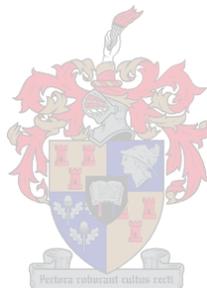


**A study of the information-seeking behaviour  
of the researchers in the Parliamentary  
Research Unit at the Parliament of the Republic  
of South Africa**

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**Assignment presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Master of Philosophy (Information and Knowledge  
Management) at the University of Stellenbosch.**

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## **Declaration**

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this assignment is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

## **Abstract**

This study examined the information seeking behaviour of the researchers attached to the Parliamentary Research Unit in Parliament. It looked at their use of the Parliamentary Library, their use of the library and its resources, what other avenues for information they use and what suggestions they have for improving the service. A questionnaire was developed and e-mailed to researchers. As the response rate was poor, it limited the conclusions that could be drawn from the research.

In line with other studies, it was found that electronic resources and the Internet played a great role in how they sourced information. Researchers frequented the Internet to find information more than they use the library and they have difficulties with accessing online resources and the catalogue. The manual circulation system was a source of frustration as well.

They made use of personal contacts to a certain extent to find unpublished information and very recent information. These categories of information, especially government information, are crucial to their work. Suggestions for improvement centred on the online catalogue, instruction in the use of the online resources, updating the collection of books and journals and consulting researchers where necessary.

## **Opsomming**

Hierdie ondersoek fokus op die inligtingsgedrag van die navorsers in die Parlementêre Navorsingseenheid. Dit ondersoek hul gebruik van die Parlementêre biblioteek en sy bronne, die alternatiewe inligtingskanale tot hul beskikking en watter voorstelle hulle het vir die verbetering van dienste.

’n Vraelys is ontwerp en per e-pos aan navorsers gestuur.. Swak terugvoering het die proses om finale gevolgtrekkings te maak, beperk. In ooreenstemming met ander studies, is wel gevind dat die Internet en elektroniese bronne n groot rol speel in die proses om inligting te bekom.Daar is ook gevind dat navorsers hierdie tipe bronne verkies bo tradisionele biblioteekbesoeke. Opleiding om die elektroniese bronne en die katalogus te gebruik is noodsaaklik.

Alternatiewe bronne van inligting soos persoonlike kontakte met ander kundiges word tot ’n sekere mate gebruik om inligting te kry wat beide op datum en ongepubliseer is. Voorstelle vir verbetering fokus op die elektroniese katalogus, opleiding in die gebruik van elektroniese bronne, die kwaliteit en inhoud van die versameling en konsultasie met die navorsers.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction and background**

In the past, libraries focused on the technical aspects of library information provision, for example, computerisation and collection development, while neglecting the subjective aspects of user expectations and needs ( Kunz, Rittel & Schwuchow, 1977:9; Jardine, 1995:478; Dalton, 1992:89).

Libraries are becoming more attuned to the needs of their clients. One method of doing this is to use a user-driven rather than a technology-driven approach to user requirements, designing services based on feedback from clients. Therefore, many user-driven studies have been undertaken to understand how users really perceive library services and what their needs are (Jankowska, 2004; Kelley & Orr, 2003; Liu & Yang, 2004). It is indicative of the current funding crisis experienced universally by libraries and their sponsors that they have retreated from using statistics as a measurement tool to concentrating on surveying their clients to establish how they use libraries and what they really should provide.

### **1.2 Problem statement**

Libraries need to have a clear understanding of their clientele's needs to be able to respond with services that are actually popular. Currently the Library of Parliament is unable to determine the extent to which its services and resources are able to fulfill the needs of researchers who are amongst its primary clientele. Yet knowing your patrons' needs are crucial in determining the kind of services and resources that are actually valuable to people. Kunz, Rittel and Schwuchow (1977:9) states: "a sufficient identification, analysis and coordination of the 'real'

information needs of the user is an essential basis for the planning, implementation and operation of information systems and networks”.

This study will attempt to understand the information-seeking behaviour of researchers in the way they search for information and how they use resources, both inside and outside the library. This will inform our understanding of what they desire from the library and it will enable the library to focus its services and resources in a manner that will ensure optimal use of resources.

### **1.3 Research aims and objectives**

This study focussed on the information-seeking behaviour of the researchers of the Parliamentary Research Unit of the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa with the aim of trying to determine the extent to which they used the library and its resources to satisfy information needs.

Particularly the objectives were:

1. To determine what use they made of the library and its resources
2. To determine what other resources they accessed besides the library and why
3. To determine what suggestions they have to improve current services that the library provides

Questions arising from the objectives were:

- What use do the researchers make of the Library?
- Which resources do they use and how often do they use it?
- Where do they find service delivery inadequate?
- Which suggestions do they have for improving services and resources?

- What rivals does the Library have in information provision to researchers?
- What functions do these rivals perform that the Library does not?

## **1.4 Methodology**

The above-mentioned questions were answered using survey methodology. A literature survey was undertaken to find out whether any information exist on the use of parliamentary libraries by researchers and if so, what resources they use and how they go about finding information in general. Further information sought through the literature review was the history and type of studies that exist dealing with information seeking behaviour and to define concepts. A questionnaire was used to source the information needed from the researchers attached to the PRU.

## **1.5 Outline of chapters**

The body of this research assignment is structured as follows:

- Chapter One – Introduction – here the problem is explored, and the aims and objectives of the project explained.
- Chapter Two – User evaluation – the existing literature on the subject will be explored and analysed.
- Chapter Three – Methodology – the different methodological possibilities will be explained, an approach will be chosen and motivated, and the manner in which the research was conducted will be discussed.
- Chapter Four – Results and discussion, which will deal with analysing and presenting the research.

- Chapter Five – Conclusion includes the findings, recommendations, limitations and suggestions for further research.

## **1.6 Impact of study**

All libraries constantly need to justify their existence, whether they are public, government or academic libraries. Authorities, or those who exercise control over budgets, are always requesting libraries to give proof that they are getting a return on investment. In these times, like all other libraries, the Library of Parliament has to do more with less.

This study will be useful in determining what the researchers use the library for and where they find the services inadequate and how they deal with that. This can lead to enhanced service planning, dispensing with unpopular services and spending capital in the right areas.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **CHAPTER TWO: USER EVALUATION**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter will examine various concepts considered relevant to the study. The history of user studies will be scrutinised, as well as the role they play in libraries. Furthermore theoretical issues will be touched on and there will be an overview of the types of user studies relevant to this survey.

### **2.2 Definition of concepts**

#### **2.2.1 Information**

Within this study the term information is used as defined by Wilson as a physical entity (e.g. documents, books), the channel of communication employed for the transfer of messages (oral or written communication) or factual data empirically determined and presented on paper or verbally transferred (Wilson, 1981).

#### **2.2.2 Information-seeking behaviour**

Since this research dealt with information-seeking behaviour in the context of user surveys, it would be useful to define the concept information seeking. Wilson (1981) stated that information seeking is the result of a need for information. The user has options in terms of search paths he/she can employ to find information. Examples of search paths are utilising a library to find information or going to a friend to verify some fact. Wilson defined the study of information-seeking behaviour as the examination of any of the search paths the user chooses.

### **2.2.3. User needs and information needs**

Kunz, Rittel & Schwuchow (1977:17) defined information needs as "...the individual needs of users", and they defined user needs as "...those information needs of individuals that should be satisfied by certain specific information facilities".

### **2.2.4 Researcher**

Here the term is meant to refer specifically to the group of people employed by the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa to perform research-related activities for Members of Parliament and senior management at Parliament.

### **2.2.5 Surveys**

In her study Jankowska (2004:52) referred to Robert Powell's definition of surveys as "...a group of research methodologies commonly used to determine the present status of a given phenomenon".

The Oxford dictionary of Sociology defines surveys as "...systematic collection of facts about a defined social group (1998:654)". It goes on to state that surveys can be used to collect information on individuals, roles, social networks, social groups and organisations. The dictionary furthermore points out that academic surveys are often carried out on as single studies to examine certain issues (1998:655). This particular survey focussed on the behaviour of the Parliamentary researchers, a subset of users of the Library of Parliament. In this case, the words survey and study will be used interchangeably.

### **2.3 Why user surveys are necessary**

Kawatra (1992:8) wrote that user studies are necessary to identify the strengths and weaknesses of library resources and services, to identify the levels and kinds of user needs and to improve the organisation and planning of library services.

Lancaster (1988:3) felt that libraries are concerned with using inputs (money, stock, etc.) to produce certain outputs (services) in order to achieve certain intangible outcomes, e.g. learning. According to him, user studies provide libraries with a means to justify their existence and to identify possible sources of failure or inefficiency with a view to rectify them at some point in the future (Lancaster, 1988:7). West (1998:15) writes that libraries utilise user surveys to identify customer needs, as a public relations exercise and to measure service performance.

Kunz, Rittel and Schwuchow (1977:10) felt that the approach and purpose of user studies can be divided into studying the information flow and behaviour within certain fields with the aim of developing a solid knowledge about it or alternatively to study the use and efficiency of certain information facilities in order to assist the management and the decision-making processes of the relevant institution.

In summary one can say that these studies are focused on understanding library users in different environments like academic libraries, school libraries, archives and so forth. The broad aim of these studies, as is this one, is to lead to an understanding of how people make use of library services or alternatives, which library services clients find useful are finally to use this information to improve planning and justify expenditure.

## 2.4 Theoretical issues

It seems almost as if user studies were first undertaken for practical reasons and that the search for a coherent theory developed as an afterthought. Theoretical concepts play an important part in developing appropriate methodology to study issues.

Some authors have attempted to theorise about the users and their environment and to relate this to the library in an attempt to develop some theoretical models. For example Kunz, Rittel and Schwuchow (1977:12) described models developed by authors like Paisley and Allen who portray the user's environment as concentric circles or levels with which he /she interacts. In the case of Paisley, there are eight circles (cultural, political, group membership, working team, invisible college, reference group, work organisation, personality of the user). Some of these circles or environmental factors exert more influence on behaviour than others. Allen simplified the model of Paisley to six circles (the user as an information processor, the user in work relationships, the user as individual in the organisation, the user as member of a professional society, and the user as part of a formal information system. These environmental levels influence information behaviour within the work environment.

Wilson (1981) too tried to develop a theory of how the user relates to the environment and attempts to demonstrate that the user cannot be seen in isolation but as embedded in the environment. According to Wilson, the information seeker has access to various information systems, and within each system there are subsystems like mediators and technology. Mediators can be described as agents who will undertake searches on behalf of the searcher, with or without the involvement of technology.

