

Measuring and communicating the value of special libraries in provincial government departments in Pietermaritzburg

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This study assessed the value of special libraries (SLs) in provincial government departments (PGDs) in Pietermaritzburg. The objectives of the study were to investigate the methods used to measure the value of SLs in PGDs, measure the effectiveness of the functions of SLs in helping to achieve the PGDs' goals, and communicate this value to the management to advocate their need for redevelopment. The study was conducted in six PGDs that have operative SLs. The population of the study comprised departmental employees who were considered as library users, information professionals (IPs) working in the SLs, and the heads of each department (HODs). The study adopted the pragmatic paradigm and applied the convergent parallel design through the mixed-methods approach. A sample of 369 employees was drawn from a population of 7,866. In addition, six IPs and six HODs were purposively selected to participate in the study. Online platforms were used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. The study established that there is no method used to measure the value of SLs in all six PGDs. However, the functions of SLs were more effective in other departments. The study concluded that the value of SLs in PGDs is visible, although the lack of support from the management in the development of these libraries hinders the ability of IPs to demonstrate the significance of the libraries. The study recommends that SLs in PGDs adopt and implement the proposed strategic framework for measuring and communicating the value of these libraries.

Keywords: South African Provincial Government Departments, special libraries, library value, strategic measurement, special library redevelopment

1 Introduction

Special libraries (SLs) are defined as libraries that enhance the objectives of their parent organisations (POs) by satisfying the specific information needs of their users through access to specialised information resources, both physically and electronically (National Library of South Africa 2014:83). SLs operate within different categories of institutions, such as government departments and businesses, among others, to provide up-to-date and immediate information to improve service delivery. This study was undertaken in provincial government departments (PGDs) situated in Pietermaritzburg, and it investigated, measured, and communicated the value of these libraries within these departments.

The provincial sphere in the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Province in Pietermaritzburg has a total of 16 departments (South African Government 2021), with seven having what are considered to be operative SLs. However, only six of these departments consented for their libraries to form part of this study. These were the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development; Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs; Department of Transport; Department of Health; Department of Public Works; and the Department of Economic Development, Tourism, and Environmental Affairs.

2 Aim of the study

This study sought to inform the departments' management about the value of SLs within the departments in order to advocate the need for their redevelopment. The objectives of the study were to investigate the methods used to measure the value of SLs, measure the effectiveness of the functions of SLs in helping to achieve organisational goals, and communicate this value to the management to advocate the need for their redevelopment. This study was imperative, especially given that the advancement of technology can diminish the value of SLs and their services. The following research questions guided the study:

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- What is the level of awareness and utilisation of special libraries in PGDs?
- What are the methods used by information professionals (IPs) to measure the value of SLs in PGDs?
- How effective are the functions of SLs in helping to achieve the PGDs' goals?

3 Overview of the conceptual framework

A conceptual framework can be defined as a researcher's plan, either in detail or in a descriptive form, which describes the central issues to be considered in the study. These may include the key variables, factors, or concepts, and the alleged interrelation among them (Ngulube 2020:19). A conceptual framework draws from concepts based on various theories, models, research findings, or the researcher's own experience to guide a research project. In this study, the researchers employed a conceptual framework to guide their review of the relevant concepts in the literature, in designing the study, and in interpreting its outcomes.

This study was underpinned by the Strategic Measurement model by Henczel (2006) and the Total Quality Management (TQM) model proposed by Deming in 1980. The Strategic Measurement model was adopted to reveal the procedures and resources that are mostly utilised in SLs, the effectiveness of the libraries in delivering their services, the relevance of the services to the current users, and how they help to accomplish the POs' objectives. The TQM model is a management philosophy that seeks to integrate all organisational functions to focus on meeting customers' needs and achieving organisational objectives. Under this model, the component of benchmarking (internal and external) was considered, as it is the procedure of comparing the processes, products, and services of a library with another library; doing quality processes; and offering quality products and services to the users, usually in their sector (Reddy 2017:146).

This allows organisations to develop plans on how to make improvements or adopt best practices, usually to enhance some aspects of performance (Dragolea & Cofîrlea 2009:814). Benchmarking questions were included in the library user's online questionnaire for internal benchmarking purposes. For external benchmarking purposes, the interview schedules for both the IPs and the heads of departments (HODs) included benchmarking questions on how library resources and services are tailored to the goals of the departments.

