

INVESTIGATING ACCESS TO LIBRARIES IN DERTIG,
SUURMAN AND BIRCHLEIGH NORTH IN SOUTH AFRICA
BETWEEN 2015 - 2020

By

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PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

I, Daniel Shatale Mashego (Student number: 2140228), am a student registered for the degree of MA in Publishing Studies in the academic years 2020-21.

I hereby declare the following:

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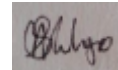
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Daniel S. Mashego

30 June 2021



Name

Date

Signature

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to all rural communities in South Africa that still have limited or no access to information and information resources.

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A special ‘thank you’ to my supervisors, Ms Colleen Dawson and Ms Lorraine Nyamapfene, for guiding me through the process and ensuring that I come up with a product of good quality.

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- Wife: Tebogo Mashego
- Head of Internal Communications, Standard Bank: Mrs Thato Cassuto
- Parents: Lamech and Renny Mashego

I would also like to acknowledge all the authorities and sources consulted in the preparation of this report. The list would include journals, libraries, schools, municipalities, Provincial Library Services, and National Library South Africa (NLSA).

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to establish the extent to which libraries and information resources are accessible in LSM 5 and LSM 9-High communities. Two LSM 5 communities, Dertig and Suurman, are used as case studies. A comparative study between these LSM 5 communities and a LSM 9-High community (Birchleigh North) was conducted to understand access in these two categories of settlement types. Although both LSM 5 communities have fully-fledged community libraries, the study outlines the following barriers that hinder access to the local libraries and other information resources: library opening hours, location of the library, internet connectivity, users' income, poor partnership between libraries and the local schools and communities, lack of effective marketing approach, COVID-19 and inadequate funding. The comparative study between LSM 5 and LSM 9-high libraries shed insights regarding the profile of the users in both settlement types and highlights the disparities in resources between the two categories, which ultimately translates into barriers that impede access to local libraries and information resources. The study showed that the centralising of functions or gravitating towards centralisation brings challenges. Centralisation is characterised by unnecessary handoffs which ultimately results in delayed decision-making and poor service delivery, hence a call for a decentralised operating model. Over and above this, the study calls for a standardised operating model across all nine provinces in South Africa. Decentralising functions and standardising the operating model will do away with unnecessary handoffs, expedite decision-making, ensure alignment in all provinces and ultimately enhance access to libraries and information resources.

Keywords

Community Library; Public library; Access; Information access; Information; Information resources; Computers; Internet; School; School library; Librarian; Municipality; Province; Budget; COVID-19

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LIST OF KEY TERMS

Equitable Share

A provincial budget allocated by the provincial treasury to the provincial Department of Arts and Culture. The Provincial Library Services get a slice from this budget. The Provincial Library Services unit falls under the Department of Arts and Culture.

Conditional Grant

A grant that is strictly for Library Services, i.e. Community Libraries, whose primary aim is to address the injustices of the past by building and sustaining libraries in previously disadvantaged communities.

Living Standard Measure

Living Standard Measure (LSM) is a unique means of segmenting the South African market. It cuts across race and other outmoded techniques of categorising people and, instead, groups people according to their living standards using criteria such as degree of urbanisation and ownership of cars and major appliances (South African Audience Research Foundation, n.d.).

Norms and standards

Norms and Standards are binding rules, requirements, or standards of conduct of people in processes or requirements for the rendering of public library and information services – Management Mania (n.d.)

Public/Community Library

A public/community library is an organisation established, supported and funded by the community, either through local, regional or national government or through some other form of community organisation. It provides access to knowledge, information and works of the imagination through a range of resources and services and is equally available to all members of the community regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, language, disability, economic and employment status and educational attainment (Koontz & Gubbin, 2010).

ACRONYMS

- **LSM:** Living Standard Measure
- **NLSA:** National Library of South Africa
- **LIS:** Library and Information Services
- **SASSA:** South African Social Security Agency
- **PLFTAS:** Public Library Funding and Technology Access Survey
- **ICT:** Information and Communications Technology

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Information and knowledge are important resources in the economy of the world (Mchombu & Cadbury, 2006). Access to information is one of the key requirements necessary to ensuring effective community development. Ugokwe (2013) in Matodzi (2018) posits that poor access to information is one of the major causes of structural poverty. Manjunatha (2003) in Mojapelo and Dube (2014) defines information access as mechanisms used to avail information and information services to users. Nkondo et al. (2015) in Matodzi (2018) view accessibility as the ability to access resources and benefits associated with libraries. They posit that this includes variables such as the language spoken by staff and patrons, relevant content and resources, distance and transport, building layout, and assistive technology.

In the context of this study, access to information is defined as the ease with which communities in the Living Standards Measure (LSM) 5 and 9-High categories access useful and relevant information sourced from various resources and tools for decision-making and self-enrichment purposes. Living Standard Measure (LSM) is a unique means of segmenting the South African market. It cuts across race and other outmoded techniques of categorising people and, instead, groups people according to their living standards using criteria such as degree of urbanisation and ownership of cars and major appliances (South African Audience Research Foundation, n.d.). The research focuses on two LSM 5 communities – Dertig and Suurman – and one LSM 9-High community called Birchleigh North (South African Audience Research Foundation, n.d.). According to Mchombu and Cadbury (2006), even the poorest people rely on information for them to make decisions, hence the need for such information to be reliable. Books, access to internet and devices such as ereaders, computers and smartphones are examples of these information resources.

Popesco and Corbos (2011) suggest that public libraries are the logical and critical partners in the local development programmes that focus on people and the quality of life. In support of this view, Servon and Nelson (2003) in Molawa (2009) proclaim that knowledge has a great impact on the economic and social aspects of societies. Abubakar (2010) in Matodzi (2018) supports this view, arguing that lack of access to information services is also a form of

poverty which often manifests itself in the form of low or no income. Libraries are open to people regardless of race, income, age, sex, political or religious convictions. This openness makes libraries ideal places for learning and social interaction (Johnson, 2010). Hutchinson and Vidal (2004) in Johnson (2010) see social capital as an important community asset that reduces crime, lowers dropout rates among high school learners, improves health, and helps communities solve local problems.

According to Cornerstone Economic Research (2013), a library is an important and valuable social asset, giving various members of the local communities access to information and other facilities, in addition to serving the reading needs of the public. Therefore, Cornerstone Economic Research (2013) maintains that libraries have a positive impact on the social and economic development of the local communities. Johnson (2012) argues that libraries contribute to social development by offering library services to those who do not have the resources in their social networks to draw upon in order to make decisions and to solve problems.

South Africa's social ills such as low levels of education, high levels of unemployment and the rampant poverty in the previously disadvantaged settlements can be traced back to the policies of the apartheid government (Mariotti, 2014). Since 1948, black South Africans were stripped of their land and moved to racially segregated settlements, far away from the big cities, where home ownership was almost impossible (Urban@UW, 2019). According to Neves and Du Toit (2013), present-day livelihoods in rural South Africa are marked by enduring spatial and racial legacies of poverty. May et al. (2000) are of the view that poverty in South Africa is excessively rural – 72% of the poor live in rural areas (Neves & Du Toit, 2013). According to Cornerstone Economic Research (2013), prior to 1993, public library services were provided mainly in urban centres while poor and rural settlements were poorly serviced.

Dertig and Suurman, given their characteristics, are classified as LSM 5 communities. In an effort to understand access to libraries and information resources in these communities, the two communities were compared to a LSM 9-High community, Birchleigh North, a previously advantaged settlement (South African Audience Research Foundation, n.d.).

1.2 Purpose

The focus of this research was on community libraries in the chosen communities of Dertig, Suurman and Birchleigh North. Mchombu and Cadbury (2006) are of the view that public libraries and school libraries have a critical role in supporting learners to improve their literacy. The aim of this study was to understand the extent to which information is made accessible in rural communities (LSM 5) to facilitate learning and enhance decision-making. The study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. Do LSM 5 communities have access to information and information resources?
2. What promotes or hinders access to information in LSM 5 and LSM 9-High communities?
3. Is access to information dependent on the LSM category within which the community falls – LSM 5 versus LSM 9-High communities?

1.3 Objectives

For the purpose of this research, I looked at access to libraries and information resources using Dertig, Suurman and Birchleigh North communities as case studies. Dertig is an LSM 5 village based in the rural North West Province in South Africa. Suurman is a previously disadvantaged LSM 5 village located on the outskirts of Pretoria in the Gauteng Province. Birchleigh North is a previously advantaged LSM 9-High suburb in the east of Johannesburg in Gauteng. The objective of this research was to gain an understanding on the following:

1. Do operating hours enable or hinder access to libraries?
2. Does the location of the library enable or hinder access to information?
3. Do local libraries have full-time trained librarians?
4. Is the library's catalogue accessible to all patrons?
5. Are there sufficient terminals for all users to access?
6. Are users able to access internet at their local libraries?
7. To what extent do partnerships between local communities, schools and libraries enhance or hinder access to libraries and information resources?
8. To what extent do marketing activities enhance or hinder access to libraries and information resources?

1.4 Scope

O'Reilly (2005) states that a good research design must begin with setting limits of the scope of the research. Bickman and Rog (2009) caution against biasing the scope of the research. They argue that researchers must also pay attention to questions left unaddressed by a study as such questions can be as or more important. The scope of this study was limited to LSM 5 and LSM 9-High communities. The study focused on three communities: Dertig, Suurman and Birchleigh North.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Snyder (2019) posits that literature review is important for all research projects and research disciplines. Machi and McEvoy (2009) in Onwuegbuzie et al. (2012) define literature review as:

A written document that logically argue a case founded on a comprehensive understanding of the current state of knowledge about a topic of study. (p. 2)

They argue that the case presents a convincing thesis to answer the question posed by the study. Literature review of relevant literature is an important part of research as it helps the researcher identify gaps and to ultimately contribute towards a body of literature. This chapter discusses recent literature on topics such as the state of libraries in LSM 5 and LSM 9-High communities in South Africa, the role of government and other stakeholders in enabling access to libraries and information, the relationship between income and access to libraries and information and the extent to which technology is enabling or hindering access to libraries and information.

2.2 The state of libraries in LSM 5 and LSM 9-High communities in South Africa

Libraries play a critical role of making information available to local communities. A library's impact and success depend on the extent to which its information resources are available, accessible and usable (Mojapelo & Dube, 2014). Most libraries in South Africa are located in highly concentrated urban areas, whereas there are few service points in rural areas where the majority of the population live (Mchombu & Cadbury, 2006). According Table 2.1, there are 1879 public libraries in South Africa. The table also shows an uneven allocation of public libraries at provincial level in South Africa. The skewed allocation of public libraries may be traced back to South Africa's historical past.

Table 2.1: South African Public Libraries

PROVINCE	MID YEAR POPULATION SIZE ESTIMATE BY PROVINCE 2017	% OF TOTAL POPULATION	TOTAL NUMBER OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES
EASTERN CAPE	6,498,700	11.5	235
FREE STATE PROVINCE	2,866,700	5.1	182
GAUTENG	14,278,700	25.3	285
KWA ZULU NATAL	11,074,800	19.6	266
LIMPOPO	5,778,400	10.2	97
MPUMALANGA	4,444,200	7.9	115
NORTHERN CAPE	1,214,000	2.1	215
NORTH WEST	3,856,200	6.8	112
WESTERN CAPE	5,822,634	28.1	372
TOTAL	56,521,900	100%	1879

Source: <https://www.nlsa.ac.za/condgrant/images/PDF/UPDATED%20LIBRARY%20STATS.pdf>

Mojapelo and Dube (2014) maintain that it is the responsibility of libraries to facilitate access to information and the use of information resources and services. This perspective implies that success should not be measured in terms of the number of libraries built in our communities. However, the question must be: once built, are they equipped with the right resources and technology so that the members of the community can have access to useful and quality information, using the right tools and technology?

In South Africa we have different settlement types such as informal settlements (Harrison, 1992), townships (Jürgens et al., 2013) and rural villages (Neves & Du Toit, 2013). The former apartheid spatial planning influenced the location of public libraries, and to address the problem, government is now building libraries in previously disadvantaged communities (Satgoor, 2015). Although all of the above types of settlements face different challenges

regarding the problem of access to libraries and information resources, this paper will focus primarily on settlements classified as LSM 5 and LSM 9-High, using Dertig, Suurman and Birchleigh North as case studies. The demographics of Dertig, Suurman and Birchleigh North are outlined in Table 2.2 below:

Table 2.2: The demographics of Dertig, Suurman and Birchleigh North

	Dertig	Suurman	Birchleigh North
Municipality	Moretele Municipality	Tshwane Municipality	Ekurhuleni Municipality
Area	3.04km ²	11.76km ²	2.92km ²
Population	2996	11071	7998
Population below 40 years	67.6%	71.54%	63.45%
Dominant Race(s)	Blacks (99%)	Blacks (99%)	Blacks (54%) Whites (40%)
Dominant Language(s)	Setswana (75%)	Setswana (36%) Xitsonga (22%) Sepedi (21%)	English (23%) Afrikaans (32%) isiZulu (12%)
Surrounding communities (populations)	Makapanstad (15076) Mathibestad (25945) Dannhouse (4551) Bosplaas (2670)	Diloppe (3874) Sekampaneng (8004)	Birchleigh (10776) Norkem Park (12229)

Source: <https://census2011.adrianfrith.com/>

Dertig is a rural village that falls under Moretele Municipality. It has small population of 2996. It is surrounded by several communities such as Mathibestad. It is predominantly black, and the main language spoken in the area is Setswana. Over 67% of the population is

below 40 years of age. Suurman is a rural village in the outskirts of the Gauteng Province and falls under Tshwane Municipality. It has a predominantly black population of 11701, of which over 71% of the population is below 40 years of age. The three main spoken languages are Setswana, Sepedi and Xitsonga, Setswana being the dominant one. It is surrounded by several villages such as Diloppe. Birchleigh North is a previously advantaged suburban community which falls under Ekurhuleni Municipality. Its population (54% Black and 40% White) stands at 7998, of which over 63% of the population is below 40 years of age. The main three spoken languages are Afrikaans, English and isiZulu, with Afrikaans being the dominant one.

2.3 Government and other key stakeholders enabling access to libraries and information

Mojapelo and Dube (2014) claim that school libraries complement school curriculum by enabling access, for learners and teachers, to various forms of information resources, exposing learners to diverse opinions, ideas and experiences. Machet and Tiemensma (2009) in Mojapelo and Dube (2014) maintain that school and community libraries can play a critical role in cultivating and fostering a culture of reading among learners. Satgoor (2015) maintains that most children are exposed, for the first time, to books at a library or school because most households do not own books. Nesi (2012) in Leung and Chiu (2020) posits that through collaboration and closely shared and effective educational initiatives, public and school librarians can support lifelong public library users and learners. Lonsdale (2003) in Mojapelo (2018) asserts that there is a connection or relationship between the provision of sufficient educational resources in a school setting and the performance of the learners. Therefore, Lonsdale (2003) in Mojapelo (2018) observes that the schools that are poorly resourced tend to struggle to achieve the desired outcomes.

