

## Now into big strides: report on statutory status for the South African Library and Information Services sector

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*The road to acquiring statutory status for the Library and Information Services (LIS) sector in South Africa has been traversed numerous times over the last sixty to seventy years. In more recent years, there has been renewed vigour to explore the acquisition of statutory status for the sector in South Africa. As part of this process of acquiring statutory status, a number of studies have been conducted. This paper examines the latest drive by the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) to solicit the views of a cross section of LIS personnel with regard to the sector acquiring statutory status. This issue of the acquisition of statutory status is earmarked as a priority in the recently developed Strategic Directions 2010-2014 document of LIASA. At the 2009 LIASA Conference, a clear mandate was given for a national survey to be conducted to solicit the views of personnel that work in the LIS sector with regard to the said issue. The authors administered a short questionnaire to a sample population representing all categories of staff irrespective of whether they belonged to an association or not. The questionnaire was administered using Survey Monkey. This paper reports the results of that survey. Given the overwhelming support for the acquisition of statutory status, the authors examined significant elements that would need to be crafted into the governance structures of a statutory body for the sector.*

**Keywords:** LIASA; statutory status; library and information services

### 1 Introduction and background

The attempts to acquire statutory status for the Library and Information Services (LIS) sector in South Africa dates back to the first half of the twentieth century (Louw 1990; Raju 2006). There have been intermittent peaks between then and the present in terms of dedicated focus to acquiring statutory status. In 2004, there was a concerted effort by the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) to drive a new investigation into acquiring statutory status for the sector. In 2006, Raju was mandated by LIASA to lead this new investigation. From then to date, there have been a number of minor studies and report backs at LIASA conferences and in publications in LIS journals on the investigation into the acquisition of statutory status for the LIS sector in South Africa. The current investigation into statutory status for the LIS profession builds on the research conducted by Raju (2006). The publication

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from this research effort gave, inter alia, a historical account of the predecessors of LIASA and their efforts to provide effective and efficient representation of the LIS sector. Further, the study presented three possible options for pursuance in the quest for acquiring statutory status. These three options were:

- acquiring statutory status via new legislation that is specific to the discipline;
- acquiring statutory status via existing legislation, namely, the LRA 66 of 1995 which will result in unionisation; and
- acquiring statutory status via an independent legislation and the LRA (Raju 2006).

Since then (2006) to the present, the issue of statutory status has been on the agenda of LIASA and has become a priority. The principle of a professional association being relevant has always been the underpinning factor for representation of the LIS sector. The issue of relevance was tested in early 2008 when an Indaba was held. The Executive Committee and the Representative Council of LIASA together with other leading role players within the LIS sector met at this Indaba to determine, inter alia, the effectiveness and relevance of LIASA. At the end of the engagement, LIASA's relevance was confirmed. However, the issue of statutory status was by far the most critical issue that had to be addressed.

Taking its cue from the Indaba, the LIASA Executive Committee recommended to the 2009 Annual Conference the acquisition of statutory status via a new legislation that is specific to the sector (LIS). It was further recommended that a referendum be conducted on the matter to confirm or reject the views of the Executive Committee. The rationale for the 'referendum recommendation' was the reality that LIASA represented a small proportion of those who work in the sector whereas the envisaged body will represent the interests of all who worked in the sector. It was acknowledged by the Executive Committee that a referendum was an enormous task which included the development of a register of all who worked in the sector and to administer the referendum to those that were on the register. Given the lack of capacity to complete the task, the Committee explored the possibility of outsourcing the development of the register and the conducting of the referendum. Unfortunately, the quotation of R2m to conduct the entire referendum process was way beyond the affordability of LIASA.

The desperate need to acquire statutory status is articulated by Raju (2011: 12) when he states that

those that are brave enough to pull their heads out of the sand will admit that the Library and Information Services profession is in distress. The closing down of library schools, the appointment of unqualified staff to provide an information service and to engage communities in critical issues such as information literacy, the 'greying' of the profession and the lack of holistic coordination of the profession contribute to this distress.

Raju (2011) goes on to state that the sector is in dire need of reform or revitalization and a legislative process that would bring essential cohesion and 'control' to the profession.

In 2010, LIASA explored the possibility of conducting a pilot study to determine support for the acquisition of statutory status. A sub-committee of the Executive Committee was formed with the mandate to conduct a pilot study. The Western Cape was mooted for the pilot study as the chair of the sub-committee was from the region. Preparations were made for the implementation of the pilot study. The sub-committee was midstream in developing the register and reported this progress to the 2010 LIASA Annual Conference. There was objection from the conference delegates to the pilot being restricted to the Western Cape. The recommendation of the Conference was that the sub-committee test the opinion of the sector at the national level.

This paper examines the necessity for acquiring statutory status for the LIS sector. It also briefly looks at professions that are governed by legislation. The authors report on the national survey, its methodology and findings. Given the support for a statutory body, the paper examines what are interpreted as significant elements that need to be crafted into the governance structure of a LIS statutory body.

## **2 Why the need for statutory status for the LIS sector?**

The LIS sector, like in most other countries, is fragmented in terms of the clientele that it serves. There is further fragmentation by the categorisation of staff that it employs. These fragmentations are exacerbated by the diversity in terms of representation of staff. There are a number of trade unions and staff associations that represent the industrial interests of workers within the sector. Professional interests are addressed by the professional association, LIASA. However, LIASA is a voluntary organisation and its current low membership raises questions about its representivity of the LIS sector and allied professions. Despite having one of the most progressive constitutions for a professional association within the sector, LIASA cannot and does not claim to represent and/or protect the views, functionalities and interests of all within the sector.