4 Review of related literature

Literature reviewed on the topic under study indicated that there is indeed a quest to provide proof of the value of libraries, especially within the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) era, where information can be accessed anytime and anywhere without the need to visit a library building (The Australian Library and Information Association 2012; Chris-Israel, Madu & Yemisi 2018; Murray & Ireland 2018; Jamali 2020; Tunga 2021). There is a dearth of international and African literature on the impact of SLs and how they can be measured to demonstrate their value to the POs (Poll 2018:84-88). Therefore, the literature discussed in this study is largely on academic or public libraries, since they are the types of libraries dominant in the literature.

A library should not only 'hold its door open', but it should also promote the awareness and utilisation of its resources and services (Manoj & Sinha 2014:136). Therefore, for a library to achieve its objectives, the intended users must be aware of the library services and resources that exist so that they can access and utilise them when needed (Nwankwo, Chukwu, Igbokwe & Agbanu 2019:189). The importance of awareness is to ensure that library users are informed of the resources available in the library, the new materials procured, the library operations, and the services provided (Oriogu, Chukwuemeka & Oriogu-Ogbuiyi 2018:34). The authors further maintain that awareness is vital for the utilisation of information services and resources, as it acts as a facilitator to users and positively stimulates their opinion of the library. A study by Ezeala (2022) recommends that appropriate awareness initiatives should be conducted occasionally, particularly to recently appointed officials in the organisation so that they become aware of the significance of the library and utilise it to support their performance and development. However, being aware of the library services available does not necessarily mean that users would make use of them. This was evident in a study by Eyiolorunshe, Eluwole and Aregbesola (2017), who revealed that while there was awareness of the library resources and how they could access them, the frequency of use was deemed lower when equated to the awareness level. This raises the question: What is the level of awareness of the SLs situated in PGDs, and does the frequency of utilisation of the services or resources provided equate to the high or low level of awareness in these libraries? This study thus sought to answer this.

Measuring the value of SLs is an international trend that is developing rapidly in the field of Library and Information Services. By demarcation, research on library value naturally strives to demonstrate that there are certain benefits in the utilisation of library services by users or the contribution of the library towards the main objectives of the POs (Schwieder & Hinchliffe 2018:425). In a world that is continuously being shaped by technology, the significance of how quickly users get access to library materials is no longer essential, but how libraries demonstrate their value to the POs by generally and practically indicating how their services support the mission of that organisation (Tetteh & Nyantakyi-Baah 2019:45).

Matarazzo and Pearlstein (2014:1) regard the question of the value of library services to the organisation as a difficult one to answer by IPs, especially in the case of SLs, where even the organisations' management often does not understand how the libraries contribute to the organisation. This was evident in the survey conducted by the Financial Times Corporate and Special Libraries Association (2013), which revealed that only one-third of the responding executives felt that IPs add value to their organisation.

In South Africa, Rajagopaul (2022) investigated the role and value of special library services in the information age within the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). There was no particular method mentioned to determine the value SLs at the SABC. However, the findings revealed that the library users and managers attest that there is much value attached to these libraries. Similarly, a study by the Australian Library and Information Association (2012) investigated the value of health libraries and information services. The findings showed that there was a considerable contribution made by library services to POs, although there were no specific methods mentioned to have been employed to measure this value. Despite the increase of research worldwide, there is no single method that can be identified as the "best" for measuring the value of SLs. Therefore, how does the IPs measure the value of SLs in PGDs?

The general function of any library is to support users in their pursuit of the information which they require, at any time, and when it is needed. Enwerem, Envulanza and Usuka (2020:236) emphasise the importance of SLs in organisations, departments, and research centres, arguing that they promote the objectives of the POs by offering modern information services and resources tailored to the needs of a user. Depending on the type of organisations that SLs serve, their functions may differ, but are not limited to selecting, acquiring, and organising information materials. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) reviewed the state of libraries around the world in a publication edited by Abdullahi (2017). The book highlighted benchmarking, collaboration, and impact or value assessment as activities that SLs could consider to advance their functions and enhance their value. The advancements in the services provided by SLs through the integration of technology suggests that the future prospects of SLs are 'bright' (Enwerem, Envulanza & Usuka 2020:240). The question that one can ask is whether the adoption of online services means that the physical library and the functions or services it provides could simply be replaced by a digital library. This is because "the SLs of today have moved from being a traditional print-based resource located in one place to becoming an information service that connects on demand to any research project, marketing value, or any other activity needing specific information" (Ali 2020:247). Have the SLs under study moved from their traditional norms of delivering services and embraced the technology revolution?