To satisfy the need for information, the user may turn to a formal information system like a library or to information systems outside the boundaries of the formal information system, e.g. advice office, banks, colleagues, and so forth. Wilson identified several different search paths the user can choose to access the information needed. Category A paths are those, for example, where the user executes his/her own searches directly while B, C and D paths all involve a mediator or technology.

All the writers mentioned above are attempting to remind us that the user cannot be studied in isolation. Clients are embedded in broader social systems that will influence their need for information. Furthermore, the user has alternative search paths to finding information and these need to be accounted for and contextualised.

What is helpful is that Wilson located the study of information-seeking behaviour as the scrutiny of any of these categories of search paths. He further stated that by looking at information-seeking behaviour we would conclude something about the needs of the user.

This study specifically attempted to examine the use of mediators and technology as subsystems within the library (the formal information system) by the researchers attached to the Parliamentary Research Unit. In terms of Paisley and Allen's categories (Kunz, et al, 1977:13) one could ask questions on the behaviour of the researchers as part of the formal information system, as a member of an invisible college, as an individual in the organisation and attempt to determine how this influences information-seeking behaviour.

There are also studies and debates on methodology. Some authors like Wilson (1981) and Kunz et al (1977:12) felt that there are too many quantitative studies. He found the term 'information' to be unclear and not specified

sufficiently in some cases. Wilson believed that the focus of studies should shift to encompass the whole social context within which the user exists. The role of information in the user's life needs to be examined by using a more qualitative approach of free-flowing interviewing, observation, document analysis and other less conventional methods (Wilson, 1981).

Wilson is correct to say that methodologies have been quantitative for the most part. Kunz, Rittel and Schwuchow (1977:10) said that most of these studies have, for the most part, not accumulated any new knowledge and that the theoretical problems have been neglected. They felt that a unified theoretical approach to methodological issues around user surveys are needed (1977:38) and questioned why observation and secondary analysis as methodologies are rarely used.

An example of a South African attempt to contribute to the methodological debate was the work of Dalton (1992) who developed a quantitative instrument to measure the construct 'user satisfaction'. This she tested on University of South Africa students. She concluded that her instrument has merits and could be used to measure user satisfaction (Dalton, 1992:103).

Other studies have bemoaned the lack of consistency in methodology or definitions of variables. Authors such as Crews and Saxton felt that this hampers the development of a consistent body of research to build on. Crews, for instance, examined various studies on reference accuracy to find variables that consistently affect accuracy of reference services (1998). He examined both obtrusive and unobtrusive studies and categorised the variables into outputs, inputs and processes. The author also felt that given the differences in methodologies, operational definitions and standards it would be difficult to consolidate research findings on reference accuracy (1998:337). He suggested research areas around each variable that could be explored and advocated a new

look at research methodology (1998:349). Saxton (1997) attempted to use meta-analysis to synthesise the findings of different studies on user evaluation, but complained about the lack of standardisation of variable definitions and how they are measured and about inconsistency in the reporting of findings (1997:282).

A further problem centres on the validity of using clients to evaluate library services. Some writers felt that the perceptions of users are too subjective to be of any use in evaluating the quality of services. It is the opinion of some that the users are not objective in their evaluation and there exist questions on "...the ability of users to evaluate the services, collections and staff, emphasizing the inclination of users to report strong positively biased answers irrespective of the quality of information received (Dalton, 1992:89)". There are others, however, who felt that as the users of a particular service clients have a right to participate in evaluating a service as they provide the subjective dimension and that other objective measures can be utilised in conjunction with user studies (Dalton, 1992:89).

Examining all these viewpoints leads one to believe that in terms of methodology and theory a lot still need to be done.

## **2.5 History of user surveys**

Library user surveys have a long tradition and had different types of libraries as their setting, studied different types of activities and sections of libraries and used different methodologies. They have taken place all over the world.

Empirical studies in this field have been undertaken since 1920, mostly in the United States of America, from where it spread to the United Kingdom, Europe and the rest of the world.

Kawatra (1992:20) reviewed user studies in the USA, the UK, India, Australia, Nigeria and Austria from the 1960's onwards at academic institutions. Furthermore, he listed some bibliographies and dissertations concerned with user studies. The studies he focused on are all related to user studies set in the academic library environment. These studies focused on various aspects of library use: the attitude of faculty or students towards the library, user education and training, the patterns of use of various parts of the collection, e.g. periodical literature, the attitude of user groups to certain services delivered by their resident libraries, or evaluated the attitude of librarians. Studies were also carried out to find out how users behave in libraries, how they go about finding resources and what their successes and failures are. Comparisons were often made on gender differences in information seeking behaviour and comparing differences between various categories of students and staff's use of library services.

A particular impetus for the interest in users can be attributed to the influence of digital technology and the Internet whose influence librarians have blamed for a decline in demand for reference and circulation services (Jankowska, 2004:51). There is a desire to see the library from the viewpoint of the user.

## **2.6 Overview of user studies**

In the parliamentary context, the Australian parliamentary libraries undertake regular surveys of user needs but as far as this researcher knows, it has only been for internal use and has never been published. No other parliamentary library survey could be identified during the literature search. Furthermore, Kunz, Rittel and Schwuchow (1977:59) bemoaned the lack of studies on politicians, managers, administrators and planners. Due to the lack of literature on parliamentary library user surveys, this study concerned itself with reviewing literature on academic libraries and as they seem to be closer to the

parliamentary research environment. Wherever applicable, studies set in other environments but dealing with issues important in the parliamentary context, will be referred to. For example, a study with pertinent information on circulation systems within libraries, though not in the academic library context, might be included.

User studies have focused on different aspects of library services, e.g. the collection, the physical environment and equipment, the reference services, the use of the catalogue and many more. From these studies, the researchers came to conclusions on what the needs of users are, where improvements in services should be concentrated and what the expectations of the user community are.

During overviews of the field, some authors classified user surveys using systems they developed themselves. Menzel, as cited by Kunz, Rittel & Schwuchow (1977:14), classified them according to their approaches into user studies, use studies, dissemination studies and comprehensive study programs. User studies can be defined as those studies that look at users' individual preferences in terms of information channels, different media and facilities. Use studies examine the frequency of use of particular information channels, information utility in certain fields and critical incident studies. Both deal with information behaviour. Dissemination studies scrutinises the professional communication mechanisms in the sciences and technology. His last category was comprehensive study programs dealing with information needs and behaviour that encompass all the other categories but cannot be limited to any one of them.

Some authors used different classification techniques. Lancaster, for instance, classified his overview of surveys on reference services into obtrusive and unobtrusive studies (1988:110). Both these types of studies can be thought of as simulations but they differ in the sense that in obtrusive studies the librarians are aware of the test while in unobtrusive surveys the librarians are not aware that

their efficacy is under scrutiny. Simulations involve assembling a number of reference questions to which the answers are known, sending in people to put these questions to library staff and determining the amount of correct answers (1988:110). These types of studies cumulated in the famous 55% rule that states that only a certain fixed percentage of reference queries are ever answered correctly (Jardine, 1995:478).

During the 1990s, users' preferences' for information have been immensely influenced by technological developments and a lot of studies have focused on how this influences library services. As stated by Bertot & McClure (2003:603) "Libraries now reside in a complex service environment – one that requires that they provide traditional services and resources such as a physical space, print material, and face-to-face reference, as well as network-based services such as Web-based collections, online databases, and virtual reference." These studies are driven by the realisation that it would not pay to make assumptions about what users want and need as they have alternative information systems. Information brokers and the growth of the Internet complicate the picture and present very real threats to libraries.

In this vein, Xia studied the provision of digital services in a New Zealand academic library and concluded that the perceptions of users and librarians differ on what the needs and preferences of users are in terms of digital services (2003:65). The study found that librarians should not assume that different user groups want the same sort of digital services and that the currency of information on a website is crucial.

Users now have a choice whether to access information remotely or come into the physical building. Ashley, together with others, compiled a bibliography of studies in information seeking behaviour in the context of the electronic age, looking at choices users make, how they move between interfaces, how they

decide on sources and how they make judgements on information sources (Ashley, et al, 2001). They categorised their results into different subcategories of user behaviour like digital library services, hypertext usage, interface design, satisfaction, resource selection behaviour and so forth.

Just from looking at their bibliography, it is clear that there are hundreds of studies on user behaviour. A study by Kelley and Orr (2003:187) at Maryland University College demonstrated that students rely increasingly on electronic resources instead of coming into the library. This particular library had a big component of distance education students. The survey showed that students used the Internet extensively, relied on full text databases (2003:189) and that students wanted a comprehensive online catalogue. The authors concluded that libraries needed to consider how online access and the Internet are affecting library use and adapt services to current student behaviour. Examples of improvements in service would be to teach students how to critically examine Internet resources.

Liu and Yang studied students at Texas A & M University and found out that at least 50% of the respondents used the Internet as their primary resource and only 28.7% used their own library. They concluded "...the principle of least effort prevailed in the respondents' selection and use of information ..." (2004:30). Furthermore, students preferred rapid and easy access to information, most found the library resources difficult to use (2004:31) and preferred online databases and the Internet as sources of information.

Jankowska (2004:52) analysed the needs of faculty at the University of Maryland in the light of advances in information and communication technology. Although a lot of time was invested in producing a questionnaire to reduce bias, library technology caused confusion in some cases. Most of them (67%) used

computers to access library e-resources and 58% used it to find information on the Internet. A percentage of them (30%) cited lack of instruction in online library resources as a reason for not finding what they needed on the library website. A significant group (65%) requested improvement to the quality of the online catalogue, access to electronic journals and government documents.

Schwartz (2002) looked at end-user needs in a private academic institution. She found that despite the fact that users' might not find the best search results, they were generally satisfied with their searches and convinced that they knew how to search. Additionally they believe that the Internet can provide in all their information needs. Siddiqui (1999) examined inter-library loan services at King Fahd University and found that only 13% of requests were supplied with 8 days and that the average response time was 14.2 days.

Other studies have focused on the behaviour of users in finding information. Rose, for instance, examined the information-seeking behaviour of art historians in a technological environment (2002:35). She discovered that art historians consulted librarians to find resources (2002:36) and frequently used peers to find the most recent information. In terms of format, print resources were the most frequently used. Certain online resources like catalogues were valued as well as websites they considered scholarly and suited to their purpose.

Kemoni (2002:70) examined the information seeking behaviour of researchers in Kenya and specifically their use of the National Archives and Documentation Service. He found that all of them were aware of the archives, but that 60% of them did not use the archives due to negative assumptions about the relevance and currency of information sources. The National Archives was busy with a computerisation programme and 100% of the respondents felt that it would improve information provision, introduce new services and enhance resource

sharing (2002:75). This proves that people generally have growing expectations of computerisation.