Brown and Senyolo, as cited in NLSA (2015), confirm that the former white schools have functional libraries simply because parents are willing to support the operations of the school libraries, including paying the salaries of the teacher-librarians. Hart (2013) supports the view, arguing that the ex-white suburban schools are able to sustain their well-functioning school libraries because they charge extra fees from the parents. Brown and Senyolo in NLSA (2015) proclaim that because, prior to 1994, school we categorised according to race,

the allocation of resources was informed and guided by this racist policy – white schools had libraries and teacher-librarians while black schools were given limited or no library resources. Mojapelo (2018) is of the view that the apartheid government built schools without libraries in black communities, to perpetuate the inferior bantu education, and this resulted in low literacy skills among learners in these communities.

Mojapelo and Dube (2014) are of the view that, one of the reasons we have a serious shortage of school libraries is because, in South Africa, the national Department of Basic Education does not have a school library policy in place, despite the five drafts that were developed since 1997. Mostert (2001) in Krolak (2005) declares that any country that is involved in information provisioning must have a written information policy. He proclaims that the lack of an information policy to coordinate Library and Information Services, especially for developmental purposes, is a serious problem in most African countries. For a country to roll out an effective library system for schools, an endorsed national school library policy is a prerequisite (Mojapelo & Dube, 2014). Mostert (2001) in Krolak (2005) states that when such a policy is not in place, related information systems are poorly coordinated, and this anomaly results in unnecessary competition.

According to Paton-Ash and Wilmot (2015) the process of developing a policy for schools in South Africa has been long and frustrating for the profession. They argue that the absence of a national policy has implications for the capacity of the profession to fill school librarianship posts. A national school library policy is a primary prerequisite to developing and sustaining a good Library and Information Services (LIS) in all schools (Mojapelo, 2018). Mchombu and Cadbury (2006) are of the view that for South Africa to be successful in enabling access to information and promoting lifelong learning, government support is critical. Mojapelo (2018) attributes the poor state of public schools in most previously disadvantaged rural communities and informal settlements to the pre-1994 apartheid policies.

Machet and Tiemensma (2009) in Mojapelo and Dube (2014) claim that under the previous apartheid regime, the provisioning of library resources was allocated unequally between the black and white communities, with black communities receiving minimal or no library services. Satgoor (2015) is of the opinion that although the current nine provinces have all established provincial LIS systems, the inequalities in service delivery in certain provinces reflect the disparities of historically disadvantaged areas. Servon and Nelson (2003) in

Molawa (2009) maintain that knowledge has a great impact on the economic and social aspects of societies. Another way of educating and empowering societies is through libraries. Not only do they educate members of our communities, they also help inculcate the culture of reading and life-long learning.

Stephen Abram (2011) in Leung and Chiu (2020) suggests that school-public library collaboration can be enhanced through both simple and complex strategies. Silbert and Bitso (2015) state that mutually beneficial partnerships in South Africa, between schools, universities and communities are critical for sustainable reform. Parker et al. (2012) maintain that these partnerships make resource sharing possible and help partners to address common problems while bringing “different knowledge, skills, and dispositions” to the partnerships. To promote literacy and the development of information, government departments must partner with NGOs (Mchombu & Cadbury, 2006). It is the responsibility of governments to establish working partnerships between the private sector, public sector and civil society organisations to enable the co-ordination of information resources (Mchombu & Cadbury, 2006).

Krolak (2005) points out that lack of co-operation among agencies involved in library-related work weakens the system and creates unnecessary duplication or even competition. The unhealthy relationship between the provincial and the municipal governments is a good example: although public libraries are a provincial function, municipalities are widely involved in providing the actual service, very often by default because provinces have been slow to take responsibility for the function (Cornerstone Economic Research, 2014). Cornerstone Economic Research (2014) argues that the library function is a provincial function – not a municipal function – and yet municipalities are being forced to fund the function because the provinces have not assumed their responsibilities. As a result, municipalities are increasingly threatening to stop funding libraries (Cornerstone Economic Research, 2014). Such an anomaly must be addressed as it may affect growth and progress in the LIS space.

It is clear from these assertions that libraries will not succeed on their own or in isolation, there must be some form of cooperation between libraries, schools, universities, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the private sector. Nkondo et al. (2014) maintain that, to address challenges faced by the youth of South Africa, there is a need for active

collaboration among sectors. They also argue that, for young people to make sense of their lives, the provisioning of effective LIS programmes must be seen as a shared responsibility between schools and universities.

2.4 Access to information resources versus income

Satgoor (2015) theorises that the fact that most households do not own books means that a child from these households will, for the first time, interact with a book at a library or school. She also argues that the same is true regarding access to technology – most children interact with computers for the very first time in a public library. Nkondo et al. (2014) posit that local libraries can embark on various reading programmes to close such a gap in low-income families. Public libraries and librarians are in a good position to influence the early development of children through age appropriate activities, reading material and tools that develop vocabulary and language skills (Satgoor, 2015).

According to Birman (1998), low-income earners do not enjoy the same access to library resources and information that people with adequate income do. He argues that we cannot talk about ‘free public libraries’ and ‘equality of service’ when a greater proportion of the population cannot afford to get to the library and cannot afford library fees and fines. Machet and Tiemensma (2009), in support of this view, also posit that most learners do not have access to transport to reach libraries, or money to pay for such transport. Therefore, the issue of access to books cannot be dealt in isolation from some of the critical variables such as household income, the location of the library and the lack of transport. It is these socio-economic challenges that exacerbate the problem of access to libraries and information in our communities.

A study by Neuman and Celano (2001) showed that children from middle-income communities tend to have access to a large number of print resources, ranging from bookstores, to signs, to observations of people reading in public spaces, to various institutions of learning. Those who came from poorer communities would have to rely on public institutions (Neuman & Celano, 2001). Neuman and Celano (2001) then concluded that the defining features of class position (for example, income and social capital) appear to affect the allocation of print resources not only in private enterprise but also in public domains.

Machet and Tiemensma (2009) in support of this view, proclaims that areas with socio-economic problems such as high levels of poverty, unemployment and illiteracy are also areas where public library services are either non-existent or of poor quality. These assertions show that there is a strong relationship between poverty and the issue of access to information and information resources. One is most likely to find the above-mentioned social anomalies amplified more in LSM 5 communities than they would in urban areas.

Popescu and Corbos (2011) suggest that within the knowledge-based economy, there is a strong correlation between education, knowledge, information and communication technologies, economic growth and regional development. One of the role of libraries is to contribute towards social and economic development by supporting the fight against the digital illiterateness, by ensuring access points to the internet and the necessary training, and by ensuring that there is cooperation between the local community of business people and other local key players that offer informational services in order to support the development of an economy based on knowledge (Popescu & Corbos, 2011). Rosa (2017) proclaims that public libraries play a vital role in community services such as computer training, early childhood literacy and workforce development.

Mchombu and Cadbury (2006) claim that information, knowledge and strategic resources in human development, which include literacy acquisition and poverty reduction, are critical. Neuman and Celano (2006) are of the view that income enables families to purchase lessons, books, and stimulating learning materials that engage children. Forster (2002) in Neuman and Celano (2006) posits that poverty affects children through its impact on the family's ability to invest in resources related to children's development. Based on their study, Neuman and Celano (2006) argue that low-achieving children who are often poor face greater challenges in understanding materials and are at greater risk of falling behind and dropping out. Of course, in the context of South Africa, the poor are in the majority because of the apartheid policies that were deliberately imposed on the black majority.

2.5 Technology and digitisation enabling access to information

Hoyer (2011) states that libraries face changing communities and must constantly reposition themselves to serve the new needs of the communities. Put differently, Hoyer (2011) states

that although the core function of a library – which is to service the needs of its patrons – may be unchanging, the programmes and services to meet these needs will necessarily change as the demographics of user groups and the users' needs change. Abu et al. (2011) observes that libraries fail to connect the social and economic life of the local communities with the information needs of the local community members. Participation of the stakeholders is key when deciding on provisions that must be made because the developmental needs of the communities being served must be considered (Matodzi, 2018). Skinner (2018) in Matodzi (2018) maintains that libraries can no longer prescribe what services are relevant.

Some of these needs pertain to technology and digitisation which place additional demands on libraries. Cuban (2007) and IFLA (2009) in Hoyer (2011) proclaim that before the libraries' programmes are changed and implemented, community analysis and needs assessment must be conducted. In support of this view, Mchombu and Cadbury (2006) argue that library development strategies must be overhauled in such a way that their plans and strategies are informed by the informational needs of the communities that they serve. They caution that, to avoid excluding potential library users, libraries must ensure that they offer content or material that is easy to consume and relevant to the needs of the potential library users. The argument in this regard suggests that libraries must assess the needs of the communities that they operate in before they think of conceptualizing programmes.

Popesco and Corbos (2011) agree that the public's need for information technology and digital information has become a new trend for libraries. Ugokwe (2013) in Matodzi (2018) suggests that libraries have evolved into platforms of learning, collaboration and participation. Although Adams et al. (2005) welcome the trend, they caution that technology can either empower or disempower people by determining the extent of their access to knowledge. Mojapelo and Dube (2014) claims that in the past, print resources dominated the information sector, thereby simplifying the process of accessing and extracting information. However, they argue that the advent of information technologies, evident in the information sector, has made it possible for users to access various formats of virtual and local information. Johnson (2010) argues that the introduction of the internet and many search engines has lessened the informational role of the library.

According to Adams et al. (2005), improving information availability does not necessarily equal increased accessibility: many users are excluded from technology access by their age,

gender, IT literacy, previous experience or disabilities. Pettigrew et al. (2010) list various types of barriers that hinder access to information and information resources: Technological (e.g. slow connection speed and software, unavailable or incompatible systems), economic (e.g. users cannot afford computing equipment or online access), geographic (connectivity unavailable or people live far away from a public access site), search skills (users do not know how to search the system/internet or how to use advanced methods), cognitive (users do not understand how the internet works in terms of how links are created, who creates and manages the information, how sites are updated, etc.), and psychological (users express a lack of confidence in their own ability to find needed information).

Although Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and internet connectivity are deemed essential for the effective functioning of LIS; a substantial number of libraries lacks these basic facilities; while libraries that are connected do not always have enough capacity to meet the needs (Nkondo et al., 2014). The challenges of lessening the digital divide in the rural communities is multi-layered and will require collaboration of the community, state, and national leaders (Tayo et al., 2016). According to the Department of Arts and Culture's 2017/2018 Annual Report, using the Conditional Grant, 451 libraries' ICT infrastructure was upgraded, and 955 community libraries were connected with free public internet access. Although access to information does improve the quality of life, most South Africans still do not have access to information (Satgoor, 2015). Satgoor (2015) is of the view that this problem is worsened by the digital divide which weakens the functional and cognitive development of most South Africans. Kinney (2010) states that while manifold digital divides persist, new divides open as new technologies are introduced. While people in all categories of income, race, ethnicity, and language have realised an increase in access to technology over the past two decades, these increases have not affected everyone in the same way (Kinney, 2010).

A study on Malaysia shows that despite the growing number of rural public libraries built in various parts of Malaysia, the libraries are not fully used by the communities (Abu et al., 2011). Furthermore, Abu et al. (2011) observed that the libraries are primarily utilised by school learners, while adults and young adults in the rural communities are not using them optimally. Various scholars (Grimes, 2000; Sung and Siraj-Blatchford, 2014; Noland and Parore, 2017; Sheik, 2017) in Matodzi (2018) posit that factors militating against digital access for vulnerable groups are infrastructure (which can be exacerbated by the inability of

the marginalised communities to keep pace with technological advances); literacy and skills (which are necessary to navigate digital platforms); economic barriers (poorer people will always prioritise subsistence over internet connection); content and language barrier (where English is not a primary language for all people).

Numerous studies, including the Public Library Funding and Technology Access Survey (PLFTAS) in the United States of America, show that libraries in rural communities offer weaker technological infrastructure such as fewer average number of computers and slower internet connections (Real et al., 2014). Tayo et al. (2016) list limited internet accessibility, slow internet speed, low income and the relative high cost of computers and lack of computer knowledge as limiting factors in poor rural communities. Eke (2011) in Tayo et al. (2016) proclaims that the poor have no access to computers and internet because they cannot afford them. This inequality in access and use of computers and internet is one of the factors that contributes to the differences in wealth and the digital divide (Tayo et al., 2016).

2.6 Library opening hours

According to Nkondo et al. (2014), the average library opening hours (40 hours per week) in South Africa are not friendly to working people who travel long distances to and from work. They are of the view that these library opening hours are mostly driven or informed by staffing shortages evident in many areas. In support of this view, Matodzi (2018) argue that the impact of inadequate funding has also affected the library operating hours since these have an implication on human resources as well. Johansen (2012) in Matodzi (2018) found that the concept "open libraries", where the library is staff-less and is protected by automated loan and electronic surveillance technologies, brought positive spinoffs to the Danish public libraries. In contrast to these findings, Oluwaseunfunmi (2015) in Matodzi (2018) found that users in Nigerian libraries were satisfied with library opening hours. Nkondo et al. (2014) theorise that library opening hours that are restricted to the typical working day, work against social inclusion. This implies that library opening hours tend to be informed by operational demands and limitations as opposed to being informed by the needs of the community that they serve. Matodzi (2018) posits that unless opening hours are adjusted to accommodate the majority of the potential users, the community fails to derive any benefits from the public resources because their informational needs will continually be left out.

2.7 Location of a library

In South Africa, it is generally accepted that a community library should serve a radius of 3.2 km effectively, where there is no transport, within a radius of 1.5 km (Nkondo et al., 2014). One of the thorny issues is the fact that many learners do not have transport that would take them to and from the local libraries, or money to pay for such transport (Machet & Tiemensma, 2009). If users are not able to gain transportation to libraries, then a state of information poverty could be created or aggravated (Thompson, 2006). Nkondo et al. (2014) maintain that the location of numerous community libraries has been influenced by former apartheid spatial planning which resulted in many previously disadvantaged communities being under-served or not served at all. Koontz and Gubbin (2010) are of the view that community members must be able to access community libraries and that these institutions must be adequately flexible to cater for the evolving needs of the communities that they serve. They are of the view that, to improve and simplify access, libraries should be built close to other amenities such as shops, schools, cultural and transportation centres.

2.8 The role of librarians

According to Olowofila and Jooda (2014), a library is a repository of the world's intellectual property and disseminator of knowledge assets. Put differently, a library is "a place with collections of books and other information materials, systematically organised, preserved for the use and benefit of its community; and managed by specially trained personnel" (Olowofila & Jooda, 2014, p. 5). Christine Mackenzie (2007) in Partridge et al. (2010) maintains that libraries are – no longer about information and books – about facilitating people to access and interact with content, and to provide the means for that to happen. Mathews and Purdue (2009) in Partridge et al. (2010) observed that technology changes constantly, and as a result, this constant technological evolution demands that librarians continually upgrade their skills sets lest they be irrelevant.

Nkondo et al. (2014) are of the view that a public library must be seen as an institution equipped with the technologies needed by the members of the community and operated by qualified staff whose skills must enable them to create partnerships that will ultimately help

build healthy communities. Librarians are specially trained, to be multi-disciplinary, to obtain and apply expertise in the selection, processing, storage, preservation and dissemination of information resources for teaching, learning and self-development (Olowofila & Jooda, 2014).

