Service-learning in LIS education: the case of the University of Natal's[1] Inadi initiative

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Service-learning involves a dynamic process linking real community priorities, issues and problems with student learning, research and development. This paper outlines service-learning projects in LIS education undertaken in South Africa since 2000, as part of the national Community-Higher-Education-Service Partnerships (CHESP) initiative. It focuses on the service-learning project undertaken at the former University of Natal and will refer briefly to a similar project at the University of the Western Cape. The Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of Natal chose the Inadi community, specifically the Emzamweni High School, as the service learning site in this area, as it was both rural and historically disadvantaged. The University of the Western Cape chose sites in the Delft and Belville South areas to work in public libraries.

The paper focuses on the results and experiences of the participatory action research carried out by the Post-Graduate Diploma in Information Studies students in the Inadi community and reflects on some of the opportunities and challenges of service-learning as an arena for research, curriculum reform and community development in South Africa. It will assess the feasibility of incorporating service learning into the LIS curriculum. The research and practice embarked upon in a real-life situation for the students serves to inform both the needs of information provision to the community and the need to build up a body of service-learning research which is unique to the South African context.

Introduction

"Service learning is recognised as a pedagogy that meets multiple, simultaneous goals. These goals include: student goals addressing cognitive or academic learning, intellectual development, spiritual and ethical development, and civic engagement as well as goals addressing community impact" (Steinke *et al.*, 2002: 73). This paper will examine the concept of service-learning, referred to by Billig and Furco (2002: vii), as "a boundary spanning activity" which can be expressed in a variety of ways. It will outline the trends which brought it to the fore in the South African higher education sector and it will highlight the role of the national Community-Higher Education-Service Partnerships (CHESP) project in the promotion of service-learning.

The University of KwaZulu-Natal (formerly University of Natal), chose the socially disadvantaged community of Inadi to work with. The results and experiences of the participatory action research carried out by Post-Graduate Diploma in Information Studies at the Emzamweni High School in Inadi are described and discussed. This reflects just one example of a service-learning intervention at this site.

The University of the Western Cape, as one of the participating universities, had students involved at three public libraries in Delft, Delft South and Belvillle South. The activities and experiences of the students participating in this intervention will be reported on briefly.

Towards the end of the 1990s there were "a number of efforts to refocus on civic responsibility and social justice in U.S. universities and this number is growing"(De la Pena McCook, 2000: 164). The 1998 Wingspread Declaration, "Renewing the Civic Mission of the American Research University", challenged universities, as did the Kellogg Commission in 2000, which called "for a redesign of universities so that they become more productively involved with communities" (De la Pena McCook, 2000:164).

This trend was already evident in the University of Natal's vision statement, published as early as 2000, which stated that the University aimed to be "a socially responsive university, reacting ethically and intellectually to the many problems of South Africa and the rest of the world … The strategic challenge for the University is to integrate development activities into the curricula so that our students are able to learn the lessons they need to play a meaningful role in the reconstruction of our society" (University of Natal, 2000: 2,4).

Similar trends are evident in the transformation imperative of post-apartheid South Africa and are particularly noticeable in higher education. *The White Paper: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* (South Africa…:1997) elaborates on the roles of higher education in contributing 'to the common good of society' and to South

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African 'reconstruction and development' priorities. One of the stated aims of transformation is 'to promote and develop social responsibility and awareness amongst students of the role of higher education in social and economic development through community service programmes'.

The national CHESP initiative, introduced in 2001, aimed "to further the transformation of South African universities towards sustained community engagement in their curricula, to develop local communities as sites of civil society, and to enhance the provision of appropriate services in these communities" (Nuttall 2001). This initiative, funded by the Joint Education Trust and the Ford Foundation, provided a unique opportunity for universities to formally implement service-learning or community-based learning into their curricula. Central to the aims of the CHESP project "are the development of partnerships between historically disadvantaged communities, higher education institutions, and the service sector so as to meet the twin goals of addressing the needs of these communities; and supporting the transformation of higher education institutions in relation to these priorities" (McMillan, 2002: 57).

