

## ***Book Reviews/Boekresensies***

### **TFPL survey of UK special library statistics**

Creaser, Claire & Spiller, David

LISU Occasional Paper no. 15

Library & Information Statistics Unit (LISU)

Department of Information and Library Studies

Loughborough University

June 1997

ISBN 1 901786 01 3

Paperback, 129p. A4

£35.00 plus £5.00 postage

It is the first time that statistics on special libraries and information centres (SLICs) in the United Kingdom has been

published. Up till now little has been known about SLICs. Information was collected from 1000 institutions in 1994, and 700 institutions in 1996. These institutions were divided into 15 sectors. The sectors include: pharmaceutical, chemical and plastic, energy, miscellaneous manufacture, finance, legal, information consultants, media/publishing, machinery manufacture, central government, health, local government, museums, voluntary organisations, professional societies.

Industrial, commercial as well as non-industrial organisations are included. The tables and graphs provided for each sector include averages for the following: budgets for staff; electronic and print materials; staff numbers; use of online hosts and databases; details of main hosts used; use of CDROMs and the Internet; book stocks and annual acquisitions; numbers of current serial titles received; holdings of reports; use of document delivery services; use of library automation systems (and systems used).

Although the budget-related information is probably of little value to the South African library situation much can be learned by considering some of the other findings for example: the most frequently used online hosts are FT Profile, Dialog and DataStar. The average company regularly access four databases and purchases six CD-ROM titles. Use of the Internet for work-related information has increased from 28% of companies in 1994 to 47% in 1996. (It would be interesting to know the latest figures.) The result of the survey supported the idea that companies are spending more money on information and particularly electronic information. The latter is also of importance to training institutions which should adapt accordingly. It was also found that 58% of all libraries surveyed used a library automation system with Cair, Soutron and Inmagic the most popular. Altogether 96% of the SLICs in the legal sector indicated that they provide some form of current awareness service. All sectors except the media and museums recorded over 50% of SLICs offering current awareness services.

Apart from comparing the different sectors on the aspects covered by the survey, statistics for all aspects are also listed for each individual sector.

The authors admit that it was extremely difficult to obtain data for special libraries and information centres. David Spiller however declares: 'There is no reason why this sector should stand aside from powerful recent trends towards comparability of performance. Comparison is a valuable tool for individual managers to benchmark and establish good practice'. Although all the findings will not be useful for South African libraries to draw a comparison, it can still be useful to support current practices or to indicate room for improvement or expansion.

Apart from statistics, the methodology, questionnaires, shortcomings and problems experienced are explained. Although *Directories of libraries in South Africa* covers some of the aspects it, might be a useful exercise to do a similar project for South African libraries. The question however is whether there are somebody willing to attempt such a daunting task!

Apart from the table of contents the book also includes separate lists of tables and graphs. The style is easy to read and the layout is clear. No obvious problems were noted with the technical presentation.

The authors succeeded well in a very difficult task. Although the publication may not be as useful for special librarians and information specialists in South African as for SLICs in the United Kingdom, the book is still recommended. It is also recommended for those involved in education.

The book can be ordered from Library & Information Statistics Unit (LISU), Publication Section, Loughborough University, Loughborough LE11, 3TU, UK.

Fax + 44 (0)1509 223072

E-mail lise@lboro.ac.uk

<http://www/lboro.ac.uk/departments/dlis/lisu/lisuhp.html>

INA FOURIE

*Department of Information Studies, University of South Africa, Pretoria.*