2.9 Catalogue management

Osiode (1987) in Islam (2010) posits that a catalogue provides manifold points of access to the library's collection of content. Islam defines a catalogue as:

A record or list of books, periodicals, journals, pamphlets, monographs, audio-visual aids and other materials of a particular library, or a group of libraries (when union catalogue), or a private collection containing specified items of bibliographical information, namely: author, title, edition, imprint, collation, etc. in automated, microfiche, card or printed form arranged in classified or alphabetical order according to any standard catalogue code or rules (Islam, 2010, p 3).

Sustainable Collection Services (2013) in Greiner (2017) reported that, of the 21 million books it has surveyed in 57 libraries, 39% of the items never checked out. According to Greiner (2017), Nixon and Saunders (2010) analysed ten years of patron acquisitions at the Purdue University Library and found that 9,300 patron-selected books were used an average of 4.1 times, whereas the 141,000 library selected titles averaged only 2.9 uses. These studies, according to Greiner (2010), make it clear that libraries are spending a lot of money and resources on items that are not used. Arguments have been made that patrons tend to select the “low hanging fruit” that librarians would select anyway (Greiner, 2010). However, the proponents of the Patron Driven Acquisition (PDA) model argue that the model is useful and here to stay (Greiner, 2010).

This argument goes back to the perspective that public libraries must come up with programmes that are informed by the informational needs of the local communities (Koontz & Gubbin, 2010). When patrons' needs are ignored, libraries run the risk of spending a lot of money and staff resources on items that are not used (Greiner, 2017). The PDA model, also known as Demand-driven Acquisition, attempts to give patrons a more prominent role

(Walters, 2012). According to Walters (2012), PDA programmes advocate for the titles to be picked by library users and acquired without further intervention. He suggests that these programmes allow library users, not librarians or selectors, to determine which titles are added to the catalogues. Greiner (2017) theorises that items selected by library patrons consistently receive higher use than those selected by librarians. While librarians might think that positive reviews in the book review literature might lead to increased book use, there is no correlation between whether a book was reviewed in well-known review sources and whether a book was used (Greiner, 2017).

2.10 Marketing library services

Patange (2013) in Busari et al. (2015) states that marketing empowers librarians to understand the actual needs of patrons which enable them to take optimal management decisions, which will in turn help them provide efficient and quality information services. Marketing is generally defined as “the analysis, planning, implementation and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with target markets for the purpose of achieving organisational objectives” (Chandratre & Chandratre, 2015, p. 166). Kotler (2000) in Busari et al. (2015) describes marketing as a set of activities by which request for goods, ideas and services are managed to enable an exchange. In the context of a library, Chandratre and Chandratre (2015) define marketing as the art and science of locating and retaining readers and users of the library. Alkindi and Al-Suqri (2013) define what they call ‘library marketing’ as the dispersal of awareness of the existence of the library, and its resources and services, using various tools and technologies in order to get users to utilise those resources and services. One such tool is social media.

Social media platforms help improve library offerings and library marketing (Islam & Habiba, 2015). Social media plays a critical role in the marketing of information to patrons and in branding the library as a community centre (Islam & Habiba, 2015). Another point worth raising is the fact that social media provides a cheaper way of communicating to the targeted audience. Landis (2007) in Alkindi and Al-Suqri (2013) states that marketing libraries on social media saves time and it is a cost-effective way to reach out to patrons. Islam and Habiba (2015), in support of the view, maintain that advertising on social media is the cost-effective way of marketing libraries.

Chandratre and Chandratre (2015) proclaim that library marketing, regardless of the size and the type of the library, talks to the ease with which library officials are able to draw the attention of their current and potential users to their library and the pertinent services. Hence the need for a clear marketing strategy. Katz (1988) in Chandratre and Chandratre (2015) is of the view that marketing is effective when the pertinent marketing activities are well co-ordinated. Jestin and Parameswari (2002) in Busari et al. (2015) point out that the library, as a service orientated institution, must be seen as a market for information whose products are consumed by patrons. Libraries must come up with ways to attract and to keep their customers hooked onto their products and service offerings.

2.11 Funding and COVID-19

Koontz and Gubbin (2010) posit that for a public library to succeed in fulfilling its role in the community it serves, sufficient levels of funding are critical. According to the funding framework, the Conditional Grant was developed to help address the injustices of the past (Bopape et al., 2017). However, Satgoor (2015) proclaims that, although the South African government is committed to putting a LIS infrastructure in place, they are inhibited by limited budgets and skills to serve certain communities. Furthermore, we have seen budgets for library services cut and reprioritised as government re-channels funds towards the fight against the pandemic, COVID-19. COVID-19 did not just impact the health of the citizens of South Africa; it had a huge impact on the economy, education, and many other sectors such as the LIS sector (Tammamaro, 2020). In an effort to lessen COVID-19 infections, libraries across the globe were, for the most part of 2020, closed during various levels of lockdown (Tammamaro, 2020).

Arnetoli (2020) and Asta (2020) in Tammamaro (2020) observes that due to the pandemic, there has been a shift in how people consume content – online content and events are promoted more and there is an increased drive to invest more in content creation. This trend is evident in South Africa. Tammamaro, (2020) is of the view that the main impediment to digital revolution has certainly been the digital divide. She is also of the view that the absence of infrastructure and the lack of devices for accessing information was exposed during the pandemic – a view supported by Ramsetty and Adams (2020). According to Tammamaro

(2020), there is a need for a digital strategy that is aimed at transforming libraries with an innovative vision of service. Ladan et al. (2020) proclaim that public libraries have an important role to play in the situation of public health emergency, like COVID-19. To fight COVID-19, they are of the view that public libraries should provide services to the public on the coronavirus pandemic by providing up-to-date information and reliable resources. In support of this view, Ali and Gatiti (2020) maintain that, one of the roles of the libraries, is to promote public health awareness by producing and distributing information pertaining to pre-emptive measures.

2.12 Conceptual framework

Maxwell (2009) defines conceptual framework as a system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that buttresses and informs research. Every study, whether explicitly or implicitly, is based on a conceptual framework or model that specifies the variables of interest and the expected relationships between them (Bickman & Rog, 2009).

From the literature that I have reviewed, I see that access to information in previously disadvantaged communities is limited and, in some places, non-existent. Based on the literature reviewed, this research was framed by the following assumptions:

1. Access to information in LSM 5 communities seems to be limited.
2. Low or lack of income in LSM 5 communities hinders access to information.
3. Lack of technology in LSM 5 communities hinders access to information.
4. Lack of strong partnerships between libraries and their local LSM 5 communities hinders access to information.
5. Inadequate or lack of funding hinders access to information.

This framework was applied in this study to illustrate what access exists, how access to information is hindered in LSM 5 communities, and how this compares to LSM 9-High communities. The formulation of interview questions for the identified key players was guided by this framework. Data collected through these interviews was input into a data capturing instrument (Appendix E) to test these assumptions.

CHAPTER 3 – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research method

A qualitative method of research was used in this study. Thusi (2017) argues that qualitative research excels at revealing the nature of relationships and everyday behaviour. She is of the view that there are two underlying assumptions in qualitative research: The first is that behaviour is influenced by the physical, socio-cultural and psychological environments. The second assumption is that behaviour goes beyond what is observed by the investigator (Thusi, 2017). This study explored access to libraries and information resources in LSM 5 and LSM 9-High communities. The qualitative research method was the preferred method for this study in that the data collected through this method is based on human experience that is sometimes more compelling than quantitative data (Anderson, 2010). Campbell (2014) maintains that the method is exploratory in nature in that it allows the researcher the ability to collect open-ended and emerging data that is then used to develop themes – the approach that this study took.

The objective of the research was to look into what access to libraries and information resources exists in previously disadvantaged and previously advantaged communities. The study looked at three communities: Dertig, Suurman and Birchleigh North. The previously disadvantaged communities, Dertig and Suurman, are located far from the big cities and are classified as LSM 5 communities. In contrast, Birchleigh North (LSM 9-High) is one of the previously advantaged communities, located in an urban area in the Ekurhuleni municipality. Through this study, I wanted to understand the extent to which a community type affects the ease with which a community accesses information. The study also sought to conduct a comparative study, comparing LSM 5 to LSM 9-High communities, to understand the ease with which these communities access information given their unique socio-economic dynamics. The broad characteristics of these two categories are outlined below:

LSM 5 Category

- No gender biases
- Some high school, small urban/ rural house, matchbox/ matchbox improved
- R5, 636 – average household income per month

- Electricity, water on plot, flush toilet outside
- TV sets, hi-fi/radio set, stove, fridge
- Activities: singing, bake for pleasure, go to night clubs, attend gatherings, buy lottery tickets
- Life stages:
 - 31.5% personally make use of a SASSA card
 - 52.9% have a savings account

LSM 9-High Category

- Male bias
- Matric and higher
- Urban
- R29, 679 – average household income per month
- Full access to services and bank accounts
- Full ownership of durables
- Increased participation in activities

The three communities were used as case studies in this research. They were chosen due to their distinct locational and political characteristics that enabled the researcher to do a comparative study whose outcomes provided meaningful insight. The purpose of the study was to establish if their locational and political characteristics and their association with their respective provinces give one community advantage over the other.

3.2 Research design

This research is descriptive in nature. Bickman and Rog (2009) state that the purpose of a descriptive research is to provide a “picture” of a phenomenon as it naturally occurs, as opposed to studying the effects of the phenomenon or intervention. They argue that descriptive research can be designed to answer questions of a univariate, normative, or correlative nature – that is, describing only one variable, comparing the variable to a particular standard, or summarising the relationship between two or more variables.

This study adopted a case study approach. Three communities were used as case studies in this study, to understand patterns and trends: Dertig, Suurman and Birchleigh North. Two cases are rural, Dertig and Suurman, and the remainder is upmarket (Birchleigh North). A comparative study was conducted between Dertig, Suurman and Birchleigh North. According to Yin (2009), a case study is likely to be stronger if it is based on two or more cases. Given the limitations imposed by the current lockdown restrictions and safety considerations, only interviews, each lasting for 60 minutes, were used for this study. To limit contact with the respondents, the interviews were conducted electronically (telephone and Microsoft Teams). To ensure that data is retained and can be revisited, should there be a need to do so, the interviews were recorded. To ensure that the participants came prepared to the interview, a list of interview questions were emailed to them in advance so that they could prepare properly for the interview.

Matodzi (2018) and Mojaelo (2014) adopted a Mixed Method Research (MMR), a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods. According to them, the aim of this approach was to increase the validity and credibility of the findings. Abu et al. (2011) adopted multiple case study methodology when investigating the role of the rural public library in community development and empowerment. They used qualitative methods of personal interview, discussion and observations of group meetings, and examination of documents to investigate the implementation of community development programs and services in six public libraries in Malaysia and Australia. Abu et al. (2011) posit that case study methodology enables the investigator to use multiple data sources (such as documentation, archival records, examination of library collection, observation, and interviews) and to collect data from all participants involved in the programmes.

The original research design of this study sought to use some of the tools listed above. However, the imposition of lockdown restrictions in South Africa made it impossible for me to use these tools. To ensure that I comply with the set lockdown restrictions, my study adopted a multiple case study approach and used structured interviews as the only tool for data collection. A study by Veil and Bishop (2014) used interviews as the only method of research for their study that looked at opportunities and challenges for public libraries – different formats of interviews were used to collect data. Although using interviews as the only tool comes with limitations, the approach had to be embraced given the lockdown restrictions in South Africa.

3.3 Research instruments and procedure for data collection

The only data collection tool that was used in this study was interviews. Some of the tools that I initially wanted to use, such as observations at libraries, questionnaires with local library users and community members, have been abandoned due to the current lockdown restrictions imposed in South Africa. Data sources, typically, can be classified into two broad categories: primary and secondary (Bickman & Rog, 2009). For the purpose of this research, structured interviews were the primary data source/tool, in conjunction with the existing body of literature on the topic. To comply with the current lockdown restrictions and to minimise contact with interviewees, interviews (Appendix B) were conducted telephonically. Consent to record interviews, where technically possible, was sought from the interviewees. The following institutions and subject matter experts, in their respective roles, were interviewed:

1. **Librarians:** One-hour structured interviews were conducted with three librarians. The interviews helped me understand library services and activities in the local communities, i.e. Dertig, Suurman and Birchleigh North.
2. **School principals or teacher-librarians:** One-hour structured interviews were also conducted with the six local schools, two schools per community, to establish the nature of the relationship between the local schools and their local libraries and to gain an understanding of the state of school libraries in these communities. For the schools that do not have libraries, school principals or deputy principals were interviewed. And for those that have school libraries, interviews were conducted with the teacher-librarians.
3. **Library Services in the municipalities:** One-hour structured interviews were also conducted with three municipal officials responsible for library services. The objective of the interviews was to understand their plans, challenges, successes and progress made against the problem of access to libraries and information resources in their respective municipalities. The chosen municipalities are Moretele Municipality, Tshwane Municipality and Ekurhuleni Municipality.
4. **Provincial Library Services:** One-hour structured interviews were also conducted with two provincial officials responsible for library services in two provinces: North West and Gauteng Provinces. This is because one (Dertig) of the three communities falls under the North West Province while the other two communities fall under the Gauteng Province (Suurman and Birchleigh North). The objective of the interviews

was to understand their plans, challenges, successes and progress made against the problem of access to libraries and information resources in their respective provinces.

5. **National Library of South Africa (NLSA):** A 60-minute structured interview was also conducted with an official from the NLSA to understand their contribution in facilitating access to libraries and information resources in South Africa, particularly in LSM 5 communities.

A total of 15 structured interviews were conducted with the following subject matter experts: three librarians, six schools' officials, three municipal officials, two Provincial Library Services officials and one NLSA official.

3.4 Data analysis and interpretation

To avoid bias during data analysis, participants' views and comments were documented in the form of notes and interviews were recorded. To analyse and interpret data, the steps below were followed:

Step 1: Conducted structured interviews with the above-mentioned officials.

Step 2: Listened to interviews and read the interview transcripts, notes and documents (Dey, 1993 as cited in Yeh and Inman, 2007).

Step 3: Developed tentative ideas, sorted ideas into themes/categories and identified potential relations between themes and categories (Yeh and Inman, 2007).

Step 4: Input collected data into a data capturing instrument (Appendix E) that is aligned to the study's conceptual framework. The data capturing instrument is broadly categorised into provinces, municipalities, libraries, schools and NLSA. LSM classifications were also used in this study: LSM 5 and LSM 9-High communities.

Step 5: Derived insights from the analysis, made comparisons and provided recommendations (Bickman & Rog, 2009). Data was analysed manually.

To ensure that I was ethical, in line with the Ethics Committee's approval (Appendix A) in my interactions with the respondents, I requested permission (Appendix C) from the relevant authorities. I also requested consent (Appendix D) to interview specific individuals and to

record those interviews. To ensure that the study is reliable, I interviewed subject matter experts in the LIS sector and in various layers of government, including schools, and corroborated data collected with the body of literature in this field of study.