It was in this context that the establishment of a national project in universities across South Africa created a funded opportunity to formalise and explore service-learning activities in the curriculum. These were incorporated with varying degrees of content across a number of disciplines on selected university campuses throughout the country.

At the University of Natal, the Information Studies programme chose two modules within its Post-Graduate Diploma in Information Studies (PGDIS), to be used in the pilot phase of the project. Drawing on the experiences of staff and students involved this paper highlights the suitability of service learning within LIS education. It will draw on the curriculum experiences of the PGDIS students to outline certain South African opportunities and challenges for service-learning, as an arena of curriculum reform, community development and social transformation. This paper will also refer to the experiences at the University of the Western Cape where "a new fourth year elective module in Library and Information Science, namely Children's and Youth Library and Information Science, became the departmental CHESP pilot project in 2002" (Witbooi, 2004:99).

What is service-learning?

The concept of service-learning involves a dynamic process, linking real community priorities, issues and problems with student learning, research and development. It can be defined in numerous ways. An appropriate definition which aligns itself to the activities described in the paper is "… a course based, credit bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organised service activity that meets identified community needs and reflects on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility" (Bringle and Hatcher, 1995). As outlined by Eyler and Giles (1999:14), "Service-learning aims to connect the personal and intellectual, to help students acquire knowledge that is useful in understanding the world, build critical thinking capacities, and perhaps lead to fundamental questions about learning and society and to a commitment to improve both". Jacoby (2000:5) refers to service-learning as a "form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development". Research into service-learning suggests that it has the ability to strengthen student learning, to provide a critical link between theory and practice and to encourage civic engagement and responsibility.

The theoretical framework on which the concept of service-learning, in this context, is based is that of a 'scholarship of engagement' (Boyer 1996), which was further developed by Bawden (1999), with the CHESP initiative in mind. This idea of engagement involves a connection between university-based classrooms and research projects with off-campus sites of knowledge generation and action. The core purpose of this engagement is to address pressing issues in contemporary society, responding to the challenges of social development and democratic citizenship (Boyer 1996).

According to Becker (1999: 286), many of the theoretical foundations of the service-learning model can be found in the writings of John Dewey and David Kolb. Dewey's work concentrated on experiential education and education for democratic citizenship, whereas Kolb's research related to learning styles and processes. Many researchers have stressed the essential role which reflection plays in the service-learning paradigm. Becker explains that "Essentially what service-learning programs do is formalize the opportunity for this type of dynamic learning by supplementing traditional classroom activities with structured opportunities for experiential learning and critical reflection. The interaction of theory, experience, and reflection encourages students to engage in deeper processing of conceptual material and, ultimately, facilitates the meaning-making process" (Becker 1999: 287). What sets service-learning apart is that "it joins two complex concepts – community action (service) and efforts to learn from that action and connect what is learned to existing knowledge (learning)" (De la Pena McCook 2000: 164). Another important distinguishing feature is that "reciprocity between the community and the learner" (De la Pena McCook 2000: 164).

Yontz and De la Pena McCook (2003) highlight the strong potential which service-learning has for advancing library and information science education. They maintain that service-learning "is strikingly congruent with librarianship's long standing commitment to improving the lives of citizens within communities" (Yontz and De la Pena McCook 2003:61) and indicate that recent articles from LIS educators support this fact. They believe that potential advantages of service-learning to LIS faculty include increased student learning of important course material, extended collaboration and decreased isolation, and promotion of the common good as a strong value in higher education"(Yontz and De la Pena McCook 2003:61). They stress the fact that fieldwork practices offer opportunities for incorporating service-learning concepts into the curriculum.

The CHESP model
Building on the theoretical framework of engagement, CHESP instituted a unique partnership programme which involved incorporating a third partner into the traditional dual community-university partnership. It was recommended that a service partner or service provider be included in the partnership to enhance the reciprocal benefits of such a partnership which included the possibilities of increased service provision to the community. It was envisaged that the service partner could in many cases ensure service delivery which might produce more measurable and tangible benefits for the community, and which, importantly, could be sustained by this partner.

