

**The information needs and information-seeking behaviour of community  
library users in Msunduzi branch libraries, Pietermaritzburg.**

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**Declaration of originality**

I, Tracy Moodley declare that

- (i) The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.
- (ii) This dissertation/thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- (iii) This dissertation/thesis does not contain other persons data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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## **Dedication**

This study is dedicated to my wonderful family, Trevor my husband and our children Wesley and Jamie for their love, support, understanding and acceptance of the time that I had to spend on my studies.

To all my loved ones who are still amongst us, and those who watch over me from heaven.

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to identify the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of community library users in Msunduzi branch libraries, Pietermaritzburg. Identifying the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of community library users in the Msunduzi branch libraries helped to determine whether the Msunduzi branch libraries met their needs or not.

The study involved a quantitative investigation into the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of community library users in Msunduzi branch libraries, within the context of community information and community information services. The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey design.

The instrument used for collecting data was the self-administered questionnaire. The instrument consisted largely of closed questions and a few open-ended questions. A sample of 200 registered members of Northdale, Woodlands, Eastwood and Sobantu Libraries was surveyed, with 196 respondents giving a response rate of 98%. The validity and reliability of the instrument were established by pre-testing the questionnaire with ten community library users at Georgetown Branch Library. The data was captured onto the computer via Microsoft Excel. The data was then tabulated, and then appropriate analysis was conducted on each question's data. These were presented in the form of graphs. The community library user's information needs and information-seeking behaviour was identified using Wilson's second 1981 model of information behaviour which suited the group under study.

The results of the study indicated that the demographic and socio-economic status of the four communities influenced the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of the users. It is evident that in all four communities the information needs of the users were basically related to personal existence, survival and development. In terms of information-seeking behaviour, it can also be concluded that the community library users often used the information providers and information sources which they knew best or those which were the most convenient.

Barriers experienced by the respondents were insufficient and relevant materials in the libraries and the lack of internet access. Based on the findings, recommendations were made to address certain problems presented in the study.

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Information is considered to be an essential part of every human being's existence. Information is a basic need of life which helps in the fulfilment of other needs such as food and shelter. Therefore it can be said that without information, survival and development of any community is not possible. In this context, the public library, being the library of communities can play a critical role in the growth and upliftment of communities.

### **1.2 Background and outline of research topic**

Knowledge of the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of users is vital for developing library collections, upgrading facilities and improving services to effectively meet the information needs of users. It is against this backdrop that this study investigates the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of library users in Msunduzi branch libraries.

Information is a strategic resource for economic, social and personal development. The public library service of the municipality is a critical interface between people and information resources. Although public libraries serve a range of educational, cultural and recreational functions, at this stage of South Africa's development, their most vital role is arguably the empowering of individuals and communities, and supporting life-long education. The major role of public libraries at present is therefore seen as information provision.

Msunduzi Municipal Library (formerly the Natal Society Library) has provided public library services for the people of Pietermaritzburg since 1850. On 1 April 2004, the Natal Society Library, its staff and branch libraries, were integrated into the Msunduzi Municipality and became known as the Msunduzi Municipal Library. In June 2005 during a major project where main streets and major public buildings in Pietermaritzburg were renamed, the Msunduzi Municipal Library became the Bessie Head Library. Since 2003 the Pietermaritzburg/Msunduzi public library has been affiliated to the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Library. The Bessie Head Library aims to provide a full library service, from the Main Library, its eight branch libraries and its Housebound and Travelling Services, to all the people of Msunduzi. The branch libraries, also known as community libraries, are divided

into the northern and southern suburbs of Msunduzi. The northern region consists of Northdale, Eastwood, Woodlands and Sobantu Libraries. This study is confined to library users of the northern region.

In July 1983, four branch libraries came under the control of the Natal Society Library. They were Woodlands and Eastwood in the Coloured areas, and Valda and Barnabas in the Indian areas (Natal Society Annual Report 1984). These libraries were small, cramped and poorly situated. The Valda library was troubled with burglaries and vandalism throughout the year and the Barnabas library was situated near the backyard of a garage and public toilets. Therefore there was a very pressing need for a new library in Northdale. For this reason, the Valda and Barnabas branch libraries were closed on 23 January 1987, and the books and staff were moved into the large, modern Northdale Library, which had just been completed at the Truro Centre, off Bombay Road (Natal Society Annual Report 1987).

The Northdale Library is now very well situated, in the same building as the councillor's office, a clinic, and a preschool. Eight schools are situated close to the library, making it convenient for school children, who use the library extensively. There are lending, children's and project sections in the library, as well as a study area.

In 1988, the Transitional Local Council of the Municipality (TLC) requested that the three branch libraries in the black areas, Georgetown, Ashdown and Sobantu, which had been run by Provincial Library Services, should be taken over by the Natal Society Library (Natal Society Annual Report 1988).

The Sobantu Library is situated in Sobantu Township, a historically black township which is located about five kilometres from the east of the Pietermaritzburg city centre (Napier & Mthimkhulu 1989). According to Zimu and Xaba (2000, Pers.Comm) Sobantu township has a population of about 30 000. Sobantu is considered to be a disadvantaged community that faces a number of challenges which include poverty, unemployment, a high level of illiteracy, crime and substandard housing.

Eastwood Library is situated in Eastwood, a historically working-class Coloured community within Pietermaritzburg. The existing library was built by the Provincial Library Services in 1995, and is the newest and most modern of the northern branch libraries. Eastwood Library is the only northern branch library that has an Internet Cafe that offers internet access. Eastwood is urban yet considered to be a poor community, plagued by concentrations of

poverty, unemployment, substandard housing, below average educational standards and single families.

Woodlands Library was initially housed in a Parka-library (mid 1980-1997) but due to constant vandalism and damage an alternate venue was sourced. On 3 February 1997, a lease agreement was signed between the Pietermaritzburg-Msunduzi Transitional Local Council and the then Natal Society Library, in respect of a portion of the Woodlands Community Hall being leased for the purpose of establishing a public library. The library is still situated in its current spot and serves the greater Woodlands community.

These branch libraries are an extension of the public library. For the purposes of this study, the term community library is used because the branch libraries are effectively “community libraries” as they serve specific communities with their own socio-economic characteristics, and thus have their own information needs and information-seeking behaviour patterns. However, therein lies the problem, for these libraries to be relevant to their users, they need to change themselves and develop information services aimed at making positive and meaningful impact in the socio-economic development activities taking place at local and national level (Brown 2004). The traditional public library is usually geared towards meeting the needs of only a segment of a community, usually the rich and educated minority, whilst the majority of the people in the community – the poor and uneducated are neglected. Public libraries are funded by public taxes. They are usually established to serve a geographical area such as that encompassed by a municipality. Too often they appear to see their target community as those who come to the library to borrow books (and other recreational media) or to use the reference library.

UNESCO (2000) states that the “public library must offer to adults and children the opportunity to keep in touch with their times, to educate themselves continuously and to keep abreast of progress in sciences and arts. Its contents should be a living demonstration of the evaluation of knowledge and culture, constantly reviewed, kept up-to date and attractively presented. In this way it will help people form their own opinions, and develop their critical capacities and powers of appreciation. The public is concerned with the communication of information and ideas”.

This study is aimed at determining the information needs and information seeking behaviour of library users, so as to ensure these libraries do indeed function as community libraries, in the sense that they serve every segment of the community. However, this is not to say that the libraries in this study, have to offer all the essential services offered by a community library, nor do they have to have all the characteristics of a community library, but rather to capture some of the essence of these community libraries to ensure that the information needs of the specific community is met.

Community libraries have the fundamental responsibility of catering for the diverse and ever-changing informational, educational, socio-economic and cultural needs of a specific community. In order to achieve this, some sort of community information services need to be rendered. Although it is accepted that most libraries (and especially their reference sections) are already rendering a service that contains all or some of the elements of community information services.

A community can be described as a body of people in the same locality or a body of people leading a common life or a group of people having common rights (Giggey 1998), whilst the term library user is defined as one who uses the public library serving the geographic community of which he or she is a member (Evans 1969). Therefore the term community library user within the context of this study means adult users who have membership of the branch libraries being studied.

There has been a significant decrease in usage in the Msunduzi branch libraries during the last three years (Msunduzi Branch Library Reports, 2010-2013). These communities are faced with numerous problems which include unemployment, crime and safety, HIV/AIDS, poverty, education, poor housing and family problems. With reference to Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, the most basic need is to survive. Thus, it would appear that these libraries would need a deeper understanding of the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of their users if they are to empower these communities to survive, develop and grow in the future.

An information need arises when an individual senses a problematic situation or information gap in which his or her internal knowledge and beliefs, and model of the environment fail to suggest a path towards the satisfaction of his or her goals (Case 2002), whilst information-seeking behaviour is defined as purposive seeking of information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal.

The purpose of this study is to determine the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of library users in the Msunduzi branch libraries.

This study is based on the following hypothesis:

Presently, Msunduzi branch libraries are merely an extension of the public library. There has been a significant decrease in membership and circulation statistics over the last three years. Although numerous factors may have contributed to this, the problem can largely be attributed to the inability of the Municipality and library management to satisfy the needs of the people they serve. Therefore traditional public library services will not work.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

Msunduzi branch libraries are not being utilised by the community as they should be according to the Msunduzi branch library reports, 2010-2013. My own observation, as a librarian in these branches, is that our community libraries are not meeting the community needs and do not understand their information-seeking behaviour. The idea of both community information and community librarianship has originated in reaction to public libraries which became largely irrelevant to users. These services were based on the opinions and assumptions of librarians instead of an analysis of the needs of the communities (Coleman 1992). In order, to define community needs, one needs to clarify the term “community information”. Community information, within the context of this research, must be understood with the concepts “self-reliance and “empowerment” (September 1993: 73). Kempson (1986) emphasizes the following in defining community information:

- that it is directed at problem solving;
- that it assists with participation in the democratic process;
- that it is directed at those who do not have ready access to other sources of assistance;
- that it provides “coping” information for problems involving homes, jobs and the rights of people.

In other words, the purpose of community information is to help people with daily problem solving and that the people whose problems should receive precedence are those individuals and groups who do not have access to other sources of assistance, in other words the poor or the “disadvantaged”.

Fouche (1971:219-221) cites examples of community information needs under the headings of:

- Consumer goods and services
- Finance and law
- Physical and spiritual health and welfare
- Personal, family and community concerns
- Teaching, education and leisure time activities.

In attempting to identify the information needs of disadvantaged communities within the Msunduzi Municipality, it is vital to realize that the social system of apartheid almost completely denied these communities the satisfaction of even the most basic of human needs. Maslow (1970) in his hierarchy of human needs, identifies the following human needs: physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. He believed that human behaviour is continuously influenced by the attempt to satisfy these needs, and that in priority order the most basic of human needs is the need for physical survival. Physiological needs include the need for food, water, shelter, and those things that sustain life on a basic level.

Therefore, it is understandable that information needs will be connected to physiological, safety, social and esteem needs.

#### **1.4 Research problem**

The mission of the Msunduzi Municipal Library and its branch libraries is to improve the quality of life of the people of the Msunduzi municipal region by being responsive to their information needs and to provide resources that enhance and contribute towards their educational, cultural and recreational needs (Phoenix 2007).

The Msunduzi Municipal Library has eight branch libraries, the majority which are situated in “previously disadvantaged” areas. However, this policy makes no provision for community information services, which should be a fundamental concern of the Msunduzi Public Library. This study aims to investigate the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of community library users in Msunduzi branch libraries.

## **1.5 Research questions**

This study attempted to investigate the following research questions:

1. What are the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of community library users?
2. What are the factors that influence or shape their information needs and information-seeking behaviour?
3. What barriers do they encounter with regard to their information needs and information searching behaviour?
4. How do users meet their information needs?
5. How are these information needs presently being satisfied by the library?

## **1.6 Delimitations of study**

### **GEOGRAPHICAL LIMITATION**

The study was confined to the community users of Eastwood, Northdale, Woodlands and Sobantu Libraries. Although there are eight branch libraries, due to the limited timeframe and cost of travelling, only the four branches mentioned above were chosen.

### **POPULATION LIMITATION**

The study assessed a sample of registered active adults, who frequent the library. The ideal scenario would be to assess all registered members of the selected libraries; however, this is not possible due to time constraints and the large volume of membership.

## **1.7 Significance of study**

The results of this study will contribute to Msunduzi branch library services and its community users as follows:

- inform staff, managers, council members, community leaders and others of the communities' information needs and information seeking-behaviour;

- indicate how the library can enhance and empower the community in these areas by addressing their needs;
- establish what can be done to improve library services so that they can meet these needs
- make a portion of the community aware of the resources presently available at the library;
- contribute towards a revised collection development policy and mission statement.

## **1.8 Research methodology and design**

This section briefly introduces the research design and methods that were used in this study. For the purpose of this investigation, the positivist paradigm was chosen. Positivism is a way of thinking developed by Auguste Comte and is based on the assumption that it is possible to observe social life and establish reliable, valid knowledge about how it works. This knowledge can then be used to affect the course of social change and improve the human condition (Crossman n.d.) A largely quantitative approach was used in view of the fact that the purpose of the study was to largely identify information needs and information-seeking behaviour of a particular community, as well as identify characteristics of that particular society. The current study employed a cross-sectional survey design. Survey research involves acquiring information about one or more groups of people – perhaps about their characteristics, opinions, attitudes, or previous experiences – by asking them questions and tabulating their answers. This study assessed a sample of registered adult members of the Eastwood, Northdale, Sobantu and Woodlands Libraries. Data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire.

## **1.9 Clarification of terms**

In the context of this study the working definitions of certain key terms need to be provided. These are listed and defined below.

### **1.9.1 Information**

Several attempts have been made to define information, some relatively broad and others more specific. Kaniki (2001:191) defines information as “ideas, facts, imaginative works of

the mind and data of value, potentially useful in decision making, question answering and problem solving. It leads to a state of knowing”. According to Case (2002:5), “information can be any difference you perceive, in your environment or within yourself”.

### **1.9.2 Information behaviour**

Information behaviour encompasses information-seeking as well as the totality of other unintentional or passive behaviours (glimpsing or encountering information), as well as purposive behaviours that do not involve seeking, such as actively avoiding information (Case 2002). Ingwersen and Järvelin (2005:384) define information behaviour as the “human behaviour dealing with generation, communication, use and other activities concerned with information, such as, information-seeking behaviour and interactive IR (information retrieval).”

### **1.9.3 Information needs**

Feather and Sturges (1997:217) define information needs as “the expression used in a wide range of ways to refer to any context where information is sought and it represents all forms of information seeking”. Case (2002) states that an information need is the recognition that your knowledge is inadequate to satisfy a goal. Such an identified information need may lead to information seeking and the formulation of requests for information (Ingwersen & Järvelin 2005).

### **1.9.4 Information seeking**

Information seeking is a conscious effort to acquire information in response to a need or gap in your knowledge (Case 2002). Ikoga-Odonga and Mostert (2006) define information seeking as the purposive search and acquisition of information from selected information resources to satisfy certain needs. Information seeking is a form of human behaviour that involves seeking for information by means of the active examination of information sources or information retrieval systems to satisfy the information need, or to solve a problem (Ingwersen & Järvelin 2005: 386). In order to acquire information the user has to select information from a particular source, system, channel or service.

### **1.9.5 Information-seeking behaviour**

Information-seeking behaviour arises from the perceived need of a user, whereby the individual identifies his or her needs for information, searches for information and finally transfers the information obtained (Ikoja-Odongo and Mostert 2006). According to Kuhlthau (1993), information-seeking behaviour entails the seeking of information that might contribute to understanding and meaning required in order to meet a need. To satisfy that particular need the user may need to consult either formal or informal information sources or services.

### **1.9.6 Communities**

Thornton and Ramphela (in Stilwell 1991) define communities as:

... An image of coherence, a cultural notion which people use to give reality and form to their social actions and thoughts. The sociological existence of communities is founded on social interactions among members, which inevitably produces social boundaries which define them and give them identity. The boundaries of communities are symbolic and exist by virtue of people's belief in their existence. Communities are made, engaged and believed in. Appeals are made to them which depend on the belief of most people that communities ought to exist, that they are the legitimate goal of all political action.

### **1.9.7 Community library**

Within the South African context the community library has been described as one controlled, owned and sustained by residents of a disadvantaged community, usually black or Coloured, in order to motivate, empower and enable the local people to participate in programmes aimed at meeting their socio-economic, political, educational and cultural needs (Fairer-Wessels and Machet 1993). Stilwell (1991: 20) described one of the aims of the community library as that of provision of information in areas of people's lives where they need it most. Information should also be provided to those who have limited access to other sources of assistance.

### **1.9.8 Community Information**

Community information is a combination of two terms, i.e. community and information. Donohue in Bunch (1993) describe community information services as “information needed to cope with crises in the lives of individuals and communities” and are primarily concerned

with providing two broad categories of information: firstly survival information such as that related to health, housing, income, legal protection, economic opportunity and political rights, and secondly social, political, legal and economic processes.

### **1.10 Structure of dissertation**

This study consists of the following six chapters

- ❖ **CHAPTER 1** is the introductory chapter which sets the scene for the entire research study. It provides a background and outline of research topic. This chapter also deals with the research problem, objectives, research questions, delimitations and definitions of key terms used in the study.
  
- ❖ **CHAPTER 2** puts forward the conceptual framework used for the study, Wilson's (1981) second model of information seeking behaviour. The chapter also discusses various information behaviour models. This chapter also provides a review of the literature related to the study.
  