Romanos de Tiratel (2000) studied the information-seeking behaviour of academics in the humanities and social scientists at Buenos Aires University. A finding of the study was that informal sources of information e.g. colleagues, were very important in leading scholars to sources. Van Zijl and Gericke (2001) looked at the information-seeking behaviour of visual artists and found that their preferences in searching were in this order: conducting their own searches in catalogues and databases, browsing, using librarians, following citations, Internet searches or using personal contacts or colleagues.

Some studies attempt to establish how the behaviour of staff influences the user in his/her quest for information. Baker and Field (2000), for example, completed a study at Wayne State Library. They demonstrated that the behaviour of reference staff significantly influenced the satisfaction of clients with the quality of the service. Even when respondents were not satisfied with the answer to their query, 53% were satisfied with the librarian. A significant percentage (47%) of those who felt they were not treated well would not return to the same staff member. The study concluded that behaviour was more important to clients than knowledge of the topic. Librarians who showed a willingness to assist and listen were viewed more favourably than others who showed the opposite behaviour.

Dalton (1992:90) attempted to design a suitable measurement for the construct "user satisfaction" during a study at UNISA and tested it on the UNISA postgraduate students who used the subject reference service (1992:92). The author demonstrates that users distinguish between technical skills of librarians

and their interpersonal skills (1992:100) and that subjective factors played a role in perceived satisfaction.

Jardine (1995) conducted a survey on students at the University of Albany library. The study examined the so-called 55% rule that flowed from user surveys supposedly demonstrates that only 55% of all reference queries are answered accurately (1995:478). The author felt that this did not give a holistic evaluation of reference services and that behavioural factors might play an important role in how clients evaluate services. It also addressed the question of whether users are suitable judges of the effectiveness of services delivered by stating that their perceptions are important, as they are the consumers being served (Jardine, 1995:484).

Instead of focusing on the accuracy of response to reference queries, this study focused on the perception of user attitude and behaviour by library patrons as a variable in user satisfaction. As a measurement of satisfaction, students were asked if they would return to the same librarian if necessary. The study concluded that the accuracy of the service is not the only factor that determines client satisfaction but that behavioural characteristics play a crucial role in users' perceptions and willingness to return to a particular librarian (1995:483). This happened in some cases despite the fact that they did not perceive their query to be accurately answered.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

User surveys have a long history and are undertaken all over the world. They date back to the 1920s, originating in the United States before the practice spread to other countries.

There are issues around the theory, the methodology and the place of the user in evaluating services and resources to be sorted out before the field can develop any further. Reasons for user studies are to ascertain the information behaviour and needs of users and their use of specific facilities to enable the institution to plan better and to maximise the allocation of resources.

Recent studies have focused a large amount of attention on the user in the electronic environment and how this affects the use or non-use of library resources and the choices made. There is a consciousness that the client has more choices today and a perception that libraries have rivals and face threats.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Social research has been described by Babbie & Mouton (2001: xxi) as "...the systematic observation of social life for the purpose of finding and understanding patterns in what is observed." They further state that empirical research is founded on the activities of observation and interpretation whereby a particular phenomenon is observed and meaning derived from what is observed or measured. Research is therefore concerned with furthering information about a particular subject and building a coherent body of theory.

This chapter will consider the methodological options and discuss the factors that influenced the choice of research design. We will revisit the research objectives; look at the research instruments used, the participants and the procedures used to conduct research.

### **3.2 Research methodology and design**

After deciding on a focus for a study, this researcher needed to plan her research process by selecting a research design and a research methodology. Research design is defined as the 'blueprint' in the research process (Babbie & Mouton (2001:74; Frazer & Lawley, 2000:8) while research methodology is analogous to the methods and tools employed by the researcher during the research process.

During the decision on research design, the following decisions needed to be taken: empirical versus non-empirical research, the use of primary or secondary data, and the use of textual or numeric data for analysis. Once a research

design has been chosen, methods or tools need to be decided on to execute the research design.

Babbie & Mouton (2001:49) said that three methodological paradigms hold supremacy in research today: quantitative, qualitative and participatory action. Each one can be linked to a different meta-theory. Meta-theory refers to the philosophical underpinnings that influence research theory and design.

This research project can be placed in the quantitative paradigm that attempts to quantify things so that it can be measured. Since controlling errors in the research process is very important in quantitative research, steps had to be taken to minimise them (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:49).

### **3.3 Motivating a quantitative approach**

Given the aims of the study, the context and chosen subjects, as well as the time constraints faced by the researcher, it was decided to do empirical field research, within the quantitative research paradigm.

It was decided that survey research would be the most appropriate method of data collection. Mouton defined surveys as follows: "Studies that are usually quantitative in nature and which aim to provide a broad overview of a representative sample of a large population" (2001:152). According to Mouton a survey's design classification can be categorised as empirical, based on the collection of primary data, and usually results in numeric data analysis (2001:152).

Mouton (2001:152) stated that the purpose of surveys can be exploratory (when exploring new areas), or descriptive (describing situation or events e.g. attitudinal studies), or causal (when examining the relationship between

variables). This study will be exploratory, as it will "satisfy the researcher's curiosity and desire for better understanding" (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:80). Since the researcher had little time to do fieldwork and given that it seems to be the instrument of choice in user research, it was decided to use a mail questionnaire.

According to Kunz, Rittel and Schwuchow (1977:20) questionnaires are the most frequently used instrument in empirical user research. The main advantage is that it is easy and cheap to administer and that a large group of people can be surveyed simultaneously (Kunz, Rittel and Schwuchow, 1977:20; Swenson, 2004). Questionnaires are usually classified as survey instruments within the empirical paradigm.

The unit of analysis would be the researchers working in the Parliamentary Research Unit (PRU). Babbie & Mouton (2001:84) define the unit of analysis as "...what object, phenomenon, entity, process, or event you are interested in investigating". Specifically the focus would be on their orientation toward the library as well as their actions in using the library and in conducting research.

Babbie and Mouton pointed out that researchers would need to decide on the timeline of research projects (2001:92). Research can be longitudinal or cross-sectional. Cross-sectional refers to research that analyse a phenomenon at a given point in time while longitudinal research focuses on observing a subject over a long period of time. This study investigated the information-seeking behaviour of researchers at a specific moment in time and can therefore be classified as cross-sectional.

### **3.4 Reliability and validity**

Any research project has to conform to certain standards or meet certain criteria to be judged scientific. Two of the criteria applied are reliability and validity.

Reliability refers to the fact that the measuring instrument must be able to produce similar results if applied to the same situation again (Babbie & Mouton (2001:646). They warned that reliability does not ensure accuracy (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:120). As examples of reliability problems the authors pointed out that two different researchers might code the same thing differently or that people respond differently to different researchers on the same issues. This happens because human beings are highly individual.

Measures to increase reliability include asking people only about things they know the answer to and to be clear about what you are asking. Proper training and practice will also assist with reliability (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:122). In this instance, questions were asked that researchers could reasonably be expected to answer and attempts were made to be clear on what is being asked.

Validity refers to "...the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:122)". To put it simply, does the instrument measure what it is supposed to measure? There are different types of validity: construct, face and criterion-related validity being three of them.

### **3.5 Research aims**

This study focussed on the information-seeking behaviour of the researchers of the Parliamentary Research Unit of the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa

with the aim of determining the extent to which they used the library and its resources to satisfy information needs.

Particularly the objectives were:

1. To determine what use they make of library and its resources
2. To determine what other resources they access besides the library and why
3. To determine what suggestions they have to improve current services that the library provides

### **3.6 Sampling, participants and data collection procedures**

#### **3.6.1 Recruitment and selection of participants**

This study focussed on the use of the Library of Parliament and its services. The Library delivers a service to all Members of Parliament, staff of Parliament, various categories of researchers, judges of the Supreme Court, state law advisors, Ministers and their staff and various other categories of users. It was decided to concentrate on seeking responses from the researchers of the Parliamentary Research Unit (PRU) since they form part of the Information Services Section (like the Library) and were quite familiar with the Library and its services.

Although desirable, it would have been difficult to sample Parliamentarians due to their schedule and availability for surveys. Other categories of the Library's clients' base's library usage can be described as patchy and sporadic when contrasted with the perceived consistent library use of researchers. Therefore the PRU was selected as the research participants due to the likelihood that they

would know the library services quite well and would be able to respond to all questions. Since they form part of the same section as the Library, it would also be easy to access them.

A letter was sent via e-mail to the Research Manager to solicit the participation of the researchers in the study (See Appendix 2). This communication was copied to the Chief Librarian to inform him of the project's existence. The Research Manager responded positively to the request and informed researchers that such a request has been received and encouraged them to participate. In terms of data coverage, it was decided to use all twenty-two researchers of the Parliamentary Research Unit as research participants.

Once the request was approved and the questionnaire finalised, it was sent to researchers with a covering letter. Researchers were also approached personally when the opportunity arose to encourage and remind them to respond.

### **3.6.2 The questionnaire**

A mail questionnaire was decided on due to time constraints. It was decided to develop a new questionnaire, as no existing one would quite fit the peculiarities of the parliamentary context (See Appendix 1).

A draft questionnaire was drawn up with the aims of the survey in mind. Hague (1993:106) states that mail questionnaires must be more orderly and logical than telephone or face-to-face questionnaires. He argued that there is a need to move from easy to difficult questions, that instructions must be clear and that it must be easy to complete e.g. by ticking a box. If these factors are not adhered to, response rates might be low, as people would not find it convenient to complete.

The questionnaire started with an introduction on the purpose of the study and tried to give respondents an incentive to complete it. The first questions were easier, more classification type questions and thereafter moved to behavioural and attitudinal type questions. Content was determined by the research objectives and categorised into library use, use of different types of library services and resources, use of alternative ways of finding information and sourced opinions and suggestions on how services and resources can be improved.

In the design of the questionnaire and the content and form of questions, an Internet search was executed to find other library surveys that could be used as examples. Several were found and scrutinised for questions that could be customized to suit the circumstances (for example the Rochester Institute of Technology Library Users Survey at <http://wally.rit.edu/general/usersurvey> and the University of California San Diego Libraries Graduate and Medical School Student Survey at [http://ssdc.ucsd.edu/lib\\_surv/codebooks/graduate.html](http://ssdc.ucsd.edu/lib_surv/codebooks/graduate.html) as well as the University of California San Diego Libraries Faculty Users Survey at [http://ssdc.ucsd.edu/lib\\_surv/codebooks/faculty.html](http://ssdc.ucsd.edu/lib_surv/codebooks/faculty.html) were used).

Both closed, open-ended and scaled questions were used (Frazer & Lawley, 2000:26). In terms of wording, jargon, ambiguous words, uncommon terms were avoided and questions were kept impartial to eliminate bias (Hague, 1993:64-68). Questions were kept as short as possible and the length of the questionnaire was kept to twelve pages as advocated by Frazer & Lawley, 2000:36).