3.5 Limitations of the study and associated risks

South Africa has been under lockdown from 26 March 2020 to date (30 June 2021), due to the pandemic. The current lockdown protocols had adverse effect on the study. To limit contact and for the safety of both the researcher and the respondents, data was collected electronically. These restrictions hampered interaction between the researcher and the respondents. As a result, the lockdown restrictions were raised as a risk and the following tools were abandoned:

1. **Observations:** The original plan was to use this tool to collect data. This data was going to help me formulate the profile of a typical library user or establish a pattern of who, in terms of gender, race and age (estimate), visits their local libraries. The big-net approach was going to be used to collect data on community members entering their local libraries (Fetterman, 2009). The observations were going to be randomly conducted for two days at each of the three libraries between 08h00 and 16h00. The first round (day 1) of observations was going to be towards the beginning of the week and another round of observations (day 2) towards the end of the week. The days of observations were spread to ensure that a fair and balanced data is collected to mitigate bias.
2. **Questionnaires:** The tool was going to be used to collect data from library users and the general members of the three communities. A questionnaire was going to be circulated to a random sample of 30 community members (10 members per community), in each community that is part of this study. However, given the current lockdown restrictions, finding participants proved difficult. Another questionnaire was going to be used to collect data from library users (purposeful sampling) in the chosen local communities – 30 library users (10 patrons per library). At various times of the lockdown period, libraries were either closed or partially closed and there is still general reluctance from libraries to host researchers in their premises. Therefore, finding library users proved difficult. Although some of the libraries were opened as

the restrictions were eased, the majority of library users stayed away from libraries for safety reasons.

CHAPTER 4 – PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

In this section I report on and discuss the responses from interviews conducted with various subject matter experts within the Library and Information Services sector. Table 4.1 below summarises the findings of this study. It outlines similarities and dissimilarities between libraries in LSM 5 and LSM 9-High communities. The three communities are classified into two categories: LSM 5 and LSM 9-High communities. Under the LSM 5 category, we have Suurman and Dertig communities while, under the LSM 9-High category, we have Birchleigh North.

Table 4.1: Comparisons between LSM 5 and LSM 9-High communities

	LSM 5 Communities	LSM 9-High Communities
Purpose	Primarily for studies	Primarily for leisure
Main users	More learners/Less senior citizens	More senior citizen/Less learners
Main service required	Mostly computers and internet	Mostly physical books
Computers & Internet	Heavily needed and used	Fairly needed and used
Computers availability	More computers are available	Less computers are available
Internet Availability	Infrastructure available but Wi-Fi connection not available in some, while others experience intermittent connection interruptions	Infrastructure available and Wi-Fi connection available without interruptions
Operating hours	Generally, open during the week only. Others open on Saturdays, only during exam periods while others don't.	Open during the week and also on Saturdays

Librarians	Employs qualified full-time Librarians and Library Assistants	Employs qualified full-time Librarians and Library Assistants
Location of library	‘Located’ centrally	‘Located’ centrally
Library-Schools Partnership	Weak partnership	Weak partnership
Library-Community Partnership	Weak partnership	Weak partnership

4.2 Library opening hours

All libraries involved in this study open between 8am and 5pm. Regardless of whether the library is based in LSM 5 or LSM 9-High community, they generally adopted an eight-to-five office hours model. All three librarians and Ekurhuleni Municipality raised operating hours as one of the barriers. They are of the view that the opening hours are not aligned to needs of the members of their local communities. This is because they work in the cities, far from their residences. By the time they arrive at home, the local libraries are closed. Suurman Community Library does not open on Saturdays due to capacity challenges, i.e. they do not have security guards to look after the premises on Saturdays. Birchleigh North Library opens on Saturdays and there are no opening hours extensions during examinations. Mphebatho Community Library does not generally open on Saturdays. However, it does open its doors on Saturdays during the examination seasons (May-June and October-November). The librarian stated that during these seasons, they experience increased foot flow – over 100% growth.

The eight-to-five opening model is problematic in that it works against social inclusion (Nkondo et al., 2014). This is because such an approach obsesses with the operational dynamics of a library while ignoring the needs of the members of the local communities. Because of the current library operating hours, community members who travel long distances to and from work are impeded from accessing library services in their communities. The principle is that libraries’ offerings must be founded upon the needs of the communities that they serve. The offerings must not be built upon any form of operational limitations encountered by the library. Instead, the needs of the members of the community must be the

source of every programme that the library comes up with. Suurman Community Library is a good example of how the library allowed its operational limitations (lack of security personnel) to dictate operating hours on Saturdays. As a result, community members are deprived the opportunity to access the facility on Saturdays. The correct approach would be to assess the needs and then come up with the programmes – a view supported by Koontz and Gubbin (2010). Failure to adopt this approach, libraries run the risk of being irrelevant.

The opening hours dynamic not only affects workers, learners are also affected adversely by this arrangement. The challenge is that some learners may not be able to make it on time as they may have to walk long distances to go to their local libraries after school. A proper community analysis and needs assessment, as supported by IFLA (2009) in Hoyer (2011), should point out all these dynamics. The scenario described above is a reality particularly in LSM 5 communities. Therefore, applying a blanket operating hours approach to all libraries is counter efficient. Unless opening hours are adjusted to accommodate the majority of the potential users, the community will not realise the benefits of the public resources at their disposal (Matodzi, 2018). As long as library operating hours are informed by the operational demands and limitations, as opposed to being informed by the informational needs of the community that they serve, the members of the community will always be the casualties in such an arrangement.

4.3 The location of the library

The distance between Mphebotho Community Library and the nearest library (Legkraal Community Library) in the same province (North West Province) is 23 km. The distance between Mphebotho Community Library and the nearest library, regardless of the province, is about 16 km (Temba Library). The surrounding communities between Makapanstad and Dertig have no libraries and between Dertig and Temba there are no libraries. The distance between Makapanstad and Temba (Temba Library) is 26 km. The expectation is that all these communities that fall within the 26 km radius must access information at Mphebotho Community Library. The distance between Suurman Community Library and the nearest library (Temba Library) in the same province (Gauteng Province) is 5 km. Suurman Community Library and the nearest library (Temba Library), regardless of the province, are 5 km apart. The distance between Birchleigh North Library and the nearest library (Birchleigh

Library) in the same province (Gauteng Province) is about 2.5 km. The distance between Birchleigh North Library and the nearest library (Birchleigh Library), regardless of the province, is about 2.5 km. The two libraries pass the 3.2 km radius test.

Four of the six schools that formed part of this study have no libraries. Of these four schools, three are in LSM 5 communities while one of the four schools is in a LSM 9-High community. One school blatantly confirmed that they do not encourage their learners to visit their local library because the library is 1.5 km away. There is no transport arrangement to transport the learners to and from the local library, meaning that they have to walk to and from the local library. The school's argument is that the primary school learners cannot walk such a distance to access their local library. The school also maintains that the idea of learners having to walk to the local library raises safety concerns. To ensure their safety, they must be accompanied by either their parents or teachers and this creates another logistical nightmare.

School D, Moretele and Ekurhuleni municipalities raised transport as one of the key barriers that makes accessing libraries difficult, LSM 5 communities in particular. Generally, the members of the communities in LSM 9-High communities are economically active and at least own a vehicle, meaning that travelling between the two libraries may not be an issue for them. Interestingly, within an 8.4 km radius, there is another library, Kempton Public Library. So, this part of the Kempton Park area has three libraries (Birchleigh North Library, Birchleigh Library and Kempton Public Library) within an 8.4 km radius; a reality that is non-existent in LSM 5 communities. These communities are some of the previously advantaged communities. From the information above, it is clear that the radius between two libraries in a LSM 9-High community is below the 3.5 km radius benchmark. In contrast, for LSM 5 communities, the radius is wider as per the examples above.

What compounds the problem is the fact that most schools do not have functional school libraries. If all schools, public schools in particular, had functional libraries, access to libraries would be simple for the learners – they will not have to be ‘coerced’ into choosing whether to go to a library or go home, after school. The location of a local library is very key in that it may limit or enable access to information and information resources. In South Africa, it is generally agreed that a public library should serve a radius of 3.2 km effectively; where there is no transport, within a radius of 1.5 km (Nkondo et al., 2014). Generally,

members of LSM 5 communities do not have cars, meaning that they have to walk long distances or use public transport to visit their local libraries (Machet & Tiemensma, 2009). It will take a motivated person to walk a 3.2 km distance to go to a library. Obviously, most LSM 5 communities do not even meet the 3.2 km radius requirement. This means that they have to walk longer distances or use public transport to use their local libraries. Given the high levels of poverty, lack of infrastructure and economic activity (Meyer, 2014) in LSM 5 communities, the members of these communities tend not to have funds at their disposal to use for transport to visit their local libraries.

4.4 Library programmes to encourage use in local communities and schools

Community libraries are built to serve the local communities. Schools, as one of the key role players in any community, play an important role in furthering library programmes that seek to enhance access to information. Schools become an important channel through which local community libraries can reach out to the youth of the local communities. Therefore, there is a need for community libraries to collaborate with the local schools to further their 'access agenda'. One of the municipalities mentioned that they always ensure that, when they build libraries, they build them closer to schools. This shows how critical schools are in enabling access to information in the local communities.

4.4.1 The state of school libraries

To understand the state of school libraries, interviews were conducted with six schools (School A, B, C, D, E and F). Two schools (School A and B) are in the North West Province located 1.2 km and 550 metres away from their local community library respectively. Additional two schools (School C and D) are in the Gauteng Province located 1.5 km and 1.7 km away from their local community library respectively. These four schools (School A, B, C and D) are based in LSM 5 communities. Two more schools (School E and F) from a LSM 9-High community were included in the study; they are located 2.7 km and 2 km away from their local library respectively.

Of the six schools that were interviewed, 50% (three of the six schools) of them have school libraries. Of these three schools, one just converted their library into a classroom. So,

effectively, only two schools have libraries. And of these two schools that have libraries, the degree of functionality differs from one library to another. Although School A in the North West Province has a school library, it is far from being fully functional. It functions more like a reading or book collection room in that it only has books such as textbooks, reference books, encyclopaedias, newspapers, and magazines. However, it has no computers and no access to the internet. The library is managed by a teacher who's not trained or qualified to run a school library, i.e. the school does not have a full-time qualified librarian. Over and above her teaching responsibilities, the teacher looks after the school library. Generally, the teacher-librarian plays a co-ordinator role, ensuring that learners have access to the school library whenever they want to access it. Furthermore, she acts as a 'go-to-person' between the school and the local library, mostly when the local library wants to host events at the local school. A team of three, the school's principal, teacher-librarian and an additional teacher, are responsible for ensuring that they buy books and other learner material for the library.

Another school that has a school library, that is currently not operational, is School E. The school is based in Gauteng in a LSM 9-High community in the Ekurhuleni municipality. Currently, the library is not operational; it is being used as a classroom. The library has no computers and has no internet connection for learners to use. The school does not have a full-time qualified librarian. It is managed by unqualified educators and the school management team. The decision and responsibility to procure books and other learner material depends on a needs analysis exercise conducted by the school governing body. Another school, School F, that has a library is in a LSM 9-High community in the Gauteng Province, Ekurhuleni municipality. It is an interesting case in that it has a physical classroom library and an online library. Each learner owns a tablet device and they use these devices to access their online library. All these tablet devices have internet connection. However, the school does not have a qualified full-time librarian to run the libraries; they are run by the teachers and student leaders.

As for the remaining three schools that do not have school libraries, the respondents maintain that their schools do not have space or classrooms that they can use to setup libraries. Secondly, the schools argued that, according to the Department of Education's blueprint, existing/old schools are not equipped with libraries. Only newly built state of the art schools are equipped with libraries. They are of the view that one is likely to see these types of schools in urban provinces such as the Gauteng Province, not in rural provinces like the

North West Province. Furthermore, learners in all three schools do not have access to computers and internet. The six schools have a combined total of 6273 learners. Of the 6273 learners, 5073 learners have no access to computers and internet in their schools. Furthermore, 4223 learners have no access to books and other learner material in their schools because their schools do not have school libraries.

All these limitations hinder access to libraries and information. The numbers outlined above paint a bleak picture and a worsening problem of access to libraries and information in our schools. Before we talk about internet, in the age that we are living in, computers play a vital role in our lives. One can use various applications such as Microsoft Office to prepare presentations, essays and spreadsheets. Learners need these applications to do their assignments. Therefore, access to computers is critical. Unfortunately, all five schools interviewed have no computers for their respective learners, meaning that the learners have no access to an important tool that simplifies learning and access to information. Satgoor (2015) and Erikson and Markuson (2007) in Paton-Ash and Wilmot (2015) contend that a library is a place where learners encounter and learn to use technology, for the very first time, as a tool to explore the world of knowledge. The problem is that the technology that is being referred to is non-existent in most schools, particularly in previously disadvantaged communities.

Over and above that, learners need access to the internet so that they can access the relevant information that they need for their studies. Unfortunately, five of the six schools interviewed do not have access to the internet. Only one school (School F) in a LSM 9-High community has computers and an online library for their learners. School F fits Brown and Senyolo's description, in many respects, of a well-resourced ex-white school with a well-functioning library (NLSA, 2015). It has a fully functional library, i.e. a physical and an online library. Given this anomaly in the five schools, the learners in these schools are forced to visit their local libraries so that they can access the internet. The respondents from the three schools (LSM 5) and all three librarians advised that learners visit libraries primarily to access computers and the internet to conduct research and do their projects. Paton-Ash and Wilmot (2015) are of the view that one of the reasons why so many schools do not have school libraries is because the school library is peripheral to – as opposed to central to – teaching and learning. If the school library is not seen as a key and integral component of teaching and

learning, the schools will continue to be side-lined and the casualties in this whole matter are the learners.

4.4.2 Community library-school partnership

The majority of the schools interviewed do not use the services of their local community libraries. Furthermore, the six respondents from the schools interviewed confirmed that teachers in all six schools do not use the services of the local libraries. Four of the six schools confirmed that their learners do use the services of the local libraries whereas the remaining two confirmed that their learners do not use the services of their local libraries. When asked if the schools encourage their learners to visit their local libraries, four schools confirmed that they do encourage their learners to visit their local libraries. Two of the four schools went as far as coming up with their own initiatives, such as weekly reading competition, to encourage reading and to promote the use of the local libraries. The remaining two schools, out of the six schools, confirmed that they do not encourage their learners to visit their local libraries due to the age of the learners, the distance between the school and the library, lack of transport or transport funds to transport learners to the local library, safety concerns, and because some local schools do not know that there is a library in their vicinity.

When asked if they have participated in any form of a programme run by their local libraries, four of the six schools interviewed stated that they have never been part of any programme run by their local libraries. The remaining two schools claim to have participated in some programmes run by their local libraries. When asked if their local libraries have ever visited their schools to promote their libraries and services, four schools stated that their local libraries have never visited their schools while the remaining two schools claim to have hosted their local libraries in their premises several times. One issue raised by a librarian is that schools tend to make it difficult for libraries to work with the local schools. This is because schools tend to place too many demands whenever libraries want to partner with the local schools or work with some of the learners. The librarian raised the Department of Basic Education's approval process as one such a deterrent – getting an approval from the district can take long. This may be the reason why some local libraries have never visited the local schools or promoted their programmes to the local schools.