- ❖ **CHAPTER 3** describes the research design and methodology. The population and instruments used are explained. The data collection procedures and the validity and reliability of the study are evaluated and described.
  
- ❖ **CHAPTER 4** presents the results of the study.
  
- ❖ **CHAPTER 5** presents the interpretation of the results of the questionnaire.
  
- ❖ **CHAPTER 6** presents the conclusions and recommendations.

### **1.11 Summary of the chapter**

This chapter introduced the current study which is an investigation into the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of community library users in Msunduzi branch libraries, Pietermaritzburg. It provided a statement of the problem with which the study was concerned, the background to the study, the objectives of the study and the key research questions asked. The key terms were clearly defined in order to avoid any uncertainty and

confusion about the meaning attributed to each term used in the study. Delimitations of the study along with a brief historical background to the study were also provided. The structure of the study has been indicated as six chapters.

## **CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Chapter 1 set the roadmap of the study by briefly spelling out the problem statement and significance of the study. This chapter contains the conceptual framework of the study and the literature review. The latter includes scholarly studies related to information needs and information seeking behaviour of identified groups of people, namely public library users, urban and rural communities and ordinary people. The literature review also covers scholarly studies pertaining to public and community libraries, as well as Community Information Services (CIS). The conceptual framework for the study was underpinned by Wilson's 1981 model of information seeking behaviour which was his second one and this is discussed in this chapter. A summary is provided at the end.

### **2.2 Conceptual framework**

A conceptual framework is described as a set of broad ideas and principles taken from relevant fields of enquiry and used to structure a subsequent presentation. When clearly articulated a conceptual framework has potential usefulness as a tool to scaffold research and to assist a researcher to make meaning of subsequent findings (Smyth 2004).

Various information behaviour models have been developed to explain user's information behaviour, information needs and information-seeking behaviour. Wilson (1999) describes information behaviour models as frameworks for thinking about a problem that may evolve into a statement of the relationship among theoretical propositions.

A careful and thorough review of applicable models was undertaken before deciding on the most relevant model for this study.

Dervin (1999) developed the sense-making approach, which is implemented in terms of four constituent elements:

- a situation in time and space which defines the context in which information problems arise;

- a gap which identifies the difference between the contextual situation and the desired situation (for example, uncertainty);
- an outcome, that is the consequence of the sense-making process;
- and a bridge, that is some means of closing the gap between situation and outcome.

Ellis' behavioural model of information making strategies identified eight features of information-seeking behaviour which characterise the information-seeking behaviour of researchers in the physical and social sciences, engineers and research scientists (Ingwersen & Jarvelin 2005):

- Starting
- Chaining
- Browsing
- Differentiating
- Monitoring
- Extracting
- Verifying
- Ending

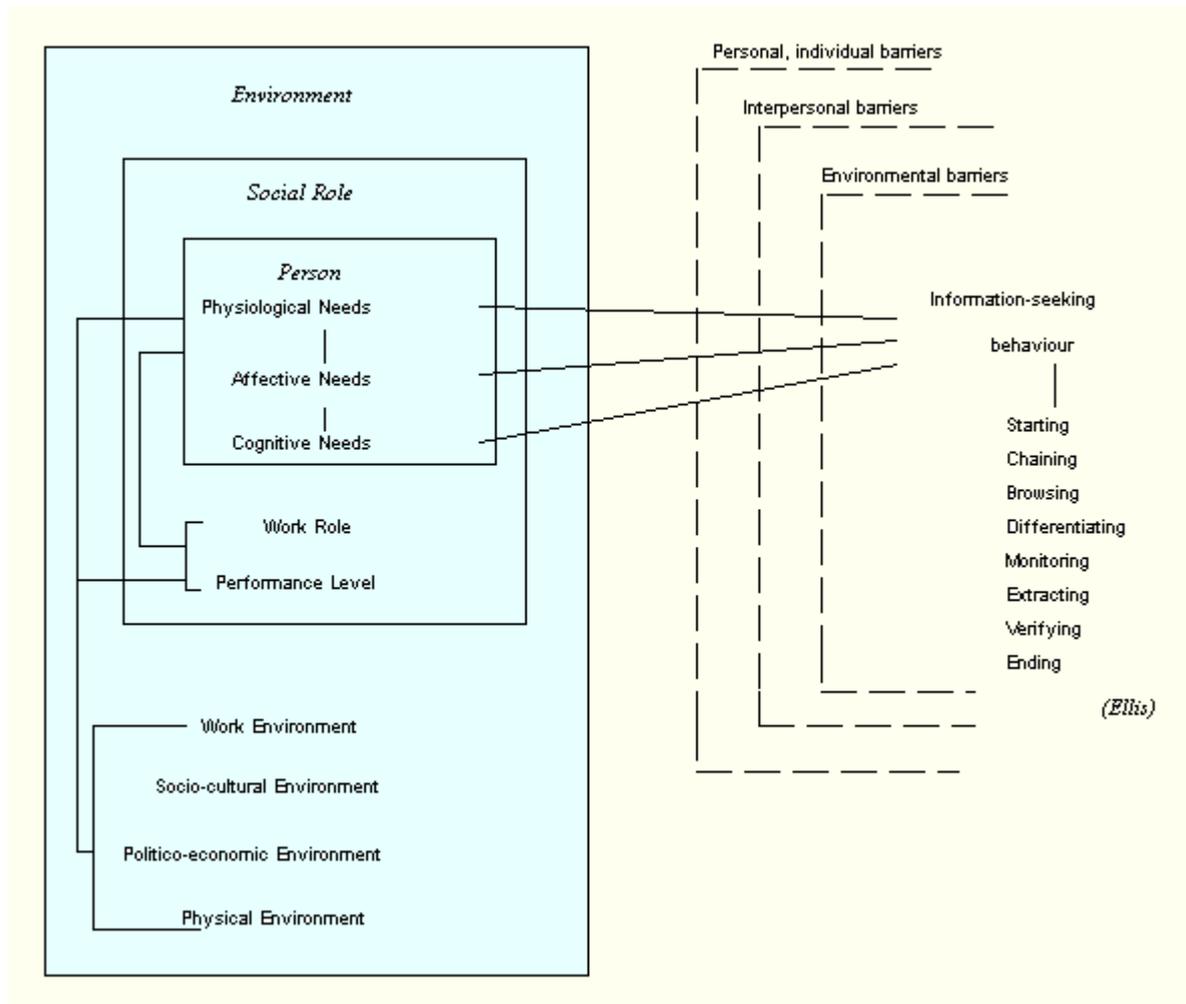
Kuhlthau's Information Search Process (ISP) compliments that of Ellis by attaching to the stages of the "information search process" the associated feelings, thoughts and actions, and the appropriate information tasks (Wilson 1999). The stages of Kuhlthau's models are Initiation, Selection, Exploration, Formulation, Collection and Presentation. As an example, the Initiation phase of the process is said to be characterised by feelings of uncertainty, vague and general thoughts about the problem area, and is associated with seeking background information: the "appropriate task" at this point is simply to "recognise" a need for information (Wilson 1999).

Ingwersen's (2004) cognitive model concentrates on identifying processes of cognition which may occur in all the information processing elements involved. This has been criticised by Dick (2005) for marginalising the core concerns of our society in South Africa for example, how ordinary people on the ground seek the information they need. Dick suggested that Ingwersen's model should take a wider view of the social contexts in which information seeking and retrieval takes place, and hence enlarge its scope of application, given the

historical, economic and societal contexts of people in South Africa. According to Aina in Bothma and Kaniki (2004), a critical review of all these models show that the important variable, illiteracy, is not taken into account in the above designs. It is assumed that all users are literate, although the model of Wilson (1999) makes provision for the educational background of users. However, none of these models specifically addresses illiteracy, which is a predominant factor in the information-seeking process of the majority of information users in Africa and South Africa.

Wilson has put forth a series of series of information behaviour models (1981, 1996, 1997 and 1991). The first model of Wilson (1999) which he first developed in 1981 suggests that information-seeking behaviour arises as a consequence of a need perceived by an information user. His second 1981 model proposes that an information need is not a primary need but rather a secondary need that arises out of a more basic kind of need. Wilson's revised model of 1996, presents the cycle of information activities, from the rise of the information need to the phase when information is being used. It includes various intervening variables, which have a significant influence on information behaviour, and mechanisms which activate it (Niedzwiedzka 2003).

This study is underpinned by Wilson’s 1981 model of information behaviour which was his second one.



**Figure 1** Wilson’s second model of information-seeking behaviour (1981)

*Source: Wilson 1999:5*

Wilson’s second model of 1981 is based upon two propositions: first that an information need is not a primary need, but rather a secondary need that arises out of needs of a more basic kind of need, and that these can be defined as physiological, cognitive and affective; and second, the enquirer is likely to meet with barriers of different kinds (Wilson 1999). The barriers include, but are not limited to personal, interpersonal and environmental barriers. He goes on to note that the context of any one of these needs may be the person him- or herself, or the role demands of the person’s work or life, or the environments (such as political, economic, technological,) within which that life or work takes place. He then suggests that the barriers that impede the search for information will arise out of the same set of contexts.

Wilson's model is clearly what may be described as a macro-model or a model of the gross information-seeking behaviour and it suggests how information needs arise and what may prevent (and, by implication, aid) the actual search for information (Wilson 1999). It also embodies, implicitly, a set of hypotheses about information behaviour that are testable: for example, the proposition that information needs in different work roles will be different, or that personal traits may inhibit or assist information seeking.

However, Wilson (1999) admits that the weakness of the model is that all of the hypotheses are only implicit and are not made explicit. Nor is there any indication of the processes whereby context has its effect upon the person, nor the factors that result in the perception of barriers. However, he asserts, that the very fact that the model is lacking in certain elements stimulates thinking about the kinds of elements that a more complete model ought to include.

The communities in which this study was taken are plagued with numerous problems such as poverty, unemployment, crime and so forth, therefore, we would expect that their information needs are of a more basic kind. Maslow's hierarchy of needs apply, which proposed that physiological needs are the most basic and fundamental needs, and these refer to the physiological requirement for human survival. These needs include shelter, food and water. The advantage of this model is that it produces a set of hypotheses that are testable.

Various information models on information behaviour were discussed and it is the researcher's opinion that Wilson's second model of 1981 is suitable for this study.

### **2.3 Literature review**

A literature review can be defined as the use of ideas in the literature to justify the particular approach to the topic, the selection of methods, and demonstration that research contributes something new (Hart 1998).

Neuman (1994) states that the goals of a literature review are:

- To display an awareness with a body of knowledge and establish credibility. The review informs the reader that the researcher is familiar with the research in an area and is familiar with the major issues;

- To indicate the path of previous research and how a current project is linked to it. Here the review basically draws the direction of research on a question and displays the development of knowledge;
- To assimilate and summarise what is known in an area. The review brings together and synthesizes different results; and
- To learn from others and encourage new ideas. The review shows what other researchers have established so that a researcher can benefit from the efforts of others.

Benefits of conducting a literature review in a study have been highlighted by many scholars including Stilwell (2004) and Kaniki (2001). In Stilwell's (2000: 173) words "a good literature review needs to indicate the different views, agreements, disagreements and trends of thought on the topic of research and be accurately portrayed and acknowledged in the text".

### **2.3.1 Information behaviour**

Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the information behaviour of library users based on their subject interest, occupation, information environment and geographical location (Thanuskodi 2012).

The concept of "information behaviour" was coined in the late 1990's, but it traces its roots to the concept of "information needs and uses" that arose in the 1960's (Wilson 1999). Information behaviour is a broad term that covers information needs, information seeking behaviour, information searching and information use (Case 2000). The relationship between these concepts is that where there is a need, a user usually seeks information in order to meet the need. For this study, the concepts of information needs and information seeking behaviour will be explored, within the context of community library users.

Key contributors in the study of information behaviour in South Africa include Stilwell (2010), Kalley (1995), Mostert (1998) and Fairer-Wessels (1987), Ikoga-Odongo and Mostert (2006) and Fourie (2002;2004) whilst international scholars include Wilson (1981;1996;1999;2000), Case (2002), Kuhlthau (1991;1993;2004), Dervin (1999), Taylor (1991) and Ingwersen and Jarvelin (2005).

Stilwell (2010) has investigated the extent and nature of research into information behaviour in the South African context from 1980-2010. In Stilwell's view, literature shows that the concept of information behaviour has grown over time and many approaches have been put forward for particular contexts and situations. Furthermore, Stilwell (2010) argues that whilst numerous papers have been presented at conferences and published as articles, little is available in terms of an overview of the entire body of such research to date. Her findings reveal an enormous growth in the number of articles and papers from 2000 onwards reflecting a wide array of subjects; however, there seems to be a significant gap in the literature reflecting the information needs and information seeking behaviour of a mixed population of library users in urban, disadvantaged areas. By mixed population, reference is made to communities that consist of Black, Indian and Coloured race groups. Tsebe (1986), Fairer-Wessels (1987), Mini (1990), Kaniki (1995) and various other researchers have all researched the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of black communities.

Fairer-Wessels (1987) is of the opinion that current research has concentrated on occupational or business information needs and behaviour, rather than on needs in a non-occupational context and feels that there is a gap in the latter field in South Africa.

Whilst still in the South African context, Ikoga-Odongo and Mostert (2006) specifically sought to review significant studies that focused on the concepts of information needs, seeking, and use and they endorsed awareness of the context of information behaviour as the foundation for any research in this field (Stilwell 2010).

Internationally, studies indicate that research in information behaviour has occupied information scientists, since before the term information science was coined (Wilson 1999). According to Wilson (1999) information behaviour is the totality of human behaviour in relation to sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information use. Thus it includes face-to-face communication with others, as well as the passive reception of information, as in, for example, watching TV advertisements, without any intention to act on the information given. Wilson (1999) presents an outline of models of information seeking and other aspects of information behaviour, with the aim of reviewing the status of models of information behaviour to discover how they may relate one to another and to propose an integration of these models into a more general framework.

### **2.3.2 Information needs**

People need accessible information in order to solve problems in their everyday lives. This information provides them with a sense of security, achievement and control. Feather and Sturges (1997:217) define information needs as “the expression used in a wide range of ways to refer to any context where information is sought and it represents all forms of information seeking”. Case (2007) suggests that an information need is a recognition that your knowledge is inadequate to satisfy a goal that you have. Wilson (1981:9) suggests that the phrase ‘information seeking towards the satisfaction of needs’ be used instead of the term ‘information needs’. He feels that personal needs are the basis of the motivation to seek information and these also affect the information-seeking behaviour of the user. Wilson describes personal needs as:

- Physiological needs such as the need for food, water and shelter;
- Affective needs, such as the need for attainment and for domination;
- Cognitive needs, that is, the need to learn a skill and take decisions.

These categories are obviously inter-related. The view is that in order to find ways and means to satisfy these needs the individual would seek information about them.

A study conducted by Tsebe (1985) highlights the inadequacy of research conducted on the information needs of Africans. The study identifies the information needs of Africans as pertaining to health, legal, and socio-economic issues and makes recommendations for the improvement of the information infrastructure.

Actual research into the information needs of disadvantaged communities in South Africa has been done by Fairer-Wessels (1987 and 1990), who attempted to isolate the particular information needs of urban black women, based on a survey conducted in Mamelodi. Her research indicated that health, money and education were the three main problem areas for this group (Fairer-Wessels 1987).

Writing in the late 1980’s Bekker and Lategan (1988) maintain that little was then known of the general information needs of residents living in the black urban areas. This remains true today, as there have been little or no studies identifying the information needs and information seeking behaviour of residents living in non-white urban areas, signifying a significant gap in the literature.

They identified “articulated” problems associated with the labour market, the housing delivery process and transport as the three areas in which they experienced the most difficulty. Other issues included access to health services, water, fuel, sanitation and schooling. They also emphasised that priorities in one specific community may not be priorities in another, and the information needs of each community should be assessed individually. Bekker and Lategan’s (1988) point seems to be that whilst it is useful to know the areas in which problems might be experienced by a community, it is essential that each community decides for itself what its priority areas are. This point of view is reason why the present study is so vital, and although there have been various studies regarding disadvantaged communities, each community is unique and has their own information needs.

Mini’s (1990) study focused on the information needs of people living in Edendale on the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg. Data was gathered by means of a house-to-house survey. The findings of the study concluded that the majority of the participants could not articulate their information needs.

On an international level, Dervin (1984) examined the information needs of urban residents in California. It involved 1040 interviewees of 12 years and older. Her findings indicate that there were many information needs and that a number of them are not being met. It also found that well well-off societies are differentiated from poor ones in terms of the situations they have to deal with and the way in which they give meaning to these situations. The conclusion of the study was that libraries must focus more on human dimensions of information use and less on demographics as a means of organising their services and getting to know their customers. Another conclusion is that information needs depend on a specific situation and time. Therefore, needs must be evaluated on a continuous basis.

### **2.3.3 Information seeking behaviour**

A Royal Society Conference in 1948 was the real beginning of an interest in information-seeking behaviour, especially in science and technology (Rafiq 2009). It was followed ten years later by the International Conference on Scientific Information in Washington, DC. The conference covered several aspects, including how people made use of libraries and the needs they endeavoured to satisfy through library use.