LIASA has acknowledged and debated the fact that there is no single body representing the profession in totality, that is, all individuals who are working in the sector and the services that the sector provides to the various communities. This lack of representivity has been debated at LIASA conferences. Given the significance of the issue, LIASA commissioned an investigation into the way forward with regards to representivity of the LIS sector. The investigation recommended the need for the acquisition of statutory status for the LIS sector.

Given that there is a lack of comprehensive representation of the sector, its fragmentation, continuous erosion of the credibility of the profession and personnel that work within the sector, and other negative factors, it becomes clearly evident that the sector is in dire need of resurrection (Raju 2006). Therefore, it is imperative that there is a legislative process that significantly contributes to this resurrection or

upswing of the profession. This upswing would be beneficial to the profession and the country as a whole as information, which is the core business of libraries, is essential for all forms of development. It is important not to lose sight of the fact that statutory status is not only a significant issue for the profession; it is in fact, as indicated above, a national imperative (Raju 2006). Hence the issue of the acquisition of statutory status being identified as a key strategic goal in the newly developed Strategic Directions 2010-2014 document (LIASA 2010). This quest for the acquisition of statutory status is also built on the recommendations of the Department of Arts and Culture and the National Council for Library and Information Services who state that "LIASA should be registered as [a] statutory body in order to regulate and give professional status to the LIS sector" (2009: xxii).

### **3 What does a statutory body provide?**

The assumption that a legislative process will contribute to an upswing in the profession is based on an examination of other professions that are governed by statutory bodies. In terms of professions that have statutory status, the primary objective of the relevant legislation is to protect the interest of the public and regulate those that enter (for employment purposes) the profession. Other significant objectives which are common to statutory bodies representing a profession include:

- Promoting the discipline;
- Regulating the entrance of personnel into the sector;
- Determining standards of professional education and training; and
- Setting and maintaining excellent standards of ethical and professional practice.

### **4 Brief examination of professions governed by legislation**

The education profession is an example of a profession that is governed by legislation - Act No. 31 of 2000 entitled South African Council for Educators Act. The governing body of the education profession is the South African Council for Educators (SACE) (Republic of South Africa 2000a).

The Act addresses the issues mentioned earlier (namely, promoting the discipline, regulating those entering the profession, standards of professional education and such). The authors found compelling Section 21 of the Act as it dealt with the issue of compulsory registration of educators. The section reads as follows:

21(1) A person who qualifies for registration in terms of this Act must register with the council prior to being appointed as an educator.

(2) No person may be employed as an educator by any employer unless the person is registered with the council (Republic of South Africa 2000a: 16).

Such mandatory regulations will be a major paradigm shift and would, in the opinion of the authors, give new direction and take representation of the LIS sector to entirely different levels of effectiveness.

The authors examined a number of other professions that are governed by statutory bodies. The example of the engineering sector was considered to have significant synergy, in terms of structure, with the proposed statutory body for the LIS sector. The statutory body for the engineering sector is the Engineering Council of South Africa.

The Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) was established in terms of the Engineering Profession Act (Act 46 of 2000), and derives its powers and responsibilities from this Act (Republic of South Africa 2000b). The mission of the Engineering Council as set out in a document by the Council on Higher Education (2003: 8) is

to ensure, through a cooperative process of quality assurance, that persons wishing to enter the profession are educated and trained accordingly to widely accepted standards, so as to be able to render a professional service for the benefit of the public and the country as a whole.

The mandate of ECSA, as documented by the Council on Higher education (2003: 8), *inter alia*, is to

- provide for separate categories of registration i.e. “Professional Engineer”, “Professional Engineering Technologist”, “Professional Certificated Engineer” “Professional Engineering Technician” and other specific categories, respectively;
- make provision for the reservation of work exclusively for registered persons;
- draw up “Codes of Practice” in addition to the normal Code of Conduct;
- act in the public interest - beyond registered persons; and
- engage in accreditation including accreditation of programmes offered by providers other than universities and universities of technology.

It is the opinion of the authors that principles encapsulated in LIASA’s mission and the mandate for acquisition of statutory status are critical issues that are necessary for the upswing of the LIS sector. The issue of the provision of a professional service for the benefit of the public and the country underpins LIASA’s Strategic Directions 2010-2014. It is these issues (that is, the benefit for the public and country) that have shaped the development of the current mission and vision of LIASA. It is envisaged that the ‘LIS statutory body’ will be over-arching with LIASA being the professional arm or a sub-body. Further, the afore mentioned core principles are already the bedrock of the LIS sector and would have to be transferred to the envisaged statutory body as one of its building blocks.

## **5 Methodology**

In implementing the mandate of the 2010 LIASA Conference (that is, to test the views of the sector), the sub-committee investigating the acquisition of statutory status decided to conduct the survey at a national level. As indicated earlier, LIASA does not have the capacity or the funds to solicit the opinion of all (with regard to the issue

of acquiring statutory status) that work in the LIS sector. Therefore, and as supported by Strydom (2005: 194), it was decided to solicit the opinion of a “small portion of the total set”. Strydom (2005) goes on to state that the major reason for sampling is feasibility as a complete coverage of the total population is seldom possible.

Kaniki (2006) makes the assertion that the main concern in sampling is its representativeness. He goes on to point out that “the aim is to select a sample that will be representative of the population about which the researcher aims to draw conclusions” (Kaniki 2006: 49). Taking the cue from Strydom (2005) and Kaniki (2006), the authors identified a sample population that was representative of the LIS sector as a whole. The population identified for this survey included staff from the academic library sector including the library schools, the national library (both campuses – Pretoria and Cape Town), six metropolitan libraries and a random sample of special libraries.