Approximately 13 exemplar modules from as many disciplines prepared themselves early in 2001 to be part of the CHESP pilot initiative on the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of Natal. The involvement of each module in the service-learning process varied in degree and content. The disciplines involved at the service-learning site included Psychology, Drama, Political Science and Information Studies. It was hoped that the impact on this particular community would be greater as each of the disciplines involved was simultaneously contributing to the various aspects of school and community life.

At the University of the Western Cape, apart from the LIS course there were four other CHESP pilot courses; in HIV/AIDS education, adult literacy, public health and botany.

Service-learning in LIS at the University of the Western Cape
While the Department of Library and Information Science was busy redesigning its traditional fieldwork practice it decided to incorporate the Childrens'and Youth LIS course into the CHESP programme. As a department it had always maintained an interest in community librarianship. "The role of libraries in democracy and in community upliftment has been a major theme in our teaching and research programme since the late 1980s" (Hart, 2003:42). The service learning sites, as mentioned above, were public libraries at Delft, Delft South and Belville South. "The development priorities identified by the community's needs analysis were storytelling and information literacy for the learners" (Witbooi, 2004:99). Problems experienced included identifying who exactly their "community partners" were, before the project began. Finding out exactly how they were meant to contribute to the library's children's and youth community programmes was another. Another factor was that as students became involved with the routines of public library work the real purpose of the community service might be blurred (Hart, 2003:43). According to Hart (2003:43) the students grew in confidence as a result of their public library work where they had "to confront real challenges" and "to improvise and think on their feet".

The students wrote daily journals to record, and reflect on, their daily activities and personal feelings. Seminars were held on campus to validate what the students were experiencing in practice, compared with the traditional approach, during which students learn theory and then venture into the field (Hart, 2003:43). This author felt that "as in traditional fieldwork, service-learning allows students to apply and refresh the learning they have built in the first three years of their degree studies" (Hart 2003:43). As the educator, Hart had to help the students to consider what they were doing and observing. They needed to look beyond the three sites and to prepare for their future careers (Hart, 2003:43). Her assessment of the CHESP model was summed up when she said that it provided a more subtle and flexible framework for education. The open-ended CHESP model places further demands on the lecturer and the students,but its benefits outweighed the time-consuming nature of this type of learning (Hart, 2003:43).

Partners in the service-learning model at the University of Natal
In this section the three partners involved in the CHESP service-learning model for the Information Studies modules on the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of Natal will be discussed separately.

The community
The CHESP core group of the Pietermaritzburg campus decided to focus on the Inadi community, a rural settlement comprising 18 villages on the outskirts of the city of Pietermaritzburg. The proposed community-based or service-learning site was located at the Emzamweni High School in Inadi. This area was chosen as the service-learning site for a

variety of reasons, including the fact that it is a rural area and historically disadvantaged. In the late 1980s this community was particularly adversely affected by the strongly pervasive, politically motivated, trends of violence. For instance, many of the youth were involved in the perpetration of atrocities. Not only were there frequent interruptions to the teaching and learning process at the High School but two new administrative buildings were set on fire, one of which housed the new, but unstocked, school library. The University of Natal saw its intervention as an opportunity to redress the injustices of the past and to make a vital contribution to the nurturing, reconstruction and development of the community. Although the High School was recommended as the off-campus service-learning site by CHESP, it did not preclude a discipline choosing to work with other communities situated elsewhere.

The University
Library and information science educators from Information Studies based in the School of Human and Social Studies decided to include two PGDIS modules in the CHESP project. *Information users and use* and *Information delivery systems*, presented by Professor Christine Stilwell, lent themselves to this project because the research assignments the students were expected to complete required community involvement and were essential components of the continuous assessment methods used in the modules. It was decided to utilise Emzamweni as the off-campus site for the PGDIS modules. The students were able to base their research projects on the asset-mapping exercise of the Inadi area which had provided details about which "assets" the community had as well as serving as an indicator to the community's needs. It was obvious from the outset that there were no libraries; in fact there was no formal information provision in the community at all. The large school library, designed for artificial lighting and consisting of shelves of shabby textbooks and a few encyclopaedias, was not used as a library by the learners. There were no financial resources from the school to stock the library or to provide a qualified school librarian, nor was the school receiving any government provision for a library. For the university students, having access to a well-stocked academic library must have been a stark reminder to them of the differences between the two communities.

