Europeans settled permanently

experienced the slowest educational progress among African people. The reason for this he believes is intentional as depriving Africans of an education was beneficial to the settlers. Using South Africa as an example, he indicates that the University of the Witwatersrand, which was founded at the start of the 1900s, only employed its first black librarian in 1975, the University College, Ibadan, founded in 1948 had black librarians in the 1950s. Southern Africa and East Africa were preferred for permanent settlement by the British whereas West Africa was considered the "white man's grave" and not suitable for permanent settlement (Olden, 1995:1). The British who settled in Nigeria had no problem availing education and employment opportunities to native Nigerians as they had no plans of staying there permanently. Kagan (1982) cited in Alemna (1995: 41) believes that "under European colonisation, societies became educationally underdeveloped. Library development took the form of "library colonisation". The promotion of European cultures and languages naturally led to libraries that promoted European values through European library materials".

The issue with library use in Africa thus stems from how the majority of the continent's people cannot relate to them, and do not use them. However, the problem of relatability is not the only issue; other setbacks include illiteracy and inadequate library funding (Raseroka, 1994). In the case of my study, the late establishment of the libraries in the communities shows the lack of accessible libraries in black communities and rural areas.

#### 2.4. South African Libraries during Colonialism, Apartheid and Present

Looking at South Africa there were already libraries in existence in the Cape of Good Hope by the early eighteenth century, before the Carnegie Corporation began to fund library development in the continent (Lor, 1996; Rochester, 1999; The Library and Information Services (LIS) Transformation charter, 2014). Rochester (1999) points out that libraries served only the White population, in their two languages, English and Afrikaans. The earliest libraries in South Africa have their roots in Europe, specifically in Britain, the Netherlands and Germany (Lor, 1996). As an example, Lor (1996) shows how one of the earliest libraries was formed in the Cape. Between 1727 and 1761 Joachim Nicholas von Dessin acquired over 3,000 books which were later donated to the Dutch Reformed Church of Cape Town after his death, for public use. Von Dessin was one of the leading collectors and left some money to the church to extend the collection (Lor, 1996). Many other libraries had beginnings similar to the one mentioned above.

The nineteenth century saw the establishment of subscription libraries in the Cape and Natal provinces (governed by Britain), and to a smaller degree in the former Transvaal and the Orange Free State of the Boers (Olden, 1995; Rochester, 1999). The first officially recognised

free public library in South Africa was established 195 years ago on 20 March 1818 when the South African Public Library was declared by the government (Library and Information Services Transformation Charter, 2014).

Milton Ferguson, a librarian from the state of California, and S.A Pitt, from the Glasgow Public Library, were sent by the Carnegie Corporation to survey and report on the state of South Africa's libraries in 1928 (Lor, 1996; Rochester, 1996, 1999). It was discovered that most of the libraries were in a poor state. The race along with class issues plagued librarianship in South Africa (Stilwell, 1989). The debate during that time was whether Black, Coloured, and Indian people should have equal access to libraries as White people (Olden, 1995; Rochester, 1996, 1999; Stilwell, 1989). This discussion centred on whether libraries should be funded by the state or be subscription based. In his 1929 report, Ferguson observed that "since the natives, comparatively so vast in number, the Coloured people –a local use of the adjective, indicating those of mixed race –and the East Indians pay taxes, it is feared that if the subscription method of support is not kept all these inferior races will be entitled to use of the books on the same terms as those of European origin" (Ferguson, 1929 cited in Stilwell, 1989: 265). It is worth noting the problematic language used by Ferguson referring to Black, Coloured and Indian people as "inferior races" and the fear that non-White people may actually use these services as tax payers – the implications are from the very beginning of formalisation, libraries are seen as white spaces; as exclusionary spaces.

Ferguson (1929 cited in Stilwell 1989) paid special mention the abysmal state of library services provided to black South Africans. The other representative, S. A Pitt highlighted "that little attempt had been made to provide satisfactorily for these peoples and that the supply of books was so meagre in relation to potential readers that it could scarcely be said to exist" (Stilwell, 1989: 265). In 1985 (56 years after the Carnegie report) minimal improvement had been made to remedy the situation (Stilwell, 1989). Di Bishop cited in Stilwell (1989: 266), a council member for the Progressive Federal Party (PFP)<sup>5</sup> in the Cape Province, detailed a 1985 discussion on the finances of libraries in the provincial council. It was revealed in that discussion that "216 libraries were reserved for Whites, 75 for the exclusive use of 'Coloured' and 6 for the exclusive use of Blacks". She further acknowledges that Black people faced 'vicious discrimination' in the Cape Province's library services.

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<sup>5</sup> "The Progressive Federal Party (PFP) (Afrikaans: Progressiewe Federale Party) was a South African political party formed in 1977. It was the main parliamentary opposition to apartheid, instead advocating power-sharing in South Africa through a federal constitution" (Progressive Federal Party, n.d.).

At the height of Apartheid, and fifty-odd years after the Carnegie report, the dismal situation continued. Stilwell (1989) argued that libraries developed on European and American archetypes were not enough for the country's population, funded sufficiently or they were not suited to the needs of most South Africans. Consequently, “public library development in South Africa has been severely retarded by the race policies of a succession of governments” (Stilwell, 1989: 266).

The level of education of community members also had an influence on the use of libraries. This still applies today. Those who are ‘better educated’ tend to use the library more often than those with little or no formal education. This led to the creation of classes along racial lines (Stilwell, 1989) and affected the provision of quality library services. As an example, Mostert (1998: 73) tells of a public library in a township inhabited by black people in South Africa. He states that “the library was underutilized due to several factors, including lack of knowledge on the part of librarians with regard to local information needs, inaccessibility of the library, and lack of understanding on the part of community members regarding how the library might be used and the type of services available”.

This pattern, well established under colonialization and apartheid, continues. There is unequal access to public libraries between rural and urban communities, between suburb, township, and informal settlements, and between the nine provinces and municipalities (LIS Transformation Charter, 2014). Currently there are 1 612 public and community libraries (IFLA, 2015) up from 1 386 public and community libraries in 2010 (LIS Transformation Charter, 2014). However, it is estimated that a further 2\_762 libraries are needed to provide adequate services to South Africans (Department of Arts and Culture. 2013b: ix). At present, there is one library for around 30 000 people in a country with a population of 55 plus million people.

The location of most libraries makes them inaccessible to the poor. The (LIS) Transformation charter (2014: 55) referred to this issue in the following way:

*“The location of many public libraries has been influenced by former apartheid spatial planning with the result that many areas, such as former townships, informal settlements and rural areas are under-served or not served at all. There are a number of municipalities where there are no libraries at all, a situation affecting more than two million people. Linked to the inequities flowing from geographical location is the historically uneven resourcing between established libraries in the suburbs, and those in townships and rural areas.”*

Raju and Raju (2010) also allude to the unequal access to information in the country. According to them, South Africa has the characteristics of both the “developing world” and the



“developed world”. “At the “developed world” end of the continuum, there is a surfeit of information and resources, and on the other end, there is a dearth of information and resources: libraries have to play the role of mediator and provider of information, respectively” (Raju & Raju, 2010:4). Regarding this, Kota (2019) is of the view that a new approach in designing existing and new libraries is necessary considering that there are inequalities regarding accessing data, internet services and public services in South Africa. Public spaces (and places of work) are the main sources of internet access for many South Africans (Kota, 2019). Considering the high levels of inequality (Roodt, 2018) and unemployment in South Africa, this means that a large number of people have no access to data or internet services.

In 1996, two years after the first democratic elections and the year of the finalisation of the Constitution, public libraries were in a terrible state (MacLennan, 2005). During the drafting of the Constitution, racial conflict still existed within the library sector which made it impossible for the sector to present anything reasonable to those appointed to write the Constitution (MacLennan, 2005). As a result, libraries were made the total responsibility of the provinces in the Constitution (IFLA, 2015 and MacLennan, 2005). Provincial governments, consequently, are required to provide library services under schedule 5A Part A of the Constitution which aims to promote access to information (Department of Arts and Culture, 2013). The national government, however, did not allocate any funds for that responsibility (IFLA, 2015 and MacLennan, 2005). This resulted in libraries being seriously under-funded by government with no funding framework or model available (IFLA, 2015; MacLennan, 2005 and LIS Transformation charter, 2014).

Today, however, monies have been set aside to fulfil this constitutional mandate. To redress the inequalities with regards to information access, a grant was created to fund the building of new libraries (IFLA, 2015; LIS Transformation Charter, 2014,). The conditional grant is intended to assist in the restoration and building of new libraries in townships, rural areas and informal settlements; spaces which previously had a dearth of library services (IFLA, 2015; LIS Transformation Charter, 2014; Kota, 2019). The funds are distributed to the nine provincial departments who either oversee the building of libraries themselves or entrust this responsibility onto municipalities through service-level agreements (Kota, 2019). Provinces are tasked with “establishing library infrastructures, services and appropriate skills to serve certain communities” (LIS Transformation Charter, 2014:10).

Another issue identified by the LIS Transformation Charter (2014) is operating hours of libraries. The average South African working hours of 40 hours per week is unsuitable for people with lengthy work commutes conflicting with library hours. The issues of operating hours arise because of library services being under-funded. The provinces and municipalities

tasked with providing library services, when “faced with growing demand for basic services such as water, cleansing and sewage, [...] [are] cutting back on library budgets, which leads to cuts in staff and opening hours, and even the closure of libraries” (MacLennan, 2005). There have also, in recent years, been issues with the accessibility of the grants to municipalities (Kota; 2019). As an example, Kota (2019) states that nine libraries have been closed in the Eastern Cape as a direct result of delays or problems in the allocation of grant monies to municipalities.

## 2.5. Community Libraries: an answer to the needs of Africans?

Public libraries have not been successful in Africa (Mostert, 1998) as most people in the continent cannot easily access them (Dent & Yannotta, 2005).

Even in post-colonial Africa libraries still have severe shortcomings. Their development has been hindered by a lack of financial and irregular support from African governments (Dent et al. 2014 & Raseroka, 1994). Library services typically receive less funding compared to other government services (MacLennan, 2005).

Dent & Yannotta (2005) and Mostert (1998) assert that community libraries are much more suitable to the needs of Africans. Dent & Yannotta (2005:39) declare that “[a]n alternative to public libraries that has shown great promise in providing communities with reading materials and other services is the community library”. Community libraries in Africa developed out of a need to rectify certain flaws in traditional public libraries. Traditional public libraries are very Eurocentric in their nature as they were originally built with European settlers in mind. In their book entitled *Rural community libraries in Africa: challenges and impacts*, Dent, Goodman, and Kevane (2014:2) state that “because of its origins, the concept of the traditional library has not been able to integrate or represent the information needs of the majority of Africa’s population, which in and of itself is one of the richest and most diverse cultural mosaics in the world”. Amadi (1981) suggest that libraries geared towards Africans are possible within the traditional or Eurocentric library model. In his view:

*“It is quite possible, within a traditional library framework, to devise alternative methods of delivering needed and meaningful information to African populations... A true African library can become a dynamic force for a persuasive and complete cultural revolution as well as an agent capable of grooming and nurturing the psycho-social renaissance of the individual, the clan, town, community and entire nation” (1981:205).*

In the same vein as that argued by Amadi (1981), Alemna (1995:41) states that:

*“A way must be found out of the existing pattern of library service which cannot function without expensive buildings and the equally expensive importation of foreign books, many of them irrelevant to the information needs of the rural people. The present system of building huge, monumental public libraries based on Anglo-American architectural designs is not only expensive, but also unsuitable for the tropical conditions of Africa. What is expected is a simple, inexpensive plan of well-ventilated reading rooms. Such buildings are not only cheaper to construct, but also inexpensive to maintain.”*

There are differences between public and community libraries according to Mostert (1998) and Dent and Yannotta (2005). Some of the criteria of community libraries are that they are designed to be easily accessible to all members of the community; and the daily lives of community members are directly connected to them (Mostert, 1998). Another difference between public and community libraries as per Dent & Yannotta (2005:40) is that community libraries “are created by and for a local population and usually are not supported with government funds”. The librarian’s role in a community library is crucial and differs from that of a traditional librarian according to Stilwell (1991). “Community librarianship aims at information provision in the crucial areas of people’s lives and at those who have limited access to other sources of help” (Stilwell, 1991: 20).

Mostert (1998: 76) argues that “community library services should not be imposed from outside the community, nor should they be based solely on the Western concept of the library”. Raju and Raju (2010) offer a solution on how public libraries in the continent can be useful in providing information that is accessible to all, particularly to those who reside in rural areas. They recommend that librarians “need to merge indigenous knowledge, expertise from developed countries, local conditions and such, and package that information in a format that will be meaningful to the local inhabitants in their quest for relevant information” (Raju and Raju, 2010:4-5). One of the ways of creating meaningful content as suggested by Raju and Raju (2010) is for libraries to record indigenous knowledge. In adherence to this, community and village libraries like the Village Reading Rooms and Book Box Service in Botswana, Osu-initiated libraries in Ghana, Family Literacy Project libraries in South Africa, village libraries in Tanzania, and rural library services in Malawi are initiatives that have attempted to make traditional libraries ‘more African’ (Dent et al. 2014).

One example of a rural community library that has been able to fulfil the information demands of a rural community according to Dent & Yannotta (2005) is the Kitengesa Community Library Project in Uganda. The project which was started in 1999 began with 161 books in a box loaned out to the learners of the local Secondary School (Dent & Yannotta, 2005). In 2004,

Dent & Yannotta investigated users of the Kitengesa Community Library. The aim was to find out “who uses the library in the community? How do users go about finding and using books/information in the library? And what kinds of materials are being used and what is most popular?” (Dent & Yannotta, 2005:43). Their findings revealed that the library was primarily used by students; relatedly Raseroka (1994) also points out that students are the main users of public libraries in Africa. Teachers also used the library in preparation for lessons. Community members, outside of students or teachers, used the library the least.

The authors concluded that the community library was very effective in meeting the needs of the community. They believe that the library can be used as an example for other communities in providing resources that are useful to communities, such as books that are relevant to the needs of Africans. The Kitengesa Community Library Project has been successful as a result of the following factors: “the location of the library on the grounds of a school, a collection of books that reflect the worldview of the population, a staff that are committed to providing services to the community, and the continual monitoring of users’ needs” (Dent & Yannotta, 2005:53).

## 2.6. Perceptions and use of Public Libraries

May (2011:354) asserts that “libraries as places continue to be important to a range of communities”. Furthermore, “knowledge of how the physical spaces of libraries are used expands our understanding of the many ways that libraries contribute to their communities, capturing information about the library roles and functions that otherwise go unrecorded” (May; 2011:355). Studies have been carried out to find out the perceptions about libraries and, how they are used; and examining if public libraries effectively operate as public places. In this paper, I will be examining four such studies: “*The Seattle Public Library (SPL) as Place*” by Fisher et al (2007), “*The public place of Central Libraries: findings from Toronto and Vancouver*” by Leckie and Hopkins (2002), “*A place where everybody knows your name? Investigating the relationship between Public Libraries and Social Capital*” by Johnson and Griffis (2009), and “*How do Public Libraries function as meeting places?*” by Aabø, Audunson and Vårheim (2010).

The studies above focused on the social or communal use of the library. Generally, the findings from all four were similar. In their research on an American library, Fisher et al (2007:140) set out to examine “What does the SPL Central Library mean as “place”-socially, politically, culturally, and economically- to library users and passers-by?” Using interviews and surveys, the study determined that only three of Oldenburg’s criteria of a third place were met by the SPL Central Library. They found out that the SPL central library is a neutral ground

where individuals are free to enter and leave as they want; it is a welcoming environment that is open to everyone; it is utilised as a second home where people are likely to be found when not at home or work. They observed that the library's patrons viewed and used the library as a location to socialise, and that the interpersonal part of going to the library was emphasized by the respondents. The Central Library attracts people of all ages and language groups, and women, men, and children regard it as a safe place to visit (Fisher et al, 2007).

Leckie and Hopkins (2002) conducted a study in two urban libraries in Canada to find out how both libraries were used and perceived by patrons and non-users. They determined that there was significant value placed on the social aspect of the library by users. They noticed that there is many people who spend long periods of time in the library, some of whom visit every day. There appears to be two types of library patrons at the Central Library: there are those who visit every day or every week; for them the library functions as their extended living room, the other type is those who frequent the library less and do not stay long. They note that: "because the central library is a relatively open and unconstrained space, both types of uses are perfectly compatible and expected" (Leckie and Hopkins, 2002:353).

Focusing on three branch libraries in the city of Ontario in Canada, Johnson and Griffis (2009) researched whether the regular use of the library has an effect on social capital. According to them social capital "both describes and, as a theoretical framework, explains the benefit of maintaining and/or expanding one's social connections and relationships" (2009:162). In other words, social capital is the positive connections between people that develop when people work together towards a common goal. Such connections are cultivated from participating in public activities such as voting, attending church, involvement with non-profit organisations and so on (Japzon and Gong, 2005). Johnson and Griffis (2009) noted that nearly all the participants in their study spoke of the impact the library had on their social needs. Johnson and Griffis (2009) concluded that the library is indeed essential in the everyday lives of the community members. They declare that the public library "is no longer just a repository of information and books" (Johnson and Griffis, 2009:189). People are able to enter and meet freely at the library; there are no requirements for membership, and they are able to utilise it in whatever way they consider beneficial (Johnson and Griffis, 2009).

Compared to the other studies by Fisher et al (2007), Leckie and Hopkins (2002) and Johnson and Griffis (2009) which looked at the general trends inside the library, and to a lesser extend the perception of the library by non-users, the research by Aabø, Audunson and Vårheim (2010) was more specific. Studying libraries from three townships in Oslo, Norway, Aabø et al. (2010) examined "how and to what extent the public library is used for meetings" (2010:19). The results of Aabø et al (2010) show the library used as a meeting place to a great degree.

Some of the activities and meetings reported by respondents are as follows: 25% of library patrons learned of leisure interests or political and social organisations happening in their community, 17% used the Internet at the library for social and leisure activities. 14% attended meetings, lectures, and events such as authors nights, to name a few. It was also noted that the participants reflected on seeing people of different ages and different cultural backgrounds in the library.

Aabø et al (2010) found that in the communities they studied libraries -as meeting places- are used in a variety of ways. They conclude that:

*“The library is a meeting place functioning as a square, a place where people learn something about those different from themselves, a public sphere, and a place for joint activities, metameetings, and virtual meetings. The library appears to be a place, where in a safe environment and in an unobtrusive way, people are exposed to the complexity of the digital and multicultural society and learn something about multiculturalism”* (2010:25).

Although most patrons in all four studies visited respective libraries alone, some users reported being engaged in social activities inside the libraries. Over half of the library users in the Fisher et al (2007) study reported bringing other people along for social reasons. However, during the duration of the data collection, researchers only accounted for less than 25% of the users in the company of other people. This is similar to the observations made by Leckie and Hopkins (2002) who noticed that roughly 70% of patrons came to the library alone, while almost 30% came with other people. The same is true for Johnson and Griffis (2009) who also noted that most participants came alone to the library. However, about half of the participants in Johnson and Griffis (2009) study indicated that they come to the library alone. More than twenty percent of those interviewed by Aabø et al (2010) visited the library with friends or co-workers to work on a project or to relax together. Nearly a third of those who participated in the study met with neighbours or friends at the library and 28 percent of them talked with strangers at the library.

The frequent activities observed in all the libraries included checking books out, reading, writing, using computers, and talking. Some of the other activities reported by the participants include meeting friends and family at the library, visiting with friends or co-workers to work on assignments, talking with strangers and attending meetings. For example, Leckie and Hopkins (2002) observed that reading, writing, computer use, and talking were the main activities at the central libraries of Toronto and Vancouver. Borrowing books, attending programs and events, using computers, and searching for resources relating to work were the most frequent

activities in the three branch libraries in the city of Ontario in Canada where Johnson and Griffis (2009) conducted their study.

In all, patrons and non-users regarded the library very highly. There is a consensus among users in the studies regarding the social role the library plays in their lives. For example, a great number of people interviewed by Fisher et al (2007) stated that they also used the library to do things for family and friends; such as returning or borrowing books, and in that sense, the library has a clear social dimension. Most of the library patrons interviewed by Johnson and Griffis (2009) had friends and family members who used the library. Many of the people in the Johnson and Griffis (2009) study viewed the library in a positive manner irrespective of whether or not they visited the library frequently. Similar to Fisher et al (2007) many of the participants interviewed by Johnson and Griffis (2009) acknowledged they also used the library for social reasons, but above all they valued the library as a place they could go to in their neighbourhood. The social aspect of the public library is also evident in the study by Leckie and Hopkins (2002). They observed a significant number of people spending long periods in the library, some even visiting the library every day. One of the findings by Johnson and Griffis (2009) not evident from the two other studies by Leckie and Hopkins (2002) and Fisher et al (2007) is that most of the people interviewed revealed that they have been using the library for most of their lives, or used the library when they were children.