The questionnaire was in electronic format and was e-mailed to researchers. They could fill it in electronically and e-mail it back or print it out and return by internal mail. Most chose to return it via e-mail but one or two chose to print it out and send it back via the post.

### **3.6.3 Validity and reliability**

Thupe (2003:48) stated that validity has two parts: that the instrument measures the concept under investigation and that it measures it accurately. Reliability referred to the obtainment of consistent results with repeated use (Whitlatch, 2000:15).

Whitlatch (2000:13) mentioned some useful questions that should be asked in terms of validity:

- a) Does the measure reflect common agreements and images associated with the concept you are attempting to measure?
- b) Do the questions measure what you intended to measure?
- c) Does the set of questions you have developed include all aspects of the concept you intended to measure?

Various steps were taken to enhance the validity of the instrument. A literature review was undertaken to understand the concept under study and to ensure that the concept under study was comprehensively covered. A pilot study was undertaken using one researcher and the research manager from the PRU and their feedback was used to refine questions to ensure that the intended answers will be obtained. Terminology was kept simple to ensure that respondents would not be confused by jargon and library terminology. Questions were worded to avoid bias through misinterpretation (Swenson, 2004) and to eliminate ambiguity (Hague, 1993:65). In order not to affect the accuracy of responses the length and sequence of questions were scrutinised. Leading questions were avoided. Other questionnaires used in this type of research were sourced and used as guides in drawing up the instrument to fit the Parliamentary library context.

In terms of reliability, respondents were only asked questions to which they should know the answers to and since there was only one coder, consistency in coding results were achieved (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:121).

#### **3.6.4 The pilot study**

After the draft questionnaire was designed, one researcher and the research manager were asked for input. They commented on the content of the questions, the structure of the questionnaire and language issues. Based on their input, certain changes were made and the questionnaire was finalised.

#### **3.6.5 The participants**

The PRU consists of twenty-two researchers housed in a building separate from the library. Their task is to provide non-partisan research facilities for the 490 Members of the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces, Parliamentary committees and senior management of Parliament.

According to their webpage, they provide research on request. Services include:

- Summaries and analyses of Bills
- Analysis and review of policy documents
- Comparative and international best practice
- Statistical information and analysis
- Budget analysis
- Background information for speeches
- Assistance with reports on public hearings
- Briefings and presentations to committees
- Constituency-based information

- Research support for national and international study tours and conferences (<http://www.parliament.gov.za>)

Respondents were given a month to respond. The response rate was not very high although reminders were sent out after two weeks. The reminders thanked those who had already responded and reminded those who still had to fill in the questionnaire. Swenson (2004) advocated the use of high-level sponsorship to induce a better response rate. This was accomplished by soliciting the research manager's assistance in urging people to participate.

Moreover efforts were made to speak to individual researchers in the course of their visits to the library or during joint meetings. All promised to fill in and return the survey. A couple of them requested that the questionnaire be resent and this was done, a method advocated by Swenson (2004). A common comment was that they were very busy as Parliament was sitting and they were unable to cope with the demand on their services. One researcher commented that he would rather print and fill it in since he found it difficult to work on the electronic version.

Only six questionnaires were returned, either via e-mail or via internal mail. It was decided to include the pilot survey as well since the researcher concerned was too busy to fill in the survey a second time and since the differences between the draft and final questionnaire was not that vast. A total of seven out of twenty-two potential responses from researchers (32%) were received.

### **3.6.6 Analysis of data**

Mouton defined data analysis as breaking up the data into "...manageable themes, patterns, trends and relationships (2001:108)". It involves looking for patterns and relationships between variables. This was done in the next chapter.

Returned questionnaires were numbered, saved and printed out. The closed questions had a limited number of responses and the chosen one could be marked with a tick or X. A blank questionnaire was employed to tally responses to the different questions and calculate percentages for each response category. The total responses to questions were calculated as well. The responses to open-ended questions could not be controlled but they could be classified into themes relating to the research questions. MsWord and Excel were used to develop graphs and tables to illustrate the discussion of results in the next chapter. Comments and suggestions were sorted and classified to discern common patterns and themes. Sometimes some of the comments and suggestions were used as quotes to illustrate points made and to give readers access to the voice of the respondents.

The researcher must also group these patterns and themes into larger pictures that can be related to existing theory as examined during the literature survey. The relationship between the findings and the existing theory were explored in the last chapter.

### **3.6.7 Limitations**

This research encountered problems in three areas: the instrument used, the low response rate and timing of research.

The questionnaire as a survey instrument has certain drawbacks and some of them emerged during this research project. One problem was that information could not be clarified where apparent contradictions or lack of clarity was detected. Furthermore the response rate was very low. This will create systematic bias, according to Kunz, Rittel & Schwuchow (1977:22), who state

that motivated respondents are more likely to respond. Furthermore, they point out that mail questionnaires often have such a low response rate that it is impossible to draw representative conclusions.

In this case, the researcher faced the same dilemma. Swenson (2004) calls this the non-return bias, which implies that the returned questionnaires will not necessarily be evenly distributed throughout the sample and those returned might reflect opinions that are not representative of the whole sample. Therefore the opinions and behaviour of those returning questionnaires might differ significantly from those that have not returned their questionnaires.

Possible other sources of bias in this case might be that:

- Respondents answered questions as they thought the researcher might wish
- Evasive answers to issues that might have negative effect on the person's working conditions could have been given
- Respondents answered questions they don't know the answer to or have no opinions on (Kunz, Rittel, Schwuchow, 1977:22).

In an ideal situation, the questionnaire will be reinforced by other research methods to verify information. Other methods can include interviews, individual or group, critical incident studies, diaries, and so forth. In this case, given the time constraints of the researcher and the respondents, it was not possible.

The timing of the project was a problem too as many researchers were too busy to fill in the questionnaire, despite promises and follow-ups.

### 3.8 Conclusion

A questionnaire was chosen as the most appropriate instrument under the circumstances. The unit of analysis was researchers attached to the PRU and the research attempted to establish the information seeking behaviour of these researchers and how that relates to their use of the Library and its resources, what other information sources they use and which suggestions they have for improving the resources and services of the Library of Parliament. The participation of all researchers was requested. Their participation was solicited with the assistance of the Research Manager.

A new instrument was designed and e-mailed to respondents after piloting. They were given a month to respond and could do so electronically to make it easier for them. Issues of reliability and validity were addressed to the best of the researcher's ability.

Both structured and unstructured questions were asked and analysed. Graphs and tables were used to illustrate the results that will be discussed in the next chapter.

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## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter will discuss the results of the survey and attempt to detect possible patterns by analysing the results.

Generally, a response rate of 50% would have been acceptable in a mail questionnaire (Kunz, Rittel & Schwuchow, 1977:22). In this case, only 7 out of a possible 22 responses were received, including the pilot survey. This makes for a 31.8% response rate that prevents the drawing of definite conclusions about the areas researched. At best, tentative patterns may emerge. Where necessary, the decimal figure will be rounded off.

### **4.2 General information about respondents**

Questions in this section were generally aimed at providing a profile of the respondents. This type of information can be used to compare and contrast different answers from different groups (Hague, 1993:34).

#### **4.2.1 Length of service**

The majority of respondents have been employed by the PRU for longer than two years. It might be concluded that they should be quite familiar with the library and its services and resources and should be able to give informed comment. This being said, one needs to keep in mind that the low response rate might bias the results.

**Table 1: Length of service**

1 year or less	14%, N=14%
2-5 years	43%, N=43%
Longer than 5 years	43%, N=43%
Total responses	100%

#### 4.2.2 Subject specialisation areas

Fifteen different areas of specialisation were listed, as indicated below. Only in Public Works and Housing did specialisation areas overlap. This severely hampers comparison of responses on various issues.

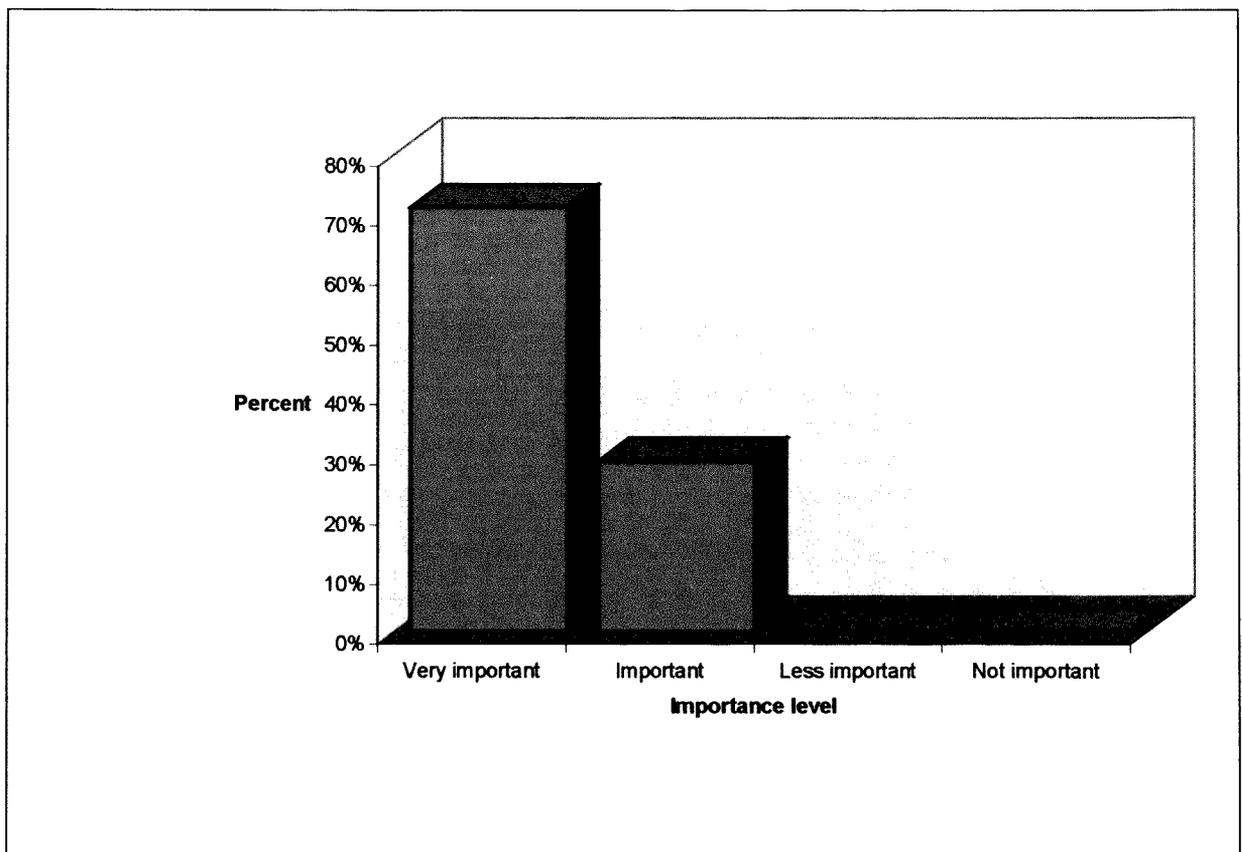
**Table 2: Areas of specialisation**

Area of specialization	Number of researchers
1. Health	1
2. Education	1
3. Housing	2
4. Management	1
5. Research management	1
6. Labour	1
7. Public service & administration	1
8. Home affairs	1
8. Trade & Industry	1
9. Public enterprises	1
10. Environment & Tourism	1
11. Sports & Recreation	1
12. Public Works	2
13. Transport	1
14. Policing	1
15. Correctional Services	1

### 4.2.3 Importance of information

All researchers indicated that information is either important (29%, N=29%) or very important (71%, N=71%) in their jobs. Given the nature of the job, this is a natural response. One could therefore anticipate that this would positively influence their perception of the Library of Parliament as an important resource and perhaps even their use of the Library. On the other hand, they might find information important, but be less inclined to using the library because of negative perceptions.