The relationship between some of the schools and their local libraries is almost non-existent. Others are not aware of their local libraries. Others are aware of their local libraries; however, due to a combination of reasons listed above, learners are not able to access the services of their local libraries. The local libraries interviewed shared some of the programmes that they run in the local schools. Interestingly, other schools stated that they have never been part of such programmes. They argued that their local libraries have never visited their schools. There seems to be a disconnect between what the local libraries are purporting to do for the local schools versus what the local schools are saying they are not getting from the local libraries. Either the programmes are ineffective, skewed towards certain schools, non-existent or local libraries' priorities are not aligned to the informational needs of the schools (Abu et al., 2011). All these gaps and lack of co-operation are hallmarks of a weak partnership between the schools and their local community libraries and that in itself weakens the LIS system (Krolak, 2005).

4.4.3 Library-community partnership

Due to lockdown restrictions, the research methodology had to be amended to comply with the set restrictions. As a result, some of the planned data collection methods in the chosen local communities had to be discarded. The data could have helped me understand the community members' level of awareness: do they know that they have a library in their locality? Have they been exposed to programmes run by their local library? Have they ever visited their local library? Do the services offered by the local library meet the informational needs of the members of the community? The local libraries in the three communities purport to run various programmes for the local communities. Such an assertion could not be verified due to COVID-19 restrictions. The lack of data made it difficult for me to profile typical users of libraries in both LSM 5 and LSM 9-High communities. As a result, profiling patrons (race, gender and estimate age) proved difficult. In the section below I discuss 'traffic' in the three libraries using small samples of data sourced mainly from access control sheets.

a) Mphebatho Community Library foot flow

For Mphebatho Community Library, I collected a limited sample of data from access control sheets called "Corona Virus Screening Tool" – please see Table 4.2 below. As stated in this

study, Dertig (LSM 5 community) is predominantly black. The average age of patrons using Mphebotho Community Library in Dertig is 29 years of age. Data also showed that only 3% of the patrons are 55 years old or older (senior citizens). Furthermore, as confirmed by the librarians from Suurman and Dertig, 72% of the patrons use the library for study purposes. The data also shows that 52% of the patrons are female while males account for 36% – the difference could not be accounted for as patrons did not capture their gender on the access control sheets. Looking at Table 4.2, it is clear that the facility is under-utilised, averaging 14 patrons per day. The respondent also mentioned that, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, they encountered a 63% reduction in foot flow.

Table 4.2: Patron foot flow in Mphebotho Community Library

		Gender			Purpose				
Date	Number of visitors	Female	Male	Other	Studies	Leisure	Other	AVG Age	Senior Citizen
19-Oct-20	20	8	7	5	10	0	10	32	2
20-Oct-20	18	11	6	1	15	0	3	22	0
21-Oct-20	20	5	14	1	10	0	10	26	0
22-Oct-20	8	1	4	3	5	0	3	28	0
23-Oct-20	6	5	1	0	2	0	4	38	1
26-Oct-20	14	10	3	1	13	0	1	31	1
27-Oct-20	13	10	2	1	12	0	1	26	0
28-Oct-20	16	10	4	2	16	0	0	30	0
TOTAL	115	60	41	14	83	0	32	233	4
%		52%	36%	12%	72%	0%	28%		3%
AVG Age								29	

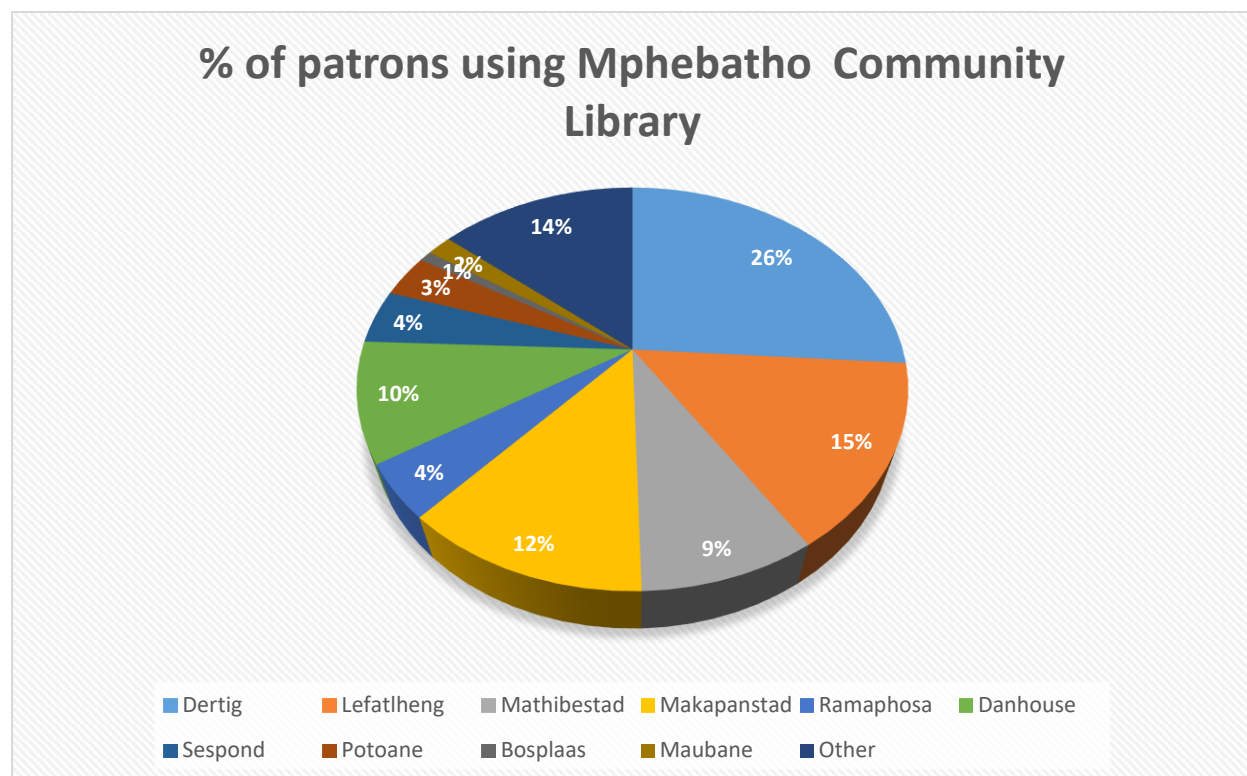
Source: Corona Virus Screening Tool

Note: Data collected during lockdown in South Africa

Another point worth mentioning is the fact that the services of Mphebotho Community Library are not being used by the members of the Dertig community only; an approach driven

by the Moretele Municipality. Instead, the surrounding communities also use the services of Mphebotho Community Library. The top five communities that use the services of Mphebotho Community Library are Dertig (26%), Lefatlheng (15%), Makapanstad (12%), Danhouse (10%) and Mathibestad (9%) – please see Figure 4.1. This means that 72% of patrons in Mphebotho Community Library come from these five communities, with Dertig leading the pack. Interestingly, 46% of the patrons do not reside in Dertig.

Figure 4.1: Percentage of patrons using Mphebotho Community Library



Source: Corona Virus Screening Tool

Note: Data collected during lockdown in South Africa

b) Suurman Community Library foot flow

To understand the profile of a typical patron that uses the services of Suurman Community Library, a limited small sample of data was collected from an access control register for the period between 11 November and 30 November 2020. The data in Table 4.3 below show that the average age of patrons using Suurman Community Library is 31 years of age. Similar to the Mphebotho Community Library's data, females use the library more than their male

counterparts – the gender split sits at 39% and 31% for female and male patrons respectively. The difference (30%) cannot be accounted for as patrons did not capture their gender information on the access control register. The data also show that only 3% of the patrons represent senior citizens. This aligns with assertions by the librarians from Mphebatho Community Library and Suurman Community Library that the majority of their patrons are young. Table 4.3 below shows that the library is under-utilised, averaging eight patrons per day. The respondent also mentioned that, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, they encountered a 25% reduction in foot flow.

Table 4.3: Patron foot flow in Suurman Community Library

Date	Number of visitors	Gender			Average Age	Senior Citizen
		Male	Female	Other		
11-Nov-21	12	6	6	0	28	0
12-Nov-21	10	2	4	4	37	0
13-Nov-21	4	3	0	1	34	0
16-Nov-21	6	3	2	1	48	2
17-Nov-21	4	4	0	0	20	0
18-Nov-21	8	0	5	3	31	0
19-Nov-21	2	0	2	0	20	0
20-Nov-21	12	4	7	1	29	0
23-Nov-21	6	5	1	2	23	0
24-Nov-21	10	2	3	5	29	0
25-Nov-21	21	1	9	11	29	0
26-Nov-21	9	3	3	3	24	0
27-Nov-21	4	1	1	2	23	0
28-Nov-21	4	2	0	0	58	2
29-Nov-21	1	0	0	1	0	0
30-Nov-21	11	3	5	3	33	0
TOTAL	124	39	48	37	466	4
%		31%	39%	30%		3%

AVG Age					31	
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Source: Tshwane Municipality – Regional Operations and Coordination Region 2 (Attendance Register)

Note: Data collected during lockdown in South Africa

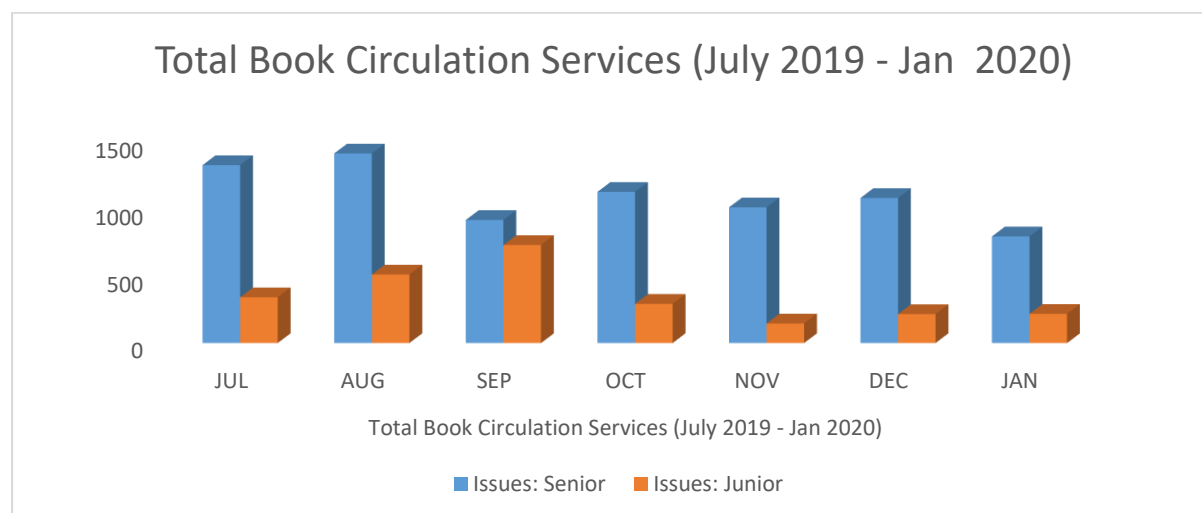
c) Birchleigh North Library Foot flow

In the LSM 9-High community, the main users of the libraries are senior citizens. There is no data to profile a typical patron in Birchleigh North Library (LSM 9-High). As a result, we had to use book circulation data to understand the types of patrons serviced by Birchleigh North Library. The data below (Table 4.4 and Figure 4.2) show that 77% of the books borrowed, are borrowed by senior citizens. Although young and school going patrons use the library, they are outnumbered by the senior citizens. In Birchleigh North Library, only 23% of books borrowed are borrowed by the young patrons. Why is the young population in the LSM 9-High community using the local library less? The respondents at all levels of government (Provincial Library Services, Municipalities and librarians) are of the view that young people in LSM 9-High communities opt to use other platforms/devices such as their personal smartphones because their families are well off when compared to LSM 5 communities. The members of the LSM 9-High communities can afford data costs and the electronic devices because they earn more. According to Table 4.4 below, Birchleigh North Library is better used by members of the community (when compared to the other two libraries in LSM 5 communities), averaging 54 patrons per day.

Table 4.4: Total Book Circulation Services in Birchleigh North (July 2019 - Jan 2020)

Total Book Circulation Services (July 2019 - Jan 2020)							
	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN
Issues: Senior	1330	1417	920	1130	1014	1084	797
Issues: Junior	342	512	733	293	146	216	218
Total	1672	1929	1653	1423	1160	1300	1015
Seniors (%)	80%	73%	56%	79%	87%	83%	79%
Juniors (%)	20%	27%	44%	21%	13%	17%	21%

Figure 4.2: Total Book Circulation Services in Birchleigh North (July 2019 - Jan 2020)



Source: Combined reports monthly_quarterly north_template_2019_2020-a

A library in partnership with the local government, school district, and electric company, created a Smart City Education Center where children can learn about sustainability and renewable energy, and how to make smart choices (Mersand, 2019). The study in these three communities indicates that there seems to be a weak partnership between libraries and the local schools. The same is true about the relationship between libraries and the local communities. According to Mchombu and Cadbury (2006), governments should foster partnerships between the public sector, private sector and civil society organisations to enable co-ordination of the information environment.

A study on Malaysia shows that despite the growing number of rural public libraries built all over Malaysia, the libraries are not fully utilised by the communities (Abu et al., 2011). This study aligns with the data presented above – libraries in LSM 5 communities are under-utilised. This is evidenced the low volumes of patrons visiting the libraries per day. However, the opposite is true for a library in a LSM 9-High community (Birchleigh North). Furthermore, Abu et al. (2011) observed that the libraries in Malaysia are mostly used by school learners; meanwhile, the adults and young adults in the rural communities, in particular, are not making full use of them. The findings of the study on Malaysia are aligned

to the outcomes of the study conducted in Suurman and Dertig. Both Suurman Community Library and Mphebotho Community Library are mainly used by young people with an average age of 31 and 29 years of age respectively. In line with the study on Malaysia, adults in the two libraries in Suurman and Dertig represent a small percentage of the total number of patrons. Patrons older than 55 years of age account for only 3% of the population of patrons in their local libraries. In contrast to the findings in LSM 5 communities above, senior citizens at a LSM 9-High community (Birchleigh North) represent 77% of the total number of patrons in Birchleigh North Library.

4.5 Access to terminals and internet at local community libraries

People no longer depend solely on physical books to access information. They want to be able to access information online. Access to terminals and internet is critical. A combined use of these resources exposes users to a plethora of information. The question is: If users can use their smartphones to access information, why do they still want to access information via their local libraries? The answer is that the cost of accessing internet is expensive. The problem of low income and the relative high cost of computers, limited internet accessibility, slow internet speed, lack of computer knowledge within poor rural communities are limiting factors (Tayo et al., 2016). Therefore, any financially savvy person will opt for a free or cheap option, i.e. community libraries. It then becomes a challenge when libraries, that are supposed to offer this service, fail to provide the required resources that help enable access to information.