The authors are of the opinion that this sample population provided a balanced cross section of the different levels or categories of staff employed in the sector. Further, the development of a list of contact details (email addresses) for this sample population was thought to be realistic and manageable. However, the actual process of acquiring the email addresses of staff from this sample was more complicated than anticipated primarily because of the lack of cooperation from institutions. Notwithstanding this, the authors did accumulate more than 2 000 email addresses.

### **5.1 The survey method**

Mangione and Van Ness (2009: 476) point out that a mail survey can be especially good when (1) the researcher has limited resources to help conduct the survey, (2) the questions can be written in a closed-ended style, (3) the research sample has a moderate to high interest in the topic, and (4) the research objectives are modest in length. As indicated earlier, the authors had very limited resources and therefore had to rely on a survey to solicit the views of the respondents. In keeping with the afore mentioned guidelines of Mangione and Van Ness (2009), the research had a very simple objective and that was to test the views of the respondents with regards to the LIS sector acquiring statutory status. The core item in the questionnaire was Do you support statutory status? – yes or no. Further, all of the items in this short questionnaire were closed-ended: again conforming to the afore mentioned guidelines. In terms of the interest of the respondents in the topic, the authors were convinced that all within the sector would have a very high interest in the topic.

The questionnaire was administered electronically using Survey Monkey with an explanation of what statutory status is together with five items – see Appendix 1. The survey was administered from 5 August to 12 September 2011 with an extension to 19 September 2011. A notice of the extension as well as reminders was sent to the respondents.

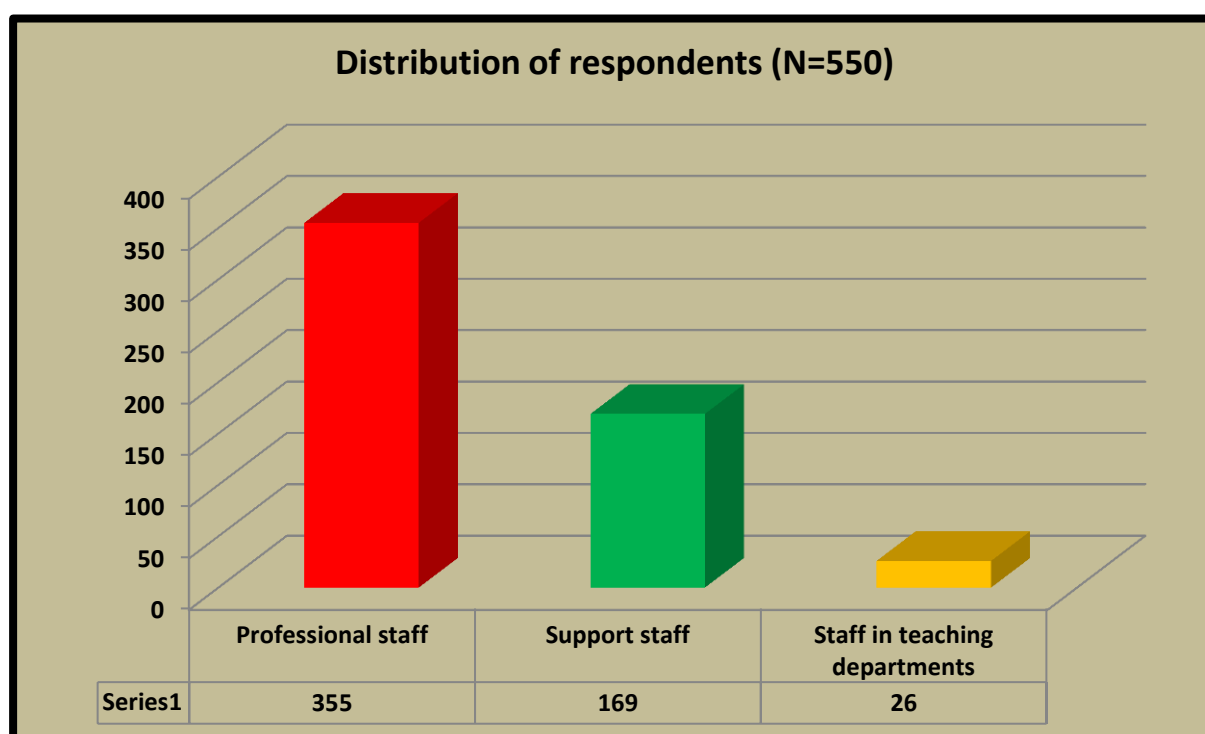
## 5.2 The response rate

An examination of the IP addresses of the responses received revealed 35 unique sets of IP addresses. Two thousand and thirty-six emails were sent out. Although most of the emails were 'delivered', a number of institutions 'complained' about not receiving the questionnaire. Investigation into the 'non-delivery' of the email to the intended recipient revealed that some institutions have a policy of automatic deletion of 'suspicious' emails. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the exact number of emails that were delivered. Hence, it is not possible to present the percentage of responses in relation to the number of emails sent. The total number of responses received was 550.

## 6 Survey findings and discussion

It was important for the authors to test the opinion of both professional and support staff as there is a large cohort of support staff within the LIS profession in South Africa. *Figure 1* shows the distribution of respondents – professional staff, support staff and staff in library schools. Although the number of professional respondents was substantial (64.5% or 355 respondents), there was a significant number of responses from support staff (30.7% or 169 respondents). The significance of this 169 responses is that it provides a perspective from the support staff who constitute a substantial proportion of personnel working in the sector. In the eventuality of the sector acquiring statutory status, the support staff would be an important group that would contribute to the effective functioning of the sector. Further, the current cohort of support staff will serve as a critical mass for the growth in the number of professional librarians in the sector.