A study by Ruthven, Robinson and McMenemy (2022) examined the value of digital and physical library services in United Kingdom public libraries and why they are not interchangeable. The study revealed that the manner in which their functions are fulfilled may lean towards more or fewer digital initiatives, depending on how the role is interpreted by the librarians' skills and experiences. The authors thus concluded that the element of value differs between these two kinds of libraries. Public library users in the United Kingdom showed that their value attributes are generally related to physical libraries, and thus digital library services or functions "were more about digital tools or products" (Ruthven, Robinson & McMenemy 2022:10). The study concluded that the one mode of a library cannot supplement the other, but rather complement one another as users value them differently. Even though this type of investigation still needs to be conducted in the context of SLs, it is an indication that the functions of libraries and their services in the corporate environment may not simply be replaced with online services. Consequently, how effective are the current functions of SLs in supporting the achievement of the PGDs' goals?

It was in the context of such issues from literature – on the awareness and utilisation of SLs, the lack of methods used by IPs to measure the value of SLs, and the extent to which the functions of SLs effectively assist the POs in fulfilling their goals – that the current study was carried out.

5 Methodology

This study adopted the mixed-methods research approach. According to Rubin and Babbie (2017:76), one of the three broad reasons researchers choose to use mixed-methods research in their studies is to see if the two sets of results substantiate each other. The researchers sought to corroborate the findings from library users, IPs, and the HODs on the value of SLs services in PGDs. Therefore, the integration of statistical trends (quantitative data) with stories and individual experiences (qualitative data) provided a combined strength for an enhanced understanding of the problem under study than either type of data on their own (Fouché & Strydom 2021:420). Consequently, the quantitative techniques were dominant and supported by qualitative methods.

Data were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, and due to the related restrictions, the researchers resorted to collecting data through internet-based research procedures. Therefore, the study used web-based survey questionnaires for library users, which was complemented by conducting online interviews with IPs and HODs. Google Form (2020) was utilised to create a multiple-choice survey questionnaire, consisting of 43 closed, open-ended, and Likert scale questions clustered into five sections.

For quantitative inquiry, simple random sampling was used as it applies to larger homogeneous groups, such as government organisations, from which a sampling frame was collected using email addresses (Fricker 2017:168). The sample size was established using the formula by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The population of this study was 7,866, and according to Krejcie and Morgan (1970:607), if the population size is between 7,000 and 8,000, the sample should be 367. However, the sample size for this study was 369.

With qualitative inquiry, there are no rules for the sample size frame as it depends on what the researcher wants to know, hence there are no real vigorous and firm guidelines for sample sizes (Strydom 2021:380). Some considerations for choosing a sample size include the ease of accessing the participants and the researcher's judgement that the selected population has rich information about the issue under study (Kumar 2011:176). Therefore, the total sample for the qualitative inquiry was 12 participants, comprising six IPs and six HODs. Online interviews were conducted using synchronous communication technology, specifically Microsoft Teams. A semi-structured interview schedule with both closed and open-ended questions and themes for various questions emerging from the literature review was used.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the data collection instruments, a pre-test was conducted. The online questionnaire was active from 5 July 2021 to 8 July 2022. Depending on their availability, individual interviews for the IPs and HODs were conducted from 10 August 2021 to 15 December 2021. Of the 369 required responses, only 160 (43%) questionnaires were filled successfully. The low survey response rate in this study was attributed to the fact that during the COVID-19, employees in PGDs were working remotely and others did not have access to the internet or computers while working from home, hence the response rate remained low. The qualitative methods yielded a 67% response rate, with four out of six targeted HODs and IPs agreeing to be interviewed. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical analysis with the aid of the SPSS 27.0.1.0 software (Neuman 2017:187). Qualitative data were analysed using thematic content analysis with the aid of the NVivo software.

This study adhered to the research ethical standards as stipulated by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) Research Office 2021). The researchers acquired ethical clearance from the UKZN and written permission to conduct the study from the six departments under study. To protect the integrity of the study, the researchers made use of data collection instruments and cover letters to explain to the respondents and participants about the purpose of the study and how the results would be used. Furthermore, assurance was given that data would be confidential and anonymous.

6 Presentation of results

The presentation of the results is in accordance with the questions of the study. Quantitative data are presented first, followed by qualitative data. The findings are combined in the discussion section.

6.1 Level of awareness and utilisation of special libraries

The researchers inquired from the library users their awareness of a special library within their department. Figure 1 shows that the majority (133) (83%) of the respondents were aware of the library in their departments, while 27 (17%) of the respondents revealed that they were not aware, further indicating that it was their first-time hearing about the existence of the library.