Wilson (2000) however argues that the subject goes rather further back in time. For example, *The Library Survey* (McDiarmid, 1940) referred to various kinds of surveys dating back to

1916 (Ayres & Mckinnie, 1916) and with a spate of studies in the 1920s and 1930s. Wilson elaborates by stating that these studies were about library use in general, they were concerned less with the needs that led people to the library as a source of information and more with issues such as the social class make-up of the clientele.

Information- seeking behaviour is purposive in nature and is an outcome of a need to satisfy some objectives (Wilson 1999). He further defines information seeking behaviour “as those activities a person may engage in when identifying his or her own needs for information, searching for such information in any way, and using or transferring that information”. Ikoja-Odonga and Mostert (2006) suggest that information seeking behaviour arises from the perceived need of a user, whereby the individual identifies his or her needs for information, searches for information and finally transfers the information obtained.

The literature search revealed that a limited number of studies have been conducted in South Africa and internationally concerning information seeking behaviour of community library users in disadvantaged urban areas. Whilst there are various studies on information seeking behaviour on specific occupations, social roles and demographic groupings, research indicates a gap in the information seeking behaviour of community library users in disadvantaged urban areas.

A study that deserves mention is that conducted by Kaniki (1995) which investigated the information needs and information seeking behaviour of communities in Kwa-Ngwanase (Natal) and Qumbu (Transkei) in South Africa. In the study an attempt was made to answer the following questions: What are the information needs in the two communities; which information providers do people use; and what is the demographic distribution of each community and its implication for information provision in these areas?

Adams (2010) has researched the information behaviour of Generation Y students at the University of Stellenbosch, whilst Du Preez (2007) has investigated the information needs and information seeking behaviour of engineers. Further studies on information-seeking behaviour include the study by Mitha (2009) on “New information seeking behaviours of academics in the Nelson R. Mandela School of Medicine at the University of KwaZulu Natal”

Abroad, Chen & Herson (1992) analysed the information needs and information- seeking patterns of people living in selected cities in the USA. A significant contribution of the study

was the use of the telephone for the first time as a tool for gathering data on information needs.

### **2.3.4 Public library**

The public library can be defined as an institution, financed by public money, housing a variety of documents and information sources that can be used for the purpose of informal education, recreation, cultural enrichment and/or information. The public library must be accessible to all members of the community (Harrod's librarian's glossary of terms used in librarianship, documentation and the book crafts and reference 1987). According to Jain and Nfila (2005) a public library is an organization established, supported and funded by the community either by local, regional or national government or through some other form of community organization. It provides access to knowledge, information and imaginary works through a range of resources and services and is equally available to all members of the community regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, disability, economic and employment status.

The Public Libraries Research Group (in Muddiman 1990: 91) defines the aims of the public library as contributing to “sustaining’ the quality of life in all its aspects... educational, economic, industrial, scientific and cultural. It should make freely available the records of man's experience to all who may ask and thus promote and foster the free flow of ideas”.

Public libraries are a critical information resource for communities in a country, particularly in rural areas, as sometimes they may be the only accessible place of information for some sectors of the community (Cannon, 1999). However, public libraries in the developing world particularly Africa have been found to be unable to satisfy the needs of the people they serve, and various reasons have been advanced for this failure. The reasons include the inability to respond to the economic and social needs of the people (Sturges and Neil, 1990).

According to Mostert (1998:71) the typical western public library is suitable for those community members who are “well educated, literate and middle class, whereas the newly literate and illiterate members of the community are not taken into account”.

For libraries to remain relevant, they need to change and adapt themselves and develop information services aimed at making a positive and meaningful impact to the communities they serve.

### **2.3.5 Community information**

Bunch (1987:4) defines community information as having two aspects. One which is “concerned with the nature of the information provided, that is, information in the community to help people with daily problem solving or in raising the quality of their lives; the other is concerned with the nature of the clientele served, namely those who belong to the socio-economic groups or those who are disadvantaged through an inability to obtain, understand, or act on information that affects their lives”. Bunch (1993) continues that there are different ways in which communication information can be offered and these include; self help, support for other information services, information giving, referral, advice, practical help with letters, advocacy, community education, community action, outreach and counselling.

Community information is the information for the survival and growth of the community or possibly the information required by a member of the community to make effective use of the available resources around them. Community information, within the context of this research, must be understood in conjunction with the concepts of ‘self-reliance’ and ‘self-determination’ (Kempson 1986:182). Thus community information is the information which helps to solve their day to day problems related to survival such as health, education, housing, legal protection, political rights and so forth. Kempson (1986:182) commented further by saying that “Communities, and individuals within them should have a far greater say in the decisions which affect their lives and a greater control over the ways in which their lives develop. To do this requires that they are both well-informed and have the means to act on that information.” Kempson (1986) suggests that information must be regarded as a public good with external benefits – each individual in the community may benefit when his/her associates, are better informed.

The hierarchy of human needs formulated by Maslow (1970) is well known (September 1993). They are physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs. Maslow believes that human behaviour is continuously influenced by the striving to satisfy these needs, and that in order of priority the most basic of needs is the need for physical survival. He further states that physiological needs include the need for food, water, shelter, sleep, and those other things which sustain life at the most minimal level.

September (1993) describes Maslows most basic human needs in ascending order as follows:

- Safety needs involve assurance that future physiological needs will be met and concern with personal safety;
- Social needs are concerned with the need to belong; to be accepted and to participate in social activities;
- Esteem needs include the need for self-respect, confidence, achievement, independence and freedom, recognition and appreciation;
- Self-actualization needs arise, only when other needs are sufficiently satisfied and lead to the desire to achieve through exploration of one' talents, capacities and potentialities, in other words, the desire for self-improvement.

September (1993) explains that in attempting to identify the information needs of disadvantaged communities it is important to realise that the social system of apartheid has almost completely denied these communities the satisfaction of even the most basic of human needs. Although transformation and improvements has been made in recent years, the fact remains that the communities in this study remain in a disadvantaged situation. Therefore, as September (1993) indicates, it is understandable that community information needs, to a great measure, will be connected to physiological, safety, social and esteem needs. This, however, he adds, does not mean that self-actualization needs do not exist. Self-actualization needs are relevant to a relatively small percentage of the people of these communities.

Community information needs will obviously vary from community to community and need to be articulated by the community itself (Kalley 1995). Bekker and Lategan (1988) however, have compiled a generalised listing of primary needs which include labour, housing, transport, community and education services set within the parameters of the social, economic and political milieu.

### **2.3.6 Community information services**

Community Information (CI) is the combination of two terms i.e. Community and Information. Case (2002:62) defines information as “data that has been gathered, processed and analysed to provide a useful result called information”. Usherwood (1977:5) defines community in a comprehensive way that “any geographical community or neighbourhood will be made up of a number of communities definable by race, social class, or income group,

employment, leisure interest, religion and so on, each with its own informal information network that has grown up without the help of librarians or any other information advice workers”.

According to Anwar (1996) community information services are basically concerned with the provision of problem-oriented information. He adds that the idea of public libraries offering information on everyday societal problems is not new. However, public library involvement in this area in the UK and USA increased after World War II in the form of active cooperation with governmental and social agencies working with the disadvantaged segments of the community. The author continues to add that during the 1960s and 1970s a shift took place whereby libraries started offering community information services direct.

Bunch (1987) Garrison (1978) Muller (1985) and Shillington (1986) are all in agreement that community information services can be defined as providing information to help people with daily problem solving and that the people whose problems should receive precedence are the individuals and groups who do not have access to other sources of assistance; in other words, the poor or the disadvantaged.

Kempson (1986) suggests that community information services should provide “information which helps to improve the quality of life (of the community) either directly by solving an immediate problem or in the longer term by helping them to influence decisions which will affect their lives”. Libraries, when considering the provision of community information services, should not only determine the extent and nature of the need for information but should also determine the ways in which the need is currently being satisfied – or not satisfied (Kempson 1986).

A perusal of professional literature indicated that whilst the concept of community information services has matured in the West, interest in community information services in Africa and South Africa is still very minimal. Buddy (1977:15 ) has quite rightly emphasized that “ access to information does not in itself give people power over their lives but lack of access can render a person powerless in the sense of being unable to exercise intelligent life options”. In South Africa, therefore the potential of community information services is great as it can correct social imbalances and make people of a community informed about the changes around themselves and improve their standard of living.

### **2.3.7 Community library**

The role of the library, and its responsibility to the community which it purports to serve, is a recurring theme in library and information science literature (Aitchison 1991). Community libraries are the focal point of this study, however the term public library needs to be defined as well, as the two terms are often used interchangeably. Public libraries and community libraries have certain characteristics in common, but they differ considerably in most. Common ground is found in the respect that both provide a service to a community.

It can be argued, that all forms of librarianship are in fact “community librarianship” in that every library serves some community: the public library its regular users, the hospital its staff and patients, and so on (Vincent 1986). Community libraries have the fundamental responsibility for providing for the diverse and ever-changing informational, educational, socio-economic and cultural needs of a specific community. In order to fulfil these objectives, libraries need to be informed about users’ information behaviour, so as to understand the user’s information needs and how to fulfil these needs.

Community libraries differ from public libraries in South Africa, in that they are usually established in economically disadvantaged communities and are more likely to provide information rather than recreational reading (Kalley 1995; Mostert 1998; Stilwell 1989, 1991, 1997). Within the South African context the community library has been described as one controlled, owned and sustained by residents of a disadvantaged community, usually black or Coloured, in order to motivate, empower and enable the local people to participate in programmes aimed at meeting their socio-economic, political, educational and cultural needs (Fairer-Wessels and Machet 1993).

The aims of the libraries are to empower community members by proactively providing survival information often repackaged by the community librarians and if necessary, of a temporary nature such as displays and pamphlets, brochures, newspapers as well as oral information (Aitchison 2006). Stilwell (1991a) maintains that the social purpose of these libraries differs markedly from those of the public library. While the public library is passive about its sense of social purpose, community libraries are pro-active. Within community libraries neutrality of service is seen as neither possible nor desirable. Fairer- Wessels and Machet (1993) add that the aim of a community library is to render a more varied and more pro-active service than is commonly offered by public libraries.

In assessing the role of the traditional public libraries in the provision of information needs, Bekker and Lategan (1988) in Kalley (1995) argue, despite well-stocked holdings, they do not make provision for the needs of the urban black community given the stock's irrelevance to the specific community circumstances. This argument would also apply to the needs of a mixed population in an urban community. They make the significant point that people need to be advised, need to be given the opportunity to ask questions, to ask for further explanations, to see for themselves (Bekker and Lategan 1988).

## **2.4 Summary**

The chapter presented discussion on various information behaviour models as well as the conceptual framework that underpins this study, namely Wilson's second 1981 model of information behaviour. The literature review helped to conceptualise some of the key terms related to this study. The literature review identified various trends regarding information behaviour, as well as recognition of the theories that exist within the various studies of information behaviour. Community information, community information services and community libraries were also discussed within the context of this study

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to present the research study design and methodology as well as the techniques applied in the research. Research methodology revolves around two major approaches; quantitative and qualitative (Powell 1997). The quantitative approach involves collecting numerical data that can be counted while the qualitative approach involves methods that collect verbal or textual data. The nature of this study is quantitative, with some qualitative elements, as the study is focused on identifying information needs and information-seeking behaviour of a particular community, as well as identifying characteristics of that particular society.

A descriptive survey design study was used to answer the research questions presented in Chapter 1. Within the descriptive survey design, a self-administered questionnaire was administered. The chapter further details information about the categories of the units of analysis used in the study and how they were obtained. Data collection and analysis procedures are presented. Evaluation of the research methodology is also provided as well as ethical considerations.

### **3.2 Research paradigm**

For the purpose of this investigation, the positivist paradigm was chosen. Positivism is a way of thinking developed by Auguste Comte and is based on the assumption that it is possible to observe social life and establish reliable, valid knowledge about how it works. This knowledge can then be used to affect the course of social change and improve the human condition (Crossman n.d.). According to Crossman (n.d.) positivism also argues that sociology should concern itself only with what can be observed with the senses and that theories of social life should be built in a rigid linear and methodical way on a base of verifiable fact.

### **3.3 Research approach**

A largely quantitative approach was used in view of the fact that the purpose of the study was largely to identify information needs and information-seeking behaviour of a particular community, as well as identify characteristics of that particular society.

Quantitative studies measure phenomena using numbers in conjunction with statistical procedures to process data and summarise results (Terre Blanche and Durrheim 1999: 42). Quantitative research includes the use of statistical analysis (Neuman 2006: 457).

Neuman (2000) lists the “quantitative style” as possessing the following characteristics:

- Measurement of objective facts
- Focus on variables
- Reliability as the key criterion of scientific excellence
- A value-free stance
- Research conducted independently of context
- Many cases or subjects involved
- Statistical analysis of method of choice
- Researcher maintains detached attitude

According to Kaniki (n.d.), in the study of information needs, the use of quantitative methods has been prevalent. The use of surveys with a self-administered questionnaire and or interview protocols with leading and some open-ended questions were used in studies by Aina (1985), Ojambo (1989) and Kaniki (1991;1995).

The quantitative approach will enable the researcher to accurately describe the community library user’s needs and seeking patterns.

### **3.4 Research design**

A research design is a plan or blueprint of how a researcher systematically collects and examines the data required to answer the research questions (Babbie and Mouton 2001). Bless and Higson-Smith (2006), by contrast, defines research design as a specification of the most adequate operations to be performed in order to test a specific hypothesis under given conditions.

The research design employed the descriptive survey technique wherein, a sample is drawn from the population and studied with the aim of making inference about a population. Descriptive survey research design presents a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting or relationship, and focuses on “how” and “why” questions (Neuman 2000). Descriptive research is designed to describe the characteristics or behaviours of a particular population in a systematic and accurate fashion (Leary 2010).

According to Powell (1997) the most straightforward type of survey research is descriptive and it is designed to ensure that the sample of the population to which the researcher wishes to generalize is reasonably representative and the relevant characteristics of the population have been accurately measured.

Survey research involves acquiring information about one or more groups of people perhaps about their characteristics, opinions, attitudes, or previous experiences by asking them questions and tabulating their answers. Leary (2010) adds that survey research uses questionnaires and interviews to collect information about people's attitudes, beliefs, feelings, behaviours and lifestyle. The ultimate goal is to learn about a large population by surveying a sample of their population (Leedy and Ormond 2005). The survey method is characterized as either cross-sectional or longitudinal. Cross-sectional survey focuses on the state of affairs in the population at just one point in time (Schutt 1996). For the purposes of the following research, the cross-sectional survey was deemed the most appropriate.

The outcome of this study is potentially important, as descriptive survey research will be used to gain an in depth insight into the phenomenon (Bless and Higson-Smith 2006), in this case, gaining an understanding of information needs and information-seeking behaviour of community library users in Msunduzi branch libraries.

### **3.5 Population**

Bless and Higson-Smith (2006) define a population as an entire set of objects or people which are the focus of the research and about which the researcher wants to determine some characteristics.

According to De Vos (2002), a population is the entire group of persons or objects that is of interest to the researcher, in other words, that meets the criteria which the researcher is interested in studying. The author furthermore describes the term as setting boundaries with regard to the elements or subjects.

The population for this study consisted of registered community library users only.

#### **3.5.1 Sample**

By definition, a sample is a part or fraction of a whole, or a subset of a larger set, selected by the researcher to participate in a research study (Brink 2006). The author further states a

sample thus consists of a selected group of the elements or units of analysis from a defined population.

Sampling therefore refers to the researcher's process of selecting the sample from a population in order to obtain information regarding a phenomenon in a way that represents the population of interest (Brink 2006).

### 3.5.2 Population size

This study assessed a sample of registered adult members of the Eastwood, Northdale, Sobantu and Woodlands libraries. This refers to members who have renewed their memberships as opposed to those whose membership has lapsed. As at 30 April 2013, the database of registered adult library users amounted to:

<b>Name of Library</b>	<b>Total number of registered adult library users</b>
Northdale	2233
Eastwood	1228
Woodlands	965
Sobantu	108
<b>Total</b>	<b>4534</b>

**Figure 2** *Total number of registered adult library users*

Leedy and Ormond (2005) propose that beyond a point of 5 000, the population size is irrelevant and a sample size of 400 will be adequate. However, due to the scope of the study and financial restraints, a sample size of 200 was deemed adequate.

Therefore, proportionally, the population size will be as follows:

<b>Name of library</b>	<b>Proportional number of registered adult library users</b>
Northdale	99
Eastwood	54
Woodlands	42
Sobantu	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>

**Figure 3** *Proportional number of registered adult library users*

### **3.5.3 Sampling**

Arkava and Lane (1983) define a sample that comprises elements of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study, or it can be viewed as a subset of measurements drawn from a population in which we are interested.

For the purposes of this research, convenience sampling was deemed to be a suitable method. A convenience sample is simply one in which the researcher uses any subjects that are available to participate in the research study (Crossman n.d.). Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique whereby the sample is derived from the researcher targeting a particular group in the full knowledge that it does not represent the wider population, which is considered a drawback (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000). Although this sampling method has its drawbacks, it is still deemed adequate for the purposes of this study. It involves the selection of the most accessible subjects. It is the least costly to the researcher, in terms of time, effort and money (Marshall 1996). The choice of the four libraries referred to earlier as a geographical limitation may mean that sampling cannot be generalised to the branch libraries as a whole.

## **3.6 Data collection instruments**

The process of data collection is of critical importance to the success of a study. According to Brink (2006), without high quality data collection techniques, the accuracy of the research conclusions is easily challenged.