*Figure 1*



There were four other items in the questionnaire that was distributed. These items include the core question and three others. Listed in tables 1, 2 and 3 are the responses to three of the four items. With regard to the item relating to the sector that the respondents were employed in, the responses are captured in *Table 1*.

*Table 1: Distribution of respondents*

Sector Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Academic Library	67.1%	369
Library School / Department	4.7%	26
Special Library	2.2%	12
Public / Community Library	20.2%	111
National Library	5.8%	32
<b>Total number of responses</b>		<b>550</b>

Responses to the item 'Are you a member of a registered trade union?' are captured in *Table 2*.

*Table 2: Membership of a trade union*

Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	70.7%	389
No	29.3%	161
<b>Total number of responses</b>		<b>550</b>

The third item was 'Are you a member of a Professional Association?'. The following were the responses (*Table 3*):

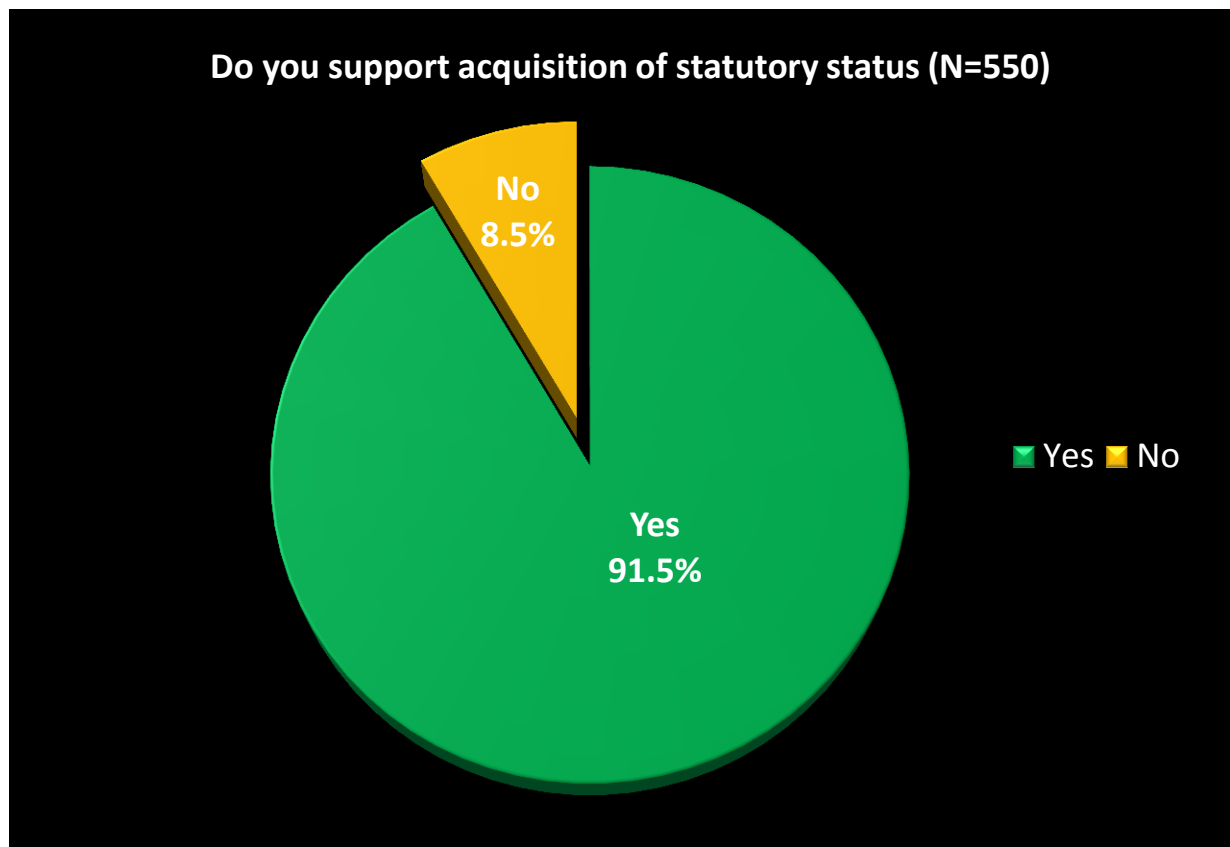
*Table 3: Membership of a professional association*

Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	49.1%	270
No	50.9%	280
<b>Total number of responses</b>		<b>550</b>

The fourth item "Do you support the acquisition of statutory status?" (which was the core item in the questionnaire) solicited an overwhelming positive response (see *Figure 2*).