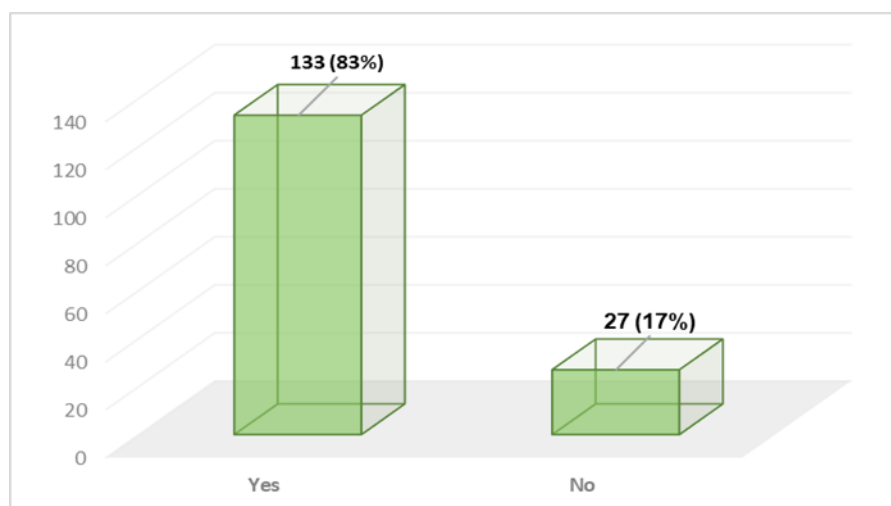


Figure 1: Respondents' awareness of the special library (n=160)

Respondents who indicated that they were not aware of the SLs in their department were requested to proceed to the next section of the questionnaire, while the 133 (83%) of the respondents who were aware of the SLs were requested to answer follow-up questions on the frequency of library utilisation, the services, or resources which they utilised during their visits, and the benefits obtained from visiting the library.

6.1.1 Frequency of library use

To determine the level of library utilisation, the researchers further probed the respondents who indicated awareness of the library to specify how frequently they used the SLs in their departments. Figure 2 shows that 58 (36%) respondents use the library monthly, 51 (32%) have never used the services or the resources provided despite being aware of the library, 12 (8%) respondents indicated that they utilised the library weekly, while 11 (7%) respondents used the library daily.

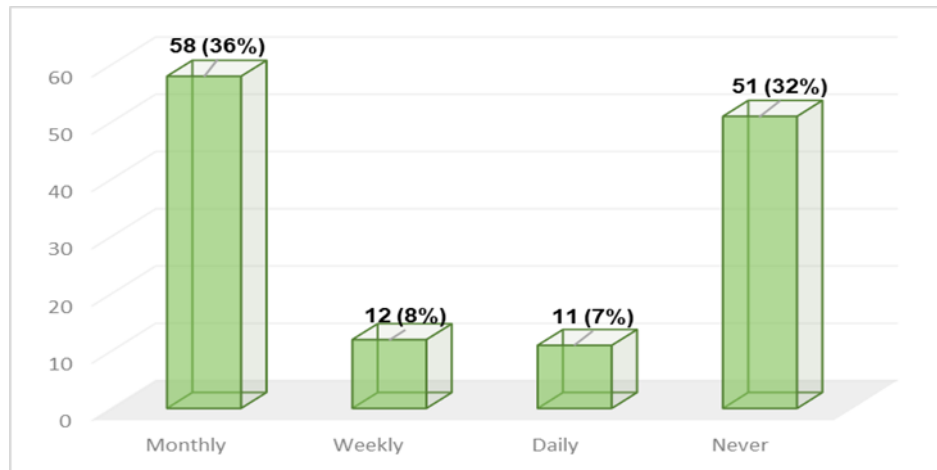


Figure 2: Frequency of library automation (n=133)

6.1.2 Utilisation of library services by users

Table 1 shows that a surprisingly high number 56 (42%) of respondents indicated that they do not utilise the identified services or resources provided by the SLs, while 25 (19%) respondents indicated that they were aware of and used the archiving services. Sixteen (12%) respondents indicated the use of the library for leisure (reading/studying), while newspaper services were utilised by 10 (8%) respondents. The remaining services listed were used by 5% of the respondents in each instance.