4.5.1 Access to terminals at the local libraries

Patrons, in all three communities, have access to terminals. Mphebotho Community Library has 17 computers. Suurman Community Library has 10 computers. Birchleigh North Library has three computers. The number of computers allocated seems to align to the needs of the three communities. It makes sense that more computers are allocated to where the need is greater, i.e. in LSM 5 communities. The need for computers in Birchleigh North Library (LSM 9-High) is not greater and that may be because senior citizens account for a higher percentage of their patrons. Less usage of computers and internet in Birchleigh North Library is because most households have computers and smartphones that they can use to access

information. Furthermore, given the fact that the majority of patrons in Birchleigh North Library are senior citizens, one expects senior citizens to use them less as most senior citizens are not keen on computers. The librarian confirmed that his senior citizen patrons prefer physical books to computers.

A study on Malaysia observed that the libraries are mostly used by school learners; meanwhile, the adults and young adults in rural communities, in particular, are not making full use of them (Abu et al., 2011). Aligning to this finding, the respondents from the three schools and the librarians (Mphebatho Community Library and Suurman Community Library) based in LSM 5 communities pointed out that learners visit their local libraries mostly so they can access computers and internet. The opposite is true for libraries in the LSM 9-High community. In this case, most patrons go to libraries for physical books and not necessarily computers or the internet. Eke (2011) in Tayo et al. (2016) proclaims that while the rich can afford to acquire computers and access the internet, the poor cannot because of the high cost of computers and the expensive internet access. If learners cannot afford computers or to access internet in their personal capacity, their next best possible option would be their local schools. It becomes a double blow to the learners, like the learners from the five schools that were interviewed, if their schools cannot give them access to computers and the internet. It becomes a triple blow to the learners if their local libraries cannot grant them access to computers and the internet. This is total exclusion from online information and information resources. This is the case with Mphebatho Community Library and Suurman Community Library; the libraries have been without internet connection for over two years and two months respectively.

4.5.2 Access to internet at the local libraries

As explained previously, patrons need access to computers and the internet. Mphebatho Community Library has internet infrastructure but the service at the time of the research was not available. This is because the contract with the service provider has expired - the service has been down for over two years. This implies that the LSM 5 library users have no access to online information. The North West Library Services stated that the delay to secure the services of a new service provider is due to policy issues that are still being addressed. According to the North West Library Services, these policy issues must be addressed before a

new service provider is brought on board. Birchleigh North Library (LSM 9-High) has internet infrastructure and the internet was operational and accessible at the time of the research. Although Suurman Community Library has internet infrastructure, the internet service was not available to the users for over two months due to network challenges, at the time of the research. Suurman Community Library is another example of how LSM 5 community members are impeded from accessing information. The ICT infrastructure is available, but internet connection is intermittently unavailable to facilitate access to information. Although patrons have access to the physical library, they are inhibited from accessing online information.

The two LSM 5 cases above align to a view advocated by various scholars (Grimes, 2000; Sung and Siraj-Blatchford, 2014; Noland and Parore, 2017; Sheik, 2017) in Matodzi (2018) who posit that factors militating against digital access for vulnerable groups are infrastructure (which can be exacerbated by inability of the marginalised communities to keep pace with technological advances); literacy and skills (which are necessary to navigate digital platforms); economic barriers (poorer people will always prioritise subsistence over internet connection); content and language barrier (where English is not a primary language for all people). The lack of internet services in LSM 5 communities is still a key hindrance to information while this is not the case in most LSM 9-High communities. Numerous studies, including Public Library Funding and Technology Access Survey (PLFTAS) in the United States of America, show that rural libraries offer weaker technological infrastructure such as fewer average number of computers and slower broadband connections (Real et al., 2014). Aligning to this school of thought, the study shows that both Suurman Community Library and Mphebatho Community Library (based in LSM 5 communities) have internet infrastructure in place. However, Suurman Community Library tend to experience intermittent network glitches while Mphebatho Community Library experiences prolonged connectivity challenges.

4.6 Key role players and qualifications

Each of the three libraries has full-time librarians. All librarians from the three libraries have the requisite qualifications. The qualifications range from bachelor's degree in Information Sciences to a Degree in Linguistics. Librarians, in each of the three libraries, are supported by

Library Assistants. Suurman Community Library has two Library Assistants whilst Mphebotho Community Library has one Head Librarian looking after four libraries, supported by four Library Assistants, each placed in one library. According to the Gauteng Library Services and Moretele Municipality, this type of a structure where a librarian looks after more than one library is common in other provinces, including the Gauteng Province.

Olowofila and Jooda (2014) emphasise the need for library resources to be managed by specially trained personnel. Employing qualified librarians puts the communities, within which the libraries operate, in a good position in that the local communities are served by qualified and knowledgeable personnel. In my opinion, unqualified librarians can hinder access to information in that they may not be effective in executing their responsibilities or may not be able to give patrons the required products or services. Qualified librarians know their responsibilities and have the requisite skills to action patrons' requests. Therefore, their expertise is key to making community libraries accessible and user-friendly. Nkondo et al. (2014) maintain that a public library must be seen as an institution equipped with the technologies needed by the members of the community and operated by qualified staff whose skills must enable them to create partnerships that will ultimately help build healthy communities.

4.7 Catalogue management

According to the librarians in all three libraries, patrons have full access to books and other resources that the three libraries have to offer. Furthermore, in cases where a local library does not have a particular book on their shelves, the local library can source such a book from other libraries within the jurisdiction of the municipality. The respondents are of the view that collaboration between libraries is critical in that it enhances access to books and information resources. In the Gauteng Province, catalogue management is the responsibility of the municipalities. This means that municipalities are given the freedom to decide on what books to acquire for their libraries. In contrast, provinces like the North West Province, follow a different model in that the catalogue is managed by the Provincial Library Services. Although libraries do sometimes buy books, the buying of books or resources is the key responsibility of the Provincial Library Services. To ensure inclusion, when doing book selection, the province hosts book exhibitions to allow all library staff in the province to come check,

review and choose their preferred books. Once chosen, the books are then referred to the selection committee for the committee to consider the cost, popularity, relevance, etc. of the books under consideration.

Although the Provincial Library Services' model in the North West does involve librarians across the province through book exhibitions, for example, librarians' influence towards the selection process is limited and the process of acquiring books or resources may take longer. Furthermore, libraries who do not have representation in the selection committee run the risk of having their preferred books or resources not being selected or falling off the system. The good thing about the Gauteng Province's model is that it allows the municipalities to tailor the catalogue according to the needs of their local communities. The librarians assess the needs of the patrons and the community (users' age, enquiries, etc.) and buy the required books or resources at the annual book selection event – this approach removes unnecessary handoffs and allows the librarian to directly buy what they deem required for their local library.

In contrast to the Gauteng Province's approach, the decision to buy books in the North West Province is taken at the provincial level, depriving municipalities the freedom to buy books that meet the informational needs of the local communities. The proximity of the province is problematic in that it is far removed from the masses and has limited understanding of the needs of the communities, and yet the decision to buy still rests with the province. The Gauteng Province's approach creates a platform through which librarians have direct influence on the types of books or resources that the libraries acquire. It makes sense to relegate the catalogue management responsibility to the municipalities, given their proximity to the local communities. Because of their proximity, they understand the needs of the local communities better. Greiner (2017) and Matodzi, (2018) posit that when patrons' informational needs are ignored, libraries run the risk of spending a lot of money and staff resources on items that do not serve the needs of the members of the communities that they service.

4.8 Marketing strategy

Suurman Community Library uses outreach programmes, such as visiting malls and schools, to create awareness about the library. The library also has a Facebook page, as a marketing tool, which was created in 2015. The page has 85 followers. If you did not know that the page is for a library, you will mistake the page for a small businesses' page. The page is dominated by small businesses advertising their products and services. The page hardly promotes library programmes and events or the library itself. Their Facebook page averages one post per month. At the time of the study, the page went for 39 days without a Facebook post. The City of Tshwane's Facebook page hardly posts content about their libraries. The library does not have Twitter and Instagram accounts. A WhatsApp contact number for the public is non-existent or is at least not linked to their Facebook page.

Mphebatho Community Library uses various channels to market their library: outreach programmes, exhibitions and social media. Over and above that, they have established a stable partnership with the local councillors as they endeavour to 'sell' the library to the community. The library has a Facebook page which was created in 2020. At the time of the investigation (2020), the page had 102 followers. Although the library seems to be using their Facebook page, usage is still below par. The library averages four posts per month. At the time of the study, the page went for 30 days without a post. The content of the page is relevant and includes activities such as book reading, promoting eBook services, and communicating library operating hours. The municipality has created 'Moretele Libraries' page. The page is active; however, the posts are mostly coming from one of the four libraries, Papi Ntjana Community Library. The other three libraries, including Mphebatho Community Library, are passive on the page. The library does not have Twitter and Instagram accounts. A WhatsApp contact number for the public is non-existent or is at least not linked to their Facebook page.

Birchleigh North Library, through the *Friends of the Library*¹, runs various programmes such as scrap booking, library orientation programme and storytelling for early childhood development. The municipality does not have social media pages dedicated to libraries that fall under Ekurhuleni. Instead, it uses the City of Ekurhuleni's pages to share content for and about their libraries. Birchleigh North Library has no presence on all key social media platforms, i.e. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. According to one librarian, the marketing

¹ A group of community members who support their local library financially and otherwise.

function resides with the municipality. It is the responsibility of the municipality to promote the libraries in their jurisdiction so that the local communities are made aware of the services at their disposal. This is the same model that the Johannesburg Municipality adopted. Joburg City has libraries' pages on all key social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and their accounts are very active. One of the concerns raised by a respondent is that, although the marketing function resides with the municipality, the municipality seems to be lacking marketing expertise that would help position Ekurhuleni libraries in the market. The municipality hinted that the marketing of libraries is receiving attention and hope to see an improvement in this regard.

Chandratre and Chandratre (2015) proclaim that information professionals must understand that, despite the type and size of the library, it is their responsibility to draw attention to their libraries, their services, their worth to their communities, their administration, their staff, and their users. From the discussion above, it is clear that all three libraries are under-utilising social media to draw attention to their libraries and the pertinent products and services that they offer. That in itself becomes a hindrance that impedes access to information. Failure to market the local community library using social media is problematic in that it deprives the members of the community the opportunity to access and use the services offered by the local library. Furthermore, when one looks at their social media pages, one gets a sense that the three libraries do not have a well-defined social media strategy. If they have, then the strategy is not working. Katz (1988) in Chandratre and Chandratre (2015) is of the view that marketing is effective when the pertinent marketing activities are well co-ordinated.

4.9 The role of various layers of government in enabling access to libraries and information

4.9.1 Libraries in South Africa

There are 1879 community libraries in South Africa. The Gauteng and North West Provinces account for 286 and 112 respectively. In the past five years, 15 libraries were built in the Gauteng Province, an average of three libraries per year. In the North West Province, 10 libraries were built in the past five years, averaging two libraries per year. At this rate, both in the Gauteng and North West Provinces, more communities will still be without libraries for

some time. One respondent from the North West Library Services argued that the rate at which libraries are built is slower than the rate at which community populations are growing.

4.9.2 Decision making and control

Between the two provinces, Gauteng and North West, there seems to be a difference in how they operate. The Gauteng Library Services relegates control to the municipalities, i.e. it adopted a decentralised model. Therefore, the municipalities are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the libraries. In this case, the Provincial Library Services plays a coordinator role. It provides oversight and direction to libraries in the province. Salaries for example, are managed by the municipalities. Furthermore, municipalities manage budgets allocated to them by the Gauteng Provincial Library Services. Although there is budget for Provincial Library Services' programmes, the bulk of the budget goes to the municipalities to run the libraries.

While the Gauteng Province gives greater control to their municipalities, the North West Province libraries are mainly controlled by the province; this is because the province gravitates towards centralisation. Key responsibilities such as budgets and catalogue management reside with the Provincial Library Services. However, library services in the North West Province is seen as a concurrent function – this is a model that allows the province and the municipalities to share responsibilities. The catalogue and budgets, for example, especially the Conditional Grant, are administered by the province. The grant is mainly used to build, renovate and sustain libraries especially in previously disadvantaged communities.

4.9.3 Funding of libraries

The annual budget of the Gauteng Province is about R320 million per annum (Equitable Share and Conditional Budget). The North West Province's annual budget is about R182.5 million per annum (Equitable Share and Conditional Budget). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, budgets were cut across all provinces and reprioritised to fight the pandemic. In the case of the Gauteng and North West Provinces, library services' annual budgets were reduced to R225 million and R137 million respectively. According to the respondents from

the two provinces, even the pre-COVID-19 annual budget allocations for the provinces were not sufficient to expedite the building of more libraries and to sustain the day-to-day operations of these libraries. Currently, Moretele Municipality has four libraries. In past five years, it has built only two libraries. Ekurhuleni Municipality has built 14 libraries in the past five years and has a complement of 48 libraries. Tshwane Municipality has a complement of 61 libraries and has built five libraries in the past five years.

The Conditional Grant, according to the respondents from the two provinces and the three municipalities, is aimed at expediting the pace at which libraries and services are made available to the previously disadvantaged communities – LSM 5 communities generally fall under this category. According to the Provincial Library Services in the Gauteng and North West Provinces, 80% - 90% of libraries built are built in informal settlements, townships and rural communities. This approach is guided by the Conditional Grant framework that demands that the grant be used to help address the injustices of the past. Satgoor (2015) states that although the government, through the Conditional Grant, is committed to establishing library infrastructures and services, it is inhibited by limited budgets and suitable skills to serve certain communities. Over and above that, we have seen budgets for library services get cut further and reprioritised as government re-channels funds towards the fight against the pandemic, COVID-19. These budget cuts affect the pace at which libraries are rolled out across South Africa. Budget cuts simply means that there will not be sufficient funds to build more libraries. Koontz and Gubbin (2010) posit that for a public library to succeed in fulfilling its role in the community it serves, sufficient levels of funding are critical.

Ekurhuleni and Tshwane municipalities have 48 and 61 libraries respectively versus four libraries in the Moretele municipality. This goes back to the point raised by various authors – Mchombu and Cadbury (2006) and Nkondo et al. (2014) – that libraries are mostly concentrated in cities while rural communities remain under-serviced. Another interesting observation is that in the past five years, the Moretele municipality built only two libraries while Ekurhuleni and Tshwane municipality built 14 and five libraries respectively. All these disparities point to one key problem, that is, budget constraints. Well-resourced provinces will always build more libraries than those with small budgets, as is the case with the examples above.

4.9.4 COVID-19 impact

All three libraries (Suurman Community Library, Mphebotho Community Library and Birchleigh North Library) were impacted by COVID-19 in that they were, at some point closed, thereby exacerbating the problem of access to libraries. Arnetoli (2020) and Asta (2020) in Tammaro (2020) point out that due to the pandemic, there has been a shift in how people consume content – online content and events are promoted more and there is an increased drive to invest in content creation. This trend is evident in South Africa. Learners are given learning content and instructions digitally; some workers work from home connecting with their teams and stakeholders digitally. Libraries have no choice but to embrace the change. To embrace the change, Ekurhuleni Municipality, for example, hinted that they are exploring the idea of a 24/7 library so that patrons can access information remotely around the clock. Although digital advancement is necessary, the adult population in LSM 9-High communities prefer physical book to online content.