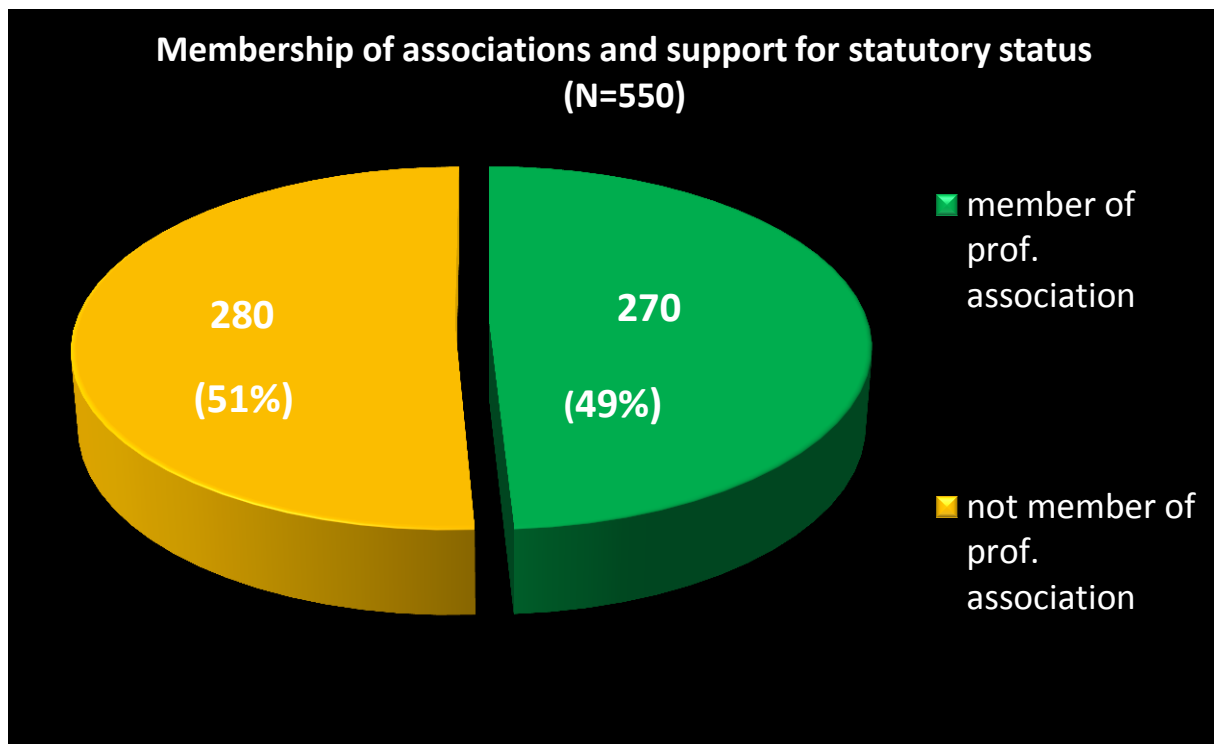


Figure 2



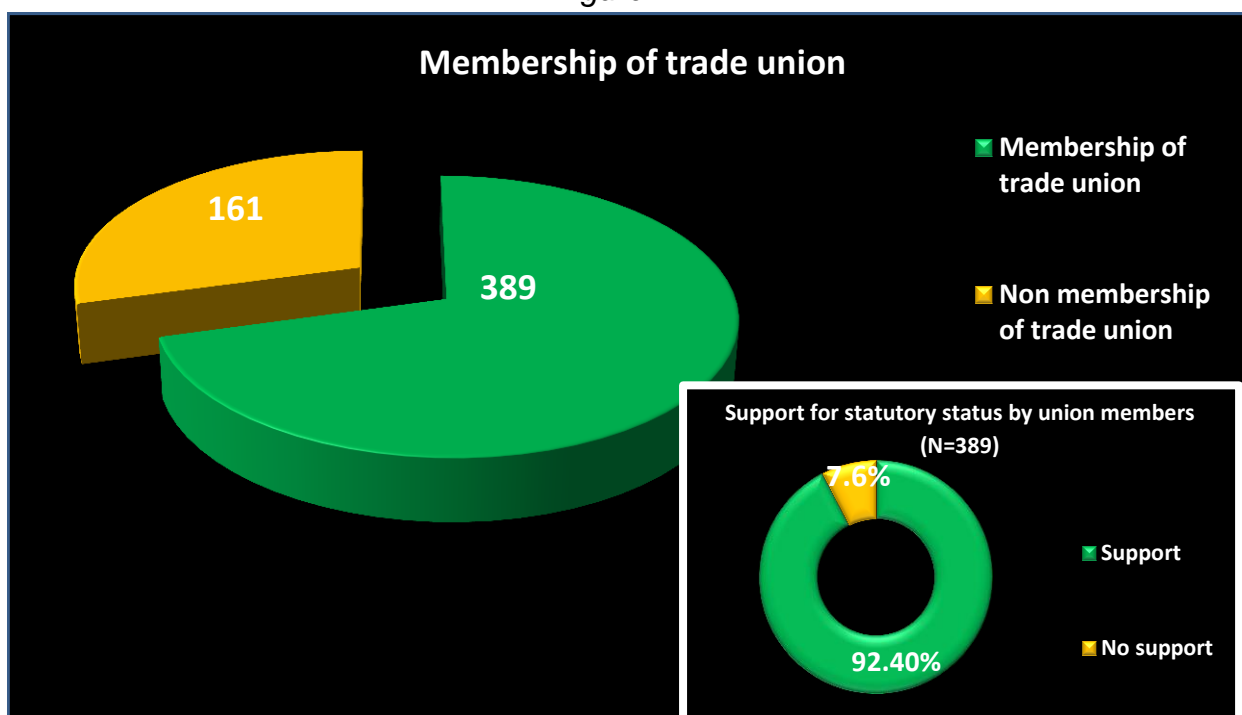
The authors did a number of cross tabulations to interrogate the responses. In the manipulation of data, the authors found that the larger proportion of the respondents did not belong to any professional association (see *Figure 3*). This revelation bodes well for the continued quest for statutory status as a significant view is from a cohort that does not belong to any professional association. The authors infer from this response that those who do not belong to an association, in the main, do not see the need for one. However, they do see the need for a statutory body. Of the 280 respondents (*Figure 3*) that did not belong to any association, 86.8% (243 respondents) supported the quest for statutory status. Only 13.2% (37 respondents) did not support the acquisition of statutory status. This overwhelming response reinforces the support for a statutory body for the LIS sector.

Figure 3



To gain greater insight into those respondents who belonged to trade unions, the authors cross tabulated *Membership of a trade union* with *Support for statutory status*. See Figure 4 for the results of the cross tabulation.