The service provider
The Information Studies staff approached Education Library, Information and Technology Services (ELITS), the government department responsible for school library provision, to be the service partner in the triad. ELITS is responsible for the planning and infrastructure of school libraries and for their stocking and maintenance. It was envisaged that the service provider would work with the University to provide advice and guidance for the research and would ultimately gain by the utilisation of the results for the implementation of a functioning school library, to the benefit of the community. Although willing to participate initially, for various reasons, including staff changeovers, the service provider was unable to maintain an active role in the process.

The Information Studies modules
Within the service-learning context, one of the aims of the first semester module, *Information users and use*, is the development of information needs assessment techniques and the use of a data collection instrument, data coding, analysis and report writing.

Information needs assessment survey
An information needs assessment survey[3] forms the major part of the assessed work for the module. During 2001 and 2002 two needs assessment surveys were carried out on the learners of Emzamweni High School. The aim was not only to gather information on the needs of the high school learners but also to gather, from the problems expressed, a wider reflection of the community information needs. A tested survey instrument using the critical incident approach, designed by Kaniki (1995) and used in a study of similar rural areas of South Africa, was adapted for this purpose. This instrument was given to the service provider and to the community representatives at the school for comment and suggestions. For the implementation, staff and students travelled to Emzamweni High School, where the students conducted face-to-face interviews with a broad-range sample of learners in the school library. Community representatives or a community co-ordinator were present to assist with the interview arrangements.

Using the critical incident technique, the survey required respondents to identify an information-seeking situation and answer questions relating to that situation. The information needs were divided into categories in terms of school-related or other needs; the use of various information providers in resolving the identified information-seeking situations and the demographic data relevant for the categorisation of information needs. Two types of questions were used, namely structured questions with coding and unstructured questions which necessitated content analysis. Each student spent approximately ten minutes interviewing each learner. The interviews were conducted in English, at the insistence of the

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3. The methodology underpinning the needs assessment survey is reported on in the article by Stilwell and Bell: 2003 in the list of references.

educators at the school, even though Zulu is the home language of the learners. When language problems occurred, particularly with the younger learners, the students themselves translated or this was done by the community representatives.

Back on campus the students were required to analyse the data they had collected and incorporate the results into a written report outlining the research process, interpreting the results and providing conclusions and recommendations. The report was then presented as a seminar to the class and on one occasion community representatives attended and were able to provide useful feedback The reports were assessed by both internal and external examiners. The students completed a post-implementation questionnaire designed by the CHESP research agency, as well as a course evaluation questionnaire. In the second year a very useful tool, the reflection paper, was introduced. This provided interesting insights into the learning process which had occurred.

Information repackaging exercise

One of the objectives of the second module, *Information delivery systems,* was the development of hard skills in material repackaging in pamphlet form. The initial plan for this assignment was for students to choose a topic which arose as an obvious need out of the information needs assessment survey which they completed at Emzamweni for the first semester module, Information Users and Use. Topics such as "Child abuse" and "Aids education" were some of those which had emerged as wider community needs. However, it was decided to work in conjunction with the Psychology Masters module, whose students were involved in a Careers Counselling project with the learners at Emzamweni. This meant a collaborative and inter-disciplinary liaison between Psychology and Information Studies, where the needs of the learners and the sort of information required were communicated to the students. The Information Studies students were given a selection of suitable careers from which they could make a choice. The role of the students was to provide career information for the learners in pamphlet format for easy access. This involved an information-seeking exercise, the researching of relevant sources, the selection of appropriate material for inclusion and the adapting and rewriting of the content to make it accessible to all. The completed pamphlets contained not only useful information about the career itself but also names and addresses of contact persons and other details for obtaining more information regarding that particular career option. The pamphlets were used by the Psychology students as part of the Careers Day held at the school and a number were left for the use of the career counselling teacher and the learners. During 2002 the students continued to work with career topics, in collaboration with the Careers Resource Centre, which serves the wider community of the city of Pietermaritzburg. Fourie (2006: 36-38) highlights the importance of the availability of vocational or career information to young people from an early age in order that they make critical decisions with regard to their future careers.