The libraries in all four of the studies are shown to be an entrenched and important part of the lives of their users, for a variety of reasons. Patrons used the libraries to find information, as a place to retreat, to study and also as a social place.

I have discussed libraries as a place and looked at how people use them as third places and meeting places. The four case studies presented looked at libraries in the context of the Western world; three of which are situated in North America and one in Europe. In the next section I will look at the perceptions and use of libraries in the Africa from a select study to form a broad idea of how other parts of the continent compare with the above studies and my study of two South African community libraries.

## 2.7. Perceptions and Use of Public Libraries in African Countries

The following is a brief review of some of the findings from the report of Electronics Information for Libraries (EIFL). In 2010, the EIFL conducted a study in four countries in Africa; Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Ghana to find out how public libraries are perceived by library users and the public. Although this is a general study that spans four countries, it is still useful to compare it to studies discussed above.

The report found that most patrons across the four countries visit the library every week, also nearly all the patrons go at least once in a month (EIFL, 2010:17). The library is considered to be beneficial to the community and to the individual users. Most users favourably commented on the comfortable and quiet atmosphere and accordingly the library is considered the best place to study (ibid p. 19). Visiting the library is a solitary activity with only a few people taking their children and other people with them. It was revealed, for example, that only 14% of library users had ever brought a child to the library, the percentage of people who don't use the library was slightly higher with 20 percent of non-users taking a child with to the library in the past year (p. 21). In contrast, 64% of patrons' family members have used a library (p. 21).

Among non-users the library is also considered very important to the community. Approximately 75% also regard them as necessary and important to the individual (p. 18). However, non-users viewed the library as less important to the community and individual. 53% of the people who do not use the library are aware of the existence of libraries in their neighbourhoods (p. 18). At 73% Ghana has the greatest percentage of non-users who were aware of the presence of a library in their community, while Uganda with 39% has the least number of people who knew of a library in their area (p. 18). Compared with 75% of library patrons, only 33% of non-users had friends who had visited the library in the past twelve months (p. 21). 45% of non-users across the countries stated that they would use the library if its collection included books relevant to them. 29% cited online materials with 24% mentioning the provision of more computers as reasons that would attract them to libraries (p. 23).

The majority (about 70%) of library users and non-users relate libraries with the storing and collection of books. Only 5% of both library patrons and non-users associate computers with libraries (p.16). Largely, the services offered at libraries are mostly traditional services of supplying books and reference materials to mostly school children and students (p. 24). Libraries are used for educational purposes by most of the patrons; similarly, non-users perceive them as institutions of education. People also visit the library to meet and socialise (p. 24). "Both users and non-users associate libraries with a sociable and welcoming environment for people seeking information" (EIFL, 2010:32). One of the recommendations by the EIFL is that libraries in Africa need to update and adopt new technology to better serve their communities.

While examining library use from a broad perspective is necessary, it is also useful to highlight how the library is used by specific groups in the community. Public libraries, as open spaces, are used by a variety of people for various reasons. An often-overlooked section of the community that uses public libraries is the youth who have distinct needs and uses from public



spaces. The following section looks at some of the issues facing young people about their use of public spaces and the library in particular.

## 2.8. Libraries as a Public Space for Young People

Young people are often excluded from the built environment and public spaces by planning and design professions (Valentine 1996; Hill and Bessant 1999; Childress 2000; Van der Beck and Johnson 2000; Aitken 2001; Abbott-Chapman 2009; Shildrick, Blackman, and MacDonald 2009). Writing on public spaces in urban areas Malone (2002) indicates that there are “geographies of power”, in urban public areas in which youth culture is perceived as a problem that needs to be policed. Furthermore, Malone (2002:158) proposes that in cities public places increasingly become identified as “adult space” whereas the neighbourhood peripheries start to be occupied by young people. She discerns between “open spaces” wherein differences and diversity are celebrated and “closed spaces” with high levels of regulation and conformity. Young people, Malone (2002) points out, are more likely to be comfortable in spaces that are not highly regulated.

Like all public spaces, library buildings are a visible representation of societal values and activities deemed to be valuable (Bernier, Males and Rickman; 2014). Libraries are seen as spaces and places that can be used to include and integrate youth into civil society (Derr and Rhodes, 2010; Feinberg and Keller, 2010 and Bernier et al., 2014). This view is that young people, along with other users, are entitled to library space on an equal basis. Bolan (2009) cited in Feinberg and Keller (2010: 34) declares that: “[t]eenagers today long to be needed, to be respected, and to belong –and libraries are ideal places for these things to happen. By creating a space designed especially for teens, librarians present themselves with the perfect opportunity to embrace this age group full force.”

However, in many libraries, space reserved for young people and their interests is negligible (Derr and Rhodes, 2010). The creation of space for young people in libraries is of significance when viewed through the lens of contested spaces of the library in which young people are seen as a nuisance to other library users. Gregory (2003:284) demonstrates how youth, who are perceived as a threat when they are (mainly) in groups, are every so often marginalized and policed even in public libraries. He describes a community board meeting in 1987 where black youth were the subject of discussion and identified as problems in one public library in the city of New York. The following is an excerpt of his account of the meeting:

*“Shapiro complained that the library was being used as an after-school “baby-sitting service” by Lefrak city parents. These “latchkey kids”, she claimed, were disruptive and*

*making it difficult for others to use the library appropriately. She called for increased library security so that “the problem kids can be identified and removed by force if necessary.”*

With nearly 25% of all public library users being young adults, Bernier et al. (2014), say ensuring that they feel welcomed inside the library is seen as essential. The exact age range of what constitutes as youth is a contentious issue. Regarding this Derr and Rhodes (2010:90) note that “[d]efining youth is problematic because the varied research used by organisations to define youth is developed to meet their needs”. In other words, different organisations have varying definitions of what constitutes as youth. Nonetheless, these authors refer to young adults or youth as those who are between the ages of 12 and 24 years. Bernier, Males and Rickman (2014) define youth as those who are between the ages of 12 and 18 years (also known as teenagers) while in their study of socially excluded young people Webster, Simpson, MacDonald, Abbas, Cieslik, Shildrick and Simpson (2004) focused on 15 to 25 year olds. Valentine (2003: 38) observe that the terms ‘youth’ or young people are commonly used to designate those between the ages of 16 and 25, “a time frame that bears no relation to diverse legal classifications of adulthood”. In South Africa people that fall between the ages of 15 and 35 years are identified as youth (National Youth Commission, 2006).

Youth are also entitled to their own space inside libraries, a space solely dedicated to them as their needs differ from the other two groups of library users. Traditionally, libraries have focused on young children and “adults” with youth who do not wholly fit in either group completely left out in library design (Derr and Rhodes, 2010). Most public libraries have sections or space that primarily cater to young children, providing services geared towards their needs such as toys, story time, and picture books. Whereas, as Bernier (2008) notes: “[l]ibrary standards have largely conflated ‘Young Adult space’ with the mere shelving of materials for young adults. These practices already rely most commonly on a meagre allocation of shelf space within, or adjacent to, children's sections or on repurposed paperback racks.” Consequently, a lack of space reserved for young people or teenagers, might make them to feel left out of library spaces.

Bernier, Males and Rickman (2014:169) provide the following account of how libraries can be inclusive to the youth:

*“rather than following prevailing trends constantly seeking more effective ways to marginalize, discourage, or even banish YAs from “adult” space in the same fashion that post–Civil War legal and social segregations distanced “minority space” from*

*“white space,” libraries might actually expand the public sphere for young people into the broader, true “third space” of the entire community”.*

The question then becomes how can public libraries attract this frequently marginalised demographic to their spaces? Echoing the sentiment that public libraries in the African continent must be relatable to the majority of people in order to attract patrons by having more Afrocentric collections (Amadi, 1981; Stilwell, 1989; Odi, 1991; Cram, 1993; Alemna, 1995; Mostert, 1998; Dent & Yannotta, 2005; Raju & Raju, 2010); Derr and Rhodes (2010) reason that libraries must provide spaces attracting youth through relevant collections and services. At the crux of their argument is public libraries must move beyond the traditional role of collecting and disseminating information to offering comprehensive services that accommodate the needs of Africans and young people whose needs have been previously overlooked. Derr and Rhodes (2010:93) remark: “Engaging young people with public libraries is not about changing what a public library is; it is more about expanding its stereotypical definitions and broadening or reassessing its capabilities, capacity and potential within the community.” Bernier et al (2014) argue that libraries can be an exemplar in civil society by envisioning young people as fully entitled civilians; the rest of the community may then emulate the library in being inclusive of the youth.

The efficient use of library space is also deemed to be necessary in increasing the number of youths who use the library. Derr and Rhodes (2010) note that it is essential that public libraries have personalised space for networking, socializing and discussion. It is further argued by Abbott-Chapman and Robertson (2009) that young people will attach special meaning to the activities and space in the library brought upon by the lively atmosphere this will in turn lead to the growth and broaden the experience of the individual. Young people’s behaviour, mental and physical presence can be enhanced by ensuring that libraries have programs which support young people’s needs and help in prolonging and preserving their social groups (Derr and Rhodes, 2010). Derr and Rhodes (2010) resolve that creating library services that accommodate the needs of young people and cultivates interest will attract them back to the library as adults. To achieve this, it is necessary to find innovative ways to engage with young people that will result in them thinking of the library as a place that is willing to meet their needs. Finally, Kota (2019) contends that to sustain public libraries and – more importantly – to reduce the massive resource inequality confronting many public schools in South Africa, community libraries need to form partnerships with local schools.

## 2.9. Conclusion

Libraries in Africa are facing challenges brought about by Colonisation (as well as Apartheid in South Africa). Many Africans do not have easy access to libraries, and for those who do libraries do not adequately meet their needs. Rural communities are not provided with adequate library services as public libraries in their present form are almost exclusively based on written materials. Most of the people in rural areas solve problems through verbal communication. Indigenous knowledge, an important resource in the lives of rural communities in the continent, needs to be recorded and preserved for future generations by libraries. Post-colonisation, the provision of library services is hampered by a lack of investment by the governments of African countries.

Community libraries are seen as an alternative to Eurocentric public libraries. They have a unique and important role to play in the continent. They have proven to be useful in delivering reading materials to communities as well as providing other services. It is argued that community libraries are better able to meet the specific needs of each community hence they have the potential to succeed in Africa. Community libraries are designed to be easily accessible to all members; anyone can use the library; and the daily lives of community members are directly connected to them.

It has become clear, through examining literature that the role of libraries in the lives of users is not singular but rather numerous. Libraries are no longer just buildings stacked with books. There are significant social interactions that take place at the library, while also being an institution of learning and information. Libraries are useful in fostering a feeling of unity among community members. As third places, libraries serve as meeting places where people can have a sense of community. The library can also serve as a public sphere in the Habermasian sense in that people are exposed to debates affecting society in their collections.

The four studies discussed above focused on the social or communal use of the library. Most of the library patrons and non-users believe that libraries are important to the community and individuals. The frequent activities observed in the reports included checking books out, reading, writing, using computers, and talking. Notably, the library is also being used as a space to meet up with friends. For example, at the library people learned of leisure interests or political and social organisations happening in their community and used the Internet for social activities and to pursue hobbies. The library is also used as a site to hold meetings, lectures and events such as authors nights. It was also noted that library users reflected on seeing people of all ages and different cultures in the library.

The literature also revealed that public libraries are important to the well-being of young people who find themselves often relegated to the side-lines particularly in urban settings. Public

libraries are seen as inclusive places where youth can be made to feel welcomed through the provision of resources and space for them to meet, socialise and learn.

In the next chapter I discuss the research methods used in my study. Following this is a discussion on the process of collecting data will be provided, ending with a discussion on the collection and analysis of the ~~data~~.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Introduction

This study is based on similar studies by Fisher et al (2007), Leckie and Hopkins (2002), Johnson and Griffis (2009) and Aabø, Audunson, Vårheim (2010) and then applied to the South African context. Some of the questions for my interviews and surveys were sourced from these studies. I will discuss these below.

This chapter will describe in detail the research process applied in the study. The method used in carrying out this research and the justification will be provided. Furthermore, I will discuss the research strategy, approach, data collection process, selection of the participants and type of data analysis I used. I conclude the chapter with a brief discussion on the validity and reliability of the study, ethical considerations, and the limitations of my study, along with problems that arose during the research.

#### 3.2. Research methodology

This study made use of a mixed method or combined qualitative and quantitative methodologies research approach. A qualitative approach was used due to its emphasis on researchers investigating and understanding the meaning and motivations of human interactions (Golafshani, 2003; Jelsma and Clow, 2005). This is based on the

phenomenological approach (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2002), as the aim of this research is to present an account of how patrons in the Moretele local municipality perceive and utilise their libraries. A quantitative research methodology in the form of questionnaires was also employed to uncover the specific reasons patrons used the library. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) the type of question and the subject under investigation determines the research methodology to be used. **The research question is answered using design in a study.** Triangulation, in the form of three classic social sciences research techniques; written patron surveys/questionnaires, face-to-face interviews and observations were utilised to investigate the profile of library patron behaviour and the experiences of library staff.

The three data collection methods answered the following research questions:

- Who uses the libraries?
- For what purpose are the libraries being used?
- What are the library users' perceptions of the libraries?

### 3.3. Justification for using qualitative research

Qualitative research is appropriate for small samples where you want to get depth rather than breadth of experiences. Hence, in a qualitative study involving the understanding of perceptions and experiences of participants, 1 to 40 participants may be adequate (Tranter in Terre Branch & Durrheim, 2002). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) the following are the basic principles of qualitative research:

- Qualitative research is all-inclusive; it seeks to understand phenomena by looking at the bigger picture.
- The relationships within a system are studied.
- Emphasis is placed on understanding a particular public situation, and not on predictions about the situation.
- Analysis of data is demanding; constant analysis is necessary.
- The design of qualitative research compels the researcher to assume the role of the research instrument. It also affords the investigator an opportunity to express his/her prejudices and beliefs.
- Informed consent is integrated into qualitative research and ethical considerations are taken into account.

### 3.4. Justification for using quantitative research

A quantitative approach in the form of surveys was used to ascertain the specific reasons patrons use the library, as well as demographic data. I decided to use surveys as a fast and reliable method of collecting information from numerous respondents in an efficient way (Tranter in Terre Branch & Durrheim, 2002). The focus of the survey is not on the number of people who use the library but rather how they use and perceive the library. An experimental method is not conducive to this type of study as this research does not require the manipulation of any variables to see how library users react under different situations. The other reason this is not conducive is because an experiment is not feasible. The library environment, demographic variables, etc. cannot be controlled and without some control/or expected natural interference in variables (as in an observational study) there is no experiment. Likewise, a correlational approach was not taken as the aim is not to investigate how library use influence the people in a specific community. The study does not look at whether there is a connection between library use and higher attainment in school or university.

My survey consisted of closed and open-ended questions. The closed questions were designed to elicit responses that can be easily compared and tabulated into charts and tables. I used open-ended questions to unearth detailed responses to set questions for participants to express their views regarding services and how they use the library.

### 3.5 Triangulation

Data collection comprised of a triangulated research methodology. Triangulation is a method of ensuring that potential bias from one data-gathering class is reduced using multiple data collecting methods (Rhineberger, Hartmann and Van Valey, 2005). Written patron surveys were used to investigate library patron profile; interviews were conducted to find out the experiences of library staff; and discreet library user observations in the form of seating sweeps were utilised to study patron behaviour. The use of these three data-gathering methods produced a detailed description of how the library is used and perceived by patrons which might have been overlooked if one or two research tools were used. My research reports mainly on the patron survey and seating sweeps and where appropriate these findings are enhanced by data from the interviews.

### 3.6. Data collection process

Collecting data took place within a 2-month period between June and July 2019. Incidentally, it was during this period that government schools were on a 3-week winter school break. I did not plan for such an occurrence, it proved to be useful as I was able to gather data during two

different occasions of the daily cycle of the library: during school holidays and the school term. There was also a public holiday that fell during data collection.

A letter of permission from my supervisor showing that my study had ethical clearance was handed to the director of the libraries (see Appendix A) a month before the beginning of fieldwork. All 4 of the libraries in the municipality have 1 director therefore only 1 permission letter was necessary. Letters of invitation to partake in the study were (provided in Appendix B) and consent forms (see Appendix C) were handed to patrons. These were attached to the written patron surveys (Appendix D). Appendix E is the interview questions for the librarians. An ethical clearance certificate (see Appendix F) was obtained from the ethics committee of the University of South Africa, College of Human Sciences (discussed in 3.9 of this chapter).

Fieldwork commenced at the TCL on the Monday of the 10<sup>th</sup> of June 2019. I spent a week at the TCL and then another week at the other library (LCL), alternating in that manner for the duration of the fieldwork. During weekdays, the TCL opens at 9 in the morning and closes at 5 in the evening. On Saturdays, the library opens at 9 am and closes for the weekend at 1pm. The LCL only operates during the weekdays and opens from 9 am until 4 pm. Both libraries do not operate on public holidays.

### 3.6.1. Observations

Data collection was arranged randomly into 3 sessions in a day: mornings, afternoon, and late afternoon. Observations were divided into 2 to 3 hours' sessions; from 9 until 12, 12:30 PM to 14:30 PM and 3 to 5. I observed patrons' behaviour in all sections of the library at varying times and on different days.

The type of observation that was utilised was unobtrusive as I quietly observed and recorded without them being aware. This type of observation gave me a more accurate and detailed data on the behaviour of the library's patrons; the nuances that might otherwise be overlooked by other methods. Seating sweeps, an unobtrusive observation technique used by Leckie and Hopkins (2002:334-5) consisted of me walking "through the library, making systematic and detailed observations of [...] different variables concerning who is present in specific locations and what activities they are conducting at specific times of the day". Put simply, I wrote down in a notebook what activities patrons were engaging in in the different sections of the library. The seating sweeps were conducted in two different weeks for a six-day cycle each, from Monday to Saturday, to attain a full week's profile. The first week was during school holidays and the second during normal school week. This method was effective in a study by Leckie



and Hopkins (2002) and in my research as both studies focus on how libraries are used and perceived by patrons.

The different sections of the TCL are separated by glass walls instead of bricks; therefore, it was possible to make observations in some of the sections from one place. For example, while seated near the circulation desk I was able to see the computer room and the audio-visual room. There was no need for me to be in those two areas. The same was true with the study room and book area. While seating on one of the couches in the book area I could see every person that was in the study room.

In contrast with the TCL, the LCL has two sections, the children's section, and the main section. In the main section has the circulation desk, four reading desks, bookshelves, computers in one corner and a small office on another corner. It was simple to observe every activity in the main section from one of the study desks. I only had to move to the children's section to observe patron's activities in that area. At the LCL I was not able to do the level of observation I did at the TCL because the library is semi-functional. Not a lot of people visit; on most days, the library is completely empty save for the staff. Observations were also limited for that very reason. These observations gave me ideas on what to focus on in my interviews, and a starting point for my analysis.

#### 3.6.2.1. Construction and Structure of Questionnaires

The survey is divided into three sections; the first consists of a Likert scale. The scale was used to ascertain how often people visit the library and how long they typically stay. They were also asked to rate the services offered by the library from excellent to poor with a fifth option for "Don't know/Not applicable". Another question measured the importance of library services to the patrons, these ranged from "Very important to "Not important" with a fifth option for "Don't know/Not applicable". The second section consisted of 13 closed and open-ended questions designed to find out the social uses of the library. These include asking patrons if they ever came with other people to how patrons believed the library benefited themselves and the community. The third section focused on the demographic makeup of the respondents; age, gender, employment, and student status. The questionnaire was adapted from library patron surveys by Fisher, Saxton, Edwards & Mai (2007), Leckie and Hopkins (2002) and survey templates from the Library Research Service (n.d.). The survey is attached as appendix D.

#### 3.6.2.2. Distribution and Collection of the Questionnaires

Only one condition existed for participants selected for surveys. Because of the ethical considerations of working with minors, participants who were approached to fill in questionnaires had to be at least 18 years of age. This required me to ask the age of some of the patrons, to be certain they were above the required age. This criterion meant patrons wearing a school uniform were also automatically excluded. However, some of the school learners came to the library not wearing school uniform, especially during the 3 weeks of school holidays. Therefore, it was imperative that due diligence was employed not to include school learners in the surveys.