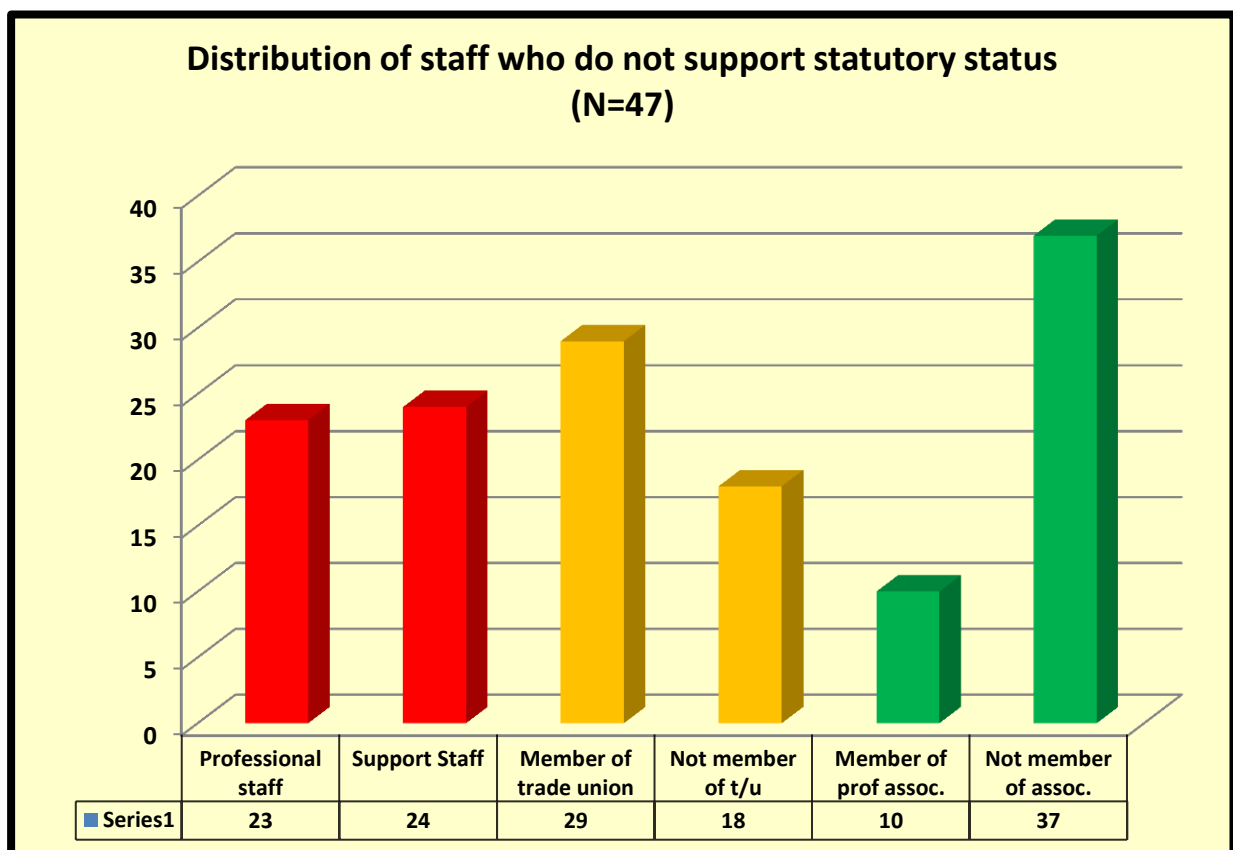
Figure 4



In terms of research conducted (Raju 2006; Khomo 2007), personnel in the LIS sector preferred a representative body that addressed their industrial concerns. Hence, in terms of these studies, the preference of LIS personnel is to belong to trade unions as opposed to a professional association. However, the respondents in the Raju (2006) study revealed that they would prefer a discipline specific organisation to represent their industrial concerns. Given this finding, it was important to solicit the views of those who belonged to a trade union with regard to the acquisition of statutory status for the sector despite the fact that they already belong to a statutory body, namely, a trade union. As can be seen from *Figure 4*, 69.8% (or 389 respondents) of the respondents belonged to trade unions. Of these 389 respondents, 92.4% supported the acquisition of statutory status – ONLY 7.6% of the 389 ‘trade union respondents’ did not support the acquisition of statutory status. Therefore, it can be inferred that those who belonged to a trade union would be amenable to belonging to a second statutory body as is the case with the educators who belong to SACE and to a registered trade union.

Despite the overwhelming support for the acquisition of statutory status, it was deemed necessary to have an aggregate view of the distribution of staff that did not support the acquisition of statutory status (47 or 8.5% of 550 respondents) to identify any noteworthy trends (see *Figure 5*). The most significant trend was the number of respondents who currently were not members of an association and who did not support the acquisition of statutory status. This issue has already been addressed.

*Figure 5*



To reiterate, 91.5% of the respondents supported the acquisition of statutory status. This positive response is interpreted as a mandate to proceed with the second phase of the process, namely, addressing the logistical issues relating to the registration of a statutory body.

## **7 The way forward with statutory status**

The authors examined a number of statutory bodies representing various professions with the intention of identifying a statutory body or bodies that were considered to have the greatest level of sameness to the envisaged statutory body for the LIS sector, especially in terms of representing varying categories of staff within the sector and similar training and development requirements. Using the identified statutory bodies (that is, the statutory body for the engineering profession and the education profession) as a framework, the authors gleaned strengths from these two statutory bodies in developing a mock structure for a statutory body for the LIS sector. For the purpose of discussion, this mock statutory body is referred to as the *South African Council for Library and Information Services (SACLIS)*.