In the study, the data collection instrument was the self-administered questionnaire.

### **3.6.1 Self-administered questionnaires:**

Questionnaires can be set up with both open and closed questions. For the purposes of this investigation, closed questions were used. These questions are popular because they provide greater uniformity of response and because the questions are easily quantified (Leary 2010). However, the author admits that the major disadvantage is that researchers often fail to include some important responses. The author adds that respondents may have an answer different from those that are supplied and suggests that one way to solve the problem is to include an “other” response followed by a blank space, to give respondents an opportunity to supply their own answers. The “other” responses are then handled just like open ended

questions – and a content analysis of the responses can be used. The researcher has chosen to follow this method.

A pilot study or pre-test of the questionnaire will solve most problems encountered with closed questions.

### **3.6.2 Advantages of the questionnaire**

Brink (2006) identifies the following advantages of the questionnaire:

- Questionnaires are a quick way of obtaining data from a large group of people.
- Questionnaires are less expensive in terms of time and money.
- Questionnaires are one of the easiest research instruments to test for reliability and validity.
- Subjects feel a greater sense of anonymity and are more likely to provide honest answers.
- The format is standard for all subjects and is not dependent on mood of interviewer.

However Kothari (2004: 113) points out that self-administered questionnaires have limitations due to the fact that respondents must be able to read the questions, understand and answer them. In order to prevent this problem, all questionnaires were designed in English.

### **3.6.3 Pretesting the questionnaire**

Babbie and Mouton (2011) state that there is always a possibility of error, regardless of how carefully the researcher designed the questionnaire. A pre-test will enable the researcher to identify and eliminate ambiguous and ambivalent questions that tend to be misunderstood by the respondents (Babbie 1994: 152). In order to overcome all possible shortcomings, and to ensure clarity and relevance, when administering the questionnaire, the researcher pre-tested the questionnaire before administering it to the respondents. The questionnaire was administered to a sample of ten registered library users at the Georgetown branch library, a library that has a population similar to that of the intended population. The questionnaire was also reviewed by selected lecturers in the Information Studies Programme because of their knowledge and expertise. All ten questionnaires were completed. The comments from the pre-test were used to refine the final instruments.

### **3.6.4 Administering the questionnaire**

The researcher gained permission from the library manager before the distribution of the questionnaires. The questionnaires were hand delivered to the four branch libraries identified in the study. The sample of 200 respondents was relatively large and assistance from library colleagues was required. The questionnaires and covering letters were photocopied and stapled. Staff from the four branch libraries assisted in the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. Where possible, respondents were asked to fill in the questionnaire immediately, and where the respondents were unable to do so, arrangements were made to collect the questionnaires at a later date (within two to four days). Distribution of the questionnaires was done during a two week period.

### **3.7 Data analysis**

Data analysis entails categorising, ordering, manipulating and summarising the data and describing them in meaningful terms (Brink 2006). The author states that the most powerful tool available to the researcher in analysing quantitative data is statistics. In addition, the author maintains that without the aid of statistics, the quantitative data would be simply a chaotic mass of numbers and therefore statistical methods enable the researcher to reduce, summarise, organise, manipulate, evaluate, interpret and communicate quantitative data.

The analysis of quantitative data involves three steps: coding, entering, and cleaning (Terre Blanche & Durrheim: 1999). The authors indicate that coding involves applying a set of rules to the data to transform information from one form to another. Before doing so each completed questionnaire was evaluated to check for missing data and ambiguity and errors in the responses. This is known as data cleaning.

The data was captured onto the computer via Microsoft Excel. The data was then tabulated, and then appropriate analysis was conducted on each question's data. The graphical functions of Excel were used to create various appropriate graphs for the different types of data (as both categorical and quantitative data were collected from the questionnaire)

The questionnaire contained a limited number of open questions. Content analysis was used to interpret the responses to the open questions in the questionnaire. Content analysis according to Powell (1997) is the most suitable approach to adopt in this regard.

The process began by reading and re-reading one's texts (responses), and trying to make sense of the patterns and themes that emerge from one's data (Babbie and Mouton 2001). Through this process, response categories for the responses to the open questions in the questionnaire were created. After identifying the categories, data was coded and manually processed.

The open questions afforded respondents the opportunity to express their views and opinions about their information needs, information-seeking behaviour and the existing library services being offered.

### **3.8 Validity and reliability: evaluation of the method used**

As mentioned, the purpose of this study was to investigate the information needs and information seeking behaviour of community library users in Msunduzi branch libraries in Pietermaritzburg. The evaluation of a research method will enable the researcher to discover if it measured what it intended to.

Gravetter and Forzana (2009) state that it is necessary to evaluate a research method in order to determine whether it has successfully measured what it intended to measure or not. Evaluation of the method requires assessing the reliability and validity of the research method used.

Reliability is the extent to which an experiment, test, or any measuring procedure yields the same result on repeated trials (Howell 1994). The author adds that without the agreement of independent observers able to replicate research procedures, or the ability to use research tools and procedures that yield consistent measurements, researchers would be unable to satisfactorily draw conclusions, formulate theories, or make claims about the generalisation of their research.

Simply explained, reliability is the degree to which an assessment tool produces stable and consistent results.

Validity refers to the degree in which a study accurately reflects or assesses the specific concept that the researcher is attempting to measure (Howell 1994). The author states that while reliability is concerned with the accuracy of the actual measuring instrument or procedure, validity is concerned with the study's success at measuring what the researchers set out to measure.

In order to ensure the reliability and validity of this study, the following steps were undertaken:

- The research instruments were pre-tested with the aim of increasing the validity. This is one of the most common ways to ensure validity. The research instrument was pre-tested on a sample similar to that of the intended population.
- The questions were formulated in such a manner to ensure that the researcher identified and eliminated ambiguous and ambivalent questions that tend to be misunderstood by the respondents.
- The respondents were promised confidentiality.

### **3.9 Ethical considerations**

- For the purposes of this study, the Msunduzi Municipal Library and the University of KwaZulu-Natal Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Committee approved the study.
- Every effort was made to ensure that participants were informed about the study and participant confidentiality was protected.

### **3.10 Summary of the chapter**

Chapter 3 described the research design and methodology underpinning the study. It also discussed the rationale for selecting the chosen research method, the population, data collection methods, the development of the questionnaire, and the data analysis procedures that were used. The data of the study were collected using the quantitative method, namely, a self-administered questionnaire. The chapter discussed the use of the survey method and the advantages of the method. The population was described and the use of the convenience sampling technique was justified. The pre-test of the questionnaire was discussed and this was followed by a brief description of how the questionnaire was administered. The chapter ended with a brief discussion of the analysis of the data and an evaluation of the research method in terms of reliability and validity. The findings of the study are presented in the next chapter, Chapter 4.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS OF THE STUDY**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results drawn from the self-administered questionnaires given to community library users at the Msunduzi branch libraries, Pietermaritzburg. The objective of the study was to investigate the information needs and information seeking behaviour of adult community library users at Msunduzi branch libraries. The purpose behind each question that was asked is explained and the results are provided according to the four libraries that were surveyed, namely Northdale, Eastwood, Woodlands and Sobantu Libraries.

### **4.2 Response rate**

The sample population was 200, with each library given a proportional amount of questionnaires, as per their registered adult users. Therefore, Northdale was presented with 99 questionnaires, Eastwood had 54 questionnaires, whilst Woodlands had 42 questionnaires and Sobantu had 5 questionnaires. The response rate from Northdale, Woodlands and Sobantu Libraries was 100%, whilst Eastwood returned 50 completed questionnaires out of 54, therefore yielding a response rate of 93%.

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001) a response rate of 70% is considered “very good”. Considering the sample size of 200 community library users, the response rate can be considered to be excellent.

This high response rate is partly explained by the fact that the questionnaires were delivered and collected by the researcher.

### **4.3 Questionnaire results**

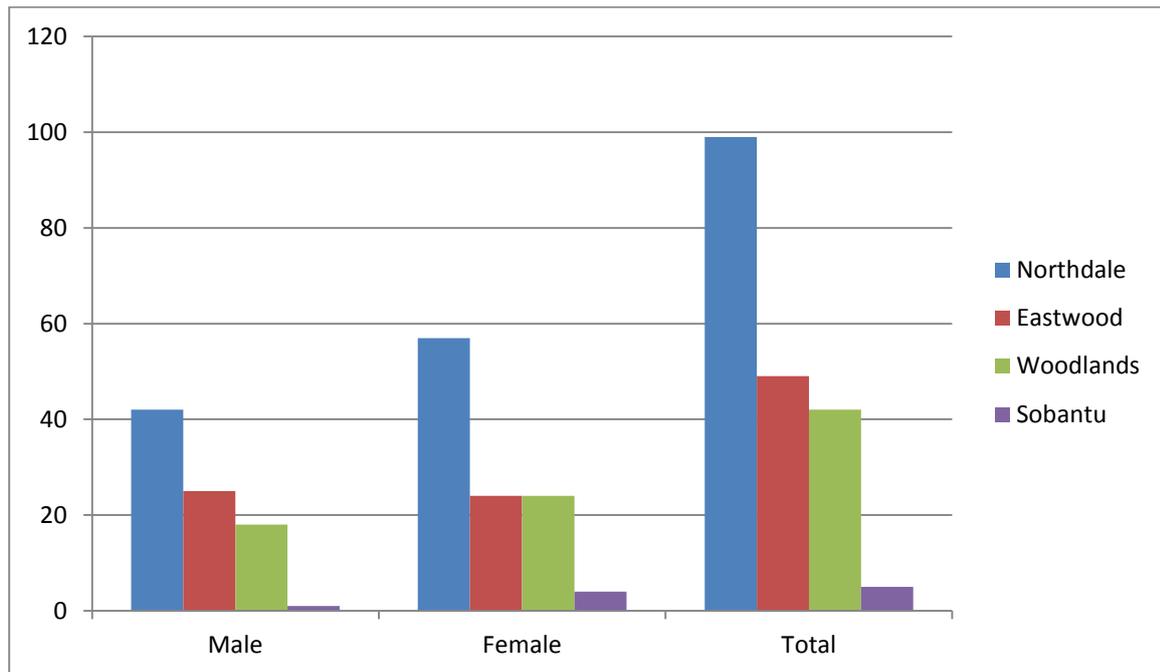
This section discusses the results that were obtained from the questionnaires which were administered to the adult library users.

Background information relating to the respondents was asked. The respondents’ characteristics (the characteristics that were relevant for this study were: socio-economic background, level of education achieved and propensity towards the use of the library)

enabled the researcher to have a clearer picture of the population under study. The questions included gender, age, marital status, race group, level of education, occupation, size of household, and whether the respondents have electricity in their homes.

Following the background information, questions relating to respondents information needs, information-seeking behaviour and barriers to information-seeking behaviour was asked.

## Gender



**Figure 4 (Question 1)**

Northdale Library (N = 99)

There were more female respondents 57 (57%) than male respondents.

Eastwood Library (N = 50)

There were slightly more males 25 (51%) than female respondents. One questionnaire had no response to this question.

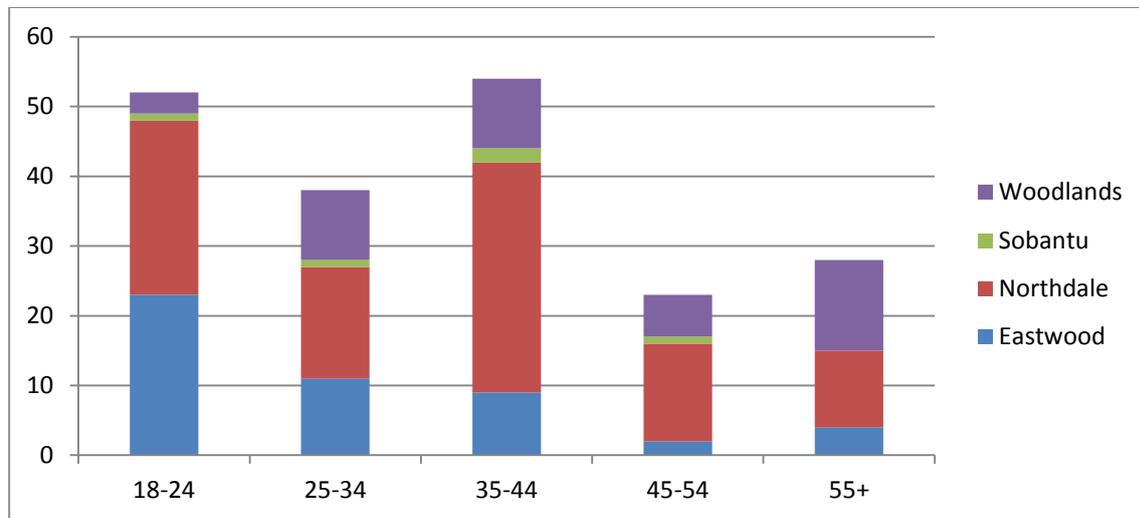
Woodlands Library (N = 42)

The majority of respondents were female 25 (57%)

Sobantu Library (N = 5)

Out of the five respondents, four (80%) were female.

## Description of respondents by age group



**Figure 5 (Question 2)**

### Northdale Library (N = 99)

There is a relatively even spread of users throughout all age groups. The largest frequency of users occurs in the 35-44 year age group with 33 (33%) of the total population. The lowest frequency of users occurred in the 55+ age group (only 11% of total population).

### Eastwood Library (N = 50)

The results of Eastwood Library were surprising, with 23 (46%) of the respondents being from the 18-24 age group. This is surprising because Eastwood is a traditionally impoverished area that suffers from gang violence and drug/alcohol abuse amongst the youth.

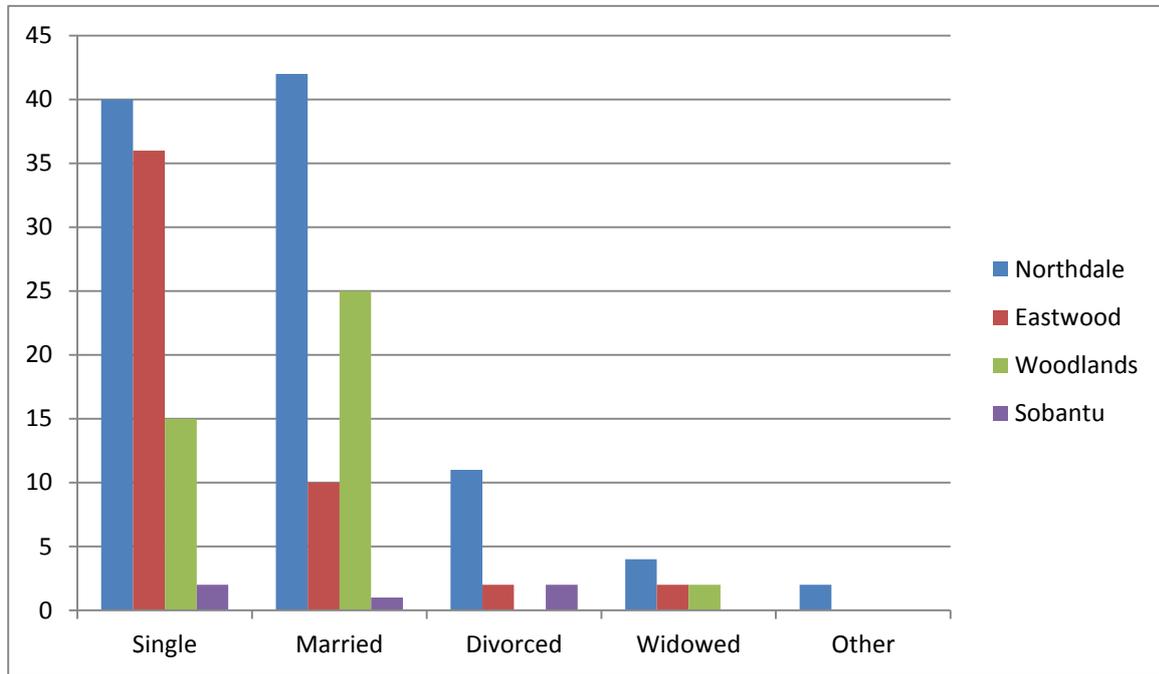
### Woodlands Library (N = 42)

The main tendency in Woodlands was towards the older age groups. Only three respondents (7%) were from the 18-24 age group. The other age groups exhibited an average population spread, with the highest frequency of response occurring in the 55+ age group (13 respondents 31%).

### Sobantu Library (N = 5)

It was observed that two of the five respondents were between the ages of 35-44, while there were no respondents from the 55+ age group.

## Marital Status



**Figure 6 (Question 3)**

### Northdale Library (N = 99)

The largest number of respondents were married with a total number of 42 (42%), followed closely by the single group 40 (40%).

### Eastwood Library (N = 50)

The reason that the majority 36 (72%) of respondents were single in Eastwood is simply because the majority of respondents were in the 18-24 age group. Only 10% of respondents were married.