The questionnaires were handed out at two different sections of the library at TCL: at the circulation desk near the entrance and at the couches in the book section. I selected the circulation desk because it has the most traffic. The people who go to the computer room, children's section, and the audio-visual room pass by the circulation desk. I sat on a chair next to the circulation desk and waited to introduce myself to the patrons after they had finished talking to the librarian or waiting for their documents to be photocopied, scanned, or printed. By sitting on the couches, I was able to hand the survey to people going in and out of the study room and book section as they do not directly pass the circulation desk. The rationale behind the research was explained to the patrons. They were then handed questionnaires and pens were provided to those who needed them. Patrons were told they could take the surveys to any section of the library they visit and could return them any time until the library closed. They had the option of returning the questionnaires to me as I stayed at the library until closing time or at the circulation desk. All questionnaires were returned, most when the patrons left the library.

All the patrons approached agreed to complete the questionnaires. The aim was to have 50 fully completed surveys to analyse. Of the 50 forms that were handed out 49 of them were used in this study. The remaining questionnaire could not be included because it was not complete. As indicated by Tranter in Terre Branch & Durrheim (2002), 1 to 40 participants may be adequate. Therefore, 50 surveys are small enough to manage by myself while producing enough data to study.

The librarians assisted me by handing out the surveys at the circulation desk to patrons. This proved to be a useful method as the librarians had rapport with patrons and were able to approach them more easily. Thereafter, data collection went quicker compared to when I was handing out surveys by myself, and most questionnaires were collected in that manner. The surveys were left on top of the circulation desk where the patrons could easily see them. The librarian on duty at the desk would ask the patrons to complete the survey. It was explained

to librarians that only people 18 years and over were to complete the questionnaires, and patrons understood that participation was voluntary.

I was only able to use (interviews and observations) at the LCL. The LCL has not had electricity and therefore computer, printing, or photocopy services since 2018. These 3 services, as observed at the TCL, draw many people to the library. Without them the LCL does not appeal to most community members hence it is empty most days. Primary and high school learners are typically the only people to that visit the library and even they are very few. Because my surveys were limited to adults. It was impossible to find participants to complete questionnaires at LCL.

### 3.6.3. Interviews

Face-to-face interviews with staff were conducted to explore how libraries are used; how different spaces are valued by patrons, how those spaces are being used, and the interactions that may take place i.e., the role of the libraries as a public place (Leckie and Hopkins, 2002). Because interviewing people is labour intensive and time consuming, I decided to only interview staff of both libraries. The written patron surveys produced a plethora of data, so interviews of patrons were not necessary (also only 1 user agreed to an interview but was unavailable). I interviewed 4 librarians in total.

Structured individual interviews were performed with 4 librarians (2 from each library). The librarians at both libraries were all asked the same questions to make sure that the process was consistent. The interview questions for library staff comprised of 13 open-ended questions relating to their job responsibilities, patron behaviour and profiles. The interviews were tape recorded with their permission and lasted approximately 30 minutes. Usually, the interviews were conducted during off-peak hours, which was typically in the morning when the libraries had just opened. The interviews were conducted in Setswana; the language the interviewees and I speak, which made for a richer interview experience as the interviewees could express themselves more freely. I made sure that each interview was conducted in private and comfortable surroundings, this turned out to be the children's section as it was usually unoccupied during school hours. The interviewees were assured that the information they provided was confidential. Informed consent was attained after explaining purpose of the study. I provided the letter of consent to the interviewees to read and sign and I also signed in their presence.

Later on, I transcribed the taped interviews and translated the responses that were important to the study. Transcription took place within a day of recording while the interview was still fresh on my mind. The tape was kept as record for future reference.

### 3.7. Sampling

The process by which researchers decide on the participants for investigation is known as sampling (Tranter in Terre Branch & Durrheim, 2002). A type of random sampling, convenience sampling, was utilised for the selection of people to participate in the interview. Convenience sampling is a method of selecting whoever is available at the moment of inquiry. In my study's case, who was present at the library and willing to participate during the time I set aside for interviews. According to Bruce Tranter in Terre Branch and Durrheim (2002:100) "In qualitative research, there is no need to work with the whole group, because we are interested in meaning and understandings, and non-probability samples [...] can provide the rich detail and nuanced understandings required".

Because there are only two librarians at the LCL, the goal was to interview both so that an equal number were interviewed at both libraries. At the TCL I randomly chose two library staff to be interviewed.

### 3.8. Data Analysis

Data analysis according to Mouton and Marais (1990) is the practice of breaking down an observable fact or occurrence into its basic parts to better understand it. Two types of data (qualitative and quantitative) collected through my research were analysed. The data was then organised in a way that was easily understandable through coding. Charmaz (1983 cited in Bryman and Burgess, 1994) refers to coding as a method of sorting and arranging data, codes function to condense, integrate, and classify numerous observations from raw data. During this process I was then able to break the text down into the smaller pieces and rearranged them into related narratives.

#### 3.8.1. Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data set consisted of interview transcripts typed verbatim and field notes written during observation. The texts were then printed out so that I could highlight and make notes of the themes as I went along. The data was then analysed manually using an inductive coding method. This method, according to Spear (2018), is used when conducting exploratory research on subjects whom information is scarcely available. With inductive coding you are starting from the beginning based on your data. This is the opposite of deductive coding in which a researcher develops a codebook that serves as a point of reference during coding.

The codebook in deductive coding is developed before collecting data, typically while doing fieldwork (Spear, 2018).

The analysis was carried out in 4 stages and each stage is summarised below:

### 3.8.1.1. Initial Coding

The initial coding process was fast and relatively easy. I read through my data to become familiar with it and to get an overall idea. For interview transcripts I coded sections by giving them general code names for easy reference and wrote down notes as I was reading.

With data from observations the initial coding was done during the observations. After every two to three hours' sessions of taking notes I transferred the notes into Microsoft Excel. The notes were then inputted under the following headings: 'time', 'activity', 'demographic' and 'number'. Time is the exact moment the activity was observed. Activity is the type of action being performed at that precise moment by a patron, while demographic referred to categories I crudely assigned to the library patrons such as:

- woman/man= those that cannot be classified as youth in appearance, older than youth,
- youth female/male= over high school age or university age,
- high school female/male= those who appear to be in high school, most usually came in wearing school uniform,
- primary school girl/boy= those who appear to be in primary school,
- pre-school and toddler.

An example of one observation:

Time=14:48. Activity= Youths sitting on sofas in the book area doing homework, demographic 2 females and 1 male, number=3.

14:48	sitting on sofas in the book area doing homework	Youths, male, females	1 2	3				
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Each day had a different sheet and the location of the observation was indicated in the heading. Example:

Tshedimose tso community library Wednesday 12 June 2019, observations from sitting next to circulation desk.

<b>Observation Tshedimose tso community Library Wednesday 12 June 2019</b>			
<b>Observations from sitting next to circulation desk</b>			

### 3.8.1.2. Line-By-Line Coding

In this stage I intently combed through my transcripts and notes, scrutinizing every line. I coded everything. My codes now had more details compared to the initial coding. A lot more insight was gained as this process continued and the codes became more detailed.

### 3.8.1.3. Categorisation

When the line-by-line coding was finished, I had a chaotic collection of codes. I then organised similar codes into the same groups and moved them around to find out a way that best reflects my analysis. While scrutinising and arranging the codes into categories, consistent and primary themes of my data began to appear.

### 3.8.1.4. Determining Themes

I then classified the codes into themes by organizing them into main themes and sub-categories that support the key themes. Mason (1994) declares that this technique is possibly the most well-known — “in some form or other”—to qualitative researchers and is a good way to start in understanding how to analyse qualitative data.

The procedure above is in line with what writers like Okely (1994) and Bryman and Burgess (1994) imply about analysing qualitative data. These writers indicate that in qualitative research data analysis is carried out by way of reading and re-reading data texts and grouping themes and patterns that are alike.

## 3.8.2. Quantitative Data Analysis

Microsoft Excel was used to analyse quantitative data from the surveys. The responses were entered into the data matrixes for analysis. The research outcomes were decoded, tables and diagrams were drawn and supplemented with explanations when necessary.

## 3.9. Reliability and Validity

As this research study used a mixed methods approach to collect data, the issues of reliability and validity relating to each method are discussed below. The focus is on the use of triangulation as a way of ensuring reliability and validity.

Qualitative and quantitative researchers ought to assess and reveal that their studies have credibility. In qualitative research, reliability and validity are not separated as opposed to quantitative research where the terms are treated as separate entities (Golafshani, 2003). “Credibility, transferability and trustworthiness”, according to Golafshani (2003: 601), are terms that researchers in qualitative inquiry should strive for in ensuring quality. This is because it is not easy to measure reliability in the social sciences because human behaviour is dynamic (Denzin & Lincoln; 2005) and “reality is socially constructed and it is what participants perceive it to be” (Creswell and Miller, 2000:125).

One of the ways of ensuring that a study is reliable and valid or rather credible, transferable, and trustworthy is using a process of triangulation. Creswell & Miller (2000) define triangulation as a technique of sorting several and differing data sources into themes in a study. As a validity procedure, triangulation verifies data by checking one method like observations against other methods such as interviews and documents to locate major and minor themes (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Using multiple data collection methods makes the study more reliable since evidence can be corroborated by the other data. If the same themes appear in the other data points, it proves that a certain phenomenon is real or valid. Mathison (1988: 13) cited in (Golafshani, 2003) says that triangulation in qualitative approaches arose as a way to “control bias and establishing valid propositions because traditional scientific techniques are incompatible with this alternate epistemology”. Patton (2002:247) asserts that “triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods. This can mean using several kinds of methods or data, including using both quantitative and qualitative approaches”.

Reliability in quantitative inquiry is based upon the idea that repeating a study will produce the same results (Golafshani, 2003). For quantitative research to be considered reliable it must be repeated by another researcher and produce the same results (Golafshani; 2003). Qualitative research is different to quantitative study in this regard as researchers seek to generate understanding rather than explaining an event. Thus, according to Golafshani (2003) the concept of reliability is irrelevant in qualitative research. The most important question for qualitative research, Golafshani (2003) argues, is whether the findings agree with the collected data.

In this study, I used interviews with the library staff as the secondary method of data collection. The reliability of my interviews was assessed by comparing it with the surveys and the observations conducted at the libraries, and Vice versa. These three methods corroborated each other as they revealed multiple themes that I used in my research findings (chapter 4). The quantitative data in my study was collected using surveys. The reliability of the survey

may be derived by a second administration of a similar survey and comparing the responses with those of the first. I ensured reliability through having a consistent list of questions in the surveys.

Staying at a research site for an extended period is one way, according to Creswell and Miller (2000), of ensuring validity in research. When a researcher stays at a site for longer periods, they can make repeated observations, and build trust and rapport with participants. This effort makes participants comfortable in sharing information with the researcher (Creswell & Miller; 2000). There was already a rapport between the librarians and I at the site where I am a patron. A relationship was developed with the librarians at the other location, through a visit to familiarize myself with the library which occurred months before research commenced. I chatted with the staff and even went for lunch with one of the librarians. Because of that relationship, and the amount of time I spent at the library observing patron behaviour and handing out surveys, the librarians were comfortable with me and readily disclosed information.

### 3.10. Ethical Considerations

In line with the rules and regulations of the University of South Africa relating to conducting research with human beings, the following ethical considerations were considered throughout the course of the research. The rights to confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent as well as professionalism were observed. These considerations were employed in both the qualitative and quantitative sections of this study.

#### 3.10.1. Informed Consent

When conducting research on people it is important that they are informed about what the study entails before they are enrolled (Jelsma and Clow; 2005). During my research I made sure to provide sufficient information regarding the nature of the survey, so that people can make a conscious decision about participating in the study. I ensured intentions of the study were abundantly clear for participants. The benefits and risks of participating in the study were discussed. To make sure that library patrons fully understood I also handed out and explained information sheets so that they could process the information in their own time. I informed the patrons that participation was voluntarily and made sure that there was no coercion to participate. Those that agreed were handed consent forms to read and sign. Participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any stage.



### 3.10.2. Confidentiality and Anonymity

Because qualitative research focuses on a particular place, time and occasionally a person it is probable that someone with knowledge of the setting where research was carried out will be able to recognise the participants (Jelsma and Clow; 2005). Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity of participants is of the utmost importance particularly when dealing with sensitive information which may cause a person or community to be stigmatised (Jelsma and Clow; 2005). The confidentiality and anonymity of my research respondents were always respected. Participants were also not harmed in any manner during or because of them taking part in the study. Moreover, participants were afforded the opportunity to ask questions regarding anything they are unsure about. "Privacy enjoys high priority, not only because certain information can be regarded as humiliating or in other ways injurious to the participant, but also because privacy is essential for intimate, personal [...] relationships [...]" (University of Pretoria n.d: 27).

### 3.10.3. Professionalism

Integrity, quality, and accountability are the basis of scientific professionalism according to the code of ethics for research by the University of Pretoria (n.d.). In alignment with these ethics I made sure that my research is independent and unbiased. -Professionalism in a study refers to the conduct between the researcher and the participants. In qualitative research the researcher serves as an instrument in the data collection process (Creswell, 1994). This means that the researcher should always strive to be impartial, recognising how the collection and analysis of data might be influenced by their relationship to the participants (Jelsma and Clow; 2005).

Working with human participants poses unique challenges regarding the ethical concerns which must be observed. Ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and professionalism, safeguard the safety and dignity of participants also helps ensure a study is of the highest quality and integrity.

### 3.11. Problems and Limitations

Research had to be limited to interviews with the librarians only because there were no patrons over 18 years, I could interview at the LCL, and patrons at the TCL did not want to be interviewed. Questionnaires could not be administered as most patrons at the LCL were school children. As a result, the research was modified, and surveys were only completed at

the TCL. What this means for the study is that the TCL is the primary site, while data collected from the LCL was used to support the data from the MCL.

### 3.12. Summary and Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research methodology that was used in this study. Information concerning the mixed methods design and its significance to this research paper were explored. The chapter also focused on the data analysis approaches used in examining quantitative and qualitative data, with emphasis on the process of coding qualitative data. The issues of ethics in conducting research with people were also discussed along with the problems and limitations faced in the field. The aim of this study is to understand how patrons use and perceive their libraries. The next chapter, consequently, reports on the findings of my research.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

#### 4.1. Introduction

In this chapter I present and analyse the statistics of who, how and why the libraries are used. For comparison reasons the two libraries are discussed simultaneously with findings from the patron survey, staff interviews, and the seating sweeps incorporated. Additionally, I will compare my findings with literature reviewed in chapter 2 to look for similarities or differences. Members of the community use the libraries for a variety of activities from reading and studying to socialising. The different services offered at the libraries attract different sections of community members with varying needs. And finally, I will show that the libraries, especially the Tshedimosetso Community Library, also function as third places where young people gather to socialise.

What I gained from the observations were this: The TCL is fairly busy during the work week (Monday-Friday). The majority of the patrons are and university students. The study room, gaming room and computer room are the busier sections at the TCL. It is mainly students from the University of South Africa who use the study area. The students typically stay at the library for most of the day. Many unemployed youths also use the library regularly to make photocopies and to play video games. The “older” people, those who are not students and the youth, primarily come to make photocopies, and do not stay at the library for lengthy periods.

The TCL is also used as a meeting place; young people meet to study together and play video games. A number of public meetings are also held at the library in the thatch-roof area. One such meeting I observed and attended was a presentation from the National Youth Development Agency organised by a local ward councillor.

At the LCL the situation is quite different in that the library is utilised mainly by school children. The library does not attract adults or even university students. The main reason why the library

does not attract people who are not of school going age is the lack of electricity. Without electricity services such as computers for people to type CVs and homework, photocopies and scanners are affected. These three services, as I observed at the TCL, entice many people to the library.

#### 4.2. Patron profile

I was interested in examining specific trends and patterns in the use of the two libraries. Patrons were asked several questions to ascertain where they live in relation to the library, their age and gender occupation and how often visit the library. The following section presents a selection of data on the profile of library patrons at the TCL and the LCL, using information gathered from the seating sweeps and library circulation data.

Both the TCL and the LCL have sign in sheets at the security gate which every person visiting must sign. I was able to get the total number of people who visited the TCL on two separate days, the first week of my fieldwork on a Wednesday and Thursday. I will use these numbers, along with the seating sweeps, to illustrate the number of users who visit the library daily. I was not able to get the number of the people who patronise the LCL.

As was briefly mentioned in chapter 1 the LCL is not as busy as the TCL. The main reason for this was a lack of electricity during the time I was doing fieldwork. Another reason could be that the LCL is not easily visible from the main road that passes through the village. The lack of electricity affected the running of the library negatively. During that period, the library functioned only as a repository of books with only a few adults using the building to study. I was informed by the library staff that many users opt to go to other libraries access services that are unavailable at the LCL because the lack of electricity. The consequence of this was I could not do similar fieldwork at the LCL as I did at TCL.

The TCL is the busier of the two libraries, and the following is an account of the number of people at the library when this research was conducted. It is not a comprehensive number, but rather an estimate of how many people use the library daily. On the third day of my research at the MCL, the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 2019, 70 people signed in at the gate the following day, 61 people signed in at the library gate. This brings the average number of people visiting the library each day to 65 people. This number is representative of patrons who visit the library during the working week. During the weekend I observed a significant decrease in the number of patrons. This observation was corroborated by interviews with the library staff who noted Saturdays are the least busy days in the library.

The seating sweeps, where I walked around the library making notes of the number of patrons and their activities, were divided into three daily sessions. The seating sweeps of one day, the 18<sup>th</sup> of June, accounted for 19 patrons inside the library on the morning session, between 9:00 AM and 12:00 PM. On the second session between 12:30 PM and 14:30 PM, 18 people were counted at 13:00 PM and finally on the last session 21 people were present inside the library at 16:00 PM. In total, I counted 58 people with the seating sweeps on that day.

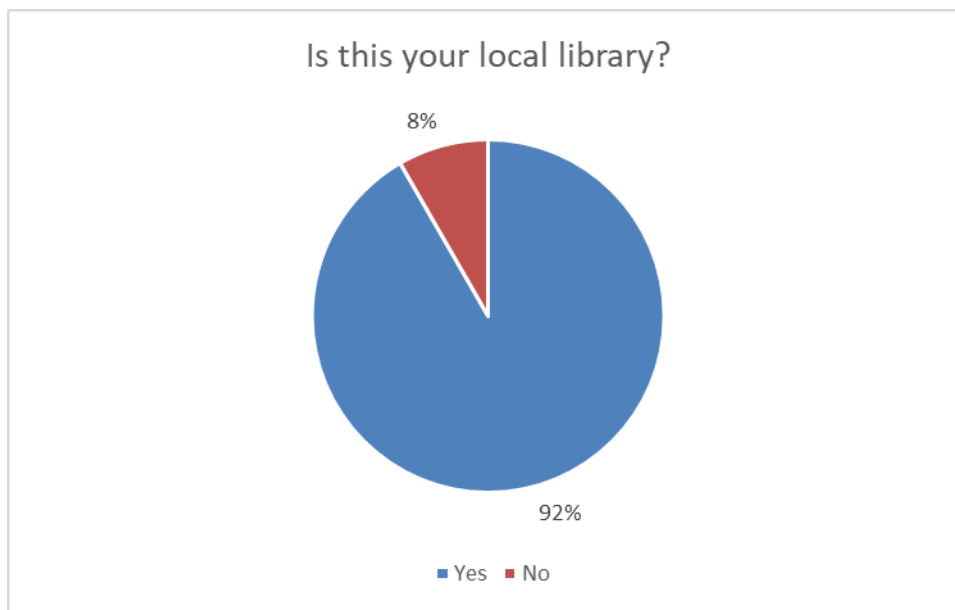
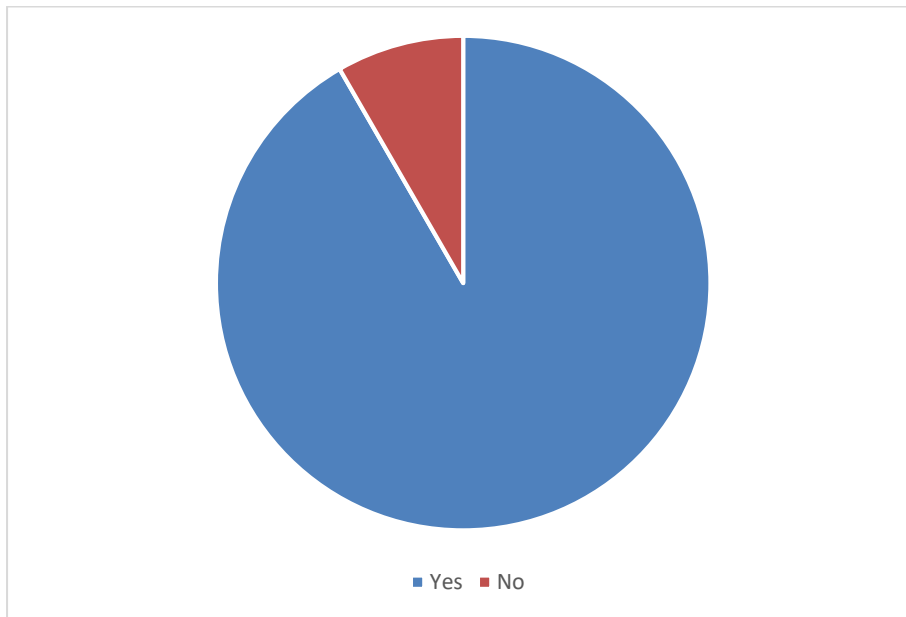
When considering the number of patrons from the seating sweeps and the total number of patrons collected from the security desk, it appears that a little over 60 people use the TCL daily.