The "visual display" assignment in the *Information delivery systems* module was also incorporated into the service-learning process in 2001. The choice of topics for displays resulted from the students' visit to Emzamweni High School, where they had observed the non-functioning school library. Each student chose their own topic, such as "Parts of a book", "Know your library", "Book arrangement on the shelves" and "The Dewey Decimal Classification System" and designed a poster for use in the Emzamweni High School Library. The displays were colourful and useful, with clear text and simple information. They were donated to the school library by the students to help enhance the library environment and to aid learners in the process of gaining information literacy skills.

Impacts and outcomes

The impacts and outcomes of the service-learning intervention of the PGDIS modules will be discussed separately in terms of the three partners.

Student experiences of empowerment through service learning.

The service-learning component of both modules allows students the opportunity to apply the theory they have learnt in the classroom to the practical situation. The service-learning experiences at Inadi made students and staff aware of the very privileged and resourced higher education situation in comparison to the reality of the community need. For example, after the interviews with the learners for the needs assessment survey, students were appalled at both the effects of social and political violence on the community and apparent lack of subsequent attention in the form of counselling services. It is vital for students to experience such a "real-life" community situation and to understand how difficult it is to meet these needs. Whilst interviewing the learners, students were confronted by serious social problems facing the learners. Miya (2001) said that "one of the things that gripped my attention during the course of interviewing learners was the issue of drug abuse". Zuma (2001) felt that "the process as a whole was sometimes painful, because I heard a lot of problems that affect learners. It also shows that the community of Inadi is living with poverty, because most of the community is not working." Many of the students made informed recommendations as to how some of these problems could be remedied, such as Polak's (2002) idea that "senior students from the Psychology department could

accompany librarians so as to offer assistance to learners who have serious problems, such as domestic issues or substance abuse".

The results of the questionnaires filled in by the PGDIS students indicated that the majority were in favour of service-learning and its benefits. They felt that the community work helped them apply the subject matter learnt to everyday life, helped them better understand the lectures and that a combination of coursework and service-learning should be practised in more university classes. Their perceptions were that the community benefited from and appreciated their involvement in the community. The students were in agreement about the importance of students being involved in community work which would result in improvements to society. Commenting on the information needs assessment exercise, a student claimed

> The exploratory study was very helpful because it will pave the way for the school to be discovered and known to the external environment. This will also assist the school to have external assistance that will help reduce and finally eradicate the problems the school is facing concerning the information needs of the students. The school will now be put in the map and the stakeholders will be able to get information about the community and its needs and be able to address them (Isaac 2001).

From the section on personal reflection it is clear that the majority of students were very positive about what they had gained from this experience, from the idea of being able to make a difference to the acquisition of leadership skills and their ability to communicate their ideas in a real-world context. Madlala (2002) stated simply "It makes me feel like a better person". From their assessed work it was evident that students have learnt hard skills in interviewing, report writing and presentation. Students in their reflection papers outlined the skills learnt. "Using posters as one of the teaching tool has helped me to: improve my communication skills; to know or have an idea of the knowledge of the subject; to have good organization of the subject matter and have presentation skills" (Sejane, 2001). The introduction of a reflection paper as one form of assessment in the modules is seen as an important tool for the assessment of responses to service-learning. It helped to capture more of the points that came up in the discussion at the seminar presentations and feedback sessions in the form of personal responses. In a reflection paper one of the students stated "although this was supposed to be just a study, for me it was an eye-opening experience....This study taught me a lot more than interviewing techniques. It gave me a close-up look at reality" (Nene 2002).