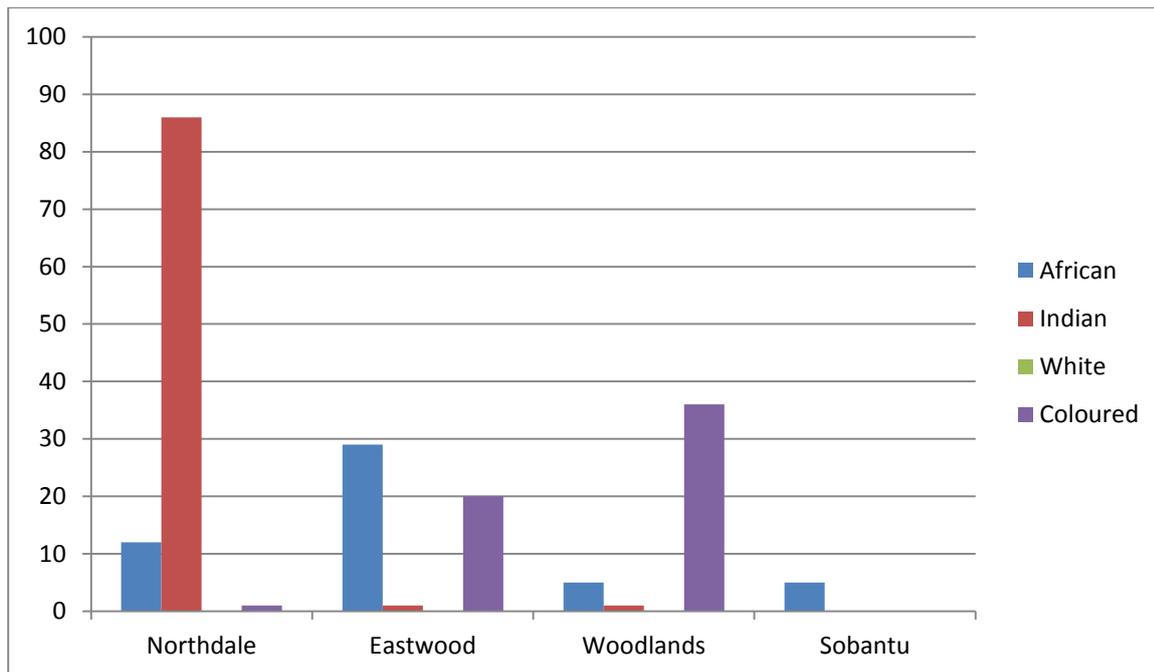
### Woodlands Library (N = 42)

The largest number of respondents were married 25 (60%), while 15 (36%) were single.

### Sobantu (N = 5)

Here there were five respondents. Two were single, two were divorced and one was married.

## Race group



**Figure 7 (Question 4)**

### Northdale Library (N = 99)

Northdale Library is situated in a predominantly Indian area and the majority of the respondents were Indian 86 (86%), followed by Blacks 12 (12%).

### Eastwood (N = 50)

Eastwood, which has previously regarded as a Coloured area, surprisingly had Blacks 29 (58%) as the majority of respondents, followed by the Coloured community 20 (40%).

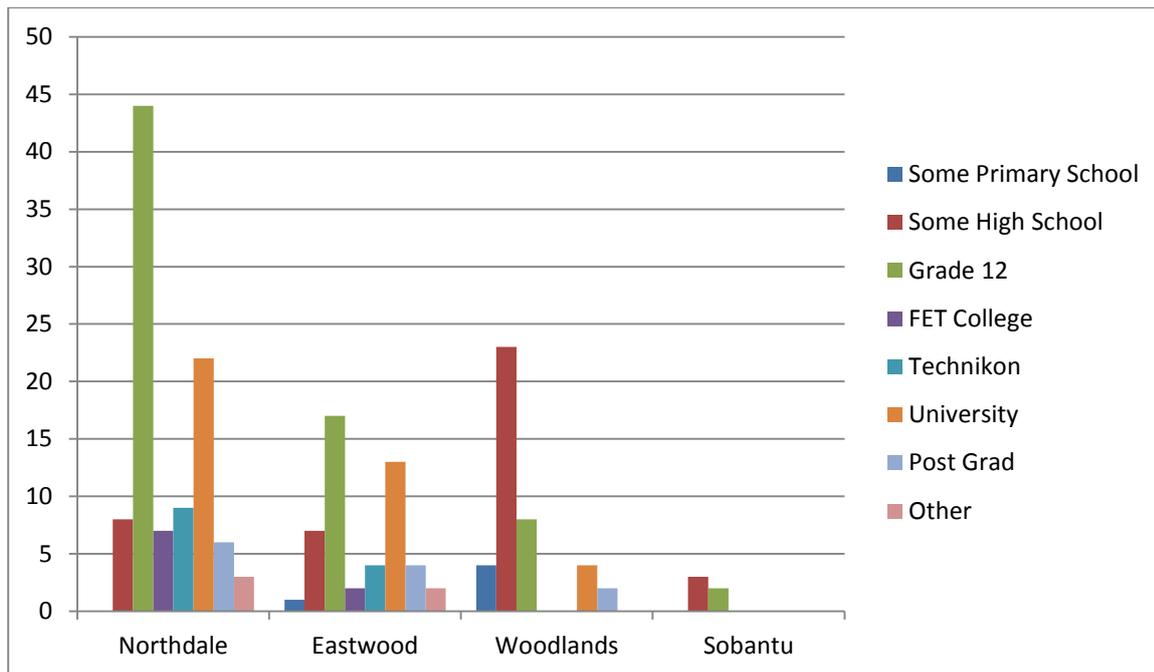
### Woodlands (N = 42)

The majority of the respondents 36 (89) were Coloured.

### Sobantu (N = 5)

The total number of respondents was from the Black community.

## Level of education



**Figure 8 (Question 5)**

### Northdale Library (N = 99)

Out of the four areas observed, Northdale would be considered as the most privileged area. As such, it stands to reason that 91 (91%) of respondents have a matric or higher qualification. Out of this 47 (47%) possessed tertiary level education. It could be said that the general level of education observed amongst Northdale respondents is high.

### Eastwood Library (N = 50)

Here again, the majority of the respondents level of education was Grade 12 (17 respondents or 34%). A total of 42 (84%) respondents possessed a grade 12 or higher qualification. Once again, this could be regarded as a high level of education.

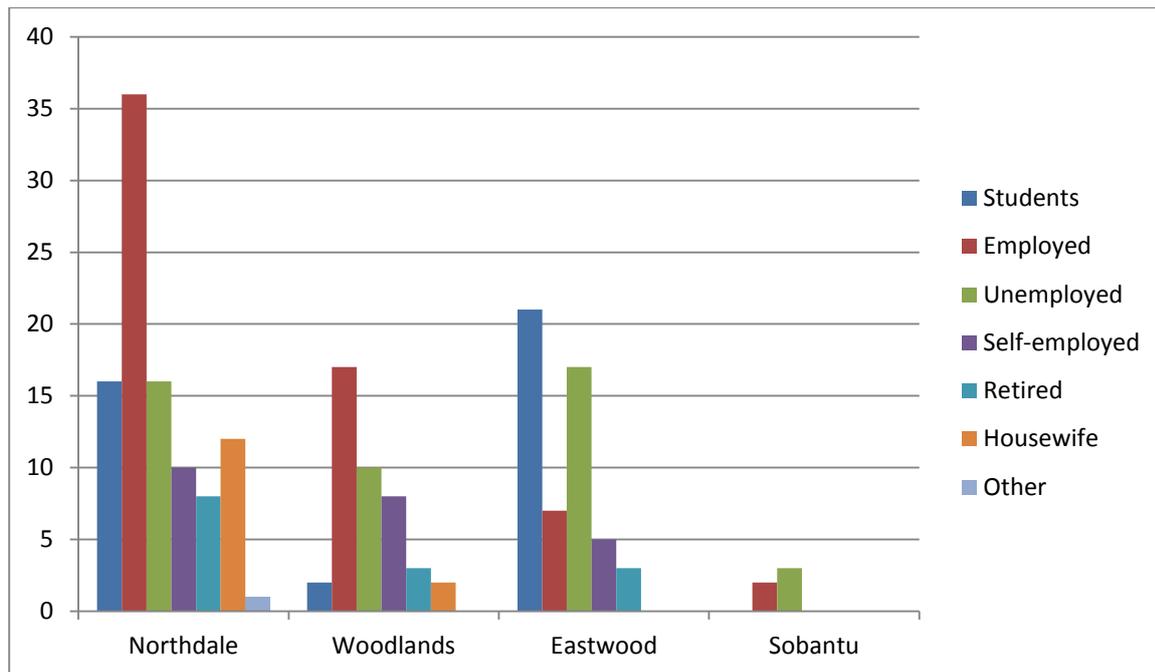
### Woodlands (N = 42)

Woodlands can be considered to have the same socio-economic background as Eastwood. Both are plagued by similar problems and barriers, yet we saw above that Eastwood respondents actually had a very high level of education. However what we observed in Woodlands was vastly different. Here 27(64%) of the observed population did not have a matric qualification. Out of the 8 (36%) who did possess a grade 12, only 6 (14%) had a post graduate qualification.

Sobantu Library (N = 5)

Two respondents had matric qualifications, while three others had only some high school.

## Occupation



**Figure 9 (Question 6)**

### Northdale Library (N = 99)

Over a third of all respondents 36 (36%) were employed. There were an equal amount of respondents who were students and were unemployed 16 (16%) each. Interesting to note that 12 (12%) of the total of respondents were housewives. This statistic is far higher than what was observed in other areas.

### Eastwood Library (N = 50)

There was a very high rate of unemployment observed at Eastwood Library. In fact, only 7 (14%) of respondents were actually currently employed. However, there were also a very large number of respondents who were students 21 (42%). The actual number from the working pool, but unemployed respondents was 17 (34%).

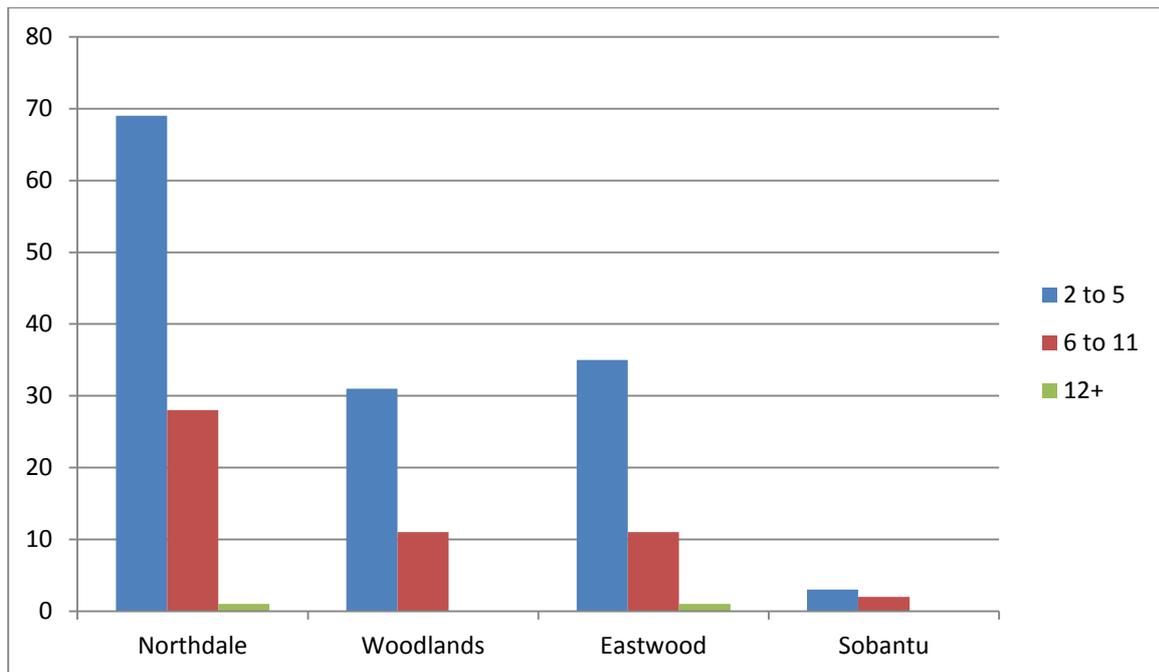
### Woodlands Library (N = 42)

The “employed” group had the highest frequency with 17 (40%) of respondents. It is interesting to note that only a very small number of students were observed to visit this library. Only 2 (5%) of the respondents were students.

Sobantu Library (N = 5)

Three people were unemployed and two people were employed.

## Size of household



**Figure 10 (Question 7)**

### Northdale Library (N = 99)

The majority of the households were between 2-5 persons per household which amounted to 69 respondents (69%). A further 29 (29%) of households consisted of between 6-11 people.

### Eastwood Library (N = 50)

The same pattern applies to Eastwood Library, the majority of the households were between 2-5 persons per household (35 respondents or 70%) followed by households of between 6-11 people (11 respondents or 22%).

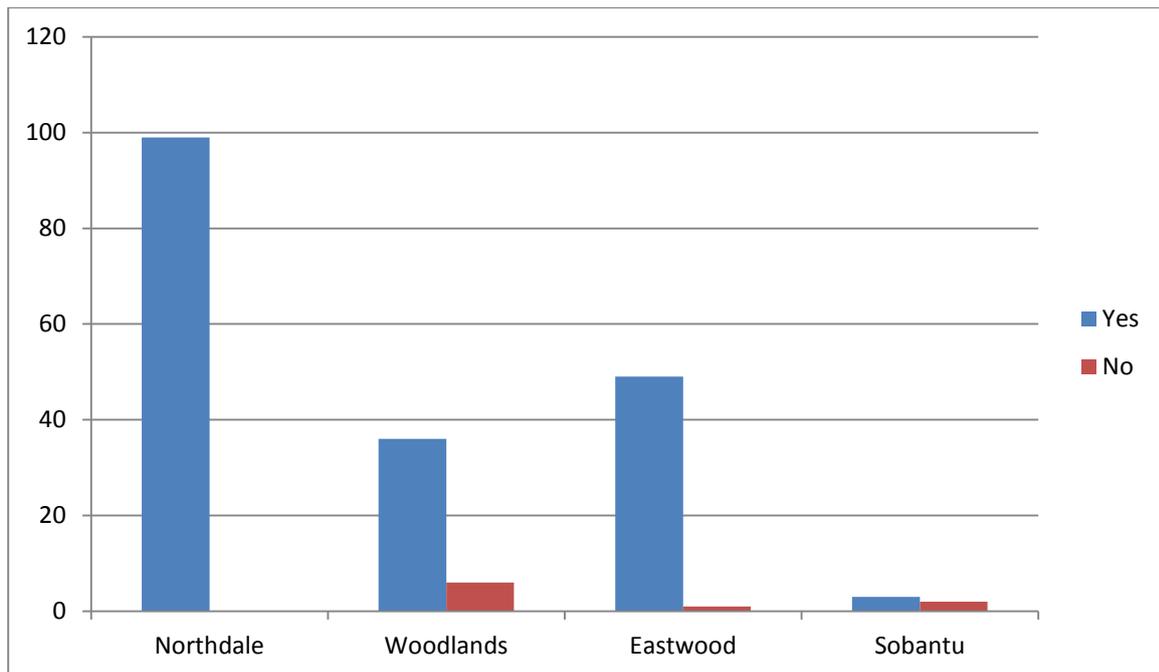
### Woodlands Library (N = 42)

Here again, the majority of the households were between 2-5 persons per household (31 respondents or 74%) followed by households of between 6-11 people (11 respondents or 26%).

### Sobantu (N = 5)

Being consistent with the observed pattern, three of the five households were between 2-5 people and the other two were between 6-11 people.

## Access to Electricity



**Figure 11 (Question 8)**

Northdale Library (N = 99)

All the respondents of respondents (99) from Northdale Library have access to electricity.

Eastwood Library (N = 50)

In Eastwood 49 respondents (98%) have access to electricity.

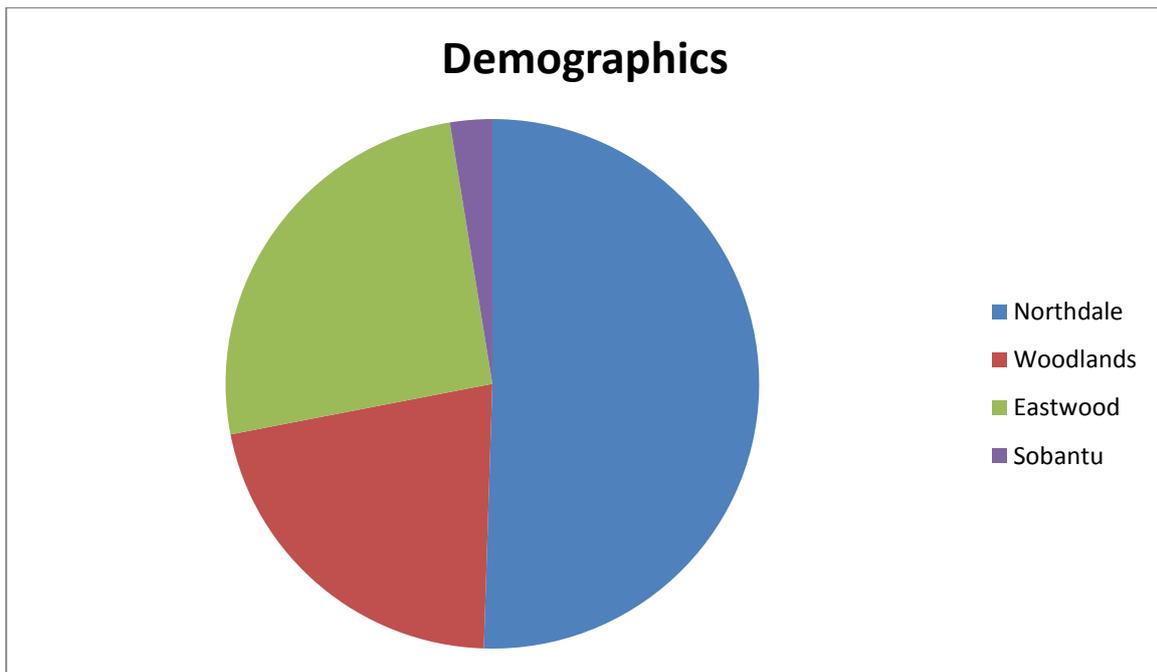
Woodlands (N = 42)

Thirty-six (86%) have access to electricity.

