

This issue contains eight articles. Five of them deal with some aspects of academic libraries. The rest cover matters varying from library mergers, reading and information needs of persons with visual impairment, training needs of general library workers to the protection of traditional knowledge.

The lead article by Sophie van der Walt and Tanya du Plessis focuses on the current age distribution of academic librarians in South Africa. A mixed-method research approach was used to investigate the age demography of librarians' work in five of the academic libraries from the Gauteng and Environs Library and Information Consortium (GAELIC). The results showed that most of the middle and senior level library management positions were occupied by those due to retire in the next 15 to 20 years. Consequently, the planning and training of new middle and top management staff members must form part of succession planning policies in order to avoid a leadership vacuum.

Glenrose Velile Jiyane and Omwoyo Bosire Onyancha turn the attention of the readers to information literacy (IL) training. Their study explores the availability and implementation of information literacy programmes in South Africa, with special reference to library and information science (LIS) institutions and academic libraries. Results indicated that most LIS schools and academic libraries offered IL programmes with a variety of titles to first year students. They make several recommendations for the improvement of IL delivery by LIS departments and academic libraries in South Africa.

One of the challenges facing academic libraries is the prevalence of journal cancellations. Ruth Hoskins and Christine Stilwell investigated journal cancellations in 17 university libraries in South Africa. The results revealed that South African university libraries, like most academic and research libraries worldwide, have been adversely affected by high priced journal subscriptions and many libraries have simply cancelled subscriptions to pay for ongoing subscriptions. Recommendations are made for enhancing library budgets and access to usage statistics, supporting consortia and avoiding restrictive journal packages.

Using bibliometric techniques, Grace Sitienei and Dennis Ocholla discuss the research and publication patterns of academic librarians in eastern and southern Africa. They conclude that in terms of publications per librarian, there was no significant difference between southern Africa and eastern Africa. Academic librarians in eastern Africa preferred publishing in foreign journals while those from southern Africa mostly published in domestic journals.

Persons with visual impairment face numerous challenges accessing conventional information resources. Using a stratified proportionate random sample, 'Niran Adetoro investigated the reading interests and information needs of persons with visual impairment in Nigeria and concluded that transcription and provision of information materials for visually impaired users by libraries should be based on knowledge of their reading interests and information needs. Library mergers in South Africa have come and gone, but Michiel Moll reminds us of the lessons learnt from merging the Boland College of Education and the Cape Technikon libraries, including handling both the human component of the merger and the unique challenges of dealing with the collections and service alignment.

The LIS landscape in South Africa is characterised by a limited number of training opportunities for general library workers. Using a case study approach informed by the literature and by personal experience, Hester Meyer considers the implementation of legislation and policies with regard to LIS training and how LIS educators involved in open distance learning (ODL) cope with the specific challenges for delivering 'work ready' general library workers in South Africa. In the last article, Charles Masango examines indigenous traditional knowledge and intellectual property rights. The article proposes possible measures that may be implemented for indigenous traditional knowledge to be protected within the South African intellectual property framework.

Enjoy the read!
Prof Patrick Ngulube
Editor-in-Chief