Community-based learning has, for many years, been regarded as an integral part of the practical application of the modules involved. The introduction of service-learning as part of the CHESP initiative will undoubtedly lead to a re-evaluation, and perhaps reinforcement or expansion, of these aspects of the curriculum in the future.

In terms of the institution's commitment to service-learning activities "the question remains as to whether service-learning will be a priority in the merged institution, and whether funding will be available for a central office/coordinating body" (Gelmon *et al*: 2004:204).

Lazarus (2005: 8) maintains that "The reconstruction and development mandate of South African local government lends itself to HEI's (higher education institutions) (sic) partnering with local government to implement local and regional social and economic development plans". He points out that "The potential knowledge contribution HEI's (sic) could make towards the implementation of these plans is enormous. Conversely, HEI's (sic) will benefit from having a local community context for integrating its teaching and research programmes with local development priorities and having access to a wider pool of resources" (Lazarus 2005:8).

The service provider

During the two years of the pilot phase of the CHESP project the service provider experienced no impacts or outcomes because of a lack of participation. During the second semester staff tried to re-establish contact with the service provider.

With possible future participation it is hoped that service delivery to the community will be enhanced, because the information given to ELITS by the University from the students' research will provide them with up-to-date and detailed background information of the situation in Inadi. This information will highlight the lack of library and information services in the area and, more specifically, the lack of resources in and the non-functioning nature of the school library at Emzamweni High School. If Emzamweni High School were to be included in the schools served by ELITS and library resources were to be provided, assistance given in the setting up of the library and continuing monitoring of, and support for, the staff and the library would be provided. If this happened there could be an immediate improvement in resource-based learning and teaching. It is important to stress the potential benefit which the information resulting from the students' needs analysis could have for the service provider. This could provide an invaluable source of information which would reflect the needs of a typical rural high school and could be used as a model for future planning and service provision for similar sites in KwaZulu-Natal.

Once the high school staff and learners have access to information, it would be envisaged to extend these services to the greater Inadi community, through shared resources at the school venue or at another venue in the area. The latter provides an example of an opportunity for service sector development.

The benefits of contact between individuals and institutions cannot be over-emphasised, as it was through the service provider that staff were alerted to useful information regarding an Information Technology (IT) provider for the school and they, in turn, are very interested in the outcomes of the information needs assessment as the first of its kind in a school in KwaZulu-Natal.

Since 2001 the service provider (ELITS) has attempted to work with the school in the provision of library materials and support. However, the school does not appear not to have had the capacity to maintain the library, to employ a qualified teacher-librarian, and little if any progress seems to have been made (Moputhing 2006).

The community

Many of the outcomes linked to the University and the service provider will ultimately have an impact on the community in the long term. For example, it will be through the co-operation and action on the part of the service provider that the school library can begin to start functioning on a basic level and that the school and community representatives will see some tangible evidence of the partnership. At present, there are few observable benefits to the community. From verbal feedback from community representatives, there appeared to have been unrealistic expectations on the part of the community involved with the CHESP process and these will have to be carefully monitored in any similar future projects.

From the feedback and the results of post-implementation questionnaires from community representatives in the Information Studies modules it appears that the community has benefited from the interaction and communication with both students and staff from the University. Exposure to the University and the study opportunities it offers actually encouraged one community representative to register for a degree in 2002. Generally, they have gained an awareness of the possibilities that could exist with information provision to the community and have come to a degree of understanding of this potential and how it could be jointly achieved in a partnership situation.

Assessment and evaluation

At the end of the pilot phase of the CHESP service-learning initiative in South Africa it is critical for all the partners in the process, including the individual modules, to evaluate the impacts and outcomes of the completed service-learning activities. With reference to the Information Studies modules, and perhaps to the CHESP initiative as a whole, a greater amount of time and effort needs to go into assessment and evaluation of service-learning modules to determine more precisely what impacts have occurred and what needs to be continued and whether anything should change.