Sobantu (N = 5)

From this library (60%) have access to electricity.

## Library Membership



**Figure 12 (Question 9)**

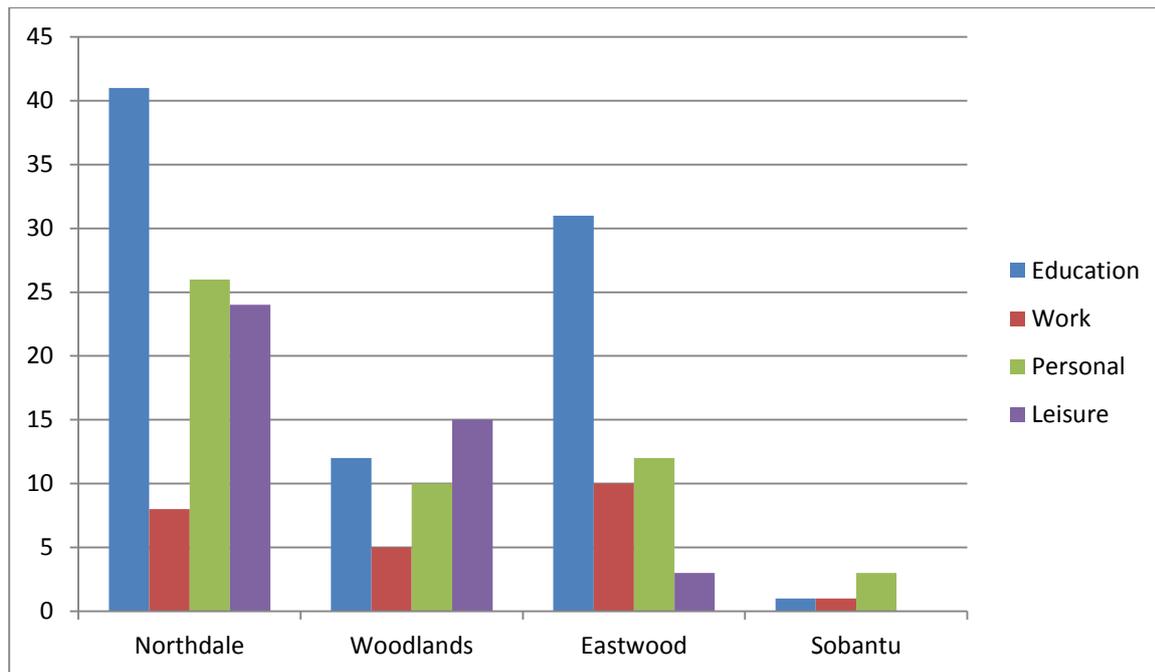
Northdale Library: 99 respondents

Eastwood Library: 50 respondents

Woodlands Library: 42 respondents

Sobantu Library: 5 respondents

## Reasons for requiring information



**Figure 13 (Question 10)**

### Northdale Library (N = 99)

As we can see from the graph, the main reason for users to visit the library is for education purposes. Forty-one (41%) of respondents visited the library for this reason. A further 26 (26%) respondents visited the library for personal reasons. What was interesting to note is that 24 (24%) of users visited the library for leisure.

### Eastwood Library (N = 50)

Once again, the majority of respondents visited the library for education reasons (31 users or 62%). An interesting thing to note here is that a very small proportion of users visited the library for leisure (three users or 6%).

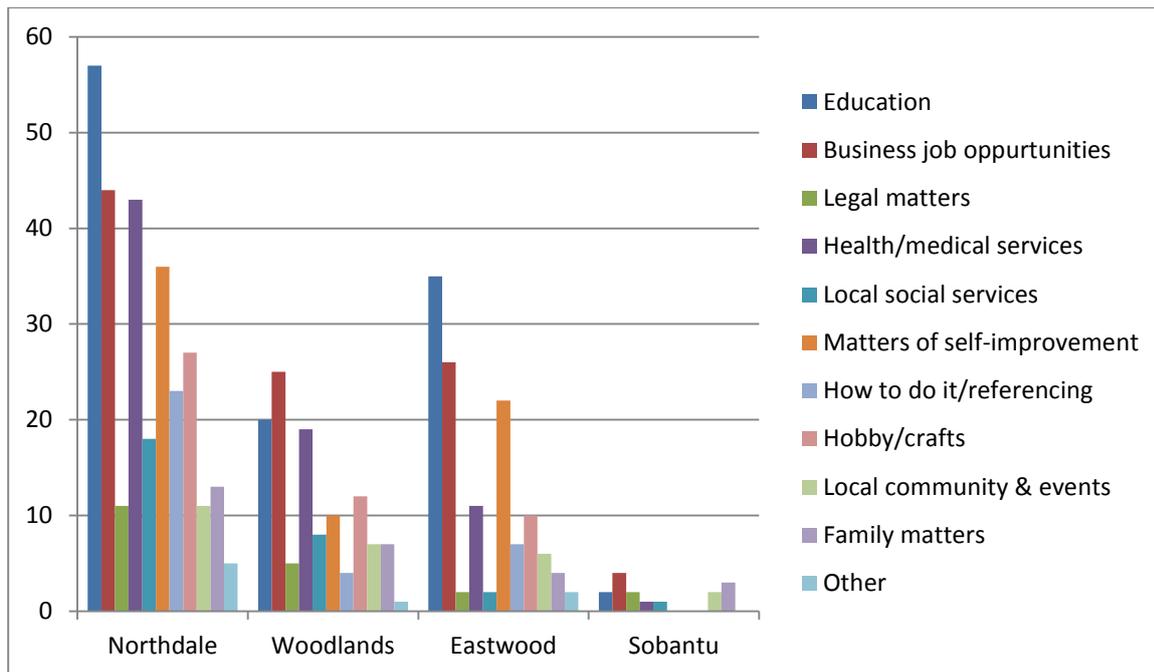
### Woodlands Library (N = 42)

Breaking the pattern, many Woodlands library users were in fact there for leisure purposes (15 respondents or 36%). It is possible that this can be attributed to the fact that the majority of users from Woodlands are of the older generation. Again, this will be fully discussed in the next chapter.

Sobantu Library (N = 5)

Here again, Sobantu differs from the other libraries in that three (60%) of the respondents use the library for personal matters and one (20%) uses the library for work and educational purposes respectively.

## Day-to-day information needs



**Figure 14 (Question 11) N=196**

\*Multiple responses received

Respondents were asked to tick their most important needs. Most respondents chose more than one option. As such, the sample sizes all have a slight variation that has been accounted for when calculating the percentages.

### Northdale Library (N = 99)

A number of the respondents 57 (20%) regard education as the most important information need, while 44 (15%) require information on business/job opportunities and 43 (15%) regard information on health/medical services as important. Thirty six (12 %) respondents felt that information on matters of self-improvement were important to their information needs, while 27 (9%) regard hobby/crafts as an important information need in their lives. Twenty three (8%) need information on how to do it/reference, 18 (6%) require information on local social services.

Other: Five respondents listed the following information needs:

- Science
- Technology
- Leisure

- Study material
- Story books

Eastwood Library (N = 50)

Thirty five respondents (28%) regard education as their most important information need and 26 (20%) require information on business/job opportunities. Twenty two (17%) respondents feel that they need information on matters of self-improvement, while 11 (7%) require information on health/medical services.

Other: Nil

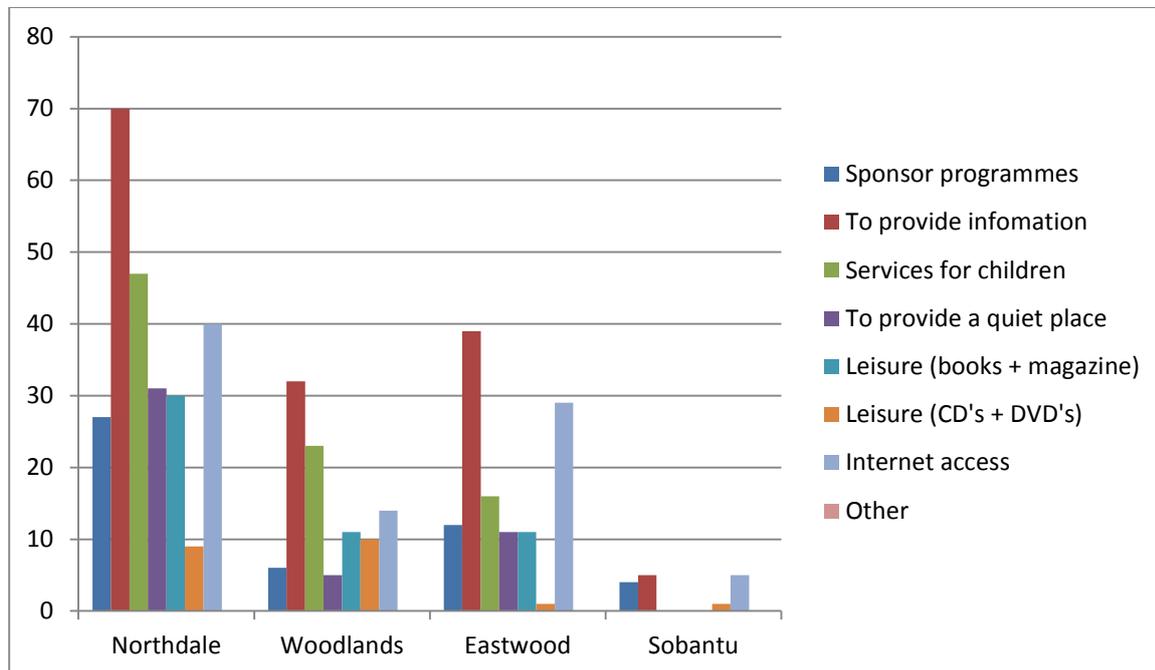
Woodlands Library (N = 42)

Figure 14 indicated that 25 (21%) of the respondents require information on business/job opportunities, followed by 20 (17%) respondents who regard education as an important information need. This was closely followed by 19 (16%) who require information on health/medical services. Twelve (10%) respondents require information on hobbies and crafts, and ten (8%) respondents require information on matters of self-improvement. Only one (1%) respondent ticked the “other” box, and did not elaborate.

Sobantu Library (N = 5)

Four (27%) respondents require information on business/job opportunities, followed by three (20%) respondents who regard as information on family matters as being important. Two (13%) of the respondents agreed that they require information on education, legal matters, and local and community and news of events.

## Most important goal of the library



**Figure 15 (Question 12) N=196**

\*Multiple responses received

Respondents were asked to tick the most important goal of the library. Most respondents chose more than one option.

### Northdale Library (N = 99)

The results show that 70 (71%) respondents agree that the most important goal of the library is to provide information, 47 (47%) respondents regard services for children as an important goal for children, 40 (40%) believe that internet access is an important goal of the library, 30 (30%) maintain the provision of leisure materials to be an important goal of the library, while 27 (27%) respondents felt that an important function of the library is to sponsor programs.

### Eastwood Library (N = 50)

The results show that 39 (78%) respondents agree that the most important goal of the library is to provide information, 29 (58%) respondents believe that internet access is an important goal of the library, 16 (32%) regard services for children as important, while 11 (22%) respondents believe that the goal of the library is to provide a quiet place and provide leisure materials (books, magazines) respectively.

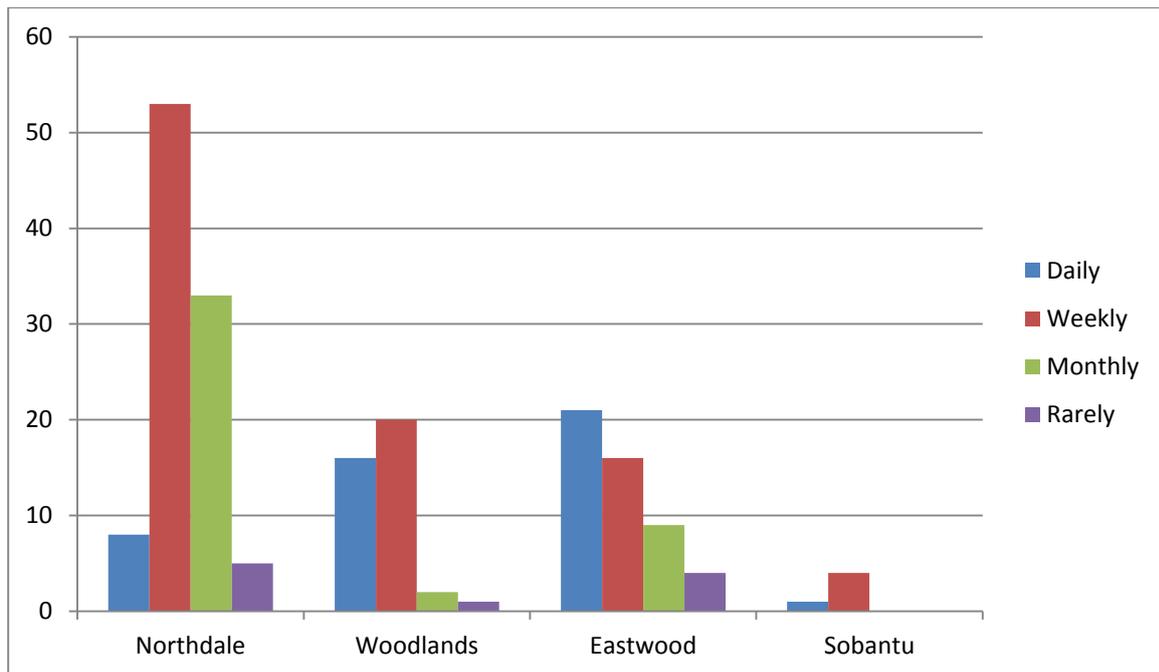
Woodlands Library (N = 42)

The highest number of respondents 32 (76%) think that the most important goal is to provide information, 23 (55%) feel that it is important for the library to provide services for children, 14 (33%) believe that the role of the library is to provide internet access, while 11(26%) feel that the role of the library is to provide leisure materials (books, magazines).

Sobantu Library (N = 5)

The total number of respondents five (100%) think that the most important goal is to provide information and the provision of internet facilities respectively, while four (80%) respondents believe that the goal of the libraries is to sponsor programs.

## Frequency of library visits



**Figure 16 (Question 13)**

### Northdale Library (N = 99)

Here we see that 52 (52%) of respondents visited weekly with a further 32(32%) visiting monthly. Only 8(8%) of respondents were daily visitors.

### Eastwood Library (N = 50)

It is interesting to note that 21(42%) of the respondents were daily visitors. A further 17(34%) of users visited the library on a weekly basis, with the remainder visiting only monthly and rarely.

### Woodlands Library (N = 42)

The majority of the respondents, 20(48%) visited on a weekly basis, while 16 (38%) respondents visited the library on a daily basis. This is far higher than the frequencies observed at any other branch.

### Sobantu (N = 5)

It was observed that four (80%) of the respondents visited the library weekly, while one (20%) of the respondents visits the library daily.

### Main reason for library visit

- Eastwood is the only library that offers Internet Services. It is crucial to note that the vast majority of users in Eastwood visited the library just to use the internet. It is quite clear that internet usage is an extremely highly valued service, and it is likely that the other three libraries would see far more usage if they too had internet, though this will be discussed fully in the next chapter.