Table 1: Special library services or resource awareness and use (n=133)

Library Services/Resources	Frequency	Percentage %
Archiving	25	19%
Reference services (e.g Literature searches)	7	5%
Electronic resources (Journals)	6	5%
Provide credible sources of information	6	5%
Lending service (Borrow books and building plans)	7	5%
Newspapers	10	8%
Leisure (e.g. reading/studying)	16	12%
None of the above	56	42%

Source: Field data, 2021

6.1.3 Special libraries' marketing methods

During the interviews, the IPs were asked about the different types of marketing methods that they use to raise awareness of their SLs to the users so that they remain informed about the library and continue to use its services. Three of the four participants indicated the use of internal emails to promote or inform specific users about a new book or journal available in the library. This is known as the selective dissemination of information, where library staff select information that will be relevant to particular users and send or inform them about its availability.

The marketing of the library and its services is also done during departmental staff meetings, where IPs alert users on what is new in the library. Another method of promoting awareness is placing posters around the building regarding library services and creating a library display of new resources at the entrance of the building. However, IP-B expressed the

difficulty of having to raise awareness for outdated library materials and offering services that would be of no use, due to budget constraints that prevent the acquisition of current and relevant resources.

6.2 Methods used to measure the value of special libraries

To determine the satisfaction of library users with the services and resources offered in the SLs, the researchers requested the users to indicate whether their general information needs were being met by the SLs in their department. The majority (104) (65%) of the respondents indicated that their library does meet their general needs for information, while 56 (35%) indicated that their information needs were not being met (refer to Figure 4).

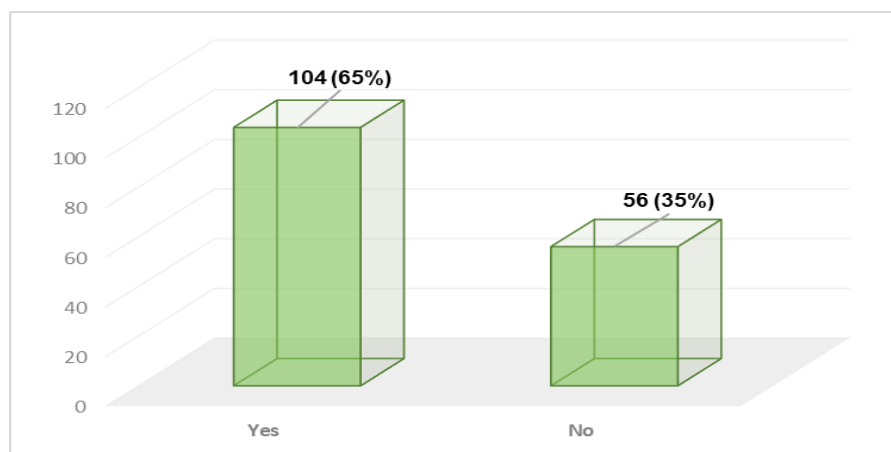


Figure 3: Library resources and services meet our general needs for information (n=160)

The researchers also enquired from the IPs the methods which they use to measure the satisfaction of users and determine the value of the library. Participant-A indicated that their library did not have any procedures in place to measure the satisfaction of their users. Participant-B said that measuring the satisfaction of users was not done as regularly as it should be. When it was done, electronic surveys and manual questionnaire forms situated at the library were used to allow users to rate the services that they receive. Participant-C stated that when the library was still active, they used to conduct regular questionnaire-based surveys to measure the satisfaction of the users, and the findings would be presented at the library committee meeting. The participant further revealed that they used to have a suggestion box at the library for users to write down their complaints, compliments, or suggestions regarding the library, and these would be evaluated monthly to determine if there were any issues that the library needed to attend to or improve on. Participant- D revealed that:

We used to have a questionnaire attached to each library resource that a user would fill out after usage regarding their satisfaction, which did not work. Now the satisfaction of users is measured through our statistics.

6.3 Functions of special libraries and their effectiveness

This study established that each department under study had different objectives, hence the functions of these SLs differed. The researchers sought to find out, from the management's point of view, the indicators that demonstrate the effective functions of SLs within the department. The HODs interviewed noted indicators such as easy access to the required information, the ability to consistently trace documentation through proper filing and archiving, and the frequency of use of library materials.

The management's point of view was sought on whether they thought it was necessary for their department to have a library. This question cut to the core of whether the HODs saw value in having a library. Notably, all the HODs agreed that their departments needed library services. They also expressed the necessity of having an effective library as it saves time in getting authentic information to achieve the strategic objectives of the department. Some of the HODs expressed the following:

HOD-A:

It is critical to have an effective library as it saves time for our professionals to have access to the required information in-house rather than a person going out to other institutions to look for that information, which improves service delivery.

HOD-C:

The library is an important part of our existence as a department because our services are more scientific and more social, which is why we need to acquire more knowledge to support those areas.