**Figure 1: Importance of information**



#### 4.2.4 Library instruction

**Table 3: Library instruction received/not**

Yes	No	Total
71% , N=71%	28.5%, N=29%	100%

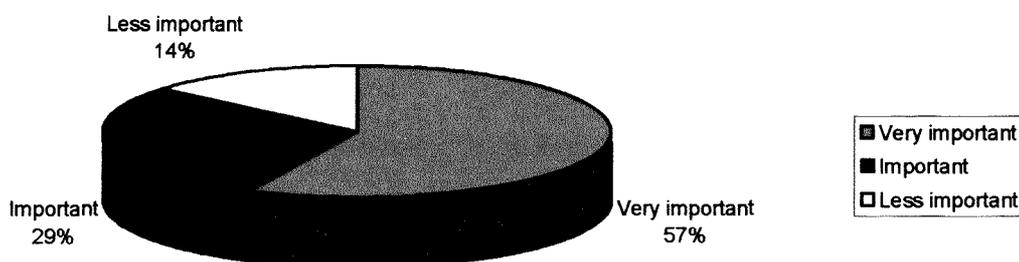
The majority of the respondents have received library instruction (71%). Forty-three percent (42.8%) of those who had library instruction found it useful. In total, 42.8% (43%) of respondents felt that they would find it useful, if offered. This total includes one person who never had instruction. Another respondent, who never received instruction, indicated that it would not be useful, if offered. Unfortunately the methodology used prohibited exploring the reasons why people would not find instruction useful.

#### 4.3 Library usage

Eighty-six percent (86%, N=86%) of respondents indicated that they make use of the Parliamentary library for finding information. Only one person indicated that he/she did not use the Library. However, the same person, in the next question, replied that the Library is an important source of information. In addition, the same person later states that he/she is either very satisfied or satisfied with the Library's services. These contradictions very likely signify that the person ticked the wrong box initially and really meant to indicate that the respondent in fact uses the Library. The inability of the researcher to verify by following up this contradiction is one of the flaws of the technique used. It would be effortless for a researcher to double-check in a face-to-face situation whether the response was intended or not. On the balance of probabilities, however, it

seems safe to assume that the respondent ticked the wrong box accidentally and that all of them make use of the Library for information.

**Figure 2: Importance of library**



In terms of the Library as an important resource to perform their jobs, 57% saw the Library as very important and 29% as an important resource. Only 14% saw the Library as less important and nobody stated that it was not important. Overall, more than 85% saw the Library as an important tool in their jobs. This finding relates to point 4.2.3, where it was suggested that there might be a relationship between the importance of information as a resource and a perception of the importance of the Library as a resource.

The respondent, who found the Library to be a less important resource, gave as an explanation the fact that Library resources often are too old or limited in his/her subject area and that resources and policy documents from government departments are very important. The individual indicated that most of the necessary resources are obtained directly from government departments or the Internet. This researcher works in the Policing and Correctional Services area. This indicates that should the Library update its resources and increase its comprehensiveness in these areas, the person could be persuaded to change his or her mind.

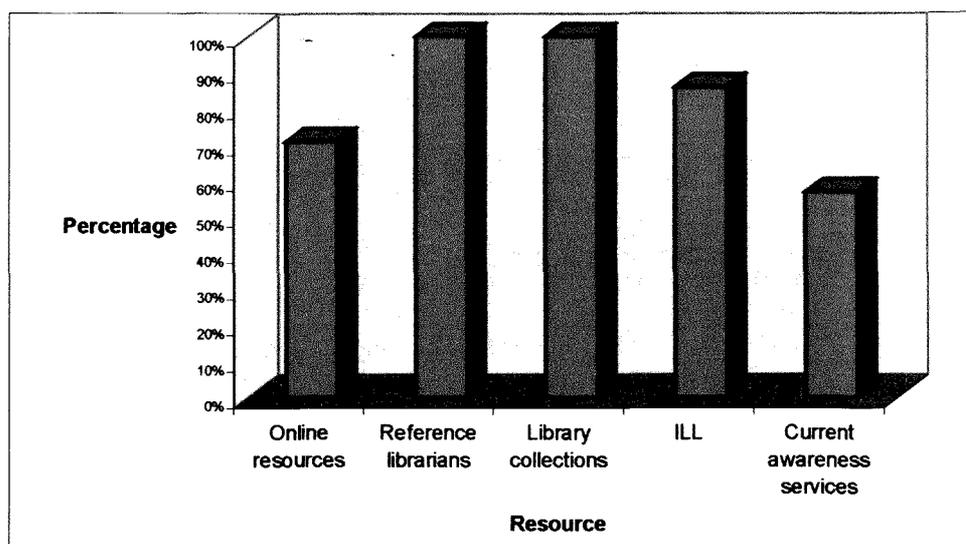
A respondent, who indicated that the Library is an important resource in his/her job, qualified this by adding that research prepared by government departments and policy documents produced by them is very important for researchers. The subject points out that in this regard the departments' parliamentary officials are important to liaise with. This researcher specialises in Trade and Industry and Public Enterprises. Furthermore, this researcher recommends that the Library establish links with the parliamentary officials if it desires to better its service.

A general question was included to measure overall satisfaction with Library services before moving into specific areas. As can be seen in the table below, most respondents were satisfied (71%) and one person (14%) very satisfied. Only one person (14%) indicated that he/she was dissatisfied. This dissatisfaction was qualified with the comment that the service from the reference librarians is satisfactory, but that the stock was outdated and items wanted were often missing from the shelves. The person also commented that inter-library loans took too long to be able to fill the gaps. This perception would influence frequency of resource use and the type of resources chosen. It would also influence how the Library is rated in terms of its importance as a resource.

**Table 4: Satisfaction with library services**

1. Very satisfied	14%, N=14%
2. Satisfied	71%, N=71%
3. Dissatisfied	14%, N=14%
4. Very dissatisfied	0%
Total	100%

In terms of frequency of Library use, 57% state that they use it at least once a week while 43% use it once every two to three weeks. Respondents had to indicate which library resources they utilised and the results are illustrated in the figure below:

**Figure 3: Resources used**

All draw on the reference librarians and the library collection while a substantial number (71%) utilise the online resources via the Intranet. Inter-library loan facilities are employed by 86% while current awareness services have the lowest usage (57%).

Respondents were requested to rate the importance of the different services above:

**Table 5: Importance of various services**

	Very important	Important	Less important	Not important	Total responses	No response	Total
1. Online resources	57%, N=80%	14%, N=20%	0%	0%	71%	29%	100%
2. Reference librarians	86%, N=85,7%	0%	14%, N=14%	0%	100	0%	100%
3. Library collections	43%, N=43%	28.5%, N=28,5 %	28.5%, N=28.5%	0%	100%	0	100%
4. Inter-library loans	14%, N=17%	29%, N=33%	43%, N=50%	0%	86%	14%	100%
5. Current awareness services	28.5%, N=40%	43%, N=60%	0%	0%	71%	29%	100%

All but one person perceived the reference librarians to be very important to them. The respondent qualified this response by writing that the answer needs to be seen in the context of the Parliamentary schedule which is extremely pressurised and by stating that although the person would like to make more use of the Library, its resources and staff, it is often impossible due to short deadlines. Therefore the person makes a lot of use of the Internet or government websites to find information.

Online resources were the second most important resource with 57% rating them very important and 14% rating it important, a total positive response of 71%. Twenty-eight percent did not rate this service and it is unclear what their feelings are on this subject.

Library collections seemed to be less important with only 43% rating it very important and 29% rating it important. That makes a total of 72% that finds it important. Twenty-eight percent did not find the library collection important. However, all respondents answered this question, while not everyone rated the importance of online services. Therefore it is difficult to conclude what the real rating would be if all participants had rated the importance of online resources.

The majority of respondents (43%) did not find inter-library loan services important, yet earlier 86% indicated that they make use of inter-library loans. This might relate to the fact that it is seen as too slow to be of use, as indicated earlier by one respondent. This observation is reinforced by the comments following this question on how to improve the services. One respondent mentions that a faster inter-library loan service will be of assistance.

Current awareness services are seen as important by 43% and very important by 29%. This makes a total of 72% that value the service while 57% earlier indicated that they use the service. The remaining 28% of respondents did not reply to this question. Their non-response on this question hampers drawing a conclusion or comment.

Other comments on how to improve the listed services include an electronic circulation system and training in online resource use. A respondent also commented that access to academic journals is important. The currency of the collection seems to be an important issue. One researcher stated the following

wish in terms of currency: *"The service can perhaps be improved by having access to international journals and articles that are current and topical"*.

Furthermore a plea was made for a more proactive service in terms of specific programmes prioritised by the government in terms of its service delivery targets. The respondent states: *"The library services could be more proactive in the services offered. This could relate to the provision of information as it pertains to the delivery of specific services of a department or around specific programmes (which has been prioritised by Government) or as information relates to the budget, etc..."*

On the question of additional library services, a suggestion was made that librarians should inform researchers of upcoming conferences and workshops. One researcher would like the Library to teach Parliamentarians the intricacies of "information gathering" processes to enhance their understanding. This seems to reflect more on the complicated relationship between researcher and client than anything the Library should address.