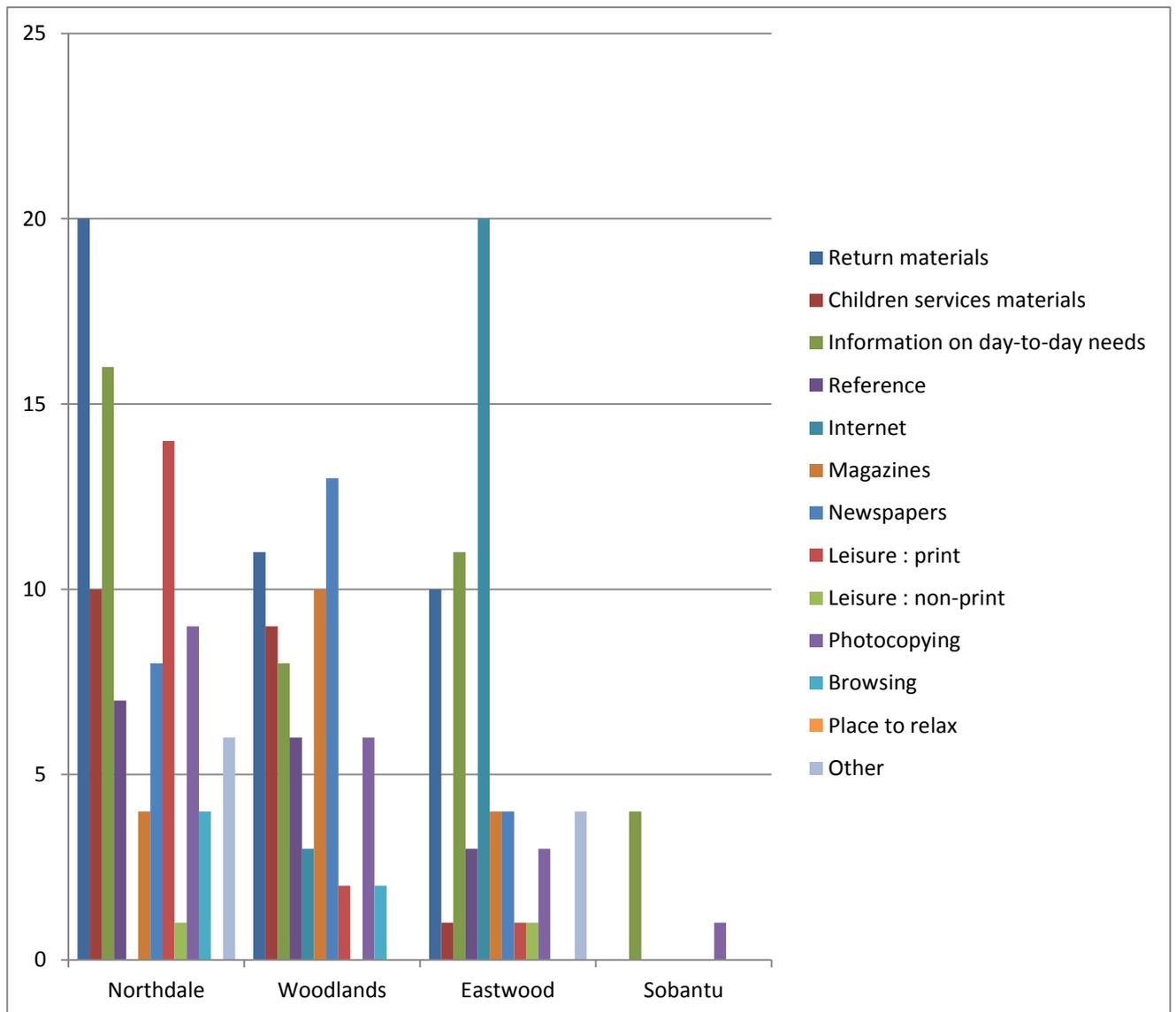


Figure 17 (Question 14)

### Northdale Library (N = 99)

Figure 17 indicates that for 20 (20%) of the respondents, the main reason for visiting the library was to return books, 16 (16 %) visited the library to search for information on their day-to-day needs, 14 (14%) visited the library to borrow leisure materials (print), 10 (10 %) visited the library for children's library services, nine (9%) visited in order to photocopy, eight (8 %) visited the library to read the newspapers and seven (7%) used the library for their reference materials. Six (6 %) ticked "other", as the choice. All six (6%) identified studying as their reason for visiting the library.

### Eastwood Library (N = 50)

Eighteen respondents (36%) visited the library for internet services, nine (18 %) respondents visited the library to obtain information on their day-to-day- information needs, six (12%) respondents visited the library to return materials, three (6%) respondents visited the library to read the magazine and newspapers respectively. A very small amount of respondents visited the library for the children's services, leisure materials (print and non-print) and photocopying. Three (6 %) respondents ticked "other" as their choice. All three (6%) identified studying as their reason for visiting the library.

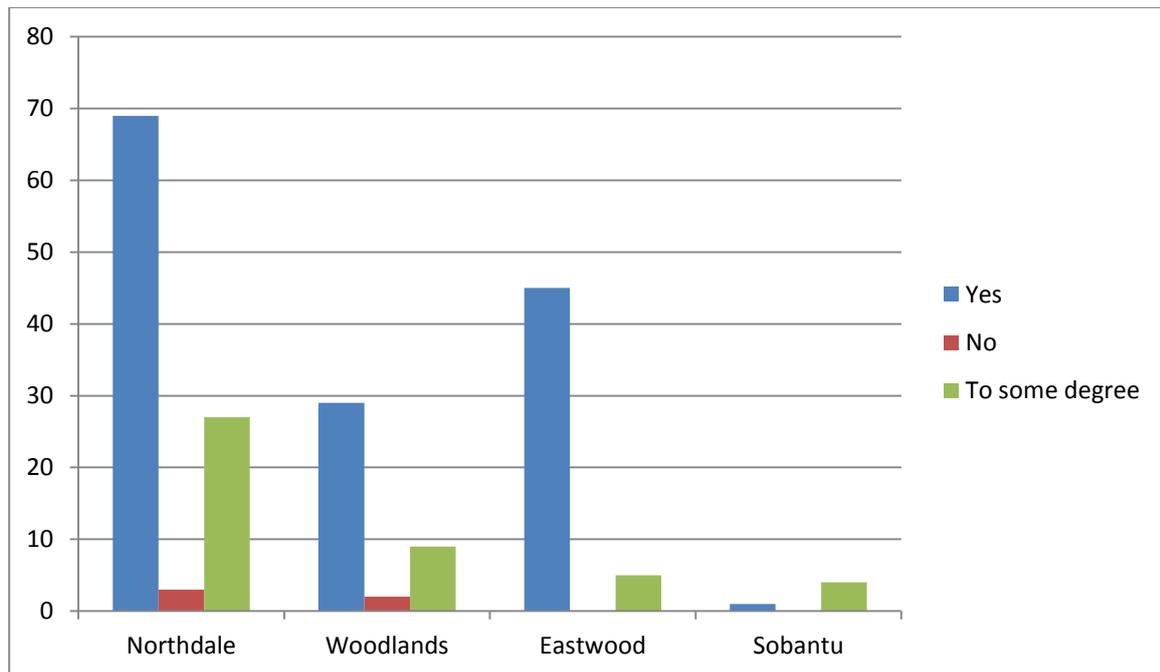
### Woodlands Library (N = 42)

The study indicates that the main reason for visiting the library was to obtain information pertaining to the respondents day-to- day information needs (eight respondents or 19 %), while seven (16%) respondents visited the library to utilise children' services and read newspapers respectively. Six (10 %) respondents visited the library to make photocopies, three (7 %) respondents utilised the reference section and two (5%) members visit pertained to use of leisure materials and browsing respectively. Three respondents (7%) indicated that they visited the library to use the internet, which is their error, as there is no internet available at this site.

### Sobantu (N = 5)

It is interesting to note that four out of five respondents in Sobantu came to the library for information on day- to-day needs.

## Fulfilment of information need at the library



**Figure 18 (Question 15)**

It is possible that a number of people thought that the purpose of the questionnaire was to test the operational efficiency of the library, rather than to determine if needs were met. As such, it is likely that people answered “yes” or “to some degree” even if their needs went unmet.

### Northdale Library (N = 99)

The majority of the respondents 69 (69%) felt that the library did provide what they needed on the day of their visit, 27 (27%) respondents said that to some degree the library provided what they needed and three (3%) respondents answered no.

### Eastwood Library (N = 50)

The majority of the respondents 45 (90%) felt that the library had provided what they needed and the day of their visit and five (10 %) answered to some degree.

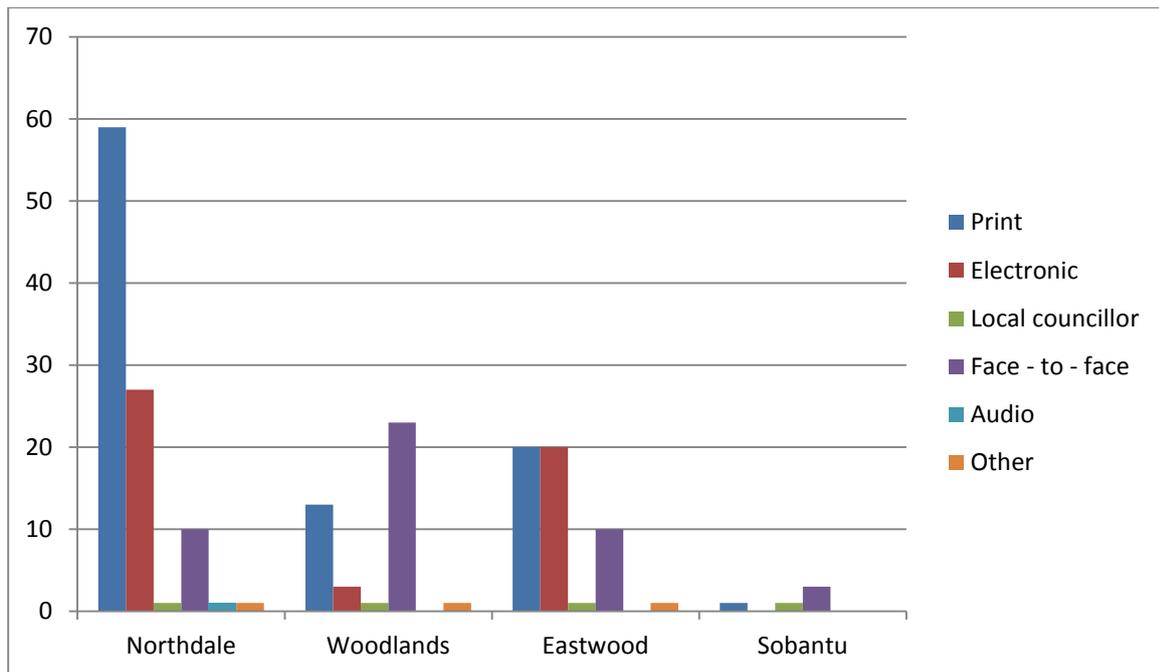
### Woodlands Library (N = 42)

Here again the majority of the respondents 29 (69%) felt that the library did provide what they needed, nine (21%) felt that the library provided what they needed to some extent and two (5%) said no.

Sobantu (N = 5)

Four respondents (80 %) felt that the library provided what they needed on the day of visit to some degree and 20 % answered yes.

## Most preferred format



**Figure 19 (Question 16)**

### Northdale Library (N = 99)

Figure 19 shows that the most preferred format listed by 59 (59%) respondents was the print format. It was followed by the electronic format reported by 27 (27%) respondents. The face-to-face format was preferred by 10 (10%) and the audio format was the least preferred format with only one (1%) respondent mentioning it.

Only one (1%) respondent chose the “other” option and chose DVD as the most preferred option.

### Eastwood Library (N = 50)

In Eastwood, print and electronic format were found to be equally highly valued mediums with 39 (78%) of respondents preferring these formats.

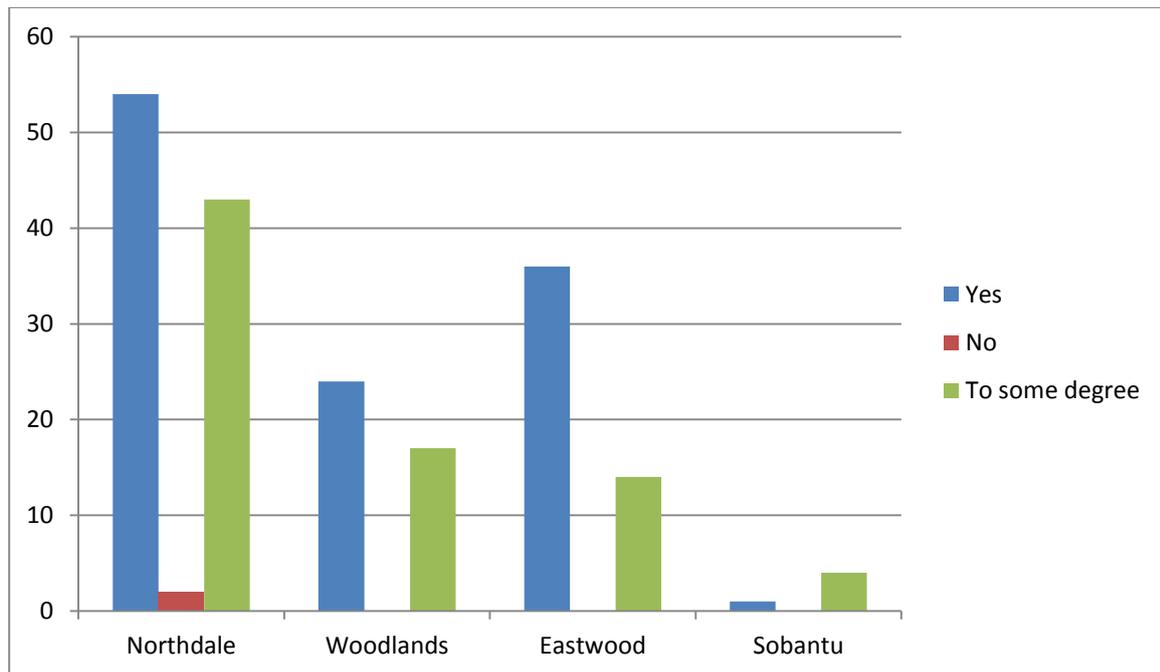
### Woodlands Library (N = 42)

A total of 22 (52%) of the respondents preferred face-to-face delivery of information over anything else, while three (7%) of the users in Woodlands preferred an electronic format.

Sobantu Library (N=5)

The majority of the respondents in Sobantu (three out of five) prefer their information given to them face-to-face.

## Libraries ability to meet information needs



**Figure 20 (Question 17)**

### Northdale Library (N = 99)

A majority of 54 (54%) respondents felt that their needs cannot be met at the library, 40 (43 %) respondents felt that their needs can be met to a certain degree and two (2%) felt that the library can meet their information needs.

### Eastwood Library (N = 50)

Most respondents 36 (72%) felt that their needs cannot be met at the library and 14 (28%) respondents feel that their needs can be met to a certain degree.

### Woodlands Library (N = 42)

Once more 24 (57 %) respondents felt that their needs cannot be met at the library and 18 (43%) respondents felt that these needs can be met to a certain degree.

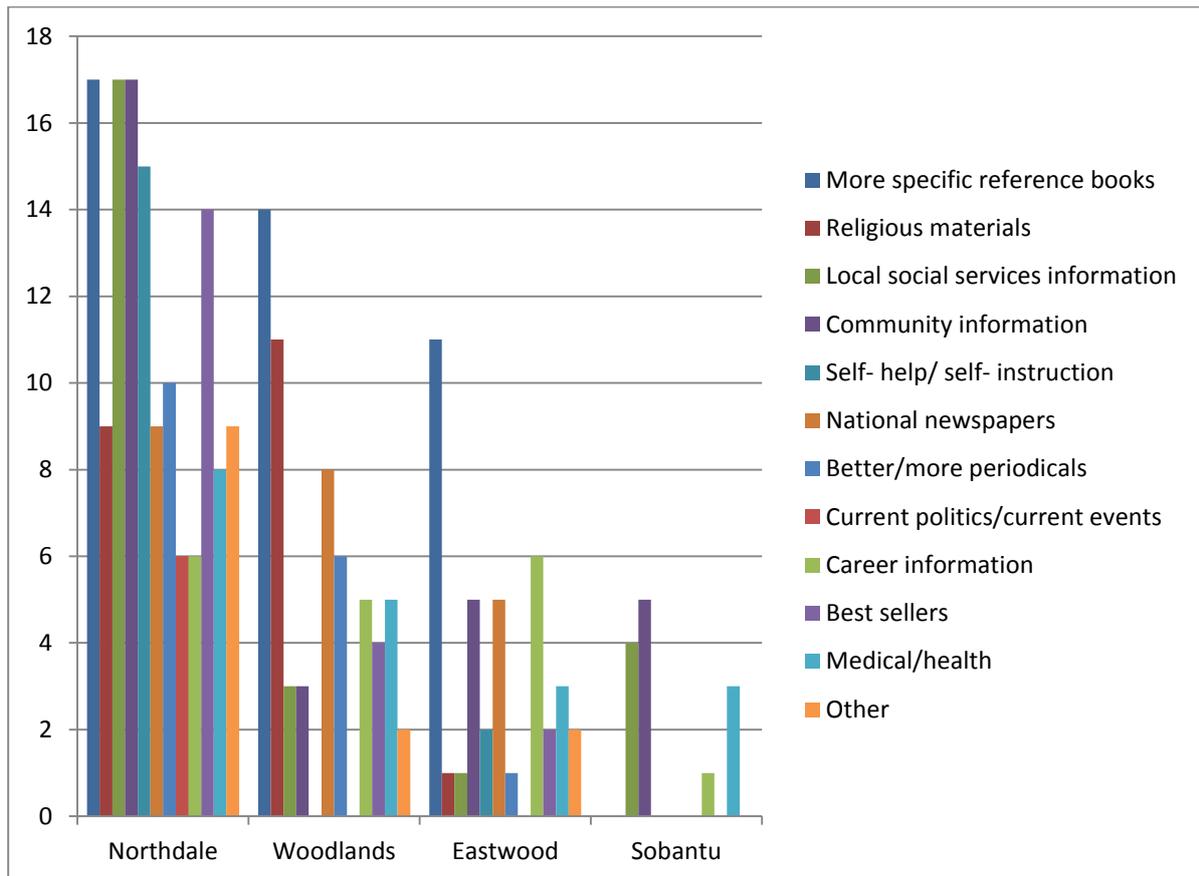
### Sobantu Library (N = 5)

A substantial four (80 %) respondents felt that their needs cannot be met to a certain degree and one (20 %) respondent felt that their needs can be met to a certain degree.

## Unmet information needs

Question 18 is linked to the previous question, Question 17. If respondents answered “yes” or “to some degree” to Question 17, they were asked to list up to 3 of those information needs.

Please note that in this question, there was a very high response rate in “other”. Almost all of the people who answered “other” elaborated that internet was the major unmet need.