HOD-D understood that the library is an integral part of the organisation, stating that:

It provides relevant and up-to-date information in different formats to assist the department in achieving its strategic goals.

6.3.1 Benefits of using the libraries

The researchers enquired from the library users how they benefited from the library services. Table 2 indicates that 25 (19%) of the respondents pointed to making better-informed decisions, while the same number benefitted by being offered new knowledge. Another 20 (15%) respondents cited that the key benefits were the library contributing to a higher quality of service delivery and the library saving time in information retrieval and delivery. Twenty-two (17%) respondents pointed to the library assisting in avoiding duplicating work tasks in the department, while 21 (16%) pointed to achieving a higher success rate in research.

Table 2: Benefits of visiting the special library (n=133)

Benefits of visiting the special library	Frequency	Percentage %
By contributing to a higher quality of service delivery	20	15%
To make better-informed decisions	25	19%
To save time in information retrieval and delivery	20	15%
By offering new knowledge	25	19%
With a higher success rate in research	21	16%
To avoid duplication of tasks in the Department	22	17%

Source: Field data, 2021

6.3.2 Internal and external benchmarking

Internal benchmarking measures the library's performance in comparison with other sections in the department. This is done to justify the existence of the library and to demonstrate the library's contribution towards the department's success. The researchers sought the opinion of the library users regarding the attention given to the library by the management of the department and to further elaborate on the answer provided. Figure 3 shows that library users are of the view that there is not enough attention given by the management to the development of SLs in PGDs, as indicated by 109 (68%) respondents compared to 42 (26%) respondents who felt that the management was doing enough for the library. Briefly explaining their answers, library users expressed their views regarding the attention paid by management to the SLs. The majority of the respondents who felt that there was no attention being paid explained as follows: *the management should allocate more budget for the library; outdated library resources; lack of library marketing and information about library benefits; and lack of recognition of the library potential in the department.*

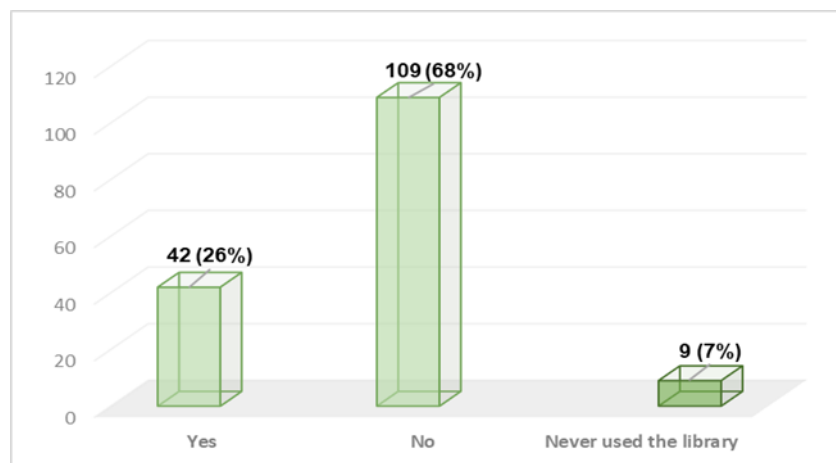


Figure 4: Managements' attention towards special library development (n=160)

For external benchmarking purposes, the researchers enquired from the IPs the key trends that they were following in their libraries which makes them stand out in the department and bring value to the library. Apart from Participant-C who indicated that there are no current trends as their library is just operating with what they have, all other participants indicated the notion of moving from a traditional library to the adoption of online library resources and services that could be accessed anywhere by the users. These include the digitisation of library resources, paid online subscriptions to journals or newspapers, and open access.

7 Discussion

This section discusses the findings of the study based on the research questions.

7.1 The level of awareness and utilization of special libraries

The results revealed that there was a great level (83%) of awareness of the existence of SLs in the departments under study and that those who use the library do so on a monthly (36%) basis. However, 32% of those users indicated that they do not utilise any of the identified services or resources provided by these SLs. All the HODs also indicated their awareness of the SLs in their departments and that they had visited the library. This suggests that each HOD was aware of the condition of the library in their respective departments, whether good or bad.

This high level of awareness does not equal actual utilisation of available services or resources. Such findings validate Henczel's (2006:10) statement, that the level, whether high or low, of utilisation of library services does not necessarily show the value of the services utilised since the numbers do not disclose how satisfied the users are with the services. Therefore, IPs need to have certain methods in place to evaluate the satisfaction of users. This way, the value of the services could be determined using tangible evidence to indicate the effectiveness of the library to its POs.