The problem with digitising library services is that not all citizens can afford to access library resources digitally. Furthermore, because of COVID-19, budget allocations for library services were reduced. As a result, libraries were allocated less than what was normally allocated to them. The pandemic did not just affect budgets adversely, it also hinders access to libraries in that less or no libraries may be built as funds are being reprioritised to fight the pandemic. As lockdown restrictions were being eased, more libraries opened their doors to the public. However, an official from Gauteng Library Services posits that access to the local libraries now comes with restrictions. This is because libraries can only take a certain number of patrons at a time, depending on the size or capacity of the building. As a result, patrons can no longer have the luxury of spending as much time as they want in their local libraries. While other libraries grapple with managing high volumes of patrons, community libraries like Mphebotho Community Library are experiencing low volumes – a 63% reduction. It is clear from this discussion that the pandemic did not only take away the lives of our loved ones. It also worsened the ‘burden’ of access to libraries and information services in our local communities.

4.10 Summary

The objective of this study was to identify barriers that hinder access to libraries and information resources in LSM 5 and LSM 9 communities. Three communities (Dertig, Suurman and Birchleigh North) were used as case studies. Interviews were conducted with various subject matter experts and key players in the Library and Information Services sector and the various layers of government. From the interviews, respondents raised library opening hours as one of the barriers that hinders access to libraries and information. Linking to the opening hours dynamic, the location of a library was also raised as a hindrance. A poorly located library makes it difficult for the members of the community to access it. As a result, the members of the community have to either walk long distances or use transport (spending funds that they do not have in abundance) to access their local library.

One of the key findings is that libraries in LSM 5 communities are mostly used by young people whereas the library in a LSM 9-High community is predominantly used by senior citizens. In both LSM 5 and LSM 9-High communities, the relationship between the local libraries and the local schools is weak; the same is true for the relationship between the local libraries and the local communities. 67% of the schools interviewed have no libraries and at least 33% of those schools have had some form of interaction with their local libraries. 83% of the schools have no access to computers and internet.

Although all libraries have computers and internet infrastructure in place, some tend to have internet connection problems. This poses a challenge for patrons in LSM 5 communities because the majority of them go to their local libraries to use terminals and the internet. Social media presents itself as the cheapest and easiest way to communicate with the patrons and yet libraries are not making use of these platforms optimally. Provincial Library Services in various provinces do not follow one standard operating model. The type of an operating model adopted will either enhance or impede access to information and information resources. The pace at which libraries are being built in South Africa is very slow due to budget constraints. As highlighted in the discussion, COVID-19 has made things worse in that budgets were cut further so that funds can be channelled to the fight against the pandemic. All these budget cuts exacerbate the problem of access to information and libraries.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1 Introduction

This section reflects and provides a summary of the research findings and the pertinent recommendations. Furthermore, the section highlights the limitations of this study and offers suggestions for further research.

5.2 Findings and recommendations

5.2.1 Operating hours

Instead of adopting a one blanket approach on libraries' operating hours, a study on operating office hours must be conducted to understand the working patterns of the members of the local communities. This will ensure that libraries offer services that are aligned to the needs and requirements of the communities that they serve. The operating office hours assessment must not only be conducted, it must be conducted regularly to ensure that there is no misalignment between what the local library offers and the information needs of the local community. Furthermore, I recommend that, instead of libraries adopting a fixed operating office hours model, they adopt a flexible working hours model depending on the needs of the local communities. This approach will help ensure that working hours are aligned to the working patterns of the working members of the community without lessening access to those that are able to access their local libraries during the day. This approach will ensure that library employees are adequately scheduled in line with the foot flow patterns. That way, there will be no employees idling.

Libraries, depending on the needs of their local users, can open their doors a little bit late and close late in the evening. A library can, for example, open its doors at 12pm (instead of opening at 8am when foot flow is very low) and close at 8pm instead of closing at 5pm (when people are still at work, school or traveling home). The library staff members will still work the same number of working hours. The only difference is that they start work late in the afternoon and knock off late in the evening.

Although the flexible working hours approach may work for some of the members of the community who travel long distances to and from work, access to libraries will still prove difficult for some members of the community. They may be too tired to go to their local library after work; they may not feel safe to visit their local library in the evening. They may not be able to visit their local library due to other family commitments such as: preparing meals for their families, picking kids from after-care centers, helping kids with homework, relieving their helpers and many other reasons. In response to this challenge, the local libraries should consider opening their doors on weekends.

If a library opens on Saturdays between 9am and 1pm, for example, this affords those members of the community, who are not able to visit their local libraries during the week, the opportunity to use the facility on weekends. Mphebotho Community Library's foot flow on Saturdays, during exams, beats weekdays' foot flow by more than 100%. To improve efficiencies, staff members may be scheduled in such a way that they come to work an hour or two late when the foot flow is low during the week and work those hours on a Saturday. That way, the number of working hours per week, for staff members, remains unchanged. If considering opening libraries on weekends, apart from the possible financial implications, religious practices of the staff members must be considered. There are religions that do not allow their followers to work on Saturdays or Sundays. Hence the need to take religious practices into account when a library considers opening its doors on weekends.

5.2.2 Location of the library

The location of a library is critical. The members of the community must be able to access it with ease. Unfortunately, a greater proportion of the population in LSM 5 communities, like Dertig and Suurman, live in dispersed settlements and this anomaly makes it difficult for the members of the community to easily access their local libraries. As a result, most LSM 5 communities fail the '3.2 km radius' test – the situation is way better in the LSM 9-High communities. Generally, members of the LSM 5 communities are poor and would not have disposable income to spend on transport fare to visit their local libraries. That is why Birman (1998) proclaims that low-income earners do not enjoy the same access to library resources and information that people with sufficient income do.

Poor spatial planning in LSM 5 communities exacerbates the need for transport for community members to visit their local libraries. Transport was raised by the respondents as one of the key challenges. The problem is that they do not have funds to spend on transport and most of them do not have cars to drive to their local libraries. Therefore, the double blow of poor spatial planning and lack of income to pay for transport hinders access to libraries and information resources. Meyer (2014) posits that spatial planning must be integrative in nature and aim to ensure integrated land use planning to address spatial inequities of the past, help in the creation of enabling environments, enhance economic rural-urban linkages through development corridors, buttress active participation, ensure compact urban areas and ensure sustainable environments with a sense of place and viable local communities. Unfortunately, this is not a reality for many LSM 5 communities. To enhance access to libraries and information resources in such communities, there is a need for government to relook its rural development policies and to expedite the implementation of such policies once revised.

According to Koontz and Gubbin (2010), libraries must be accessible to all in the community and be adequately flexible to cater for new and changing needs. They maintain that libraries should be located close to other amenities such as shops, cultural and transportation centres. Building a library at such a strategic location addresses the problem of transport and members of the community can go to the library and still be able to do shopping, for example. However, the reality in many LSM 5 communities is that they live in dispersed settlements and do not necessarily have Central Business Districts (CBDs). This means that it is highly unlikely that they will find all that they need in one area. As a result, they have to make several trips to various service centres located at different places. This kind of a setup exacerbates the need for efficient transport and the pertinent transport fares. Nkondo et al. (2014) maintain that the location of numerous community libraries has been influenced by former apartheid spatial planning which resulted in many previously disadvantaged communities being under-served or not served at all.

5.2.3 Technology availability

There is a serious need for access to computers and the internet in LSM 5 communities. Although both libraries, Suurman Community Library and Mphebotho Community Library,

have a good number of computers for the patrons that are largely young, there seems to be a problem with access to the internet. The lack of internet connection means that, although the patrons have access to their local libraries, they do not have access to online information. As it has been discussed in this study, for their internet needs, patrons in LSM 5 communities tend to rely heavily on their local libraries because they cannot afford data costs in their personal capacity. This goes back to the problem of income. There is a need for government, either at provincial or municipal level, to prioritise the problem of internet connection, particularly in LSM 5 communities. There is no point putting internet infrastructure in place and yet patrons cannot use it to connect to the internet. Users in LSM 5 communities must be given access to Wi-Fi and the internet infrastructure must be improved to lessen network interruptions. As for the North West Province, it is essential that the province expedite the process by ensuring that policy issues are resolved as a matter of urgency, so that they can secure the services of a competent ICT service provider. Although ICT and internet connectivity are deemed essential for the effective functioning of LIS; a substantial number of libraries lacks these basic facilities; while libraries that are connected do not always have enough capacity to meet the needs (Nkondo et al., 2014).

I need to emphasise that this study is not calling for the establishment of computer centres. The definition of a well-resourced library cannot be confined to books. Over and above the books, a resourceful and well-functioning library must facilitate access to computers and internet. Facilitating access to computers and internet opens up a plethora of opportunities for patrons to access information that they would not necessarily be able to access from physical books.

5.2.4 Library partnerships

There is a serious need for Library Services or the Department of Arts and Culture to collaborate with the Department of Basic Education so that the relationship between the local libraries and the local schools is strengthened and unnecessary bureaucratic processes, that discourage libraries from working with schools, are eliminated (Mojapelo, 2018). The fact that the school and the teachers do not use the services of the local libraries is problematic; learners always see their teachers as role models. Therefore, when they see their teachers visiting and using their local libraries for whatever reason, the learners are most likely to

follow suite, simply because they see their role models using the service. When teachers do not set an example, by using the services of the local libraries, they can become a hindrance in that there is nothing and no one inspiring learners to use the services of their local libraries. Therefore, there is a need for school leadership and teachers to set an example.

To keep the learners interested, the local libraries must nurture a close and consistent relationship with the local schools. Mojapelo (2018) proposes that, in the absence of fully functional school libraries, schools and community libraries must collaborate to enhance access in the local communities. The proposal by Mojapelo is noble; however, it must be considered in conjunction with other factors such as transport. Collaboration becomes a challenge when the two parties are supposed to meet and yet they cannot because of transport challenges. Many learners do not have transport or disposable income to spend on transport fare to visit their local libraries (Machet & Tiemensma, 2009). I am of the view that by sorting out the problem of transport, over 80% of the issues discussed in the previous chapter will be solved.

One gets a sense that local libraries are not doing enough to engage their local communities and to promote the services that they offer. Hence the obvious weak relationship between the local communities and the community libraries. Schools, community libraries and the local communities must initiate other programmes to further strengthen the partnership and to enhance access to libraries and information resources. The North West Province, for example, has embarked on a ‘dual-purpose library’ concept whereby a community library is built inside school premises – Lebotlwane Community Library is one good example. The idea is for the library to benefit both the school that hosts it and the local community. For a partnership between the local communities, schools and public libraries to work, all parties must be fully invested in the partnership – none of the parties can afford to be passive as this attitude is likely to worsen the problem of access to information and information resources.

As discussed, libraries in LSM 5 communities are mostly used by the young people. Data collected from the two libraries in the two LSM 5 communities (Suurman and Dertig) align with what the respondents told the researcher, i.e. the library is predominantly used by young people. Abu et al. (2011) corroborate this view by arguing that rural public library services, activities and programmes appear to be supporting largely the children’s and teenage adults’

needs. Elderly people hardly use their local libraries. The reasons may range from illiteracy challenges, to lack of awareness and to other socio-economic factors. Nkondo et al. (2014) observes that a significant barrier to access to information and participation in LIS is the lack of a culture of reading in South Africa – this is due to poor reading skills, lack of motivation to read and unawareness of the importance of reading. This anomaly presents an opportunity for the local libraries to engage the elderly in the local communities to understand their challenges and needs. This will help ensure that libraries come up with programmes that are relevant and appealing to the elderly. In LSM 9-High communities, the opposite prevails – the local libraries attract elderly patrons more than they do the young patrons. There is a serious need for libraries in LSM 9-High communities to come up with programmes that will retain existing young people and attract a new cohort of young patrons. Offering ICT programmes that are focused on technology, such as coding, graphic design, etc. will attract young people to the local community libraries.

5.2.5 Marketing strategy

Unless a product or service is marketed or promoted, people will not know about the product or service. Secondly, for a product or service to be a success, it must be marketed to the relevant target market. It is a known fact that marketing a product can be costly, especially when using traditional media. However, this impasse does not negate the need for an integrated thought-through marketing strategy, at municipal level, that will ensure that libraries are marketed using effective marketing tools and channels to reach the target market. There is a need for the local municipalities to establish marketing as a key specialty that will help develop an integrated marketing strategy and coordinate marketing activities in the local municipalities. The lack of marketing strategy and activities, as pointed out by one respondent, works against the progress and growth of the local community libraries. When one looks at the current social media landscape, one gets a sense that all three municipalities have no integrated social media marketing strategy for their libraries. Failure to market the local libraries to the public exacerbates the problem of access to libraries and information.

It is essential that libraries take advantage of these cheap platforms to make their products, services and programmes known. Marketing a library using traditional media channels can be costly. To avoid these costs, Landis (2007) in Alkindi and Al-Suqri (2013) maintains that

libraries must find innovative and cheap ways of marketing their entities. One such innovative and cheap platform is social media. A social media strategy must be put in place so that the right messaging is channeled to the right client base using the right channels. A refined social media strategy will benefit libraries whose target market is young people simply because young people are social media natives. As for libraries whose client base is older, such libraries can still use the social media platforms to recruit a cohort of young patrons and must come up with a suitable strategy to reach out to the elderly.

A study in Bangladesh, by Islam and Habiba (2015), showed that libraries were lacking in their promotional activities on social media platforms. When one looks at the promotional activities carried out by the three libraries in South Africa, the libraries' promotional activities on social media platforms are lacking too. Social media provides a platform through which libraries can access interested parties and be accessed by patrons and other interested parties. There is, therefore, a need for these libraries to start investing time and resources, to learn and find ways to use these platforms optimally, and to ensure effective online presence on these platforms.

The passive use of these social media platforms is a missed opportunity, more so because young people/learners are most likely to access the libraries' social media accounts. As stated previously, the target audience for libraries in many LSM 5 communities is young people. The ideal approach would be to flood social media with useful content, library programmes and advertisements promoting the library. Then not promoting and publishing useful content, consistently so, hinders access to information. The libraries must take advantage of the available social media platforms simply because more young people have access to these very same platforms. The libraries' failure to grow their following on their Facebook account is a barrier that hinders access to information. Community members will only know about the library and use the library's services if they are exposed to the library and its services. Hence the need to use social media to reach out to the masses and 'sell' the services of the local library.

5.2.6 Catalogue management

The difference between the two provinces, North West and Gauteng Provinces, lies in how their catalogues are managed. The difference in how their catalogues are managed is

informed by the operating models adopted by the provinces. I believe a decentralised catalogue management approach empowers librarians. Furthermore, a decentralised catalogue management approach eliminates unnecessary hand-offs between librarians, districts and the provinces.