With this in mind the following is an analysis of some of the basic characteristics of the people who patronise the libraries. The information cited below is from data gathered using questionnaires.

#### 4.2.1. Patrons living close to library

Most of the users were resided in the village the library is situated in, as well as surrounding villages that are less than an hour away from the library. A little over 90 percent reported that the Tshedimosetso Community Library (TCL) is their local library, while the remainder responded that it was not (see figure 4.1). The reasons given by those who answered that the TCL was not their local library are as follows: *“No, the main reason I came here is to meet the group of people I study with”*, *“No, there is no library where I live”* and *“No, to borrow text book, to study”*. Only one respondent who replied that the TCL is not their local library did not specify why they came to the library. The questionnaire did not ask respondents to name the place or village from which they came from, which would have provided in-depth information of where patrons live. However, from my interviews with the library staff I gathered that most of the patrons come from the village the library is situated in and its surrounding environs. The 6 surrounding villages are very close to where the library is located. People from the 2 closest villages can walk while those from the 4 furthest villages took less than 20 minutes to travel by public transport.

Figure 4.1: Is this your local library?



One point of interest coming from the first interview with a librarian at the TCL is people who come to the library from the 4 villages that are not within walking distance are mainly school learners (high school learners to be exact) and university students. Whereas, in villages that are within walking distance of the library there is an assortment of people visiting the library, ranging from primary school children to older people. As noted by Powell, Taylor and Mcmillen (1984) living far away from a library has a negative influence on use.

The difference in patron profile being divided along proximity to the library indicates that unequal access to library services in Moretele local municipality. There are members of the

community excluded from library services such as school children, who can be better served by having a library that is easily accessible by foot because they are too young to travel alone by taxi. For most residents in the Moretele Local Municipality minibuses are their only mode of transport. Those who live beyond walking distance are unable to visit the library due to transport fare difficulties or parents not feeling safe letting their children travel by taxi alone. Parents and guardians are also unable to come with their children to the library as transport costs will be more. The high unemployment rate in South Africa along with the fact that Moretele Local Municipality is situated in a previously disadvantaged area means many families do not have spare money to travel to the library. Therefore, only those who live close by, who have disposable income and are old enough to travel alone benefit from the library.

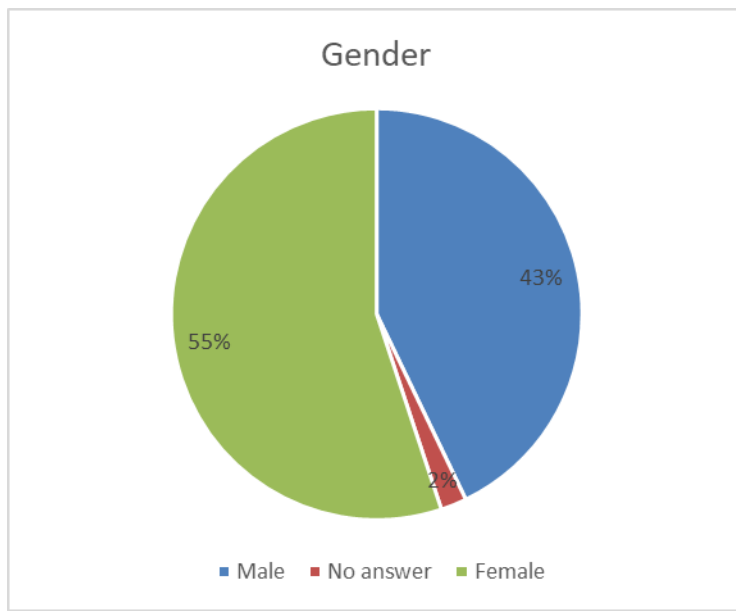
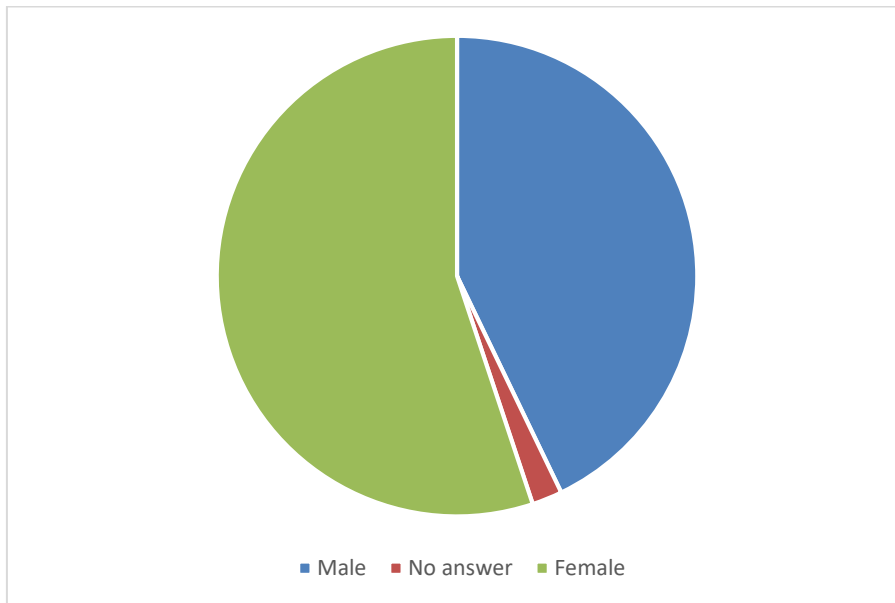
As mentioned in Chapter 2, there is uneven access to libraries in the country. The Department of Arts and Culture (2013b) estimated that 2 762 more libraries are required to provide adequate services to South Africans. Just 4 years ago, the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), determined that there were 1 612 public and community libraries in the country (IFLA, 2015), while in 2017 there were 1 879 public libraries as per the National Library of South Africa (NLSA, 2017). This is a significant increase from the 1,386 public and community libraries in 2010 (LIS Transformation Charter, 2014). When looking at the North West province, there were 112 public libraries in 2017 servicing a population of over 3\_500 000 people according to the National library of South Africa (NLSA, 2017).

The 4 community libraries in the Moretele local municipality are insufficient to cover the entire community of nearly 190,000 people. This means an average of 50,000 people meant to be serviced by each library with some of the residents travelling longer distances to reach a library. More libraries need to be built in the municipal area's villages to ensure the majority of people are able to walk to their nearest library. Some library patrons at the MCL are also cognisant of the lack, of libraries in surrounding villages in the municipality. When asked how the library can improve its services, one of the patrons replied that more libraries should be built to "help others". Another one replied "by reaching more people". This shows that patrons are aware that the existing libraries are insufficient to service everyone in the municipality.

#### 4.2.2. Gender and age of patrons

In terms of gender, the survey revealed that more women than men patronised the TCL. In the survey 55% of the patrons indicated on the survey they were women (see figure 4.2, which is on par with previous studies on public libraries (Powell Taylor and McMillen;1984). The seating sweeps, however, revealed an even number of male and female patrons at the library.

Figure 4.2: Gender of participants



The seating sweeps revealed an abundance of data. I therefore decided to use only two days to illustrate how patrons use the library. The first day, June 12<sup>th</sup> was when schools were in session and the other day; July 2<sup>nd</sup> was during school holidays. The activities observed through the sweeps are listed in table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: seating sweeps observations of library users.**

	June 12 <sup>th</sup> 2019		July 2 <sup>nd</sup> 2019	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Study room	8	9	5	6



Book area				
• Reading	5	4	6	3
• Browsing	5	2	2	
Electronic resources				
• Computers	2	3		
• Scanner	2			
• Photocopier	2	2	4	2
• printer	3	3	3	
Circulation area:				
• Borrowing books	2	1		1
• Returning books	1			3
Gaming room		5		9
Children's area			6	5
Notice board at entrance	1			
Thatch area	3	2	2	1
Total	34	31	28	30

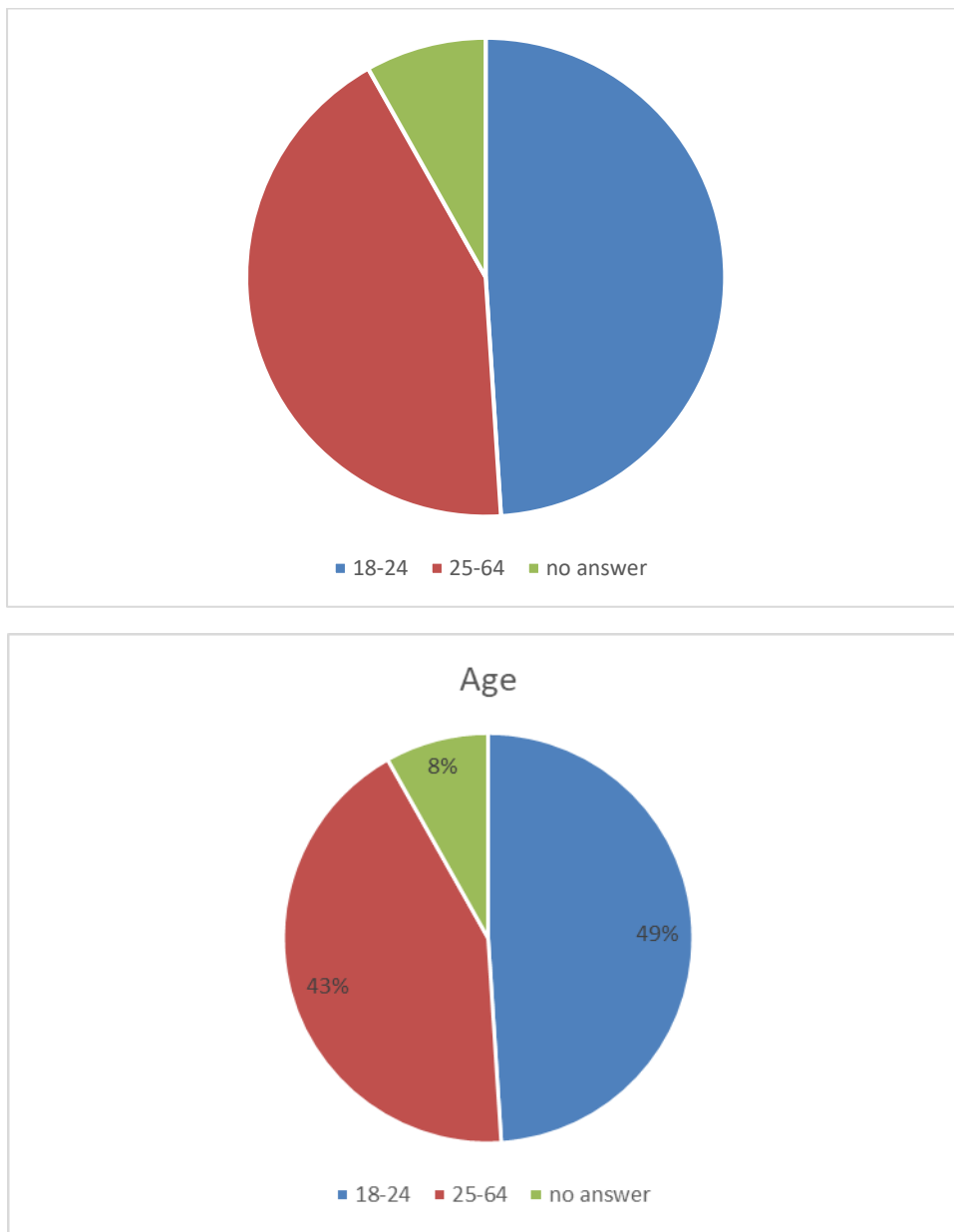
When looking at the above table 4.1 there is an even distribution of patrons by their gender and the different activities. It is in the gaming room where there was a noticeable difference; during my seating sweeps I observed only young men utilising the gaming room. In fact, during my time at the TCL I did not witness any females, in the gaming room. I was unable to do a seating sweep inside the discussion room as it was, being used as a temporary security room because the actual security room was under repair.

I am not able to say whether this is true for the LCL because as I mentioned before, the LCL was lacking patrons at the time of my research because of a lack of electricity. On one day two youths, male and female, came to the library. The male youth was accompanying the

female who was looking for information on Nelson Mandela, presumably for a school project as they both appear to be high school learners. On another day I found a female student studying. Beside these there were the learners from a school for children with disabilities who are brought to the library every day after school. They use the library as an after-care place more than anything else. Consequently, the LCL offered little information in terms of the seating sweeps.

With regard to the age the patron surveys revealed that the library users are relatively young (see figure 4.3). At the TCL, about 50% of the patrons were under the age of twenty-five, just over 40% were under the age of 64, 8% of the respondents did not give their age. According to Powell, Taylor and Mcmillen (1984) younger people are more likely to be library users, therefore, there is a direct connection between age and library use. They posit that the reason young people use the public library more is primarily for educational purposes as many are still in school or tertiary institutions (Powell et. al, 1984). A design flaw of the survey was age groups were not more sharply divided. I must concede that the twenty-five to sixty-four age group could have been split into two groups to get a better understanding of age. The way this age group is divided is simplistic and does not accurately capture the essence of the patrons. From my observation most patrons are under the age of forty years. This naturally means that most of the people who completed the surveys are also under the age forty.

Figure 4.3: Age of participants



The seating sweeps and library staff interviews were in concurrence with the findings from the patron survey. At TCL, there were a greater number of observed patrons under thirty years of age (including those who are under the age of eighteen) compared to thirty to sixty years old, with people over the age of sixty visibly lacking. Most people who use the library are youth. In every section of the library the youth are overrepresented and stay at the library the longest. Those who are older (from forty years and above) generally go to the library to photocopy documents and then leave; they usually do not stay longer. As a result, there is a noticeable dearth of older people visiting the library to make use of other services such as reading, borrowing books, and using the computers.

Similarly, the patron profile of the LCL veers heavily towards the younger side. The interviews with the librarians at the LCL revealed that the library is mostly frequented by young people, particularly primary and secondary school learners. One of the reasons the LCL attracts a mostly young clientele has to do with its location. The library is situated next to a primary school making it is easier and quicker for the learners of the school to visit the library every day. Typically, they come to the library to do research on schoolwork and nearly all are girls.

Similar to the TCL, older people primarily visit the LCL to make use of the photocopier. However, when I was doing fieldwork, the library did not have electricity for the past year — therefore the statements of the library staff could not be corroborated. I did notice however, that during my fieldwork no adults visited the library, apart from one female student who was there to study. Only a few children patronised the library during the entire time I was at the library to conduct research.

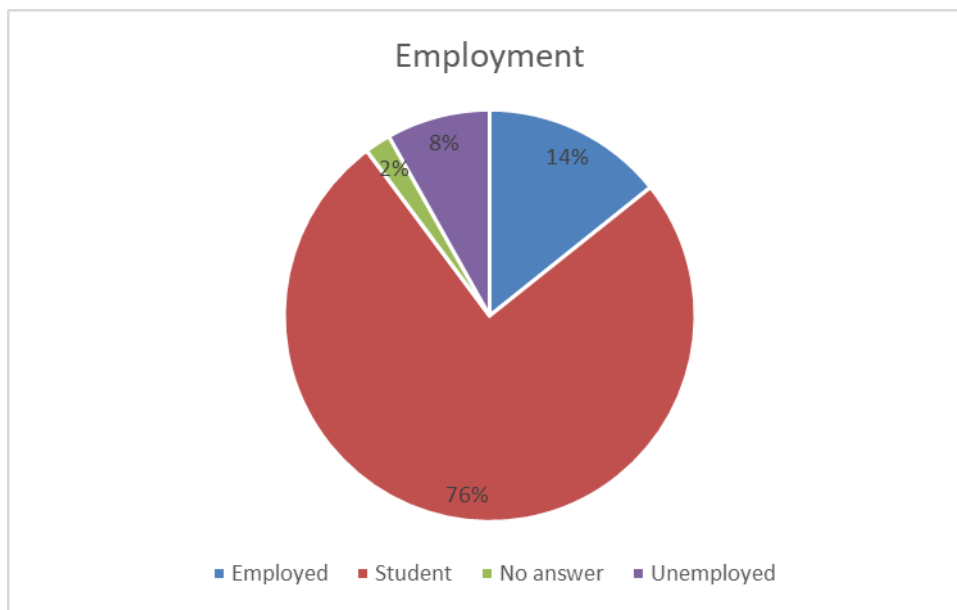
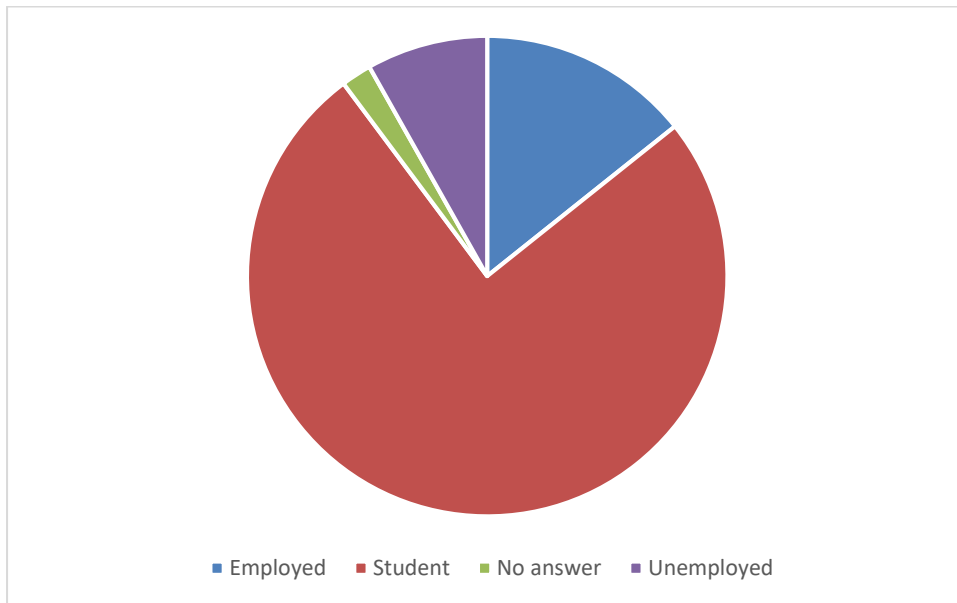
Given where the libraries are located, the subject of race does not factor into this discussion. The libraries are in areas that were reserved for black people by the apartheid government. To this day only black people live in the area, thus library patrons are all black.

#### 4.2.3. Employment status of patrons

Regarding the occupations of patrons (see figure 4.4), the majority (76%) reported that they are university students. This finding is consistent with observations and interviews with the library staff. It is also in line with the view of Powell et al (1984) who stated that school learners and university students are more likely to visit public libraries frequently.

14% of the respondents reported being employed or self-employed, while 8% replied that they were unemployed. Not one of the survey respondents reported being retired. This is because retired people tended to be a considerably lower section of users at TCL, corroborated by my question regarding age there were only two participants over 65 who completed the questionnaire. During the seating sweeps I observed only two people of retirement age at the library; one was a woman directed to come to the building as she was told it was a psychologist's office. Another one was also a woman who came in with a man. They were both seeking help from the library staff with typing a document.

Figure 4.4: Employment status



At the LCL there is an attempt to include elder people, albeit in the form of arts and crafts. The librarians noticed that there was a dearth of people of retirement age at the library and came up with a way to attract them. They informed me that there are arts and crafts projects offered by the head librarian to senior citizens. The librarians usually invite elderly people to the village hall as there is no space at the library for such an activity. The evidence of this can be seen all over the library where there are beautiful decorations made by the elderly. This shows the initiative from the librarians to make the library truly inclusive of every member of the community.