#### 4.4 Online resources and databases

**Table 6: Use of Library online resources (Butterworths/Lexis-Nexis; Sabinet. Etc)**

	%	Total responses	No response	Total
1. 2 or more times a week	0%	0%		
2. Once a week	14%, N=14%	14%	86%	100%
3. Once every 2 or 3 weeks	14%, N=14%	14%	86%	100%
4. Once a month	14%, N=14%	14%	86%	100%
5. Once a quarter or less	42.8%, 43%	43%	57%	100%
6. Never	14%, N=14%	14%	86%	100%

A 100% response rate was received on this item. Most of the respondents (43%) used the online resources once a quarter or less. Reasons given were that it was difficult to use or that a password was requested to access a particular database. One respondent, who indicated that he/she never used the resource, suggested that training in online database usage would be useful. One respondent indicated that he/she uses the online catalogue, but was not familiar enough with the other online resources to use them. Another respondent, who uses it once a week, states that usage depends on the nature of the research request.

Respondents were equally divided on the question regarding ease of use of electronic resources (43% yes and 43% no). Comments on how to improve the service touched on training in the more complicated databases, improving the response speed of downloading and addressing password difficulties. Criticism of the online catalogue included that it was time-consuming to use it and that it was not user-friendly. Respondents feel that they do not have the time to use it and would rather be doing something more urgent.

#### **4.5 Reference services**

This section's purpose was to measure the use and attitude towards the reference services section of the library. The reference librarians seek information on request using various databases and through contacting organisations and government departments. This information must be delivered within the deadline stipulated by the client. Forty-three percent (43%) of respondents say that they make use of the reference librarians once a week while 57% state that they use them once every two three weeks. A 100% response rate was achieved to this question. One commented that the frequency of use depended on the nature of the request. All of them make use of the service.

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the service. A 100% response rate was achieved to this question. As can be seen below, all were either satisfied or very satisfied with the exception of one. In the comment section this dissatisfaction was qualified with the comment that due to the lack of an electronic circulation system, one might have to stand in a queue. Therefore the dissatisfaction expressed had nothing to do with the service delivered, but rather with the infrastructure of the Library.

**Table 7: Satisfaction with reference services**

	%	Total responses	No response	Total
1. Very satisfied	29%, N=29%	29%	71%	100%
2. Satisfied	57%, N=57%	57%	43%	100%
3. Less satisfied	14%, N=14%	14%	86%	100%
4. Dissatisfied	0%	100%	0%	100%

Other comments point to the fact that skills levels between librarians vary and that some librarians are seen to be going out of their way to provide the information while others are perceived to be less helpful. This respondent further commented that it would be frustrating to rely on the assistance of a librarian if the person cannot find the information or provide irrelevant information. This frustration is understandable given the tight deadlines for research products.

Suggestions for improving the service include an electronic circulation system and updated information products. One suggestion was that librarians receive training in what the specific needs of Parliament is in terms of topical issues and currency of information and that they work with researchers in updating information products in certain areas e.g. subject files on peace and security which the person sees as an ongoing issue.

## 4.6 Library collections

This section aimed to obtain information on how researchers use the book and journal collection of the library and their opinions on the subject.

Frequency of use ranges between once a week (28.5%), every two to three weeks (28.5%) and once a month (43%). The comment was once again made that the nature of the request dictates the usage of the collection. Respondents were requested to comment on the strength of the collection in their areas of specialisation. Most of them (57%) found it adequate for their needs but 28.5% replied that it did not meet their needs. A positive comment by one respondent was that *"...The library has been able to find the majority of information I have requested either in-house or through inter-library loan."* Someone else commended the inter-library loans section: *" The inter-library loans service is useful. Reference librarians have also assisted in obtaining books and materials from Government departments and other agencies in the fields relevant to my work at my request."*

However, there were a few suggestions for improvement. Suggestions to make the collection more relevant include a request that researchers be involved in collection development, speeding up the acquisitions process, investing in more government and policy publications and improving the journal collection and international coverage in certain areas. These areas were not specified, but the respondents' interest field is policing and correctional services. Furthermore, it was remarked that the Library has discontinued certain journal titles without consultation and without the respondent being able to ascertain reasons for the decision taken.

Researchers were asked what they did when they could not find relevant information in the Library. Their responses as illustrated below indicate that most of

them (86%) use inter-library loans or the Internet (71%). A significant number (43%) use other libraries or personal contacts (43%).

**Table 8: Alternative information sources**

	%	Total responses	No response	Total
1. Make an inter-library loan request	85.7%, N=86%	86%	14%	100%
2. Go to another library	42.8%, N=43%	43%	57%	100%
3. Use the Internet	71.4%, N=71%	71%	29%	100%
4. Use personal contacts	42.8%, N=43%	43%	57%	100%
5. Other. Please specify				

#### **4.7 Internet usage**

This section quizzed the researchers on Internet usage by attempting to find out how often they do Internet searches and how useful they find it. All of them (100%) use the Internet two or more times a week. Most of them (86%) frequently find what they want while 14% always find what is needed on the Internet.

One can see that they use the Internet more than they use the online resources. Earlier it was indicated that 43% use the online resources once a quarter or less. Only 14% use online resources every week. The reasons could be that, as indicated in 4.4, they find it difficult to use, they have problems with password access and they do not have the training to use the resources properly. One researcher confesses that unfamiliarity with online resources influences her behaviour. While they struggle to use the online catalogue and online resources,

they perceive the Internet as user-friendly and 86% say that they frequently find what they need on the Internet.

Furthermore, all of them use the Internet twice or thrice a week, but only 43% uses the reference librarians once a week, although 86% see the reference service as very important. The fact that they feel they can perform their own searches, the tight deadlines they face and the distance they must walk to the Library might influence their behaviour.

#### **4.8 Other sources of information**

This section, together with the above one, was included to see what competition the Library faces as a service provider. When asked how often they make use of other libraries, 57% indicated that they seldom did and 43% indicated that they never did. A 100% response rate was achieved on this item. One person commented that when she/he did use other libraries, it was for personal or academic reasons. This person further commented that the Library should take a broader view of what is relevant, move beyond a collection that focuses on the legislative and oversight functions of Parliament and attempt to cover the literature, biography and social history of South Africa.

On the question of whether or not they use personal contacts for information, 43% indicated that they frequently use personal contacts while a total of 57% indicated that they seldom or never use personal contacts. A 100% response rate was achieved on this item.

**Table 9: Use of personal contacts**

1. Always	0%	Total responses	No response	Total
2. Frequently	42.8%, N=43%	43%	57%	100%
3. Seldom	42.8%, N=43%	43%	57%	100%
4. Never	14%, N=14%	14%	86%	100%

In the comments section to this question, it was stressed once again that the Internet and the government departments were key sources of information, as in the section on library usage. In terms of information they consider important and why they use personal contacts include:

*"Our clients often want information which is very up to date, which has not been published, and is not in the public domain. The only way to get it, is to spend time on the phone – a time consuming and frustrating process." And "...Latest research information in particular areas, identification of civil society initiatives in an area etc i.e. information which is not yet available in the public domain. And "... Information that lives in the departments".*

This might explain why the Library and the reference staff are used to a lesser extent. If they perceive that the Library cannot assist them in finding the specific information they need and that they can only access it through personal contacts and from government departments, they will not use the Library. This might also be related to the frustration with the library collection as not being up to date and limited. If they need information that is not yet published or very current, acquisition processes in the Library might be too slow to be of real use to them.

On the question of how the Library can assist in this regard, one comment was: *"Library can also begin to identify contacts in specific departments so that when*

*they do not have the information they can also know where to find it. This will assist when researchers have tight deadlines or may not have personal contacts in a specific area."*

Therefore it seems that researchers use contacts in government departments and in institutions to access unpublished information and very recent information.

#### **4.9 General comments**

The last section of the questionnaire attempted to obtain general comments on how to improve Library services to research staff. One proposal was to hold quarterly meetings between the library and the research staff to sort out problem areas. Another suggestion was to improve the collection. In terms of electronic resources, there was a request for an introduction to online resources. A further comment was unclear: "... *The library could be of much assistance if they could make available their search engines and websites to researchers that they are unable to explore.*" One of the limitations of a mail questionnaire is that clarifying this comment is impossible.

A rather pessimistic final comment from one researcher indicates once again the nature of research within the parliamentary context and the pressures researchers face: "... *I think the library is trying its best to deliver a quality services with inadequate resources. It would be great if you have the staff to assist us in obtaining info and material from government departments in the time required but you don't. It would also be great if clients do not have unrealistic expectations re the delivery of information but they do. So it would not serve any purpose to make suggestions while the current situation continues unchanged.*"

#### **4.10 Conclusion**

It needs to be stressed once again that with such a low response rate it is difficult to draw final conclusions. At the very best, certain trends or patterns can be pointed out but these would have to be confirmed with a more representative survey.

There is no doubt that information is important in the work of a researcher and that most (or all) of them use the Library. The highly pressurised environment they work in influences their search paths and information-seeking behaviour. The nature of the requests they receive determine the frequency of library resources and services as well. It has been commented, for example, that when time is short they prefer to do their own searches on the Internet and use the available time to do other things. Therefore the access to the Internet and the ease of use of this tool contribute to the choices they make when deciding on a search path. The type of information they seek will also influence behaviour, where unpublished information will be sought through personal contacts or through government websites.

Reference librarians, library collections and online resources seem to be the most popular resources. Reference librarians are seen as a very important resource and there seems to be a high degree of satisfaction with most of them. Some respondents requested training in online resources.

Frustrations with the library collection seem to be significant. Complaints about the age of the collection, the limitations in certain areas of specialisation, with gaps in international coverage and with items missing from the shelves have been noted. Unpublished information and highly current information relating to government programmes, civil society initiatives and the budget have been highlighted as crucial to the performance of their duties.

Lastly the manual circulation system is seen as time-consuming and frustrating and negatively influences the satisfaction with library services.

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## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the findings of the study will be summarised and discussed in the context of the research questions to see what conclusions can be drawn.

Furthermore, the applications of the research and recommendations for further study will be considered. Since only seven responses were received out of a possible twenty-two, it must be repeated that only tentative patterns can be discerned.

### **5.2 Summary of findings**

For review purposes the original research objectives are stated again:

1. To determine what use researchers make of the library and its resources.
2. To determine what other resources they access besides the library and why.
3. To determine what suggestions they have to improve current services that the library provides.

#### **5.2.1 Researchers' use of the Library of Parliament**

One of the original questions posed that arose out of the research objectives related to the use the researchers make of the Library. The following patterns can be discerned in terms of the respondents' library use:

Most of the respondents have been working in the PRU for more than two years and information is seen as an important resource by all of them. Given the

nature of their work, this is hardly surprising. What's more, most of them see the Library as an important resource.