Gelmon (2000:28) recognised a shift in higher education "from an 'old way' emphasizing teaching to a 'new way' emphasizing learning". Service-learning "demonstrates characteristics of the new ways, emphasizing application of knowledge, team and community focus for learning, collective instruction and curriculum definition, integrated sequencing of courses, and active learning by students" (Gelmon, 2000:28). It is important to consider all these characteristics when deciding on how one should assess the impact of these programmes. Various methods can be considered, ranging from focus groups, structured reports, journals and e-mail discussion groups, to reflective essays, but at the core of any service-learning assessment is reflection. In seeking to substantiate or validate the effects of service-learning it is crucial to provide the evidence that service-learning is making a difference and, above all, that it is of educational value. Staff must be committed to innovative methods of continuous assessment in order to document service-learning's effect on student learning, to convince the sceptics of the cognitive and intellectual outcomes gained by the students.

After evaluating the University of Western Cape's CHESP experience Witbooi (2004:101) maintains that in the field of library and information science "the traditional pre-professional fieldwork can incorporate structured reflection sessions on service-related as well as discipline-specific concerns in the fieldwork period in order to enhance the fieldwork experience". Witbooi (2004:101) believes that service-learning should not "replace the other forms of experiential learning, but it can co-exist with them in a curriculum". In her view "service learning as a pedagogical strategy is to be accepted and implemented in more courses or modules in Library and Information Science" (Witbooi, 2004:101).

The conclusions which Hart and Witbooi reach echo the sentiments of Yontz and De la Pena McCook (2003) with regard to fieldwork experiences and practical applications in the LIS field being so closely linked to service-learning concepts. Further research in service-learning needs to be undertaken within the LIS sector in South Africa to assess this.

In the assessment of the service-learning which took place at the former university of Natal it is important to note the influence of research. A published conference paper by Stilwell and Bell (2003) which documents this research has been drawn on by other researchers, such as Hart (2004, 2005) in seeking to address the lack of needs assessment and school and public library provision in many areas of the country.

The benefits for the community from this service-learning intervention include the awareness of the information needs of both the school and the wider community as well as the knowledge that increased access to information sources may provide the means for a better future in terms of education and ultimately, economically, in terms of better employment prospects. In addition, interaction with the students increased the community's exposure to individuals involved with the tertiary education sector, giving them a knowledge of the institution, greater confidence in bridging the education gap and bringing the two worlds closer together. The library posters and career pamphlets produced by the students for the learners at Emzamweni are a practical example of an improvement in the information provision for learners, thereby empowering them for a future with a greater possibility of employment.

The benefits of service-learning point to the potential of future partnerships with the Inadi community or public libraries within communities. Individuals and organisations need to strive to overcome the conceptual problems and the practical obstacles in order to promote equity. Conceptual problems, for example, may include unrealistic expectations of the outcomes on the part of one of the partners, such as the community. Another conceptual issue relates to the problems of sustainability in terms of ongoing provision, something which a service provider may be able to assist with. Practical obstacles would include financial costs of intervention, transport to distant sites, organisation and arrangements for individual surveys, the language problem in interview questionnaires and time constraints regarding student interventions in the community.

Conclusion

The research and investigation into the lack of information provision at Emzamweni High School and the Inadi community provided the PGDIS students with a real-life situation, very similar to many other rural areas, where there is no school library or information provision of any kind in the community. In a similar way, the UWC students contributing to the children's and youth community programmes were able to face the challenges and problems confronting South African library and information science practitioners today and help to provide avenues for literacy and for information resources to reach these communities. The research and practice embarked upon will ultimately serve to inform both the needs of information provision and literacy to the Inadi, Delft and Belville communities respectively and the need to build up a body of service-learning research which will be unique to the South African context but remain relevant to the international context. Service-learning does seem to be particularly fitting to the LIS field. As Yontz and De la Pena McCook (2003:66) claim, "the service-learning movement seems to be a 'natural' for library and information science education". The service-learning experiences of these students outline a small part of the picture of South African opportunities and challenges for service-learning as an arena of curriculum reform, community development and social transformation. Moreover, service-learning offers the opportunity for the strengthening of civil society in post-apartheid South Africa, an essential factor to ensure the growth of democracy.

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