The theme that appeared across all the interviews with the library staff from both the TCL and the LCL was university students, particularly students from the University of South Africa (UNISA) who used the library on a regular basis. In both libraries UNISA students made up a significant number of the patrons, according to staff. When asked to describe their patron profile all of the librarians noted that UNISA students visited the libraries frequently. These are their answers: librarian 1 at TCL stated that *“those who come, you see a person coming regularly mostly it’s UNISA students”*, the second librarian interviewed at the MCL noted that: *“Mostly it is students, and majority are from UNISA”*, librarian 1 the LCL also had this to say: *“[...] most it’s people who attend UNISA”*, in agreement with this the second librarian at the LCL said that *“UNISA students mostly come during exam times.”*

UNISA is an open distance learning institution in Africa and the largest university system in South Africa with over 350 000 students (Unisa, 2019). Because it is a distance education institution most students do not live close to campus or regional study centres. Some, like those in the Moretele municipality, make use of the nearest public libraries to study. Therefore, students from the university make up a large share of library patrons at the TCL and the LCL. I noticed that the students at the TCL used it as a type of substitute university campus library. As a result of the library being especially important to UNISA students as the patron survey revealed, would like a bigger study room to accommodate more library users.

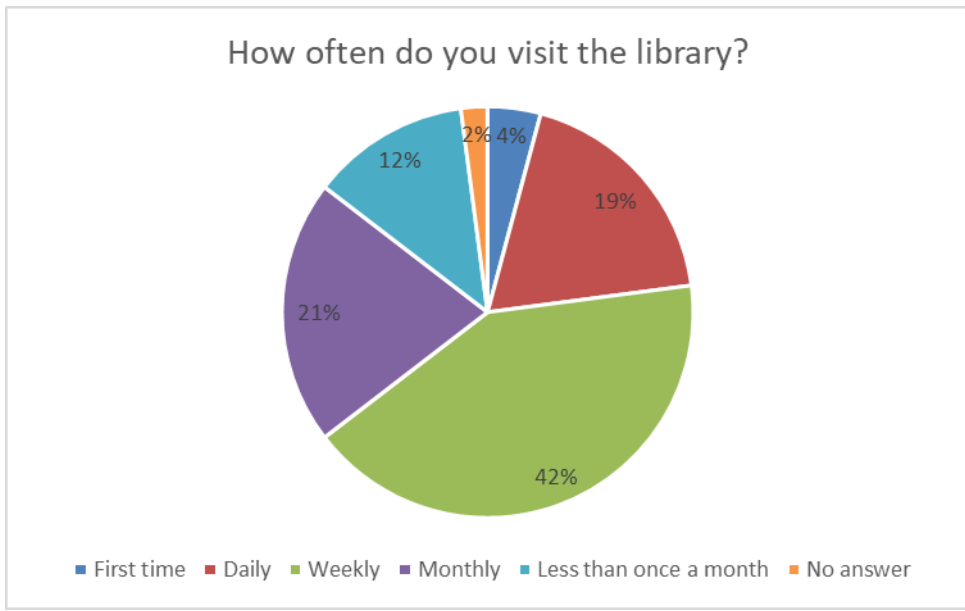
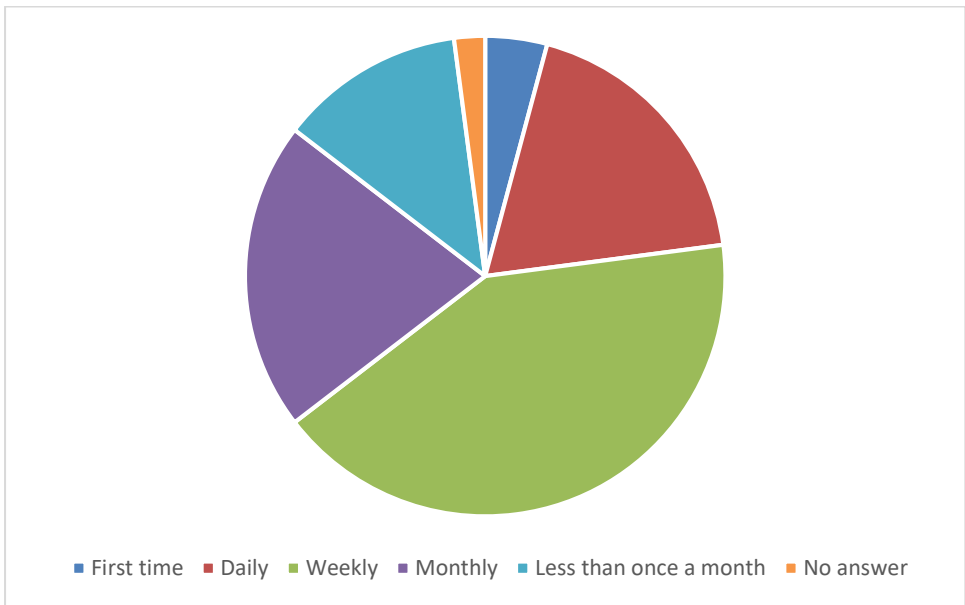
It would seem that public libraries are indispensable to many UNISA students. As a result, it would be in the best interest for the university to help students access university online resources at these libraries by offering free WIFI to the students. The student can use their student numbers to login thereby ensuring that only UNISA students can use it. Many of the survey respondents, who also happened to be students, complained about a lack of internet at the libraries. A partnership such as the one between the University and a few selected public libraries in the City of Johannesburg, where UNISA students can access the university’s online resources at the public libraries for free, would be useful at the libraries in the municipality.

#### 4.2.4 How often do people visit the libraries

Patrons were divided regarding how frequently they used the library. The survey revealed that 42% of patrons visit the library at least once every week (see figure 4.5). Again, this could be because of the UNISA students who use the library frequently. This is followed by those who visit monthly at 21%. The remainder was divided between those who visit less than once a month at 13%, those who came to the library for the first time when the survey was conducted (4%) and one person that did not provide an answer.

The interesting discovery is that 19% of those surveyed revealed that they frequent the TCL library every day. This finding is corroborated by observing the behaviour of patrons inside the library. When carrying out the research I took note of the same people inside the library every day. The daily visitors were mostly students who came in carrying backpacks with books and laptops to use in the study room. As confirmation to me that quite a few patrons visit the library daily, some of them became intrigued by what I was busy with and a few asked me what it is I was working on. For example, while engaged in a conversation with one of the patrons he stated that: *“I see you here every day, you are always seating on the couch busy with your laptop but never come to use the study section like the rest of us”*. This indicated to me that he, like the 19% of patrons, come to the library regularly and is aware of unfamiliar faces.

Figure 4.5: How often do you visit the library?



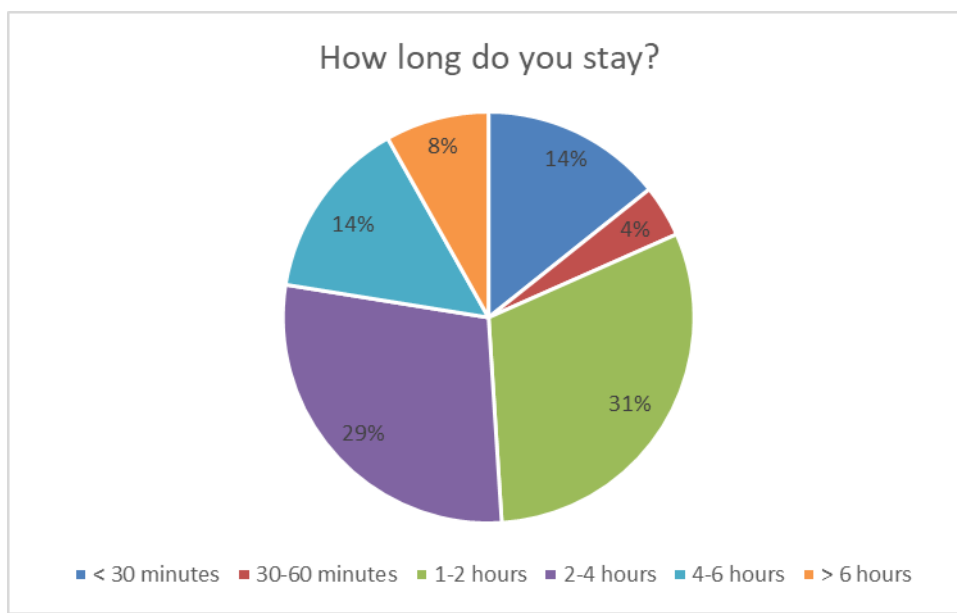
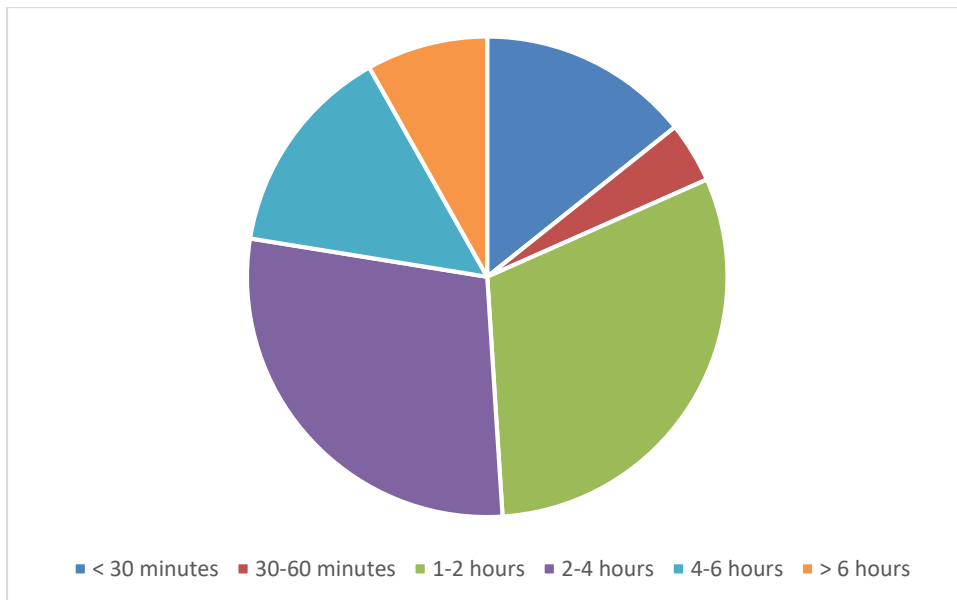
There is also an atmosphere of familiarity or friendliness among some users and the library staff. I noticed on various occasions patrons, mainly those who used the study room and gaming room, stopped at the circulation desk to chat with the staff when entering or leaving the library. The library staff also knew several the patrons by name, and many call staff by their first names. This sociability can be attributed to patrons visiting regularly as well as the library staff living in the community they serve. The majority of those who participated in the survey have been patronising the TCL for more than a year. 48% have been using the library for three years or more; 11% for more than a year while 41% said they have been visiting the TCL for less than a year. All the library staff, except one, are from and still live in the areas



where the libraries are located. They are a part of the communities and are well known by many people who visit the library.

The TCL library has a steady flow of patrons from opening until closing time and visitors tended to stay for longer periods. As figure 4.6 shows only 14% of those surveyed stayed at the library for less than thirty minutes. University students are typically the first to arrive at the library, and it is not uncommon to find the study room full of students by 10 o'clock in the morning - especially during exam times. Students generally stay the longest at the library and are also likely to visit the library frequently.

Figure 4.6: How long do you stay?



The young men who use the game room typically arrive at the library late in the morning and remain in the library for longer periods. I observed that the game room was always occupied until the library closed at 5 o'clock. The afternoon is when school learners arrive after school with most still wearing school uniforms. They usually visit the library to use the study guides and/or the computer room. It is not uncommon to see two or three learners in uniform huddled over a single computer working on a school project. Those that visit the library with the sole purpose of using the photocopier remain at the library the shortest amount of time – typically less than thirty minutes.

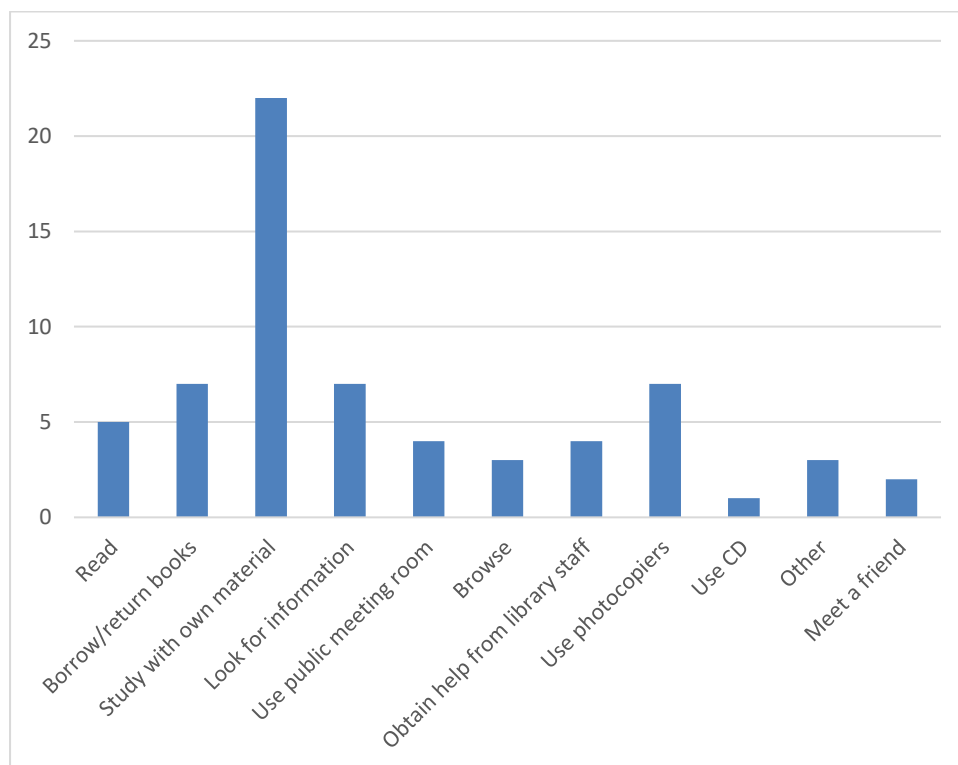
With the exception of the game room users, patrons who use the library to study during the week did not visit the library on a Saturday, when people are more likely to have spare time. Fridays also had fewer people studying compared to the other four days. I can only assume, as have the librarians, that people have other matters to attend to during those days or the more plausible explanation is that they are simply taking a break from schoolwork.

The lengthy times spent at the library could also be because a little over half (53%) of those surveyed reported visiting the library with other people. I observed many young people, including school learners, working on school projects together. Young people were also engaged in discussions on the couches, in the meeting room and thatch area. I will discuss this in detail in the following section.

#### 4.3. The library as a quiet study place

The TCL is very popular among those who need a place to study. When asked the question “why did you come to this library today?” the most common survey response was to study with their own materials (see figure 4.7). Regarding this question, respondents were asked to select the main reason with the number 1 and to choose others that might be applicable with an x. Consequently, many respondents checked more than one reason for visiting the library. The common reasons people gave for visiting the library included studying with personal material, searching for information, loaning/returning books and using photocopiers. These replies are supported by the actual behaviours witnessed during sweeps. The prominence of individual learning is supported by the discovery that visitors, usually students and high school learners, mostly had their own backpacks to carry their books. Most students brought their laptops and were seated in the study room to conduct their reading and study.

Figure 4.7: Why did you visit library today?



The study room when filled can accommodate forty people. It has ten tables: with four chairs on each table - two on either side. On a typical day fifteen to twenty people use the study room, this number increases significantly during exam times when some of the patrons are accommodated in the thatch-roof area.

I was informed by one of the library staff at the TCL that the thatch-roof area was designed with the objective of accommodating the overflow of visitors to the library. On numerous occasions I observed, mainly, young people sitting under the thatch-roof. Typically, it was one group at a given time. The groups tended to be small between three and five people who were involved in discussions and usually with open books and a laptop(s) in front of them. Sometimes there would be two people studying together and very rarely I observed a person sitting alone studying under the thatch-roof area. It appears that the thatch-roof area is mainly used for group activities such as studying together and socialising. Those who want a quiet place to study use the study room inside the library.

During my time at the LCL only one person, a UNISA student, came to the library to study. According to one of the librarians, the student was studying for a maths exam. The only other person who came to the library was a female high school learner who was accompanied by a youth male. She was looking for information regarding a school project. The two stayed at the

library for about 30 minutes while the librarian assisted them by searching for books on the shelves.

In keeping with the theme of the library used as a place to study, survey participants (36%) identified the study room as one of the things they most value about the TCL library. This was followed by books (at 18%). Some of the reasons patrons gave for valuing the study room are that it is a quiet and conducive environment to study. Additionally, when asked what they understood the primary function of the library to be, 33% of respondents said that the primary function is to provide the community with a quiet place to study. Most representative of this are the following statements:

- *“To help local residents find a better and peaceful place to study and also help to provide books for a particular period”.*
- *“To provide study area, lending books to patrons and to provide internet access”.*
- *“To provide a study area for students”.*
- *“Primary purpose is to give the community a quiet area to study in peace”.*
- *“A quiet [sic] environment to study”.*
- *“To help the community and children who cannot study at home”.*
- *“To provide resources for the community and personal space to study”.*

A little over half of the survey participants (53%) also named the study room as their favourite location in the library. Among the services offered at the library, the study room was rated highly with forty of the forty-nine people surveyed rating it as ‘very important’ and seven respondents rating it as ‘important’. For many of the patrons, particularly those who are still in school or tertiary institutions, the library offers them a space to study without interruptions. They used words such as peaceful, quiet, safe, empower and personal space to describe the study area in the library. One of the respondents, a male student, had this to say on the subject of the primary purpose of the library: *“To empower education for those who live with people who love to play loud music so this is where we run to so I can study peacefully”.* Because the study area is broadly favoured and greatly used some survey respondents stated that they would like a bigger space to study. Two patrons, both self-identified as students stated that the library’s services can be improved by “expand[ing] the space in the study room” and “creat[ing] more space to study”. This finding is indicative of the study room being extensively used by university students.

Just over 40% of all TCL patrons were observed reading. This was the leading activity and mostly took place in the study room. Most of the people reading were doing so with their own materials whereas those who were reading library books typically did so on the couches in the

book area. 15% of people came to photocopy documents (an activity performed only by the librarians). Playing video games made up eleven percent of activities witnessed in the library. Writing comprised ten percent of observed activities, talking (14%) and using the library computers to type at eight percent, were the major activities observed.