A centralised catalogue management approach is characterised by unnecessary hand-offs and librarians have limited influence on the final decision as to which books or resources to acquire for their libraries. Therefore, I recommend that a decentralised catalogue system be adopted across all provinces to simplify and expedite the book selection process. Keeping the catalogue management function at the provincial level is problematic in that the province is far removed from the local communities. I also recommend that the three libraries look into adopting a Patron Driven Acquisition (PDA) approach, where applicable, as this approach will ensure that unnecessary delays and handoffs are eliminated. Furthermore, the error of acquiring books that patrons are not interested in will be eliminated.

5.2.7 Standardised operating model

Although the North West Province sees a library function as a concurrent or joint function between the province and the municipalities, the responsibilities between the two entities are not fairly shared. Key responsibilities such as budgets and catalogue management are still centralised at the provincial level. In contrast, the Gauteng Province adopted a decentralised operating model which tends to empower municipalities by relegating key responsibilities to the municipalities. Therefore, I recommend that a decentralised operating model be adopted, as a standard model, across all provinces as the model will help enhance service delivery, simplify decision-making, eliminate handoffs and shorten turnaround times. Ultimately, when these benefits are realised, access to libraries and information resources will be enhanced.

5.2.8 Funding of libraries

Funding was raised as a concern by the respondents from the Provincial Library Services and the municipalities. The pre-COVID-19 annual budgets for the North West and Gauteng Provinces for the 2020/2021 financial year were cut by 25% and 30% respectively. These budget cuts, as discussed in the previous chapter, are an anomaly. Therefore, the respondents believe that once the pandemic has been stabilised, the annual budgets will at least go back to

where they were pre-COVID-19. Although the respondents appreciate the budgets allocated to Provincial Library Services, they are asking for more funding so that they can build more libraries. The fact that these budgets pay salaries, buy books, build libraries, run operations, etc., the budgets are small. If we are to see more libraries built, more funding must be channeled to Provincial Library Services. On average, the Gauteng Province builds three libraries per annum while the North West builds two libraries per annum. At this rate, access to libraries will still be a pipe dream for the foreseeable future in many communities. Furthermore, the problem of access to libraries is also worsened by the rate at which the South African population is growing and the rate at which new residential developments are being established in South Africa. To address this problem, more funding must be directed towards the establishment of libraries and the pertinent services.

5.2.9 COVID-19 breeds new normal

Tammaro (2020) claims that the COVID-19 encounter could somehow change the nature of interaction between librarians and library users. Post the COVID-19 pandemic, there is high likelihood that more users may opt to interact and transact digitally with their local libraries. Therefore, libraries in partnership with the government, must look into bolstering their digital infrastructure to cater for the emerging digital needs of the patrons. Ladan et al. (2020) proclaim that public libraries have an essential role to play in the situation of public health emergency, like COVID-19, by providing up-to-date information and reliable resources. Libraries must take advantage of the social media platforms, given their cost effectiveness, to share this important information. Another advantage with social media is that information travels faster on such platforms. Not only must libraries share reliable content, they must also be able to communicate this reliable content speedily to counter fake news.

5.3 Suggestions for further research

The limitation of this study was the small sample size: the study focused on three communities only – Dertig, Suurman and Birchleigh North. Furthermore, of the nine provinces in South Africa, the study was limited to two provinces, i.e. Gauteng and North West Provinces. Small sample sizes of three municipalities and six schools were also interviewed. Although the results cannot be used for generalising across South Africa and the

LIS sector globally, this study highlights pain-points that provides a solid basis for further research on the topic. COVID-19 and the pertinent lockdown restrictions in South Africa impacted this study as some of the data collection tools had to be abandoned. To contribute further to the body of literature, I recommend that further research be conducted on the following:

1. Further research on the topic must be conducted in a COVID-19-free environment so that other research tools can be used in the study to strengthen the case.
2. The cost implication of changing libraries' opening hours to cater for the needs of the members of the local communities. The study must also consider the impact of religious practices on the idea of opening libraries on weekends.
3. The ramifications of standardising the operating model for Provincial Library Services across all provinces.
4. Reasons as to why elderly people in LSM 5 communities do not use library services in their local communities. A similar study must be conducted in LSM 9-High communities to understand why young people are not using the services of their local community libraries.
5. Investigate the feasibility of spatially redesigning LSM 5 communities and the pertinent costs of redesigning those settlements.

5.4 Conclusion

This study provided a glimpse into library services offered by three local libraries, two of which are in LSM 5 communities and one in a LSM 9-High community. According to this study, the problem of access to libraries and information resources is far from over. Given the rate at which libraries are being built in South Africa, most communities are still going to be without libraries in the foreseeable future. Although all three case study communities have libraries, all of them encounter various types of barriers that still make access to libraries a problem. The library operating hours dynamic is still a problem, particularly in LSM 5 communities. The location of libraries poses a few challenges which are more visible in LSM 5 communities. It either depletes community members' resources or discourages them from using the services of the local libraries. All case study libraries have computers and internet infrastructure. However, connectivity is still a problem mostly in LSM 5 communities.

To enhance access to libraries and information resources, libraries and local communities must work on strengthening their partnerships. There is also a greater need for libraries to work closely with the local schools. A strong partnership between these two entities will ensure that more learners have access to libraries and information resources. Equal Education (2011b) in Mojapelo (2018) estimates that more than R12 billion is required from the government coffers to provide all public schools with a decent, standardised, well-stocked and staffed school library. Therefore, the South African government has a responsibility to ensure that all schools have sufficient resources to enhance the education standards, learner outcomes and quality of education to produce skilled, competent and knowledgeable youths (Mojapelo, 2018). Furthermore, the private sector companies have a critical role to play to advance effective school library development initiatives in all South African schools (Mojapelo, 2018). Marketing plays a vital role in library services. Given the tight budget allocations for library services, social media presents itself as the cheapest and easiest method that libraries can use to communicate with their target market. Libraries must take advantage of these tools to reach out to their target markets and to promote their services.

Provinces do not follow one standard operating model. There is a need to standardise the operating model such that all provinces use one standard operating model. An operating model at the provincial level influences how municipalities carry out their functions at the municipal level. Provinces like the Gauteng Province use a decentralised model while other provinces, like the North West Province, use a concurrent function model which gravitates towards centralising key functions in the province. A decentralised system simplifies decision making, eliminates handoffs and expedites service delivery. When these benefits are realised, access to libraries and information resources will improve. Funding is another important factor to consider. More funding must be channeled towards the construction and the sustenance of libraries, particularly in LSM 5 communities. COVID-19 has made things worse, resulting in budget cuts. Budget cuts meant that there are less funds available to build more libraries and to support existing ones. Ultimately, the people that are on the receiving end of the effects of the pandemic are the communities that need access to libraries and information resources.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – ETHICS CERTIFICATE



SCHOOL OF Literature, Language and Media RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

PROTOCOL NUMBER: SLLM-M20-06

PROJECT TITLE
In South Africa between 2015-2020

Investigating access to libraries in Dertig, Suurman and Birchleigh North

INVESTIGATOR

Mr Daniel Mashego

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT

SLLM

DATE CONSIDERED

September 2020

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE

Approved

This ethical clearance is valid for 2 years and may be renewed upon application.

EXPIRY DATE

Date of submission of the project report

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE

October 2020

CHAIRPERSON

Colleen Dawson

cc: Supervisor : Lorraine Nyamapfene

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and ONE COPY returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

D.S. Mashego
Signature

Date

20 / Oct / 2020

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

APPENDIX B – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Librarian Interview Questions

1. What is your role?
2. What qualifications have you achieved?
3. What is your employment contract?
4. Do you have supporting staff?
5. Please share operating hours of your local library.
6. Who uses the local library in terms of race, gender, and age group – Traffic?
7. What are your peak periods? Daily and seasonally?
8. Do you know if the library users use the local library for studies or for leisure?
9. Is there membership fee? And how much is it, if any?
10. Are all of your services free?
11. What services do you offer at your local library?
12. Any idea or stats as to what library users use the library for?
13. Who decides on what books to acquire for the library?
14. Do you have a catalogue that all users can access?
15. Are you a full-time librarian(s)? How many are you?
16. What programmes is the library running in partnership with the local community to encourage usage?
17. Is there some form of collaboration between the library and the local schools?
18. Do you have computers for your library that users can use to access information? How many?
19. Does the library have access to the internet?
20. Do you have a budget for data (Wi-Fi, Fibre, etc.) for your library? If yes, what is the budget?
21. Is your location enhancing or hindering access?
22. How far is the nearest library?
23. Do you conduct research to assess the community's needs and to check the relevance and effectiveness of the library?
24. How do you market the library and your events?

Schools Interview Questions

1. What is your role in the school?
2. How many learners do you have in the school?
3. Do you have a school library?
4. If no, please provide reasons why the school does not have a library.
5. Is the school library functional?
6. Is the library's catalogue accessible to all?
7. Who buys the books for the library?
8. Do you have a full-time librarian?
9. Is the librarian qualified for the role?
10. Is your school library equipped with computers for the learners?
11. How many computers in a school library?
12. Does the library have access to the internet?
13. Do you have a budget for data costs?
14. When does your school library peak in terms of foot flow?
15. Do you have a view of who visits the school's library in terms of race, age and gender?
16. Do learners use the school's library for personal enrichment or studies?
17. What types of services do they use more in the school's library?
18. Do teachers use the local library or the school's library? If yes, what for?
19. Do the school use the services of a local community library?
20. Do your learners use the services of the local library? If not, why?
21. Are learners encouraged to visit the local library?
22. Have your school ever participated in a programme run by a local library?
23. Has the local library ever visited the school to encourage learners and teachers to use the local library?

Municipalities Interview Questions

1. What is your role in the municipality?
2. What is the municipality's strategy for libraries?
3. Is there a budget for libraries? What is the annual budget for libraries?
4. What percentage of this annual budget is allocated to LSM 5 communities?
5. How much Conditional Grant do you get from the province?
6. What is the total number of libraries in the municipality?
7. How many libraries were built in the past five years in your municipality?
8. How is the role of the province different from the role of the municipality?
9. Who decides on what books to buy for libraries?
10. What types of books do you generally buy, if you are the one buying, for the libraries in the municipality?
11. Do you have full-time librarians in all libraries?
12. Are librarians qualified for the role?
13. How do you ensure library-community partnership?
14. How do you ensure library-schools partnership?
15. Do all libraries have computers? And how many per library?
16. Do all libraries have access to the internet?
17. What are the challenges that hinder access to information, particularly in LSM 5 communities?
18. How do you plan to improve access to information in LSM 5 communities in the next five years?

Provincial Interview Questions

1. What is your role in the province?
2. What is the province's strategy for libraries?
3. What is the province's operating model?
4. Is there a budget for libraries?
5. Is budget controlled from the province?
6. What is the annual budget for libraries?
7. What percentage of this annual budget is allocated to LSM 5 communities and LSM 9-High?
8. How is the role of the province different from the role of the municipalities?
9. Who decides on what books to buy for libraries in the province?
10. What types of books do you generally buy, if you are the one buying, for the libraries in the province?
11. What is the total number of community libraries in the province?
12. What is the total number of community libraries built in the past five years in the province?
13. Of the total number of community libraries built in the last five years, how many were built in LSM 5 and LSM 9-High communities?
14. Do you have full-time librarians in all libraries?
15. Are all librarians qualified for the role?
16. Do all libraries in LSM 5 and LSM 9-High communities have computers? And how many per library?
17. Do all libraries have access to the internet?
18. What are the challenges that hinder access to information, particularly in LSM 5 communities?
19. How do you plan to improve access to information in LSM 5 and LSM 9-High communities in the next five years?

NLSA Interview Questions

1. What is your role in NLSA?
2. What is the role of NLSA?
3. How is NLSA different from a community library?
4. Is it the NLSA's mandate to ensure that libraries are built?
5. How many community libraries do we have in South Africa?
6. What percentage of community libraries do we have in LSM 5 and LSM 9-High communities?
7. What is the total number of community libraries built in the last five years in South Africa?
8. Based on what you know, is the Conditional Grant succeeding in addressing the imbalances of the past?
9. It seems to me that, while the infrastructure is in place in our public libraries, access to the internet is still a problem, especially in rural communities. Your view?
10. Challenges hindering access to information in LSM 5 and LSM 9-High communities?
11. How do you plan to address the problem of access in LSM 5 and LSM 9-High communities going forward?

APPENDIX C – PERMISSIONS LETTER EXAMPLE

13 Muisvoel Avenue,
Palm Crest, Unit 13,
Birch Acres, Ext 1, 1618

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Daniel Shatale Mashego and I am a Masters degree student in Publishing Studies at the university of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (Student No. 2140228). One of the key requirements for the degree is that I conduct and prepare a research report. My research looks at the problem of access to information and information resources. The study will help identify factors that hinder access to information and information resources and will come up with recommendations to solve the problem of ‘access’ in communities. To understand the problem and to come up with potential solutions to the problem, I will need your assistance.

I hereby apply for permission to conduct interviews with the following roles in the following institutions:

- Librarian – Suurman Community Library.
- Librarian – Birchleigh North Library
- Tshwane Municipality – An official responsible for libraries in the Tshwane Municipality.
- Ekurhuleni Municipality – An official responsible for libraries in the Ekurhuleni Municipality.
- Gauteng Library Services – An official responsible for libraries in the Gauteng Province.

The interviews will last for 60 minutes and will be conducted electronically due to the current Covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

The officials and roles were selected to be part of this study due to their unique strategic role in facilitating access to information and information resources in the province.

Participation in this study does not involve payments and is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the participant is entitled.

Should you want to verify the validity of my studies, please feel free to contact my Head of Department and Supervisor, **Ms. Colleen Dawson** on +27 11 717 4140 or +27 83 308 2335. All other questions regarding this request and the study may be directed to me; contact details provided below.

Any information considered confidential by the participant(s) will not be disclosed to others. The participant(s) name / identifying data will not be disclosed and anyone reading the research results will not be able to identify the participant(s). The study will be available online through the university library website and a summary of the research will be made available, if requested.

The data collected from this research project will be stored in a password-protected storage and will be kept for two years. With your permission the data collected from this research project may be used by other researchers. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrec-medical.researchoffice@wits.ac.za

Your assistance in this regard will be highly appreciated. Thanking you in advance.

Yours Sincerely

D.S. Mashego

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APPENDIX D – CONSENT FORM EXAMPLE

Consent Form

Title of project: Investigating access to libraries in Dertig, Suurman and Birchleigh North in South Africa between 2015 – 2020

Name of researcher: Daniel Shatale Mashego (Student Number: 2140228)

I,, agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below).

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous	YES	NO
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I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in his / her research report	YES	NO
---	-----	----

I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	YES	NO
--	-----	----

I agree that the information I provide may be used anonymously after this project has ended, for academic purposes by other researchers, subject to their own ethics clearance being obtained.	YES	NO
--	-----	----

..... (signature)
..... (name of participant)
..... (date)

..... (signature)
..... (name of person seeking consent)
..... (date)

APPENDIX E – DATA CAPTURING INSTRUMENT EXAMPLE

[illegible]