One of the challenges identified from the findings that hinder the effective use of library services is the lack of an adequate budget to develop the library, as indicated by some IPs. These participants pointed out that their library holds outdated resources. A study by Rajagopaul (2022) revealed how the outdated collections in such libraries were viewed as both a weakness, as they were irrelevant in the current information age, and a strength, a rare historical collection of the services.

7.2 Methods for measuring the value of special libraries

Regarding the satisfaction of users, the findings revealed that the SLs under study meet the general information needs of their users, as indicated by 65% of the respondents. However, with regards to determining users' satisfaction and measuring library value for the SLs, it was evident that IPs in these libraries have no active methods in place used to determine the satisfaction and further measure library value. This adds further to the struggle of IPs to locate, demonstrate, or prove their value to the management. The latter corresponds with the results of the study by Creaser and Spezi (2012), who noted that libraries are battling to find suitable and efficient methods to capture and demonstrate substantial evidence that proves their value to the POs. Regarding the methods used to measure the value of SLs, the findings from this study substantiated the disparity in strategies for measuring value, as noted from other studies, such as the Australian Library and Information Association (2012) and Rajagopaul (2022).

The findings drawn from research by Kamposiori and Crossley (2019) show that the significance of measuring the value of SLs is already noticeable, and what is now required is a common framework that could be used to measure this value for or impact the POs. On this note, this study proposed a strategic framework for measuring and communicating the value of SLs in PGDs, as illustrated in Figure 5. The core principle of this framework is that SLs in government departments should not function in isolation but be interlinked with various sections to assist in achieving the main objectives of their Pos.

7.3 The functions of special libraries in provincial government departments and their effectiveness in helping to achieve departmental goals

This study found that PGDs have different key objectives, meaning that the functions of each library would be different. With regards to how SLs contribute to the objectives of the departments and the necessity of having such services in corporate organisations, the HODs viewed the library as an integral part of the organisation, whose services add value to the general objective of PGDs, namely, the improvement of service delivery. HODs further concurred with the need and significance of having a library, specifying that when those services are utilised effectively, time is saved in obtaining authentic information to achieve the strategic objectives of the department (value-in-use). The effectiveness of SLs in PGDs is visible through benefits such as making better-informed decisions and being offered new knowledge obtained by the respondents after visiting the libraries. Similar findings were observed in a study conducted by Lasig and Collantes (2022), that library users were also satisfied with the overall services.

Compared to other sections (internal benchmarking) in the departments, there is not enough attention given by the management towards the development of SLs in PGDs, as indicated by 68% of the respondents. This implies that even though the management are aware of the need for an effective library within their departments, they are not doing much to show support towards the development of these libraries. In terms of external benchmarking, IPs pointed to the adoption of online services and resources as the main trend in their libraries, which helps them to receive some recognition from the department and contribute to achieving the objectives of their POs. However, one of the IPs revealed that their library did

not have any key trends, as they are currently operating with what they have, without a budget allocation (also noted by the respondents). Nevertheless, other trends that could be adopted by SLs include the digitisation of library resources, access to online journals or newspapers, and open access to academic information. Such trends could be adopted or adapted, especially by libraries that do not follow any key trends, provided that the IPs are granted access to adequate funding.

These findings imply that IPs in the SLs under study are constantly improving their functions and gradually acknowledging the need to move from their traditional methods of operation towards embracing the digital era. The gradual move towards and adoption of online services thus questions the significance of having a physical library in these organisations. This gradual move supports the notions presented by recent studies conducted by Ajayi, Ayodele and Adedokun (2021) and Zygiaris, Hameed, Alsubaie and Rehman (2022), that instead of waiting for users to visit the library, IPs should make use of technological facilities to influence library users and deliver library services through online platforms.

8 Conclusion

While the value of SLs in these PGDs is visible, the lack of support from the management in the development of these libraries hinders the ability of IPs to showcase their significance to the organisation. Therefore, without this support, IPs are limited in the modes of services that they do and can deliver, and the value of the library is compromised. Based on the findings from this study, the authors made the following recommendations:

- The KZN PGDs should adopt the proposed strategic framework (see Figure 5). The core principle of this framework is that SLs in PGDs or any other corporate organisation should not function in isolation but be interlinked with various sections in the departments to achieve their main objectives.
- The HODs should ensure that there is enough budget for the development of SLs.
- Each department should review the placement of their special library to ensure that it is placed in the correct section for effective communication between the library and the management.