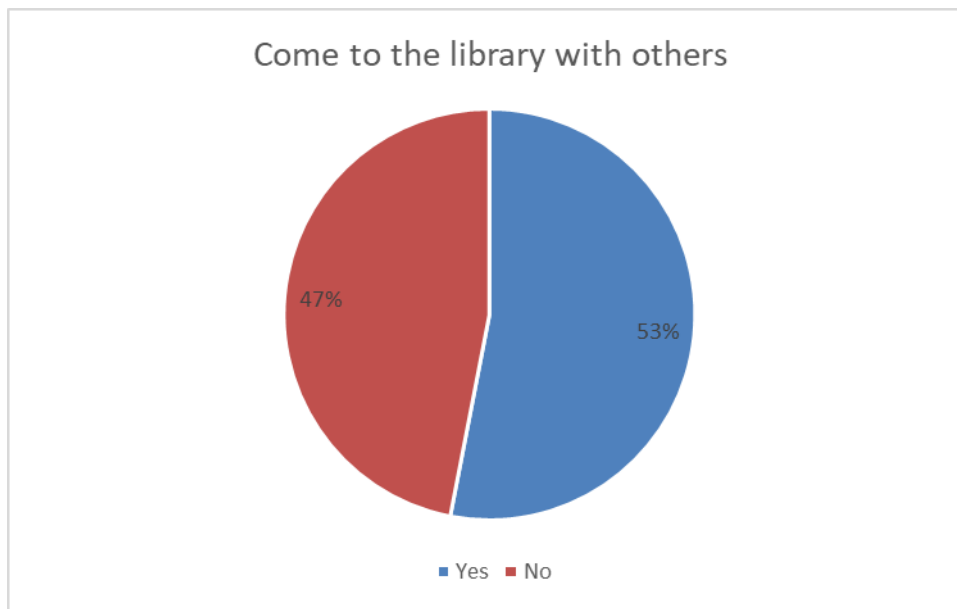
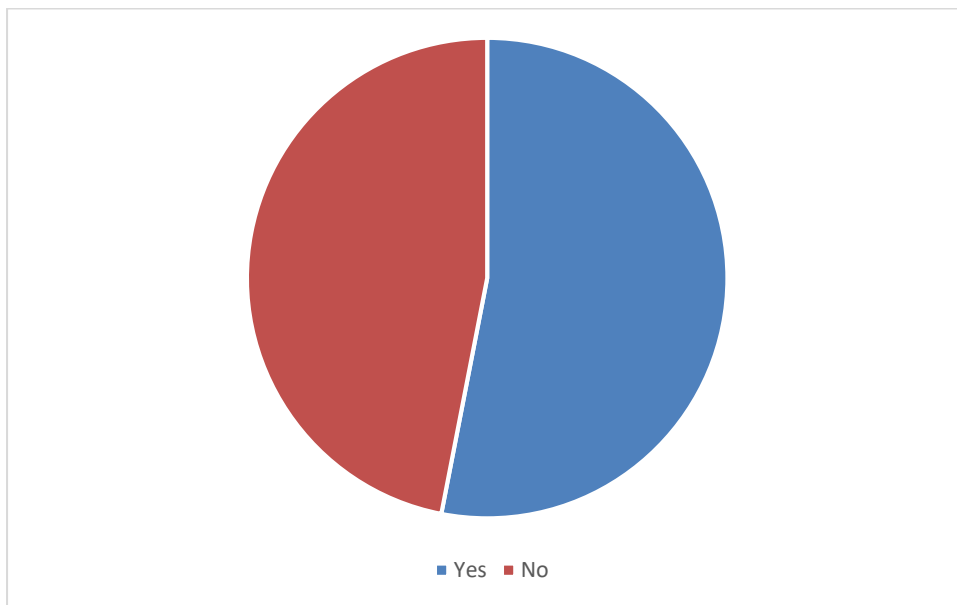
The results of this survey, in addition to the observed patron behaviour, indicate the studious nature of TCL patrons. People are attracted to the quietness of the library. The library, for many, is a favourable place to study as opposed to the home where there are many interruptions or where there might not be a designated or private study space. There is also another facet of the libraries that might not be considered the traditional function of a library; the role of the library as a place to meet people.

#### 4.4. The library as a social place

My survey contained a few questions regarding the social aspect of the TCL. First, I was interested in whether people came to the libraries with other people (figure 4.8), the intention being to find out if there is a social aspect in going to the library. Specifically, I wanted to find out if the TCL and the LCL fit Oldenburg's framework of the third place, and if so in what ways. When asked if they ever come with other people, over half (53% percent) replied "yes". Those who were accompanied, mostly (16 out of 26 people or 61%) - came with friends and/or study partners. Younger patrons – both men and women - were more inclined to come to the library in pairs or groups, when compared to older patrons. I became aware of this during observations and later was confirmed by interviews with the library staff.

This finding is true for both patrons who came to the library to make copies as well as for those who stayed for longer periods to study or work in groups. For the library patrons who came to use the photocopier about half were accompanied by either a child or someone their age. These patrons are diverse and most representative in age of all the library users as they ranged from youth to people in their late to early fifties, men and women, students and those that were unemployed.

Figure 4.8: Visit the library with others



The reason young people use the library as a social place is because the library is a conducive environment for them to work together on school projects and to socialise. The discussion room and thatch-roof area are all ideal places where young people can interact in a comfortable and convenient environment where they have access to books and technology resources. With the addition of the gaming room the library has expanded its role as a place where people can search for information, study, and play under one roof. In this way the TCL has done what Derr and Rhodes (2010:93) have contended when they wrote that “[e]ngaging young people with public libraries is not about changing what a public library is; it is more about expanding its stereotypical definitions and broadening or reassessing its capabilities,

capacity and potential within the community.” It is for this reason that the library attracts many young people and the reason that they tend to visit the library in pairs or groups.

**Table 4 2: Reasons people come to the TCL with others.**

- 
- *With my children who are at school for them to collect more knowledge about their subjects. Also to develop the habit of reading and learning.*
  - *With Friends; usually to seek assistance from the library. And study mates; to discuss schoolwork and engage in a dialogue.*
  - *friends or colleagues, for meetings and workshops.*
  - *to use the meeting room.*
  - *to play games with friends.*
  - *I come with my friends, we study together so that we can help each other.*
  - *My son to borrow book for me and him and for my son to play with toys at the children's section.*
  - *Sometimes I come with a friend who is also a student at Unisa.*
- 

As shown in table 4.2 responses regarding why people come to the TCL together includes learning, studying together and to discuss. The responses above indicate that many people visit the library with friends which is in congruence with observed behaviour. The encouraging finding is that the MCL unites people by providing social opportunities for them to interact in ways that would otherwise be unavailable without the existence of the library.

In the next section, I detail the behaviour of three kinds of library patrons. These are visitors I witnessed arriving together or were seen sitting with other people at the library. They are, in no specific order, those that use the library as a meeting place, young men who visit to play video games and primary-school children who come in groups. This all indicates the social facet of the library.

#### 4.4.1 The library as a meeting place

On different dates during the seating sweeps, I observed people arriving at the library in groups of two or more. The people who arrived in groups were normally located on the couches in the book area, the computer room, discussion room and under the thatch area. Some patrons came into the library individually to meet with others already in the library. One such scenario is of four male youths whom I observed from the circulation desk. Two arrived first and went to sit on the couches in the book area. There are three orange couches facing

each other with a small coffee table in the middle. They took out their books and began a discussion, seemingly of their schoolwork. Around thirty minutes later one more came into the library to join them. The activity immediately shifted, with chatting being the focus. A few minutes later, a fourth male youth arrived. The group continued chatting and laughing and this time their voices became louder, so much so that one of the library staff went over to tell them to lower their voices. They continued to chat for 15-20 minutes, packed their bags and three of them went to the gaming room while one left the library.

In another instance, I observed four women who appeared to be in their mid-forties to early fifties also sitting on the couches busy discussing and working with a lot of papers. Three of them were already busy working when the fourth arrived alone to join them. Frequently, one of them would ask the librarian at the photocopy machine to make copies. This continued for the duration of their stay at the library, which was over five hours.

On other occasions, I observed people who had been in the study room come out in groups of two or three to sit on the couches, which are just in front of the doorway leading to the room. They often sat and chatted while taking a break or they would bring their books to discuss. Their stay on the couch was often short, normally lasting less than thirty minutes after which they returned to the study room. There is a lot of movement by library users going in and out of the study room. Every few minutes I observed patrons leaving the study room to answer phone calls, make photocopies, go to the toilets, take breaks, or exit with mates. Patrons generally enter the study room individually, however nearly 50% leave the study room in pairs or groups of three. Those who come to study and meet with friends or study partners often bring their lunch boxes, as they typically remain in the library for long periods. They eat their lunch outside because eating and drinking are not allowed inside. They use the thatch-roof area to get a respite and often you would find patrons talking in loud voices, laughing, and playing music on their phones. This is an indication of patrons using the library as a meeting place.

#### 4.4.2. The Gaming Room

*“Engaging young people with public libraries is not about changing what a public library is; it is more about expanding its stereotypical definitions and broadening or reassessing its capabilities, capacity and potential within the community.” -- Derr and Rhodes (2010:93).*

Much of the people I observed coming into the library in groups were young males who went straight to the gaming room to play video games. For one seven-day observation period I observed young men on seven different occasions arriving in groups of two or three and headed straight to the audio-visual room henceforth referred to as the gaming room. The



gaming room is a small room (compared to other sections of the library) with about five computers and a big flat screen television used to play video games like football and racing games. I only observed young men using the gaming room and this was later confirmed by interviews with library staff.

*“In the gaming [room] I have never seen girls going to the gaming [room], it is only boys”*. This is the response from one of the librarians when asked about who typically uses which section of the library the most. Another librarian had this to say on this topic: *“It is boys. Girls I don’t know if it’s because of cars - it is cars and football games. I think that girls are demoralised by the fact that it is football games. So I realised that it is only boys that go to there but I am looking at the types of games and I think that is why it is only boys there”*. The gendered use of the gaming room might be due to the perception of playing video games being a male activity. The dominant perception of video gaming is that it is a male dominated sport whilst being hostile to women (Coyle; 2017). Hartmann and Klimmt (2006) reported that interest in video games was low among girls and young women, their knowledge of video games was small, and they play less often and for brief periods when compared to boys and young men. However, this has been changing as recent research shows there are more female gamers than ever before. Since the 2010s women have made up nearly half of all gamers. In the USA, for instance, 48% of people who played video games frequently were female in 2014 (Sullivan; 2014). The gaming room space at the TCL that was meant for all library users has been appropriated by young men who have unconsciously turned it into a “boy’s room” at the library. This might also explain why there are not any females that use the room.

According to one of the library staff, only high schoolers and older people are allowed in the gaming room. Those who are younger than high school age have games in the children section such as two tablets and a computer with educational games only. However, those who are still in high school are only allowed access to the gaming room on Saturdays and during school holidays. Therefore, as stated by one library staff *“most of the time the gaming room is full of youth who are unemployed”* and university students who come to the library to study.

The gaming rooms demographic is different on the weekend and during school holidays. During that time, the gaming room is filled with boys of school going age. This is because, as informed by one of the library staff, school learners are not allowed into the gaming room on weekdays when schools are in session (including after school hours). Therefore, on school holidays and Saturdays high school boys replace the older users of the gaming room as it is the only time they are allowed to play games. It is an interesting dynamic that has developed over time and shows how the library staff and the community in general manage the library resources.

Not everyone that uses the library is enthusiastic about the presence of the gaming room. When asked the question “what do you value least about the library?” many of the participants (42%) stated that there was nothing they value the least at the library. However, 24% of the respondents said the lack of internet is something they value the least about the library. 16% of the respondents identified the gaming room as something they value the least about the library according to the survey results. When looking at the gender of the survey participants who value the gaming room the least, both males and females equally do not appreciate the presence of the gaming room. Regarding the age of those who are not particularly fond of the gaming room, fifty percent fell in the eighteen to twenty-four years’ category and the rest in the twenty-five to sixty-four years’ category. The only thing they all had in common is that they are university students. It appears that generally it is university students who do not see the value of the gaming room. I expected to find that most of the people who said they valued the gaming room the least would be female, just by going with the observations and interviews that revealed that only male youth patrons use the gaming room; however, that proved not to be the case. I suspect that the reason many students stated that they value the gaming room the least might have to do with noise. The librarians pointed out that they often must go inside the gaming room to tell the video game players to quiet down. I observed that the gaming room users also make sure to keep the door to the room closed to minimise the noise.

The introduction of the gaming room serves as a prime example of how the TCL has expanded the conventional definition of a library and broadened its capabilities. This has resulted in the library attracting users who might not have been regular users before then such as male youths who are not in school or the workplace.

#### 4.4.3 Children at the library

Another group of people who frequently visit the library in groups is school age children both primary and high school age. Every day after school and during school holidays, I observed schoolchildren coming into the library typically in groups of three or more and less frequently in pairs. Primary school children invariably come in groups while a rare number of high school age children came alone. Similarly, the library staff in both libraries made the same observations. When asked whether patrons typically came to the library in pairs, groups or individually they unanimously stated that younger patrons, particularly those in primary and high school, tended to come in groups. The reason that school age children are inclined to come in groups, according to library staff, is to do work together. When they have a school project they usually go to the library in groups to either do it together (they use the library as a place to work together), to use the library resources such as computers or to ask the library staff for assistance in researching the projects.

However, young children also come to the library in groups for leisure, predominantly during school holidays and very rarely on Saturdays when the TCL is also open. I noticed a few primary school aged children at the TCL during the winter school break who came in in groups to read library books and play with toys. They were often the same group of children who came to the library nearly every day and even brought lunch boxes, which they must leave in the storage shelves at the entrance. On average, the children stayed in the library for around four hours.

One particular day during the school holidays I witnessed three girls around the age of nine enter the library and went to the bookshelves for children's fiction. They browsed the shelves for a few minutes, and all came and sat on one of couches where I was seated, facing me. They all had the same picture book written by Desmond Tutu in Setswana and proceeded to read quietly for twenty minutes. They then went back to the shelves again, took out other books and headed to the children's section. A few minutes, later four boys of similar ages to the girls came into the library and headed to the children's section as well. After twenty to thirty minutes, the girls returned to the couches to read. Curious as to why they came back to the couches, I asked, and they responded that the boys were bothering them by being loud.

Children tend to come to the library with other children, in groups of two or more. In general, parents and caregivers do not bring their children to the library. Only three respondents from my survey revealed that they often bring their children to the TCL; one is male while the other two are women. All are between the ages of 25 and 64 and all are employed or self-employed. In their study focusing on how children use public libraries Powell et al. (1984) also found that only 13.6 percent of the participants, who were eighteen years and older, reported that they visited the library with parents when they were children. Most of participants, 56%, either visited a public library alone or with a friend when they were children; 34.9% went alone and 21.1 with a friend. A 1992 newspaper article on the L.A times by Danielle Fouquette spoke of a phenomenon called latchkey children. Latchkey kids are described as children who are unsupervised for some hours after school when their parents are still at work (Fouquette, 1992). Parents then see libraries as perfected places for their unsupervised children because of the view of libraries as "wholesome, productive places where people are engaged in academic pursuits" (Fouquette, 1992). Regarding parents not taking their children to public libraries it appears that it is not an occurrence unique only to the TCL and LCL.

The staff at both libraries said they would like to see parents visiting with their children and complained about parents' lack of interest. One of the librarians at the TCL commented that she feels like the librarians are doing the job that parents should be doing, as some parents send their children so that the librarians can help them with their homework. They also stated

that parents do not seem to know that there is a children's section in the library, despite the library orientations they offer at the beginning of every year, where they can bring their kids. The head librarian at the LCL remarked that in all the years she has worked at the library (since its inception) she has yet to see a parent bring their child(ren) to the library. The librarians see the lack of parents visiting with their children as an indication of not being involved in their children's education. Echoing the sentiments of the librarians interviewed in my study, a librarian interviewed by Fouquette (1992) also maintained that it's not their role to provide day care and baby-sit children who come to their library without adult supervision. She remarked that sending their children made parents feel good, however, she maintained, many librarians do not think they should replace after-school care.

I witnessed only one parent who had brought her child to the library at the TCL. The woman who appeared to be in her forties came in with her nine-year-old son (I overheard her telling the librarian her son's age at the circulation desk). It appeared to be their first time visiting as she told the librarian that she was informed it was possible to bring her child. They were directed to the children's section and the woman went to the study room a few minutes later leaving her son in the children's section.

A noteworthy finding at the LCL is that of a group of eight children from a local school of learners with learning disabilities who come to the library every day. In conversation with the librarians I learned that these schoolchildren I saw in the children's section and others playing outside come to the library during the week (Monday to Friday) after school. They are brought to the library by the driver of their scholar transport and stay for two hours while the driver fetches other kids from other schools. They have been coming to the library for three years and have formed a bond with the librarians who assume a custodial role. While at the library they stay in the children's section to read books and play with toys. The librarians take turns staying with them in the children's section until their transport returns. They normally let them run around free in the premises of the library, except in the adult section. When the children arrive, the librarians close the door leading to the adult section to avoid disturbing the other users. A friendly relationship has developed between the library staff (including the security staff) and the children. The librarians allow the children to play games on their cell phones and sometimes, as witnessed on one of the days conducting fieldwork, buy them sweets.

Because children typically visit the library on their own there is a dearth of pre-school children. I observed that young children who visit the library are typically around the age of eight years and older. This is usually the age when most parents allow and trust their children to go off on their own. The very young children (those of pre-school age) who do visit the library do so in groups from local crèches. Librarians in both libraries indicated that they sometimes go to their

local crèches, as part of the community outreach programme, with books and toys to read to and play with the children. Another way pre-school children access library services is when their educators arrange visits to the library. Like other library users, it is often the crèches that are close to the library that can bring their children to the library.

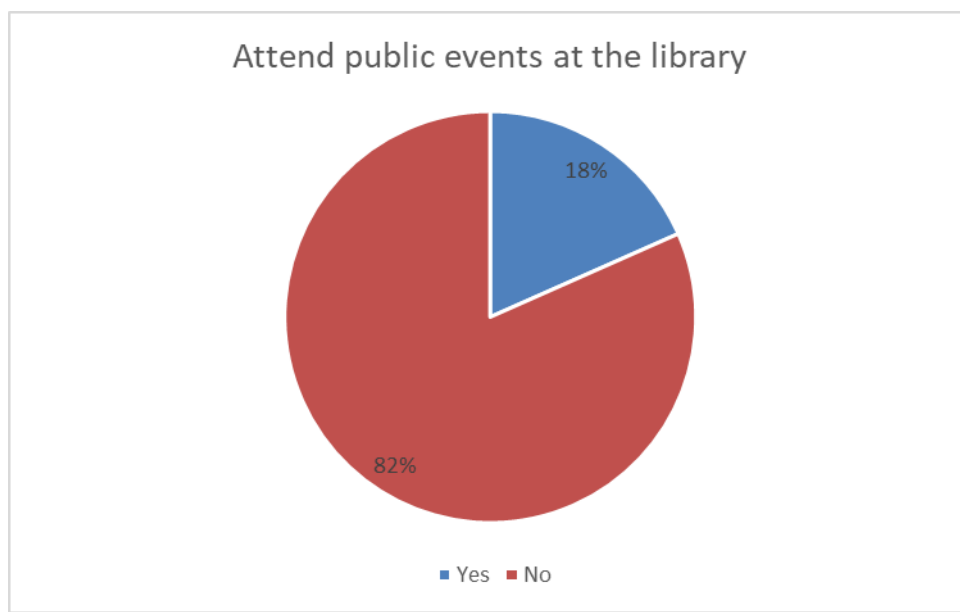
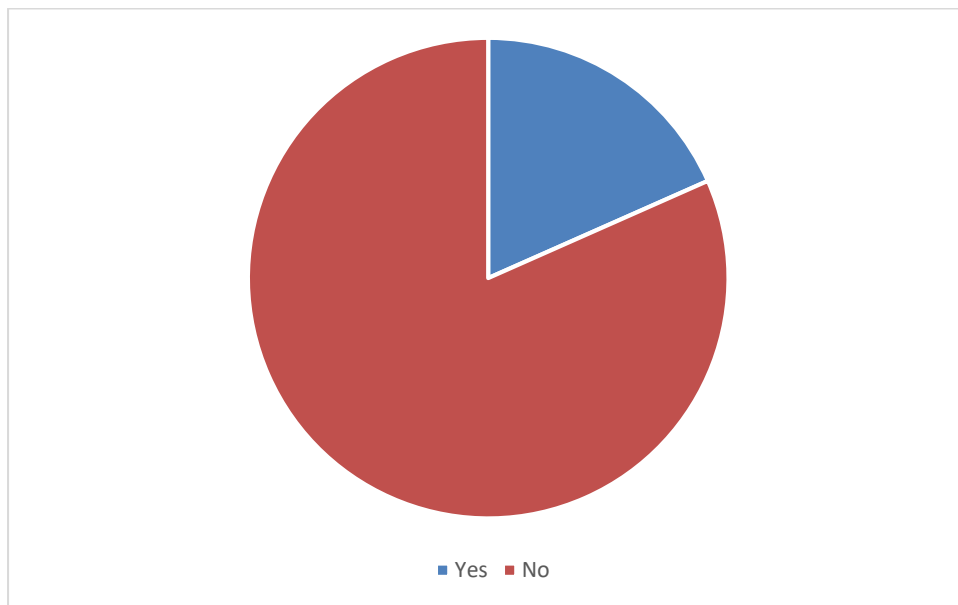
My hypothesis of why parents do not bring their children is because most did not have libraries growing up and are relatively new in their areas. Consequently, a culture of using libraries has not developed among many homes and children took the initiative to go by themselves. Perhaps they started visiting the libraries after an orientation at school or maybe through a friend. Maybe they are 'latchkey kids' whose parents are working or, like the children from the special school at the LCL, they are dropped them off at the library every day for a couple of hours.

#### 4.4.4. The Public Space of the Library

Like many libraries, the TCL offers a few public presentations on various topics. Of the survey respondents, however, only eighteen percent had ever come to a public presentation (see figure 4.9). The type of presentations they attended included one from the National Youth Agency Development (NYDA) and a presentation about personal finances. About ninety percent of those who had attended a presentation at the library said they had attended the NYDA presentation. The reason for the over representation of said presentation could be that it was still fresh in their minds as it had taken place during the time I was doing research (I was also invited to attend by the organiser). The presentation took place in the thatch-roof area away from the main library building and lasted for roughly three hours- from 10 am to 1 pm on a Friday.