In terms of the *Directory of ETQAS* and professional bodies there are certain characteristics or elements that are consistent in statutory bodies. Some of these characteristics include the mission of the statutory body, objectives, mandate, functions, and education and training (Council on Higher Education 2003). Characteristics such as powers and duties of a council and, the composition of the council have been gleaned from relevant legislation.

### **7.1 Mock structure for the LIS statutory body**

For the purposes of developing a mock structure for the LIS sector, the authors extracted characteristics from the *Directory of ETQAS* and professional bodies document and respective legislation and applied this to the mock structure. It was interpreted that the issue of a mission and vision is more intimately defining and should be debated and derived by a representative group. However, what was extracted and applied to SACLIS were characteristics such as objectives, mandate, functions, powers and duties of the council and, the composition of the council.

#### **7.1.1 Objectives of SACLIS**

- i. to provide for the registration of LIS personnel;
- ii. to promote the professional development of LIS personnel; and
- iii. to set, maintain and protect ethical and professional standards for LIS personnel.

### 7.1.2 Powers and duties of SACLIS

i. with regard to the registration of LIS personnel:

- (a) provide for separate categories of registration i.e. “Professional Librarian”, “Professional Library Technician”, “Certificated Library Assistant” and other specific categories, respectively. A person may not practise in any of the categories contemplated unless he or she is registered in that category;
- (b) make provision for the reservation of work exclusively for registered persons;
- (c) determine minimum criteria and procedures for registration or provisional registration;
- (d) consider and decide on any application for registration or provisional registration;
- (e) keep a register of the names of all persons who are registered or provisionally registered; and
- (f) prescribe the period of validity of the registration or provisional registration.

ii. with regard to the promotion and development of the LIS profession:

- (a) must advise the Minister on matters relating to the education and training of LIS personnel, including but not limited to<sup>1</sup> :
  - (1) the minimum requirements for entry to all the levels of the profession;
  - (2) the standards of programmes of pre-service and in-service LIS education; and
  - (3) the requirements for promotion within the LIS system.
- (b) research and develop a professional development policy;
- (c) promote in-service training of LIS personnel;
- (d) develop resource materials to initiate and run, in consultation with employers, training programmes, workshops, seminars and short courses that are designed to enhance the profession;
- (e) compile, print and distribute a professional journal and other publications;

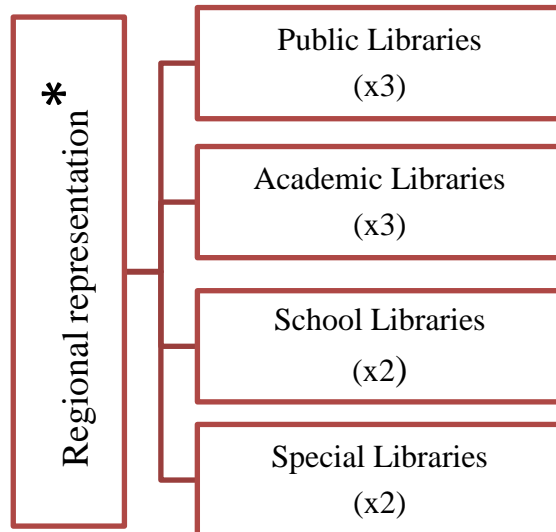
- (f) set and audit academic standards for purposes of registration through a process of accreditation of LIS programmes at universities and universities of technology:
  - (f.1) accreditation powers are extended to include accreditation visits and to accredit programmes offered by providers other than universities and universities of technology.
- (g) set and audit professional development standards through the provision of guidelines which sets out post-qualification requirements for registration in the professional categories of registration;
- (h) determine exit levels and education and training outcomes (outcomes based competence);
- (i) determine essential modules within curricula to address national imperatives;
- (j) draw up “Codes of Practice” in addition to the normal Code of Conduct;
- (k) has jurisdiction to act in the public interest extended beyond registered persons; and
- (l) determine the fees and increments regarding fees.

### 7.1.3 *Composition of council*

The council consists of members, appointed by the Minister, taking into account, inter alia, the principles of transparency and representivity (including race, gender and disability):

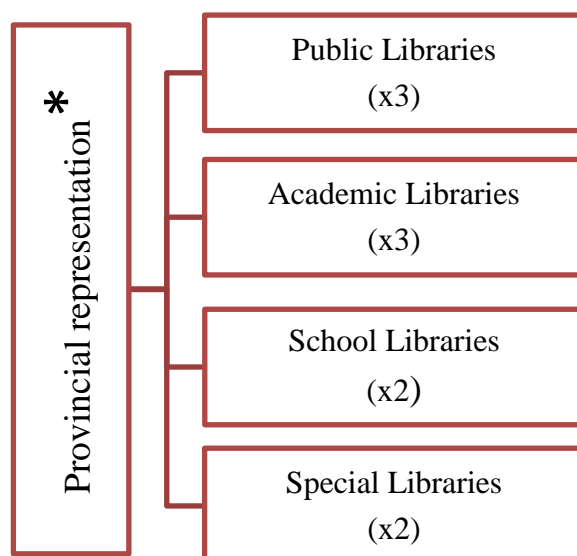
- (i) ten registered persons, of whom at least
  - (a) three persons nominated by the Department of Arts and Culture;
  - (b) three persons nominated by the Department of Higher Education and Training;
  - (c) two persons by the Department of Science and Technology; and
  - (d) two persons by the Department of Basic Education.
- (ii) ten persons to be elected via regional and provincial structures to the national council

- (a) membership representation will be via election by the registered members;
  - (b) structure of member representation
1. regional representation