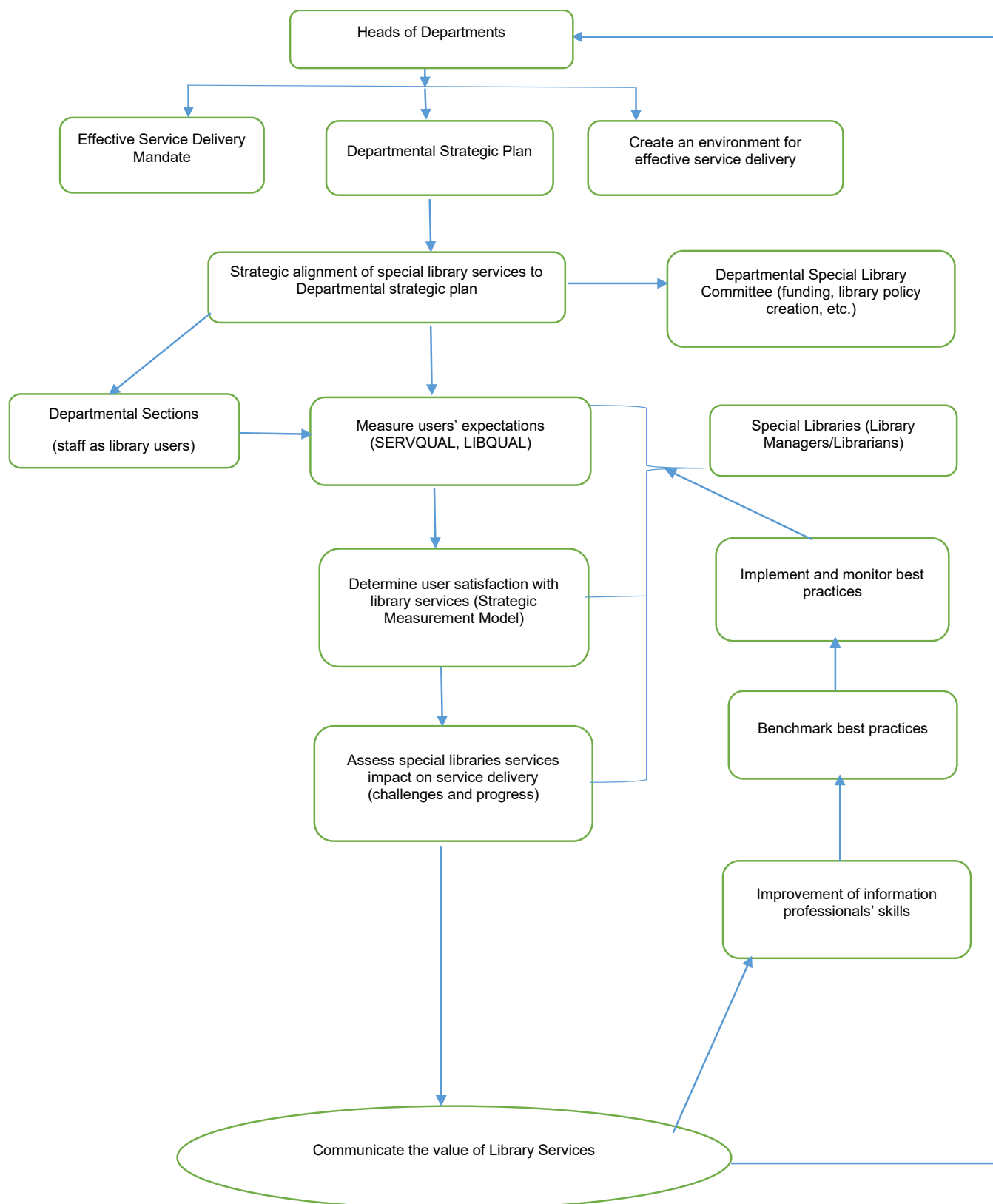


Figure 5: Strategic framework for measuring and communicating the value of SLs in PGDs (Synthesised by the Researchers)

Explanation of the framework

- i. There should be a strategic alignment of special library services to the departmental strategic plan.

- ii. The needs and expectations of users should be sought and measured from every departmental sections, and the users' expectations about the library regularly monitored.
- iii. There should be regular measuring on users' satisfaction with library services.
- iv. Assess the impact of special library services on service delivery.
- v. The library committee should frequently communicate the value of library services to the management.
- vi. IPs should benchmark best practices from other SLs to improve their services.
- vii. IPs should implement and monitor best practices adopted.
- viii. Conduct annual assessments on special library value.

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