Over sixty people (who fall under the category of youth - those under the age of thirty-five years) were in attendance and most went to the library with the sole purpose of attending the presentation. A few of those who joined the presentation were there to do other things at the library and decided to also attend the presentation. They quickly went back inside the main library building once the presentation was over and resumed what they were doing, most of whom were studying in the study area.

Figure 4.9: Attend public events at the library



The ward councillor who organised the presentation from the NYDA frequently comes to the library to make photocopies or use the printer for his work. He is very involved in youth development in his ward, which also includes the TCL, and uses the library to host workshops and presentations for young people in the area. On two occasions I observed him printing out documents related to the NYDA workshop he was hosting. Conversations with the library staff later revealed that he often assists the library by providing paper for the photocopier and printing machines when they run out. One of the librarians who was not a part of the interviews informed me that the library is better off since the ward councillor took office. The councillor acts as a conduit between the library and the municipality. Whenever the library is lacking something, such as paper, they call the councillor and the situation is quickly rectified. Before

they had to wait long periods for the municipality to supply the library with what was needed or requested.

Apart from the public presentations mentioned above, there are public events that are hosted at the TCL and the LCL every year. This was revealed by librarians interviewed at both libraries. There is what is referred to as a “calendar of events” for all four of the libraries that fall under the Moretele local municipality. As was explained to me, a calendar of events is a list of public presentations and celebrations hosted by the libraries each year. Most of the events are the same time each year, the only thing that changes is the location at which they are held. At the beginning of each year the librarians from the four libraries meet to decide which library will host which event, in other words the events are alternated between the four libraries under the municipality. Some of the events or celebrations hosted by the libraries are youth day commemorations, Human Rights Day which in 2019 was presented by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) at the TCL, Heritage Day celebrations, Spelling Bees hosted together with the Department of Basic Education and a play day for young children.

#### 4.5 The Library as Third Place

In answer to the broad question “is the TCL and the LCL third places”? results from my study suggest that the TCL meets most of the criteria of Oldenburg and Brisset’s third place. Following below is a discussion and comparison of how the TCL and to a lesser extent the LCL meet six characteristics of a third place.

##### **1) Third places offer a neutral ground where people can come and go with ease, all are welcome and treated equally**

At both libraries patrons move about the libraries with ease. There is no restriction to who can enter; thus patrons range from young children to older people, schoolchildren and university students as well as those who are employed and unemployed. I observed many people, particularly children and the youth, going in and out of the building freely many times. These two groups move around the library going from one area to another, outside and coming back in numerous times in a day compared to older patrons who usually go to one section of the library usually the circulation desk waiting for photocopies and then leave.

Many supporters of youth spaces such as Derr and Rhodes (2010); Feinberg and Keller (2010) and Bernier, Males and Rickman (2014) view libraries as public spaces that can provide young people who are often marginalised and over policed with a sense of place. Libraries are therefore seen as spaces and places that can be used to include and integrate youth into civil society (Derr and Rhodes, 2010; Feinberg and Keller, 2010 and Bernier, Males and Rickman,

2014). This view is that young people, along with other library users, are entitled to library space on an equal basis. Bolan (2009) cited in Feinberg and Keller (2010: 34) declares that: "[t]eenagers today long to be needed, to be respected, and to belong -- and libraries are ideal places for these things to happen. By creating a space designed especially for teens, librarians present themselves with the perfect opportunity to embrace this age group full force." When compared to the literature on public spaces for young people, the TCL, specifically, is very welcoming. The inclusion of video games in the audio-visual room, a space that has been appropriated by local young men, is testament of the library's efforts at accommodating everyone.

## **2) Information exchange, be it formal discussion or a casual chat, is the main activity**

The TCL, in particular, offers patrons a place to meet with friends and fellow students to discuss and study together. The design of the library is intended to facilitate discussion among patrons with a discussion room located far away from other sections of the library to not disrupt other users. Indeed, to go to the discussion room, one must pass through the entrance at the front/circulation desk and go down a short passage past the toilets. The discussion room has four solid walls and two wooden doors compared to other sections of the library, which are divided by glass walls. The second door leads to the outside of the library for patrons to move in and out of the discussion room. People inside the room are free to talk in loud voices, as was observed on two occasions.

The other area patrons use for formal and casual discussion is the thatch-area on the outside of the library building. Like the discussion room, it is located on the side furthest from the study room and reading area opposite the discussion room and the children's section. With plugs to connect laptops patrons, often use the thatch-roof area to meet, chat and work together or attend events.

## **3) Third places are easily accessible to the broader community and usually found close to public transportation**

The TCL meets this criterion as it is situated next to a busy main road that passes through many of the villages in the municipality. The road is one of the few tarred roads in the municipality therefore all public transportation, buses and taxis, and most cars pass by this road to while travelling to and from the nearest town, shopping mall and places of work.

The LCL on the other hand is not visible from the only tarred road running through the village. It is about a 5-minute walking distance from the road with a dirt road leading to the library. There is also no sign next to the road informing people of a library. According to the head



librarian at the LCL a sign was knocked over by a car and has not been replaced. Consequently, the library is not easily known by those who might not reside in the village. The implication of this is that the LCL does not attract many patrons because they might not be aware of its existence. The first time I went to the LCL I had to ask for directions whereas I was aware of the TCL while passing by the road. It is also at the TCL that I found out about the LCL. I can assume that people who do not live in the village where the LCL is located might have a similar situation.

**4) Their operating hours are outside the regular weekday working hours to cater for evening and weekend visitors**

The TCL's weekdays operating hours falls short of Oldenburg and Brisset's third place as it closes in the afternoon; those who work regular working hours are unable to use the library during the week. While the TCL does open on Saturdays it closes at one o'clock compared to its closing time of five o'clock in the afternoon on weekdays. Those who are unable to visit the library during the week are able to come on a Saturday even though the operating hours are considerably shorter. Some of the patrons criticised the operating hours and said that the hours should be extended, especially during exam times. For example, one female student suggested that the library services can be improved by "Increase the number of the library operating hours", while another also a female student stated that "staff must be friendly and open till late during exams". The operating hours might explain why many of the library patrons are students considering that during those time many people are either at school or at work.

The LCL on the other end does not open on weekends. Its operating hours also shorter than the TCL as it closes at four o'clock in the afternoon. Thus, regarding its operating hours the LCL fails to meet this criterion of a third place. Both libraries do not meet the standard of third place in this regard with the LCL fairing worse than the MCL.

**5) Their clientele is fairly consistent, and their activities and diversity create a lively atmosphere**

The TCL attracts a variety of patrons from young children to older people; primary school learners all through to university students; unemployed youth to self-employed and employed patrons. The services offered by the library as well as the activities carried out by patrons run the gamut from studying, borrowing books, playing video games and using computers to photocopying, using the place to meet with friends and study partners as well as hosting public presentations.

The gaming room provides male youths with a place in the library that is specifically designed for young people to socialise. Young men who are unemployed and those who use the library

to study go to the gaming room to socialise or to take a break in between studying. They use the library as a social place for recreational purposes where they come with friends or meet at the library to play video games. Similarly, young women use the library as a social place wherein they come with their friends and study partners to use the computers, study together and engage in energetic discussions either in the discussion room or underneath the thatch roof area. Many students and high school learners meet at the library thereby creating a lively atmosphere. They were often observed working together and chatting at the same time.

Primary school kids, who frequently come to the library by themselves without adults, also bring a different energy as they too almost always visit both the libraries in small groups. They also keep the librarians occupied because they must continually check on them and keep them busy with toys and books. When primary school children are present in large numbers at the library, mainly on school holidays at the TCL and afterschool hours at the LCL, there is a hive of activity with them moving in and out of the library (and making noise with the librarians telling them to quiet down regularly).

The other group of patrons who create a diverse atmosphere at the TCL are those who visit to use the electronic services such as the photocopier, printer, scanner and typing on the computer. Although they stay the shortest amount of time at the library, they are a large and regular feature. They are not only students and school learners but also regular community members such as crèche educators busy with paperwork, youth typing CVs in the hope of finding employment, those starting or growing their businesses, parents, grandparents and community leaders.

#### **6) There is an innate feeling of attachment for frequent users**

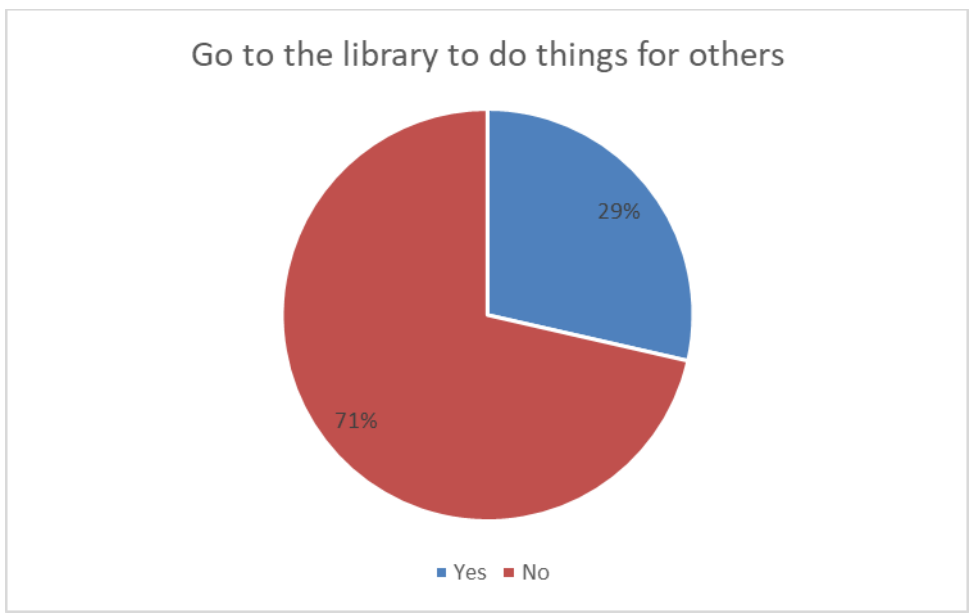
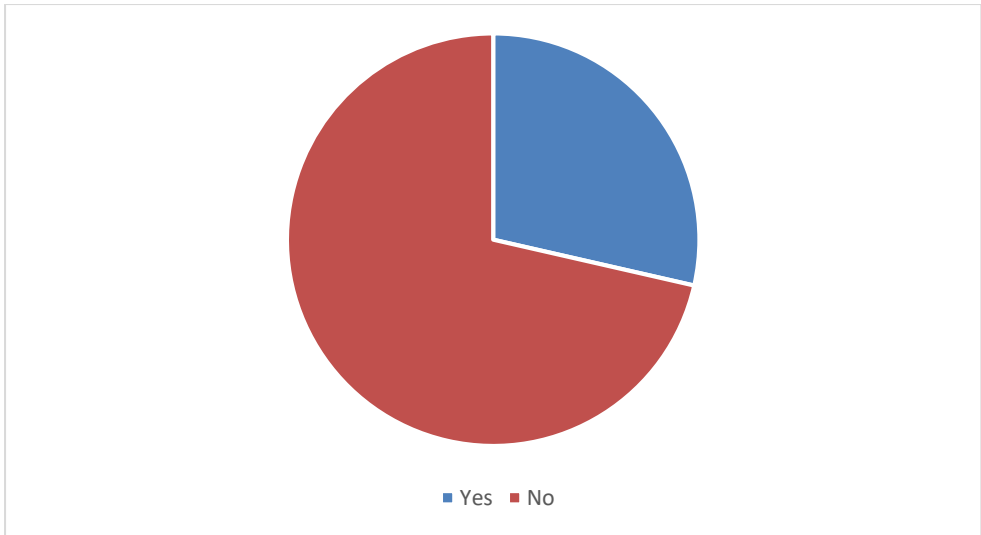
For some who patronise the library frequently, the TCL forms a part of their daily routine. University students visit the library regularly, some even come every day. The library is an invaluable place for this subsection of the community offering a secure and quiet place to study and other necessary resources in one building. The LCL also has frequent users, in the form of the learners from the special school who visit the library daily.

The two community libraries that are the focus of my research certainly exhibit the qualities of a third place where people go to relax and enjoy the company of others. They show characteristics of the first place as people come to the library to meet other people, come with other people to the library and occasionally do other things for family and friends. As second places the two libraries are often used for work related purposes such as using computers to type documents for work as well as printing and photocopying documents. To return to Habermas' idea of the public sphere as a place in society where every person, regardless of social class, can partake in conversations of interest to the general public, Elmborg (2011)

states that third spaces are a new form of the public sphere in the twenty first century. Elmborg (2011: 348) goes further to declare that “[i]n seeking the real shared spaces between us and de-emphasizing the structures and rules of the library, librarians can be attuned to the imaginative and transformative potential of the library for those who come seeking adventure in its mild climates”. The TCL specifically has indeed transformed itself into a third place with the gaming room as a good example of young men ‘hanging out’ with friends while playing video games. Both the TCL and LCL serve as a public sphere in the Habermassian sense where people take part in events and discussions hosted by the library or hosted at the library. They play an important role by providing space for the various events and discussions that are of general interest to the public such as the NYDA presentation, Youth Day commemorations and the Human Rights presentations which were hosted at the TCL under the thatch roof. The others such as the Heritage Day celebrations and Spelling Bees to name a few were also hosted by the libraries but at an outside venue. These are events that may otherwise not be available to the communities if there were no libraries.

#### 4.6. The Library as Technology Repository

*Figure 4:10: do things for others at the library*



Participants were further asked “Do you ever come to do other things for other people?” (see figure 4.10). Out of the 29 percent who said “yes”, the people who said they did things for other people at the library included family members, friends, and neighbours. As shown in table 4.2, the activities that users perform on behalf of others frequently involve using technological services such as scanning, photocopying, faxing documents and typing CVs. The overrepresentation of such types of activities at the library is indicative of the socio-economic environment in which the libraries are situated. The Moretele Local Municipality in which the libraries are located is a “previously disadvantaged area”<sup>6</sup> where many households cannot afford to have computers. As a result, most of the people rely on the libraries to access computers, photocopiers and scanning devices. All the services are free with the exception of

<sup>6</sup> In South Africa, a previously disadvantaged area is a place, prior to 1994, where people lacked many of the basic services such as electricity, piped water, sanitation and health services.

the photocopier, scanning and printing machines. There is a small set fee of 50c for photocopying and printing, while R1 is charged for scanning documents.

**Table 4.3: Activities users perform for others.**

- 
- *“My friends, family members and my neighbours. Photocopies, internet access. So that our library must be known and continue operating because it helps us with many services that are very much important to our lives”.*
  - *“Other study mates who seek assistance on a topic or subject. And neighbours and friends who seek library services and print outs and to use computer. The reason I do things for other people is because they need help and it pleases me to help others”.*
  - *“for my mom, at times she is busy”.*
  - *“photocopies and scan documents for my brother”.*
  - *“Sometimes I come to make copies for my sister because at home we don't have photocopy machine”.*
  - *“Curriculum vitae for my father, because he was supposed to go to work and he came back later”.*
  - *“To do photocopies for family members. When I tell them I am going to the library they sometimes give me their documents to photocopy”.*
- 

Many people come to the library for the sole purpose of making photocopies or to use computers. This observation is substantiated by the library staff at both libraries. According to one of the library staff at the LCL more than twenty people in a day come to use computers and to have their documents photocopied. At the TCL, the librarian noted that because there is no internet, computers are generally used for typing and printing out CVs and assignments. This is in accordance with my observation where most of the people who were observed using the computers are young people. Older people who want to use computers typically ask the library staff to type and print documents for them. More women than men were more likely to come to the library to make photocopies, incidentally this is the service that attracts the most people to the library. All the library staff interviewed mentioned that when the photocopiers are not working the number of people who visits the library drops considerably.

According to library staff at both the LCL and TCL, many people struggle to use computers. The librarians must help some of the patrons use the computers and in some cases they conduct classes to teach patrons to use computers. Words like empowerment, skills and

development were used by the library staff when referring to teaching patrons how to use computers. All interviewed library staff were of the view that community members should be able to use computers on their own without assistance but admitted that many people had limited or non-existent knowledge.

An unexpected revelation from the library staff is that many young people lacked computer skills. As a way of empowering them, the library staff do not type for the youth but rather teach them how to work a computer. They acknowledged that they are willing to type documents for older people who need assistance. On one occasion the staff at the TCL decided to host a computer class after witnessing many of the patrons struggling with using computers. The library staff decided to offer basic computer training to learners who attend the local Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) schools after they realised that they could not use computers. Three schools were involved in the computer classes, which were divided into “theory and practical”. As was explained to me, the theory part consisted of the library staff teaching the ABET learners about different parts of the computer while the practical included teaching them to type CVs. The ABET learners were split into groups and were taught by the library staff in the computer room, gaming room and children’s section. Beside the classes that have so far been conducted only with the ABET learners, the interviewed library staff state that it has become a frequent occurrence to teach individual patrons how to use computers and they see this as a way of empowering the community they serve.

This was also observed during research as the library staff would frequently go over to someone using a computer or were called over to assist them. In this manner the library offered people opportunities for experiences, skills and relationships that are otherwise unavailable.

The most common criticism was related to the lack of Wi-Fi and internet. Of the forty-nine survey respondents, twenty-five of them answered that the library services can be improved by offering free Wi-Fi and internet connectivity. As was revealed in the literature by Raju and Raju (2010) and Kota (2019) many people in South Africa are unable to afford access to the internet and consequently, many turn to the library for internet access. According to Raju and Raju (2010: 4) South Africa has the characteristics of both the “developing world” and the “developed world”. “At the “developed world” end of the continuum, there is a surfeit of information and resources, and on the other end there is a dearth of information and resources: libraries have to play the role of mediator and provider of information, respectively”. Kota (2019) is of the view that a new approach in designing existing and new libraries is necessary considering that there is unequal access to data, internet services and existing public facilities in South Africa. Public spaces (and places of work) are the main sources of

internet access for many South Africans (Kota, 2019). The issue of a lack of internet in both libraries has been going on since 2017.

#### 4.7. The Library as a Source of Information



*Picture 7: High school learner reading a study guide from shelf next to front desk in circulation area*

A theme that arose from the survey responses is the library as a source of information. Of the people surveyed 32% identified the primary function of the TCL as a source of information. Both libraries have large collections of reference materials used by school learners and university students. A quick walk through the bookshelves revealed a variety of books on subjects such as accounting, business, mathematics and science to name a few. There are also university textbooks which are utilised by some of the students. Next to the front desk at the circulation area is a shelf with a collection of study guides (picture 7). The collection appears to be aimed at high school learners, with a smaller collection for those in primary school.

#### 4.8. The Importance of the Library to the Community

The scarcity and absence of places where people can access technological resources such as computers, photocopiers, scanning, and printing machines makes the library invaluable for many community members. The availability of technological services and books at no cost

was indicated by many survey respondents as being beneficial to the community. Indeed, nineteen of the forty-nine people surveyed stated that the community benefits from having these services at the library. For this reason, the library is seen as very important to the community by library patrons, some of their responses regarding the importance of the library are listed in table 4.4 below:

**Table 4.4: Importance of library to community**

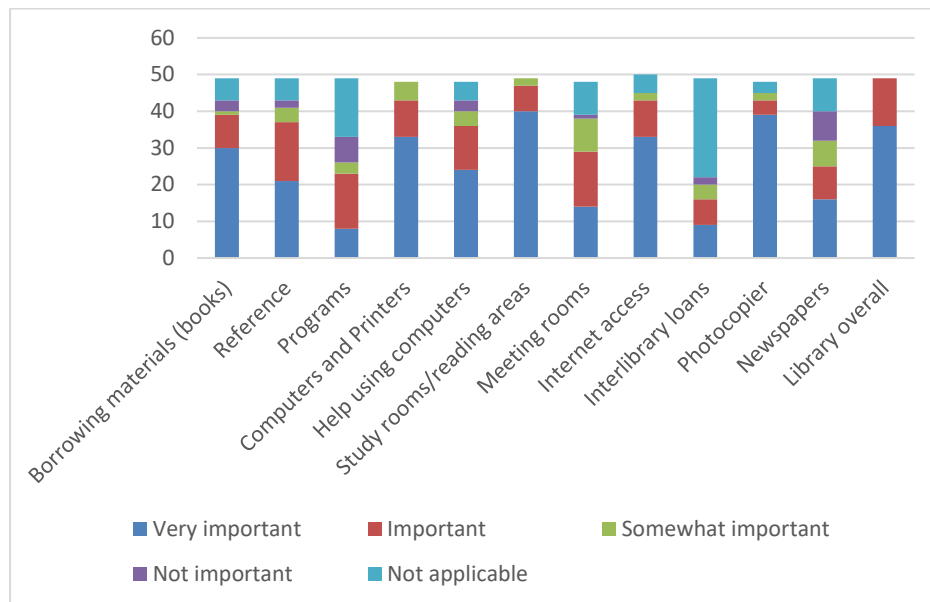
- 
- *“The library provides services that are essential to the community such as borrowing books, use computer, do print outs provide students with a place to study their school work. It benefits me because I can use my time at the library to do school work and to meet with other students to study, discuss and engage in a dialogue on a related topic.”*
  - *“We can study peacefully and borrow study material. The library workers also help with applications.”*
  - *“It provides a safe and clean environment for me to study. For the community I usually see learners from local schools in the library to complete their school projects using the library's resources.”*
  - *“cheap copies, computer skills and reading skills”*
  - *“It's the best place to study and play games.”*
  - *“Library benefits me a lot because at the library if you want to use something you don't have to pay or something it's just for free.”*
  - *“It provides me and the community with a quiet area to study for exams, it also provides cheap photocopies, printing and access to computers, scanning and binding.”*
  - *“We find information we need. We don't have to travel a long distance for information.”*
  - *“it provides the community with information to improve their lives.”*
  - *“I am able to borrow books that I cannot afford and make copies at a reasonable price.”*
- 

The first librarian interviewed at the TCL imparted a story which she said illustrates the importance of the library to the surrounding community. She told me a story of how the people from the community, where the library is situated, prevented the library from being burned down by angry protesters from a nearby village. The protesters, angry about a lack of service delivery from the Moretele local municipality had decided that they were going to burn down the library; a practice that is commonplace among protesting citizens in South Africa dating back to the apartheid years (Sicetsha, 2018). However, the people living close to the library managed to talk them out of it by telling them that the library is important to the community.