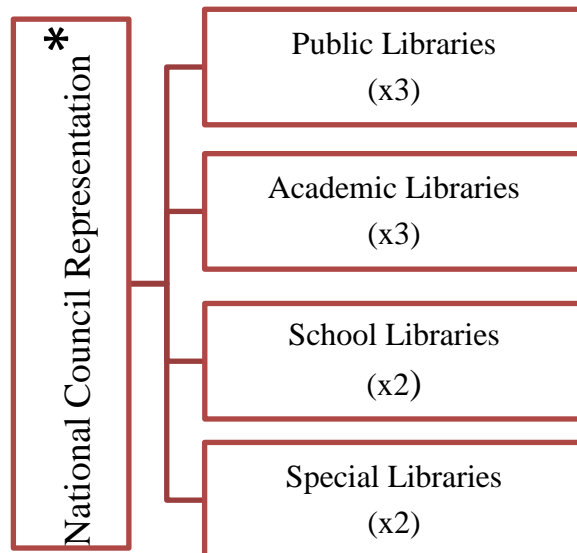
\*Prescription – there must be a minimum of two (2) with a maximum of four (4) support staff on the regional sub-council. The same structure would be applicable to the provincial structure. There would be a maximum of five regions per province. A caucus of the aggregate of the regional structure would elect the provincial sub-council.

## 2. Provincial representation



The nine provincial sub-councils will nominate and elect the ten membership representatives on the national council. The national council will be much larger.

### 3. National representation



At the national level, nominated and elected by the provincial sub-council, there would be two national sub-councils, namely, the support staff sub-council and the profession librarian sub-council. The national support staff sub-council would be nominated and elected by the support staff on the provincial sub-councils. The national support staff sub-council would be constituted of sixteen (16) members who would address issues unique to support staff. The national council would have a minimum of two (2) and maximum of four (4) support staff. By the same token, the national professional sub-council would be nominated and elected by the provincial sub-council. The professional sub-council would address the professional issues of the sector and those which may arise from discussions at the national sub-council level.

## 8 Conclusion

It is almost a decade since the LIS profession embarked on the path of revitalizing the profession through the acquisition of statutory status. The stimulus for this action was the motion that was adopted at the 2004 LIASA Annual General Meeting. Since then the 'quest for statutory status wheel' chugged along slowly for the following five years or so. The growing downward spiral of the profession seems to have cajoled the professional body and its membership into action: the profession is now into big strides into acquiring statutory status. The first port of call for the professional body was to seek the views of the rank and file with regard to the necessity of acquiring statutory status for the LIS sector.

It is clear from the survey conducted that the rank and file would prefer to belong to a statutory body that would govern the activities and functioning of the LIS sector.



Given the findings of this survey, the mandate of LIASA annual general meetings, the vision of the LIASA Executive and the leadership of the organisation in general, there needs to be swift action by the LIASA sub-committee to lobby the relevant authorities for the development of appropriate legislation for the creation of a statutory body to govern the LIS profession. At no stage in all attempts to acquire statutory status has there been so much ground covered as done by the current process. Therefore, it is absolutely imperative that the issue is driven to a conclusion.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The authors would like to draw a distinction between the statutory body NCLIS and the proposed SACLIS. The object of NCLIS is to advise the respective ministers on policy issues relating to information provision – the emphasis is on the end users. SACLIS will advise the minister on matters relating to the providers of information – the emphasis is on LIS employees.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **REFERENDUM**

#### **THE ACQUISITION OF STATUTORY STATUS**

#### **FOR THE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SECTOR**

##### **Introduction**

The Library and Information Sector, like in most other countries, is fragmented in terms of the clientele that it serves (namely, general public, academic sector, corporate sector and such). There is further fragmentation by the categorization of staff that it employs (namely, professional librarians, support staff, paraprofessional staff, administrative staff and such). These fragmentations are compounded by the diversity in terms of representation of the staff. There are a number of trade unions and staff associations that represent the interests of the workers within the sector. The professional interests of the sector are represented by LIASA and other professional groups.

The fundamental problem is that there is no single body representing the profession in totality, that is, **all** individuals who work in the sector and the services that the sector provides to the various communities. The purpose of this referendum is to solicit the views of people in the sector with regard to the acquisition of statutory status for the LIS sector.

In the current LIS scenario there is a lack of comprehensive representation of the sector, there is a continuous erosion of the credibility of the profession and of personnel that work within the sector. Further, there is a growing number of people that would be retiring from the profession within the next five years (an international phenomenon) which is exacerbated by the closing down of a number of Library and Information Science departments/schools in South Africa.

##### **Why a statutory body?**

A statutory body is a legal entity born out of registration via legislation. There are a number of statutory bodies representing different employment sectors and the communities that they serve. The objectives of these statutory bodies carry common principles which include:

- Promoting the discipline;
- Regulating the entrance of personnel into the sector;
- Determining standards of professional education and training; and
- Setting and maintaining excellent standards of ethical and professional practice.

Precedence and studies conducted demonstrate that statutory status will ensure consistency and equity within the sector which would have a positive domino effect towards a more focused profession. A focused profession would increase credibility and command greater respect for the profession, for those who work within it and for the services that it provides.

### **Referendum questionnaire**

Please indicate the sector that you are employed in

1. Academic library
2. Library school/department
3. Special library
4. Public/municipal library
5. National library

Please indicate if you are

1. Professional staff
2. Support staff
3. Academic staff (in a teaching department)

Are you a member of a professional association?

1. Yes
2. No

Are you a member of a registered trade union?

1. Yes
2. No

**DO YOU SUPPORT THE LIS SECTOR ACQUIRING STATUTORY STATUS?**

1. YES
2. NO

Thank you for your time and considered view.