

## 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