Emphasizing the importance of the library to the community, the librarian paraphrasing what she heard from some of the community members used these words: “if you burn down the library, you will be killing us [the community]”. Another point she raised is the fact that the TCL has never been vandalised or broken into. According to her this is a testament that the community recognise the importance of the library in their lives-- or it might be because the library has twenty-four-hour security.

Figure 4.11: Importance of library services



Patrons were asked to rate the services that are offered at the MCL from ‘very important’ to ‘not important’ see figure 4.11. These five services: the study room; photocopiers; computers and printers; internet access and borrowing books, were consistently rated as very important compared to others. The study room is valuable to many of the patrons and was ranked as very important by forty people out of forty-nine, with seven people saying it was ‘important’ and two people stating that it is ‘somewhat important’. The use of photocopiers had thirty-nine patrons rating them as very important, while computers and printers and internet access both had thirty-three out of forty-nine respondents rating them as ‘very important’. Library patrons also viewed borrowing library materials as essential with thirty of the forty-nine saying it was very important and nine regarding it as important. Overall, the majority of the respondents, thirty-six out of forty-nine, regard the library as very important. Thirteen of them said the library was important.

#### 4.9. Challenges and Issues at the Libraries

The two libraries are not without their fair share of challenges. Most of their challenges are a direct result of the inadequacies of the local municipality. Both libraries have no internet

access; for the past three years. This affects the day-to-day operations of the libraries; books must be checked out manually and recorded, patrons do not have access to online services therefore computers are only used for typing.

Compounded with a lack of internet, the situation in LCL is even more dismal as the library has had no of electricity, for over a year. The librarians are only able to keep the photocopy machine and the computer at the circulation desk working. However, a shortage of printer toners, which the library has been without for three months, means that the photocopy machine also does not work. The lights and computers meant for patrons are not working and most of the library services that require the use of computers have been halted. The municipality only managed to send out electricians to the library during the time when I was conducting this research. Library usage has been severely affected by these issues.

The children's section at the TCL has a severe shortage of books. Over half of the books at the TCL in the children's section were destroyed by water from the air conditioner. Shelves that were once full of books now stand empty with the damaged books removed. This is one of the issues mentioned by one of the patrons (patron L1-9, Female) who replied that she often visits the library with her children. When asked how the library can improve its services, she replied that "*the kids section is very poor*" implying that the children's section can be improved.

#### 4.10. Conclusion

My research yielded several important findings regarding who uses the libraries and for what purpose. The most significant of these findings are noted below.

The user profiles offer a small hint to an extremely diverse member body with differing needs. It shows that the library patrons were almost entirely people who live close to the library and surrounding villages not more than half an hour away. In terms of gender, the survey revealed that more women (55%) than men patronised the TCL. The seating sweeps, however, revealed an even number of male and female patrons at the library.

With regard to the age of library users, the patron surveys revealed that library users are relatively young with half of the patrons being under the age of twenty-five, just over 40% were under 64, 8% of the respondents did not give their age. This is because many young people use libraries for educational purposes. For the occupations of patron's 76 percent reported that they are university students. This finding is consistent with observations and interviews with the library staff. It is also in line with the view of Powell et al (1984) who stated that school learners and university students are more likely to visit public libraries frequently. The theme

that appeared across all the interviews with the library staff from both the TCL and the LCL was university students, particularly students from the University of South Africa (UNISA) who used the library on a regular basis. In both libraries, UNISA students made up a significant amount of the patrons.

Patrons were divided with regards to how often they used the library. The survey revealed that forty-two percent of patrons visit the library at least once every week. 19 % of those surveyed revealed that they frequent the TCL library every day. Students and video game players generally stay the longest at the library and are also likely to visit the library frequently.

The TCL is very popular among those who need a place to study. For example, when asked “why did you come to this library today?” the most common survey response was to study with own material. The prominence of private study is supported by the observation that patrons, usually students and high school learners, mostly had their own backpacks to carry their books. The LCL on the other hand does not attract many people who want to study because of the ongoing problems with electricity.

There is a social aspect of visiting the library with some patrons accompanied by friends and/or study partners. Compared to older patrons, younger patrons – both male and female – were inclined to come to the library in pairs or groups. Responses regarding why people come to the TCL together include learning, studying together and to discuss. There are also patrons who use the library as a meeting place, for instance, young men who meet at the TCL to play video games. This all indicates the social facet of the library. Regarding the gaming room, young men and boys are the primary users. The gendered use of the gaming room might be due to the perception of playing video games being a male activity. Nevertheless, the TCL unites people by providing social opportunities for them to interact in ways that would otherwise be unavailable without the existence of the library.

Another group of people who frequently visit the library in groups is school age children both primary and high school age. The reason why school age children are inclined to come in groups is to do schoolwork together. When they have a school project, they use the library as a place to work together and use the library resources such as computers or to ask staff for assistance in researching the projects. The libraries are also used as public spaces to hold public presentation.

Results from my study suggest that the TCL meets most of the criteria of Oldenburg and Brisset’s third place. The two community libraries certainly exhibit some of the qualities of a third place where people go to relax and enjoy the company of others. They show characteristics of the first place as people use to the library to meet other people, come with other people, and occasionally run errands for others. As second places, the two libraries are

often used for work related purposes such as using computers to type as well as printing and photocopying documents.

For many people, the libraries are their main source of technological resources. Users pay little to nothing to use these resources and so many people come to the library for the sole purpose of making photocopies or use computers. Along with the study room, the libraries' technology resources attract the most patrons.

A theme that arose from the survey responses is the library as a source of information. Of the people surveyed 32 percent identified the primary function of the TCL as a source of information. The availability of technology services and books at no cost at the library was indicated by respondents as being beneficial to the community. Indeed, nineteen of the forty-nine people surveyed stated that the community benefits from having these services at the library.

It is evident from my findings that the libraries are an important and invaluable resource to the communities they serve. The conclusion from my findings is the importance of community libraries as vibrant public spaces where people come to learn, seek information socialise and relax.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

#### 5.1. Overview of the study

In the introductory chapter of this dissertation I presented the theoretical framework of the third place as a way of understanding libraries. Specifically, my research aimed to elicit the role of community libraries as third places, and the extent they are used as third places. This is derived from the central research question which is conveyed as follows: “What are the perceptions and experiences of library users of two community libraries in Moretele local municipality in the North West Province?” A brief background of the two libraries in question was also provided along with the context of the study.

Chapter two focused on reviewing literature related to public and community libraries, and how they are used by patrons by providing case studies of library use in Africa and in three countries in Europe and America. The chapter also discussed literature regarding public libraries as an alternative public space for young people who are often relegated to the peripheries of public spaces. The literature review formed a theoretical perspective and foundation for developing the research instrument employed.

Chapter three discussed the research tools used to collect data. A mixed method approach, qualitative and quantitative, was utilised. Three research techniques; written patron surveys/questionnaires, face-to-face interviews and observations we utilised to investigate the profile of library patrons, observing library users behaviour and library staff interviews were deemed to be appropriate for this research project as they best meet the needs of this study.

In chapter four, I presented the results of my study. The findings showed that the libraries are regarded as quiet places to study, social places, third places, repositories of technology, and information sources. The importance of the library to the community was discussed along with some of the challenges and issues faced by the libraries.

This concluding chapter is therefore a summary of my research and its findings. This will be followed by a discussion on whether the libraries meet the qualification of third places. The implications of my research findings, scope for future research and limitations of my study and will also be discussed.

## 5.2 Findings of the study

My findings from the TCL suggest that the community library is a unique and necessary public space heavily utilised and greatly appreciated by the residents of the municipality. The library is clearly a very effective community space, and the data shows rather distinctly that the TCL complies with most of Oldenburg and Brissett's (1982) criteria for a successful third place in the following ways: people are able to come and go with ease at the TCL and all are accepted and treated equally. The principal activity is information exchange, whether through formal discussions, such as the workshops and presentations held at the library and learners and students doing schoolwork together, or spontaneous conversations of people meeting at the library to play video games. The library is situated next to a busy road thus it is easily accessible to the wider community and it is close to public transportation. It also opens on Saturdays to accommodate people who are not able to use it during the regular weekday working hours. Patrons like UNISA students, school learners, and video game players are consistent, and their activities and the diversity create a lively atmosphere. Subsequently, frequent users have an innate feeling of attachment to the library.

This is in congruence with literature on how public libraries are used by Fisher et al. (2007), Leckie and Hopkins (2002), Johnson and Griffis (2009) and Aabø et al. (2010). They concluded that public libraries are seen and used as a social place, and that the social aspect of visiting the library was important to respondents. It was also discovered that many people spent long periods of time at public libraries, some even visit every day. People can enter and meet freely at libraries and they utilise them in any way they deem to be useful. Libraries are being used as a meeting place to a great degree.

The LCL on the other hand fails to attract a diverse clientele (with only school learners being frequent users) because of the issues it currently experiences with electricity. Consequently, the LCL meets only a few of the criteria for third places. The library is hidden from view from the main public road; there aren't many people who use the library to create a diverse and dynamic atmosphere; and the operating hours of 9 am to 4 pm are within the regular weekday working hours therefore it does not accommodate evening and weekend visitors.

As was shown, both libraries were designed and expected to be used by all of the residents, and the TCL, specifically, does indeed attract a diverse user population. Both libraries, for instance, have children's sections which cater to the needs of young children with collections

of picture books and educational toys. There is space for people who wish to study, meeting spaces, recreational space (at the TCL) as well as technological resources such as computers, printers, photocopiers, etc. It is evident that both the Tshedimosetso community library and the Lebone community library fulfil valuable educational, informational, and social functions in the areas they are located, offering the public space to meet, work, and study; an environment that is not simple to replicate in any other way.

Analysis also clearly showed that the TCL and LCL are largely youth spaces; more young people use the libraries compared to other age groups. The former library comprises of school children, university students and unemployed youth who make up many of the patrons with the latter comprising of school children. For young people who are often relegated to the sidelines of public places libraries are essential in including them into the public sphere. An interesting observation is young children of primary school age often visit without adults; a phenomenon I chalked down to parents and caregivers not having access to libraries when they were children. Whether this theory holds true is a subject future research.

There is not much of a difference in terms of which gender patronises the library frequently. The written patron survey revealed that a little over half of the survey respondents 55% were women. The seating sweeps, however, revealed an even number of male and female patrons at the library on two separate days. It is evident that the library's differing services attracts both sexes equally.

We can see that the day-to-day lives of community members are absolutely connected to the TCL; a distinguishing feature of community libraries according to Mostert (1998). People who visit every day to study or play video games, those that rely on the library for technological resources and information along with those that use the space for public meetings and events, all view the library is an integral part of the community.

### 5.3. Limitations of the study

My study was restricted to the two libraries in question and therefore cannot be generalised to other libraries. Initially, I aimed to interview both library users and librarian, however, interviewing patrons proved to be difficult and so I decided to do without them. Admittedly, the patron interviews would have presented a more nuanced dimension to the study, but I believe the open-ended questions worked just as well as respondents could freely discuss their views of the library with pen and paper without my presence being a deterrence.

## 5.4. Recommendations

### 5.4.1. Recommendations relating to the study

Despite all the limitations, the conclusions recommend useful ideas the libraries can take to better serve their users. Internet and WIFI is of the utmost importance to the running of the libraries and for the library users to access online resources.

UNISA should form a partnership with the community libraries (or at least one of the libraries possibly the Tshedimosetso community library because it is the bigger of the two) to reach students where they are by making their online resources available at the library. Perhaps the university can provide the libraries with free WIFI for the students who use the libraries to access their online resources.

### 5.4.2. Recommendations for further studies

My research brought to the fore a couple of interesting phenomena that can be explored in future research. For instance:

- The unforeseen outcome of my research is the discovery of many UNISA students using the community libraries regularly. This poses a question for future research to find out why and how South African university students use public and community libraries?
- Another recommendation for future research is looking at why parents don't take their children to libraries?
- Do elderly people use public libraries?
- How do elder people from previously disadvantaged communities use community libraries?

## 5.5. Conclusion

The Tshedimosetso Community Library has grown into much more than a collection of books: it is a place where the community can gather, learn, and interact. Given the space restrictions and the issue of electricity the Lebone Community Library is currently unable to move past being a building with a collection of books.

In a democratic South Africa with its high rate of inequality and unemployment community libraries, offering free access to a wide variety of resources, now more important than before.



As a symbol of democracy, they bridge the gap by making space, information, and technological resources available to all. We now need more public libraries like the TCL, for every citizen to be included in the democratic process.

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**Appendix B**  
**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

04 June 2019

Title: The library as place: A study of the experiences and perceptions of community library users in the Moretele local municipality.

**Dear Prospective Participant**

My name is Itumeleng Sepeng. I am an Anthropology student at University of South Africa (Unisa). I am doing research towards my Masters with the assistance of my supervisor, Dr. IE Marais, the Chair of Anthropology and Archaeology.

**WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?**

I am conducting research on public spaces and would like to find out what the community members use the library for. Fundamentally I am interested in the services that are offered by the two libraries, how people make use of the space(s) within the library, what do library patrons think of the library (their perceptions) as well as an ethnographical observation of members/visitors.

**WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?**

I require information from library users of the two libraries situated in the Moretele local municipality, namely Mphebatho community library and Tladistad community library. As a user of one of these libraries, you are important to my study because you can provide me with valuable information regarding your view of the library, why you use it and how you make use of the services and spaces of the library.

### **WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?**

The study involves face to face open-ended questions to the Librarian and all library staff members. The interview will take approximately twenty minutes and the information will be used to draft an Activity Chart and a Resource Map. The Activity Chart will then be a document that will guide my observational research of what community members do in the library. Both these constructed documents will form part of the final report.

### **CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?**

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

### **WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

The ethnographic report will enhance and/or confirm member usage and enable the library staff to have a more holistic view of who their customers are and what they do at the library.

### **ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?**

I only require information on the visitors' usage of the library spaces. If there are any inconsistencies in usage, it will be filtered through a final interview with the Librarian as well as an Activity Chart and Resource Map which she will sign-off prior to starting the ethnographical observations.

### **WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?**

Confidentiality: You have the right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research. Your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings

Anonymity: Your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

Please keep in mind that it is sometimes impossible to make an absolute guarantee of confidentiality or anonymity in a small group of staff members.

### **HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?**

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a minimum period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable.

### **HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?**

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Itumeleng Sepeng on 073 266 3269 or email on [isepeng@gmail.com](mailto:isepeng@gmail.com).

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Itumeleng Sepeng on 073 266 3269 or email me at [isepeng@gmail.com](mailto:isepeng@gmail.com).

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr. IE Marais on 012 429 6479 or email [maraiie@unisa.ac.za](mailto:maraiie@unisa.ac.za).

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Thank you.

Itumeleng Sepeng

Student no. 61858323

**Appendix C**  
**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the face to face interview.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname..... (please print)

Participant Signature.....Date.....

Researcher's Name & Surname..... (please print)

Researcher's signature.....Date.....

## Appendix D: written patron survey

Please take a moment to answer this anonymous survey about the library. All questions are optional.

### Section 1: Please check one answer for each of the following:

1. Do you have a library card?                      Yes              No  
                 

2. On average, how often do you visit the library?  
    Daily              Weekly              Monthly              Less than  
    once a month              First time  
                                                           

3. How long do you typically stay at this library? (please check one).  
    Under 30 minutes      30-60 minutes      1-2 hours      2-4 hours      4-6 hours      over 6 hours  
                                                                         

4. How would you rate each of the following library services?  
    Excellent              Good              Fair              Poor              Don't know/Not applicable

Customer service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Collection (books, DVDs, music, newspapers, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programs (classes, story times, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online services (website, catalog, research databases, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ILL (Inter-library loan)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Library policies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Computers and printers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internet access	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hours of operation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall, how would you rate the library?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. How important is each of the following library services to you?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Don't know/Not Applicable
Borrowing materials (books, DVDs, music, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reference (research assistance from librarians)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programs (classes, storytimes, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Computers and printers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Help using computers, printers, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Study rooms/reading areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community meeting rooms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internet access	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ILL (Inter-library loan)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Photocopier	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Newspapers and magazines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall, how important is the library to you and your family?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Why did you come to this library today?

Please indicate the most important reason with the number 1 and check any others that apply with an X:

- use public meeting room
- use children's services
- Brows
- Borrow/ return books
- Look for information on a subject

- Meet a friend
- View artwork, displays, notice board
- Obtain help from library staff
- Read
- Study in the library with own materials
- Use photocopiers
- Use CD Roms
- Use the internet
- Other : please specify : \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 2: We value your opinions. Please answer the following questions:**

7. How long have you been visiting the library? (years or months)

8. Is this library your local branch? (Yes/No).  
(If No) what was your main reason for visiting this library?

9. Typically, what do you use the library for?

10. Do you usually come by yourself? (Yes/No).

11. Do you ever come with other people? (Yes/No).  
(If Yes) Who do you come with? For any particular reason?

12. Do you ever come to do things for other people? (Yes/No).  
(If Yes) Who have you done this for? What have you done for them? Why?

13. Have you ever come to a public presentation at this library? (Yes/No).  
(If Yes) which ones?

14. What do you value most about the library?



15. What do you value least about the library?

16. Where is your favourite location or place in this library?

17. In your opinion, what is the primary purpose of this library?

18. How could the library or its services be improved, if at all?

19. How does the library benefit you or the community?

**Section 3: Please tell us about yourself. Please check one answer for each of the following.**

20. How old are you?

- 12 or under
- 13-18
- 19-24
- 25-64
- 65 or older

21. What gender best describes you?

- Male
- Female

22. What is your employment status?

- Employed or self-employed
- Retired
- Unemployed

Thank you for your time! If you have questions about this survey or about the library, please contact us at [isepeng@gmail.com](mailto:isepeng@gmail.com) or 0732663269.

## Appendix E

### Interview questions for librarians

- 1) Typically, who comes to the library? From which villages do library patrons come from?
- 2) How many people come to the library on a daily, weekly, monthly and yearly basis?
- 3) Can you describe the typical library patron?
  - (i) Ratio between male and female.
  - (ii) Age group.
  - (iii) Percentage of those who come alone versus those who arrive in pairs/groups.
  - (iv) Normally who uses which section the most.
  - (v) Percentage of those who borrow books.
- 4) What do most people come to do at the library?
- 5) Do you think patrons know the rules of the library? Do they abide by the library rules? How do they typically behave?
- 6) How common is unacceptable behaviour in the library?
- 7) Could you provide an example of an unacceptable behaviour encountered in the library?
- 8) Does the community appreciate the library in your experience? Do they see it as useful to their lives in your experience?
- 9) Does the library host any events? If yes, what are they?
- 10) Aside from providing the public with access to information, what other important function(s) does the library play in the community?
- 11) How do you see the library being used socially?
- 12) What proportion of your interactions with the patrons involve helping them use the computer?
- 13) Could you briefly describe your primary job responsibilities?