Researchers have tight deadlines that influence the manner and frequency in which they use library services. Furthermore the nature of the request influences their use of the library. Since they face tight deadlines, they sometimes prefer to search the Internet or government websites rather than waste time consulting a librarian. In line with the findings of Lui and Yang (2004:31) online resources play such an important role that it is actually the preferred route of accessing information. The prominence given to the Internet in this study, is in line with the general worldwide trend.

The frustrations with electronic information systems that the researchers encounter and report are mentioned in other studies as well. Problems they encountered include password requests by the system, slow downloads and lack of training in how to use the databases. Access problems to electronic resources were cited also in Xia (2003:65) and the author urges libraries to improve interfaces to databases and to decrease the number of links needed to access resources. This concurs with the findings of Lui and Yang (2004:31) that users find library resources difficult to use.

Other studies reported complaints about lack on instructions on how to use online resources, complaints about the poor design of library websites and lack of time to use online resources (Jankowska, 2004:58). The last complaint featured prominently in the discourse of the PRU researchers who continuously face time constraints.

The preferences of researchers to do their own searches should not be seen as a reflection on the library, but a natural progression due to developments in technology. There are still roles to be played by library staff. An example is

training in electronic resources. Kelley and Orr (2003:189) reported that students prefer full text databases this study found that they need training in how to use it.

It should not be viewed as a threat to the library, but rather a way in which users augment existing services. Van Zijl and Gericke (2001) , for example, established that artists use various ways of finding information including conducting their own searches, browsing, asking librarians or searching the Internet, in that order.

The second question concerned the resources they use and how often they use it. Most of the PRU researchers are satisfied with the Library's services and all of them use the reference librarians and the library collection. There has been comment in the literature about the lack of critical faculties of users and this is one reason cited by some writers for their reluctance to employ such subjective means for the evaluation of services (Dalton, 1992:89). Kemoni (2002:75) found that even in a non-computerised environment, users would have positive opinions on electronic resources.

The Internet is used by all of them one or more times a week. This finding is in line with Kelley and Orr's finding that 77% of students at The University of Maryland College use the Internet frequently to find information (2003:186). In the case of Parliament the percentage that relies on the Internet is even higher. This study found that users make use of the Internet more frequently than they use the Library, reference librarians or other online resources.

This use of the Internet is in line with the study of Liu and Yang (2004:30) who found that fast and easy access to resources played a big role in the information-seeking behaviour of distance education students, that they preferred electronic resources and that half of them saw the Internet as their primary information

source. Kelley and Orr (2003:188) echoed their findings that users prefer online resources and make far less use of the physical library if they have alternative access. In their study they found that more than 80% used electronic services offered by the University of Maryland College (Kelley & Orr, 2003:187).

Xia (2003:61) too found that users identified ease of use and convenience important criteria in users' preferences for services. Kunz et al (1977:60) too refer to empirical research demonstrating that users' information seeking behaviour is influenced by ease of access and that they frequently tolerate lack of information rather than exerting themselves beyond a certain level.

The third question asked related to where they find service delivery inadequate. Dissatisfaction relates to the age of the library's stock and the library collection that does not meet some of the respondents' needs. Other stock-related problems include items missing from the shelves, the lack of an electronic circulation system, and the slowness of the interlibrary loans system. A slow inter-library loans system implies that it cannot quite compensate for the deficiencies of the outdated or limited stock. This reliance on rapid inter-library loan facilities is echoed by the study of Siddiqui (1999) who stated that the turnaround time of inter-library loan requests is an important indicator of success to the user.

The online catalogue is seen as not user-friendly and that prevents use. Xia's study (2003:62) found that improving the online catalogue was the highest priority for all users in that specific study. Xia's study found that this dissatisfaction would not prevent users from using the catalogue since they have to rely on it. One can assume that a similar pattern would emerge here at the Parliamentary library, where people might not find the catalogue easy to use but would be forced to search it for information due to time constraints.

Kelley and Orr (2003:189) too found that students at Maryland University College require a comprehensive online catalogue. In the same vein, Jankowska too reported that 65% of faculty members requested improvements to the online catalogue and access to electronic journals (2004:59). Like these studies, a comment from the PRU in this study was that researchers were unsure about the comprehensiveness of the Library catalogue.

Therefore the status of the online catalogue is something that should be publicised then even though we have taken for granted that users know this. It again reflects on the different priorities of librarians and users and that librarians should not make assumptions on what users regard as important.

### **5.2.2 Alternative sources of information**

Here questions were posed relating to the rival information providers and the functions they perform for researchers that the Library cannot.

Like the Jankowska (2002:59) study, researchers at the PRU indicated that they need access to publications by government departments as well as information that is still unpublished due to its currency. In her study, she found that 52% of faculty members wanted government documents included in the library collection. At Parliament, researchers all use the Internet to access government department websites and use search engines to find what they need. Internet searches are done by all of them more than once a week. All of them say they frequently or always find what they want. This satisfaction with their own search strategies concurs with the study by Schwartz (2002) that found that end-users are generally satisfied with their search results although they might have missed many useful resources.

Personal contacts are used by a significant number of researchers to find information. This echoes the study by Romanos de Tiratel (2000) who wrote that scholars at the University of Buenos Aires relied on colleagues and specialised literature for research projects. Furthermore Rose's study on the information-seeking behaviour of art historians found that the other information sources they relied on besides the library were what she calls "the invisible college" or network of colleagues when current information is needed (2002:36). Van Zijl and Gericke (2001) established that contacting friends and colleagues was one of the ways visual artists access information. This echoes the models of Paisley (Kunz, et al, 1977:12) and Allen (Kunz, et al, 1977:13) who view the user as part of many different circles. These include the 'invisible college', the formal information system, or as part of an organisation that will influence his or her information seeking behaviour. Kunz and his co-authors feel that in designing information systems there should be an awareness of the fact that the formal information system is part of a larger network or networks and that personal communication between people who have similar problems should be facilitated by the system. (1977:63).

The personal contacts of PRU researchers can therefore be seen as an extension of this process of establishing networks that can be called on when required. Therefore, if users need information that the formal information system cannot provide, they will activate a network or path appropriate to the occasion. It is for the Library to decide whether they choose to see these paths as rivals or complementary sources.

### **5.2.3 Suggestions for improvement of services**

The last question asked related to the suggestions they have for improving services and resources and will be dealt with in this section.

Regarding the collection, suggestions for improvement included updating the collection, concentrating on building relationships with departmental contacts to improve access to current and unpublished information and keeping track of significant civil society initiatives that relate to parliamentary work.

Some of them believed that collection developments efforts can be improved by consulting with researchers on how to build the collection, by concentrating on government publications and consulting with researchers on which journals to retain.

As stated before, 71% found electronic resources important. As Xia (2003:67) says, users are now expecting to be provided with digital services. Suggestions for improvement include an electronic circulation system, training in online database usage, eliminating password restrictions on databases, and more bandwidth to increase the speed of downloads. The desire for training in specifically online resources echo the findings of Kelley & Orr (2003:182) where students indicated that the training should focus on the use of online resources, specifically Web-based instruction in online resources usage and the online catalogue.

This is not surprising, given the increasing importance of online resources to users. Contact between the Library and researchers are not only seen as important in terms of collection development, but also in terms of sorting out any problems that might exist. Therefore a suggestion was made that quarterly meetings between the library and the researchers be held.

Skills of reference staff were a point of concern for some. It was suggested that their skills could be improved by training them in what are topical issues for Parliament and that they work with researchers in building up information in those areas. Reference work in Parliament is somewhat different from reference

work in other libraries in that the quality will not just be judged on a single correct answer, but on the range and depth of resources provided in response to a request for information. Deadlines play a large role as well as the ability to be creative and resourceful in sourcing little-known information from printed, online and personal contacts.

Therefore the so-called 55% rule cited by Jardine (1995) will not provide an adequate judgment. The suggestion that reference staff establish bonds with parliamentary departmental liaison officers has great merit in this context as well as the suggestion that they learn to respond to topical issues debated in Parliamentary Houses and in committees. There is merit too in librarians establishing close ties with the researchers. All of the above measures will ensure that they understand the context of information requests and can respond with the depth and relevance required.

One researcher indicated that some reference librarians are more helpful than others and more efficient. A conclusion that can be drawn is that some researchers, or all of them, might have a preference for certain reference staff. This might lead to an increased workload for some and less work for others. This needs further investigation since if it is true, it would be a point of concern. The research of Baker and Field (2000) demonstrated that the behaviour of reference staff have a significant influence on whether users are satisfied with the service or not. Even when respondents were not satisfied with the answer to their query, 53% were satisfied with the librarian, and 47% of those who felt they were not treated well, would not return to the same staff member. The study concluded that behaviour was more important to clients than knowledge of the topic. Librarians who showed a willingness to assist and listen were viewed more favourably. Dalton's study further demonstrates that users distinguish between technical skills of librarians and their interpersonal skills (1992:100) and that subjective factors play a role in perceived satisfaction.

Finally the study of Jardine had similar outcomes. The study concluded that the accuracy of the service is not the only factor that determines client satisfaction but that behavioural characteristics play a crucial role in users' perceptions and willingness to return (Jardine, 1995:484).

### **5.3 Practical applications of research**

The patterns that emerge from this study could be used to improve certain aspects of library services. The pressured environment and tight deadlines of researchers need to be taken into account when planning services. Their preferences in terms of information provision must determine the channels that will most effectively service them. Since they like online resources these need to be made user-friendly.

It seems that the way decisions are made regarding the collection of library material need to change. In general unpublished material seems to be very important. Researchers need to be consulted on what is important and librarians need to establish contact within government departments to improve their access to current, unpublished information that would materially assist researchers with information to meet their tight deadlines.

One more important step would be to identify and establish contact with the departmental liaison officers stationed at Parliament who could be helpful in sourcing information from departments. Librarians must not see these contacts as rivals, but view it from the perspective that the user is embedded in various information systems and can make use of different search paths to find information. The Library should therefore assist in enhancing these links if it really wants to provide better services to researchers. As Kunz, Rittel and

Schwuchow mentioned: "Rather the establishment of such links should be considered a very important purpose of the service under design (1977:63)."

It seems that librarians will have to be more proactive in dealing with the needs of researchers. Here efforts must be made to identify civil society initiatives that will have an important impact on the programme of Parliament, identify government service delivery priorities relating to the oversight function of Parliament and generally consult with researchers on the type of information they would want the Library to keep current. In total, librarians and researchers need to build a closer relationship to ensure that the appropriate resources and contacts are concentrated on. Perhaps a regular meeting schedule to improve communication and feedback needs to be investigated.

The frustrations with the Library's online resources need to be addressed by making it more accessible and by instituting a training programme for those who need it. The library needs an electronic circulation system that will not only speed up transactions but also assist in tracing whether items are out on loan when they cannot be located on the shelves. A proper shelf-reading schedule need to be instituted to minimise frustrations with misplaced items, and there is a need to consider ways of speeding up inter-library loans to properly complement the library collection.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for further research**

A truer reflection of the attitude of the researchers toward library services is needed. The word 'truer' refers to the fact that the findings have been biased by the inadequacies of the sample of respondents. Therefore this study needs to be complemented with more research to verify, disprove or complement the patterns that emerged from this study.

Firstly, the timing of such a project needs to improve. The parliamentary programme dictates the schedule of researchers and will influence their level of participation enormously. In this case, there was a clear willingness to participate, but due to the fact that Parliament was in session, and that this influenced their availability, participation was compromised.

Secondly the kind of research would have to change. Clearly, this research project demonstrates the limitation of the questionnaire. Results would improve by selecting more qualitative methodology (Wilson, 1981) like interviews, focus groups, observation, and so on. Moreover, a combination of questionnaires and interviews could also have produced a more representative sample to analyse.

Thirdly the PRU are not the only group of researchers in Parliament and for that matter, the researchers are not the only clients of the Library. As indicated by Talbot, Lowell & Martin (1998) different user groups have different needs and assumptions are dangerous. One would have to sample different groups using different techniques and with sensitivity to their work schedule and the parliamentary programmes to get a true reflection of what the different needs and expectations are.

Particular attention needs to be the following areas of research: The library collection and its strengths and weaknesses, online resources and users' preferences related to that, the services provided by reference librarians and exploring the weaknesses related to these crucial areas. Furthermore, user training, its focus, timing and kind need to be researched. These seem to be crucially important areas for researchers and will enable the Library to pinpoint exactly where efforts need to be concentrated if it is to remain relevant to the needs of its users and to recruit more clients.

## 5.5 Conclusion

This research project is but a preliminary investigation into the information seeking behaviour of the researchers of the PRU. Furthermore, the PRU is only one component of clients of the Library of Parliament. Information seeking behaviour gives an indication of information needs and this investigation, with all its shortcomings, can be considered a step in the direction of ascertaining what the Library needs to do to remain relevant to users' needs. This research indicates that there are similarities between the behaviour of the researchers and the patterns found by other research initiatives that indicates a preference for electronic information and remote access. It was found that researchers undertake more Internet searches than using the library or the reference staff. The preference for electronic resources implies that the user instruction programme needs to be adapted and electronic resources must become user-friendlier. The manual circulation system was mentioned as a source of frustration.

The library collection and the way it is being built also present problems of relevancy to needs. Unpublished information and information sourced directly from government departments and civil society initiatives are crucial to the work of researchers and attempts must be made to build links that will provide access to this type of information.

Ways need to be found to address these shortcomings as soon as possible and a closer working relationship with all users will enable the Library to become more receptive to their needs and to maximise resources.

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**APPENDIX ONE: QUESTIONNAIRE****Library of Parliament  
User evaluation survey**

*Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey. I am currently studying towards a Master's Degree in Information and Knowledge Management. As part of my studies, I chose to do research on the information-seeking behaviour of researchers attached to Parliament.*

*The purpose of the study is twofold: it will contribute toward attaining my degree and your responses can be used to improve the level of service of the Library of Parliament, and developing new services tailored to your needs. There is no need to state your name as responses are treated as confidential.*

**A. General information**

1. Approximately how long have you been employed in your current job?  
(Please tick the appropriate box)

1 year or less	<input type="checkbox"/>
2-5 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
Longer than 5 years	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. What is your subject area or areas in your current job? (Please list them)

1.	<input type="text"/>
2.	<input type="text"/>
3.	<input type="text"/>
4.	<input type="text"/>

3. How important is general access to information to success in your day-to-day job? *(Please tick the appropriate box)*

1. Very important	
2. Important	
3. Less important	
4. Not important	

4. Have you received instruction in how to use the library and its resources? *(Please tick the appropriate box)*

Yes	No

5. If you replied yes to the previous question, did the instruction assist you in using the Library's resources?

Yes	No

6. If your answer to Question A (4) was 'no", please explain why you did not find it useful:

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.....

7. If you never received instruction, would you find it useful, if offered? *(Please tick the appropriate box)*

Yes	No

## B. Library usage

1. Do you make use of the Library of Parliament for work-related information?  
*(Please tick the appropriate box)*

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. If you replied yes to the last question, please state how important the library is in terms of performing your job. *(Please tick the most appropriate box)*

1. Very important	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Important	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Less important	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Not important	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. If you marked responses 3 or 4 in Question B (2) above, please explain why you do not regard the library as an important resource in your job.

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4. If you marked responses 3 or 4 in Question B (2) above, what can the Library do to become more important to you in performing your job?

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4. In general, how satisfied are you with the quality of services of the Library of Parliament. *(Please tick the appropriate box)*

1. Very satisfied	
2. Satisfied	
3. Dissatisfied	
4. Very dissatisfied	

5. If you are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, please explain why:

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6. If you do make use of the Library of Parliament, how often do you contact or visit the Library? *(Please tick the most appropriate box)*

1. 2 or more times a week	
2. Once a week	
3. Once every 2 to 3 weeks	
4. Once a month	
5. Once a quarter or less	

7. If you make use of the Library of Parliament, please indicate which of the following resources and services you make use of? *(Please tick all relevant boxes)*

1. Online electronic resources via the Parliamentary website	
2. Reference librarians	
3. Library collections e.g. books/journals, etc	
4. Inter-library loans	
5. Current awareness services - GCIS newspaper clippings, TOC (Table of Contents service)	

8. How important are the resources and services you ticked above to your work?  
 (Please tick the appropriate box)

	Very important	Important	Less important	Not important
1. Online resources				
2. Reference librarians				
3. Library collections				
4. Inter-library loans				
5. Current awareness services				

9. Do you have any suggestions for improving any of the above-mentioned services to make your work easier?

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10. Are there any other services you would like us to deliver, besides the ones mentioned above?

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### C. Online resources and databases

1. How often do you make use of the Library's online electronic resources via the Parliamentary web site, (Butterworths/Lexis-Nexis, Sabinet, etc.)? *(Please tick the appropriate box)*

1. 2 or more times a week	
2. Once a week	
3. Once every 2 or 3 weeks	
4. Once a month	
5. Once a quarter or less	
6. Never	

2. If you marked 5 or 6 in Question C (1) above, please explain why you seldom or never make use of electronic resources:

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*(If you do not make use of the electronic resources, please skip the following 2 questions)*

3. Do you find the online electronic sources easy to use?

Yes	
No	

4. Do you have any suggestions to improve the electronic resources? If so, please state:

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5. How often do you make use of the online library catalogue? (Please tick the appropriate box):

1. 2 or more times a week	
2. Once a week	
3. Once every 2 or 3 weeks	
4. Once a month	
5. Once a quarter or less	
6. Never	

6. If you marked 5 or 6 in Question C (5) above, please explain why you seldom or never make use of the online catalogue:

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*If you do not use the online catalogue, please skip the following 2 questions)*

7. Do you find the online catalogue easy to use?

Yes	
No	

8 Do you have any suggestions to improve the online catalogue? If so, please state your suggestions:

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### D. Reference services

1. How often do you make use of the reference service librarians? *(Please tick the appropriate box)*

1. 2 or more times a week	
2. Once a week	
3. Once every 2 or 3 weeks	
4. Once a month	
5. Once a quarter or less	
6. Never	

2. If you marked 5 or 6 in Question D (1), please state the reasons why:

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*(If you do not make use of the reference services, please skip the following 2 questions)*

3. If you make use of the reference librarians, how satisfied are you with their services? *(Please tick the appropriate box)*

1. Very satisfied	
2. Satisfied	
3. Less satisfied	
4. Dissatisfied	

4. If you marked 3 or 4 in Question D (3), please explain why you are not satisfied:

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5. If you have any thoughts on how their services can be improved, please state:

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**E. Library collections**

1. How often do you make use of the Library collection of books and journals?  
*(Please tick the appropriate box)*

1. 2 or more times a week	
2. Once a week	
3. Once every 2 or 3 weeks	
4. Once a month	
5. Once a quarter or less	
6. Never	

2. If you marked 5 or 6 in Question E (1) above, please explain why:

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*(If you do not make use of collection, please skip the following 2 questions)*

3. Do you find the collection in your field of interest in the Library strong enough to meet your needs? *(Please tick the appropriate box)*

Yes	
No	

4. Do you have any suggestions for improving the collection to make it more relevant to your work?

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4. If you cannot find information relevant to your purpose in the Library's collection, what do you do? *Please tick the appropriate boxes)*

1. Make an inter-library loan request	
2. Go to another library	
3. Use the Internet	
4. Use personal contacts	
5. Other. Please specify	

## F. Internet usage

1. How often do you do your own Internet searches for material? *(Please tick the appropriate box)*

1. 2 or more times a week	
2. Once a week	
3. Once every 2 or 3 weeks	
4. Once a month	
5. Once a quarter or less	
6. Never	

2. How often do you find what you need on the Internet? *(Please tick the appropriate box)*

1. Always	
2. Frequently	
3. Seldom	
4. Never	

**G. Other sources of information**

1. How often do you have to make use of other libraries to find work-related information? *(Please tick the appropriate box)*

1. Always	
2. Frequently	
3. Seldom	
4. Never	

2. If you marked 1 or 2 in Question G (1), please indicate why you often need to make use of other libraries:

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3. If you marked 1 or 2 in Question G (1), are there actions the Library of Parliament can take to lessen your need to use other libraries?

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4. Do you use your personal contacts to find information? *(Please tick the appropriate box)*

1. Always	
2. Frequently	
3. Seldom	
4. Never	

*If you seldom or never use personal contacts, please skip the next two questions.*

5. If you marked 1 or 2 in Question 6 (4) above, please explain what you use your contacts for:

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6. What, if anything, can the library do to lessen your reliance on personal contacts for information?

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**H. General comments**

1. In general, how can we improve our service to you?

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Thank you for helping us to improve the quality of services.

Please return the completed questionnaire to:

Barbara Swartz  
Library of Parliament

## APPENDIX TWO: E-MAIL TO RESEARCH MANAGER

Dear Ms Rustin

I am currently studying towards my Masters degree in Information and Knowledge Management at Stellenbosch University.

Completing a research project is part of the requirements of the degree. I have chosen to research the information-seeking behaviour of the researchers attached to your unit. This involves examining what information sources they use to fulfil their daily jobs, and what they think of the Library of Parliament and its services and resources.

Since the research will focus on the parliamentary library, its results may also be utilized to improve the current services and would therefore have practical value.

I hereby request your permission to approach the PRU researchers to participate in my project. I am also attaching a copy of the questionnaire that would be e-mailed to researchers should you agree.

Yours truly

B. D Swartz  
Library of Parliament