**Figure 21 (Question 18) N=191**

\*Multiple responses received

Northdale Library (N = 94)

The results illustrated in Figure 21 reflect that the following three categories had 17 (18%) respondents requiring the following information needs:

- More specific reference books
- Local social services information
- Community information

Self-help/self-instruction information follows closely with 15 (16%) respondents requiring it, while 14 (15%) respondents listing best sellers as unmet information need.

The next three categories had nine (10%) respondents requiring the following information:

- Religious materials
- Periodicals
- Other (nine respondents)

Seven of the nine respondents listed the internet as an unmet information need, one respondent listed travel information as an unmet information need and one respondent listed science and technology materials as an unmet information need.

The next two categories had six (6%) respondents requiring the following information/materials:

- Information on current politics
- Career information

#### Eastwood Library (N = 50)

Figure 21 indicates that 11 (22%) respondents require additional reference books, six (12%) respondents listed career information as an unmet need.

The following categories had five (10%) requiring the following information/materials:

- Community information
- National newspapers

Three (6 %) respondents listed medical/health information as an unmet need.

The next three categories had one (2%) respondent that required the following information/materials:

- Religious materials
- Local social services information
- Periodicals

Two (5%) respondents chose the “other” option, but did not elaborate.

### Woodlands Library (N = 42)

Figure 21 indicates that 14 (33%) of the respondents listed more specific reference books as an information need, 11 (26%) respondents need more religious materials, eight (19%) respondents would like to have more national newspapers, five (12%) respondents require information on careers and four (10%) respondents would like more best sellers.

The next two categories had three (7%) respondents requiring the following information:

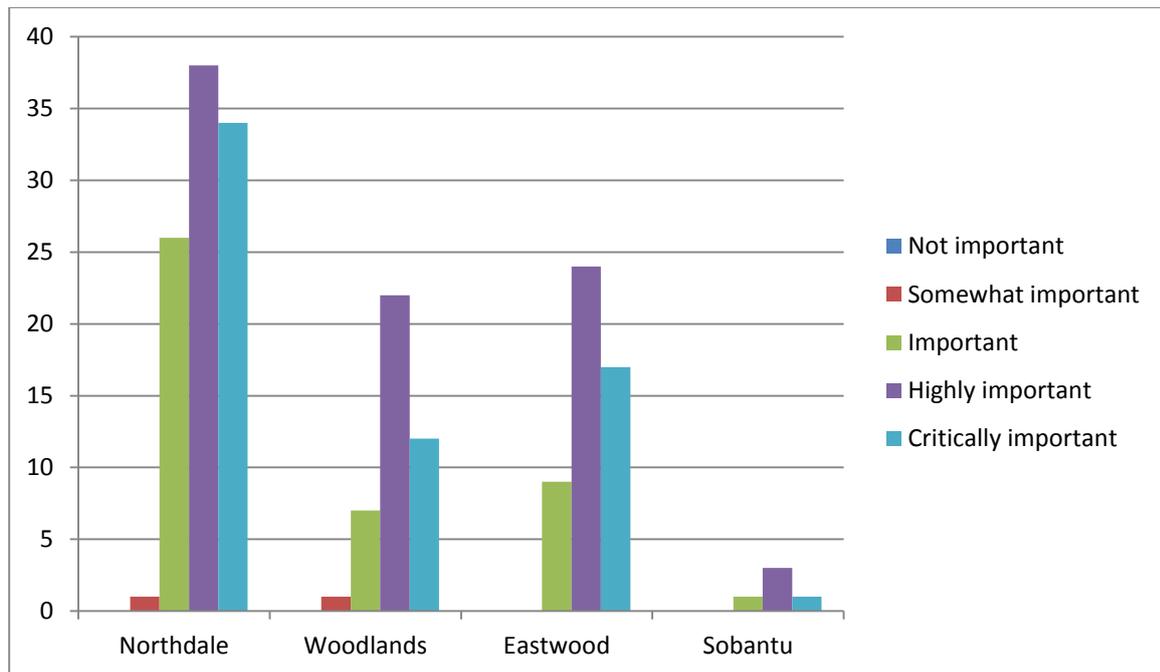
- Local social services information
- Community information

Two (5%) respondents chose the “other” option. The two respondents both stated that they require internet services.

### Sobantu Library (N = 5)

Figure 21 indicates that four (80%) of the respondents require community information, four (80%) respondents require local social services information, three (60%) respondents require medical/health information and one (20%) require information on careers.

## Importance of library services



**Figure 22 (Question 19)**

### Northdale Library (N = 99)

The results illustrated in Figure 22 indicated that 38 (38%) respondents regard the library as being highly important to the well-being of the community, 34 (34%) respondents regard the library as being critically important, 26 (26%) as being important and just one (1%) that regards the library as somewhat important and none of the respondents that the library was unimportant.

### Eastwood Library (N = 50)

Of the 50 respondents who answered, 24 (48%) respondents regard the library as being highly important to the well-being of the community, 17 (34%) respondents regard the information as being critically important and nine (18%) that regard the library as important.

### Woodlands Library (N = 42)

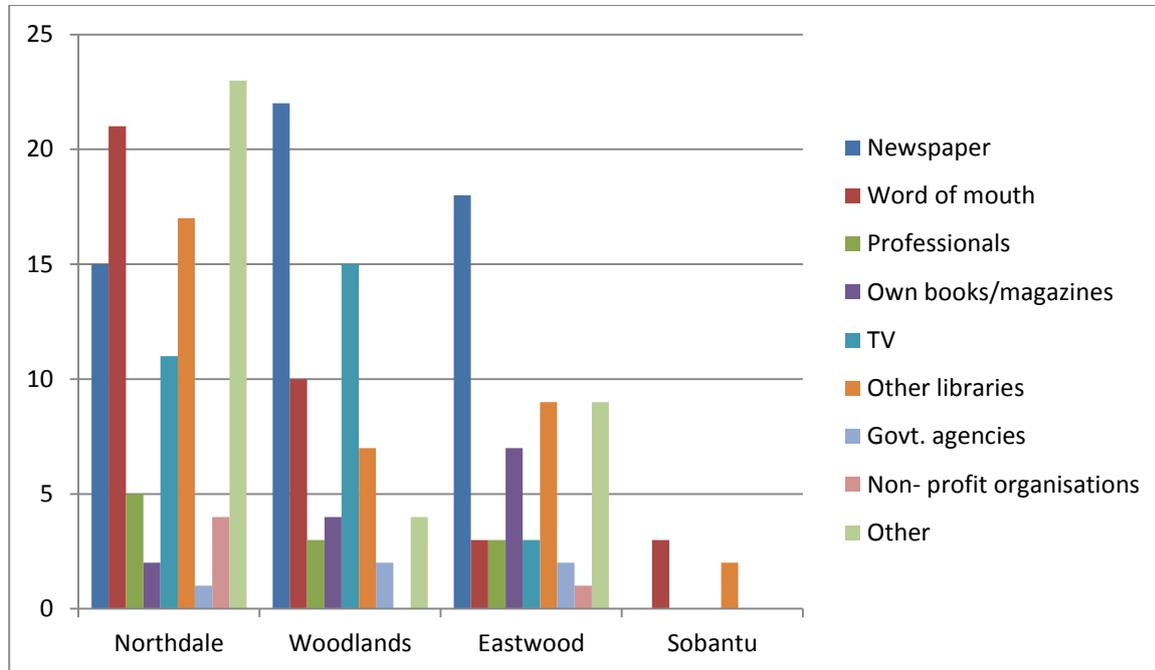
Again we see a similar pattern developing, where 22 (52%) of the respondents regard the library as being highly important to the well-being of the community, 12 (29%) respondents regard the library as being critically important, seven (17%) as being important and an insignificant one (2%) that regard the library as somewhat important.

Sobantu Library (N = 5)

Three of the five respondents feel that the role of the library is highly important.

## Major information sources

Once again, the group “other” had a high response rate. The majority of respondents elaborated that the internet (or Google) was their primary source of information.



**Figure 23 (Question 20) N=221**

\*Multiple responses received

### Northdale Library (N = 99)

A number of the respondents 23 (23%) prefer to get their information from the internet. Although the internet was not an option, 23 (23%) of the respondents who chose “other” as an option, indicated that they prefer to get their information from the internet. Word of mouth was the group with the second highest frequency with 21 (21%) users.

A further breakdown of the response groups is as follows:

Seventeen (17%) chose other libraries, 15 (15%) listed the newspaper and 11 (11%) listed the television as their source of information.

Five (5%) respondents chose professionals as their source of information, four (4%) chose NGO’s, two (2%) chose own books and one (1%) chose government agencies.

### Eastwood Library (N = 50)

In Eastwood Library, 18 (36%) respondents chose newspapers as the most preferred medium of information. Internet and other libraries had the next highest frequency of users, with nine (18%) respondents each.

A further breakdown of the response groups is as follows:

Seven (14%) respondents use their own books and magazines as sources of information.

The next three categories listed six (6%) respondents as using the following sources:

- Word of mouth
- Professionals
- Television

Two (4%) respondents use government agencies as a source of information, and one (2%) respondent used non-profit organisations.

### Woodlands Library (N = 42)

In Woodlands Library, some of the respondents chose more than one option.

There is a similar trend in Woodlands, with 21 (50%) of users preferring newspaper as the most preferred source of information, which was followed by TV with 15 (38%) choosing this option.

Word of mouth had 10 (23%) responses while a further seven (17%) respondents prefer to use other libraries as a source of information.

The next two categories were chosen by four (10%) respondents as sources of information:

- Own books
- Other

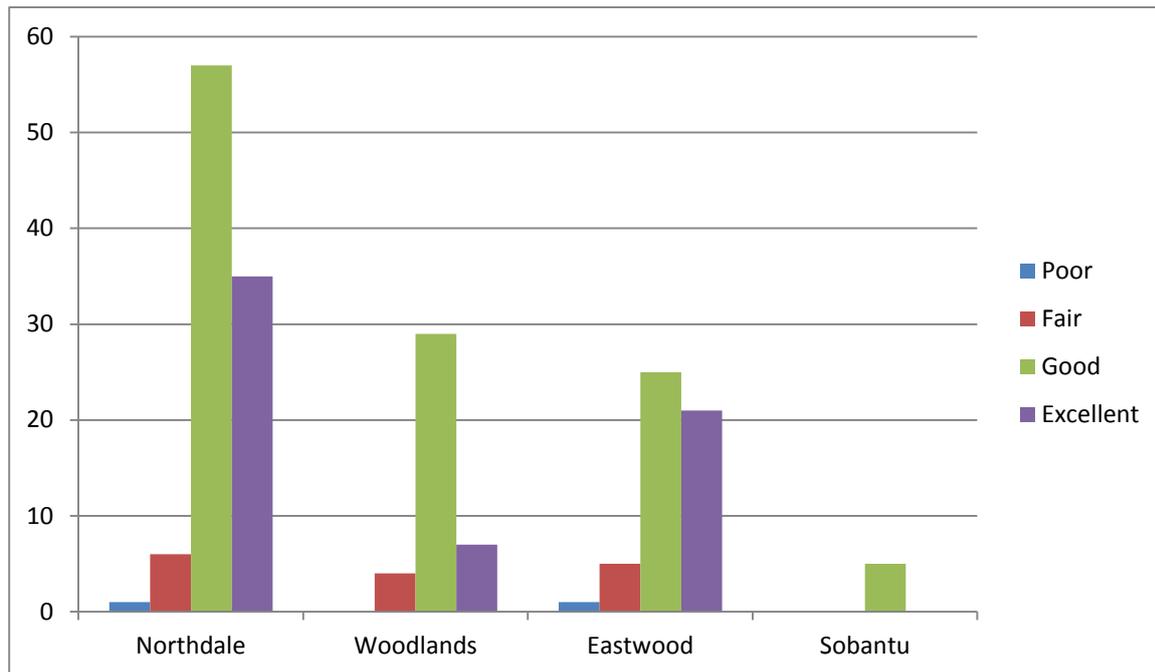
The four respondents who chose the “other” option mentioned the internet as a source of information.

Three (7%) respondents used professionals as sources of information and two (3%) respondents use government agencies as a source of information.

Sobantu Library (N=5)

Three users prefer word of mouth as a source of information, while two respondents use other libraries as a source of information.

## Ratings of the Library



**Figure 24 (Question 21)**

### Northdale Library (N = 99)

The results show that 57 (57%) respondents believe that the libraries offer a good service, 35 (35%) respondents rate the library as excellent, six (6%) respondents rate the library as fair and one (1%) as poor.

### Eastwood Library (N = 50)

Once again, the results show that 25 (50%) respondents believe that the library offers a good service, 21 (42%) respondents rate the library as excellent, five (10%) respondents rate the library as fair and one (2%) as poor.

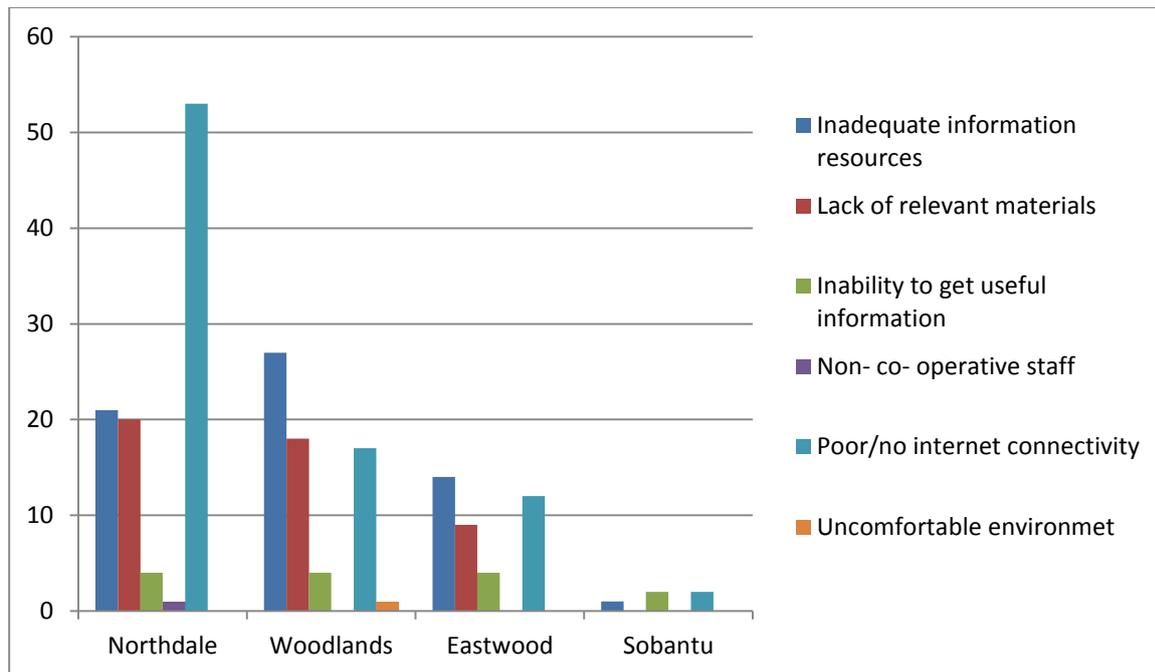
### Woodlands Library (N = 42)

The results show that 29 (69%) respondents believes that the library offers a good service, seven (17%) respondents rate the library as excellent, four (10%) as fair and two (4%) as poor.

### Sobantu Library (N = 5)

All five respondents (100%) rated the library services as good.

## Factors hindering library services



**Figure 25 (Question 22)**

### Northdale Library (N = 99)

Fifty three respondents (53%) agree that poor or no internet connectivity is a major factor that hinders library services, 21 (21 %) respondents believe that inadequate information resources hinder library services, 20 (20%) believe that it is a lack of relevant materials, four (4%) believe it is the inability to get useful information from the library most times and one (1%) respondent felt it was the non-cooperation of library staff.

### Eastwood Library (N = 50)

A number of respondents 19 (38%) agree that poor or no internet connectivity is a major factor that hinders library services, 14 (28%) respondents believe that inadequate information resources hinder library services, nine (18%) believe it is the lack of relevant materials and four (8%) believe it is inability to get useful information from the library most times and uncomfortable environment respectively. It is interesting to note that the only library that does have internet connectivity has nearly as many respondents noting poor internet connectivity as a problem, as many respondents from the other three libraries who had no internet connectivity at all.

Woodlands Library (N = 42)

The response to this question had 67 responses; therefore percentages were worked out on this basis.

A large number of the respondents 27 (40%) agree that inadequate information resources is a major factor that hinders library services, 18 (27%) respondents believe it is the lack of information resources, closely followed by 17 (25%) who believe it is poor or no internet connectivity, four (6%) believe it is the inability to get useful information from the library most times and one (2%) respondent who felt it was the uncomfortable environment.

Sobantu Library (N = 5)

Two library users (40%) believe it is both the poor or no internet connectivity and inability to get useful information from the library most times which hinders library services. One (20%) felt it was it was due to the inadequate information resources.

### **Question 23**

#### Comments

This question was an open ended question. Listed below are the two comments:

1. Lack of internet (22 respondents).
2. The library needs more prescribed textbooks (one respondent).

#### **4.4 Summary**

In this Chapter, results of the survey were presented according to the research questions that were posed in Chapter 1. The information needs and information-seeking behaviour of community library users in Msunduzi branch libraries were depicted largely in a bar graph format. The results of the survey have managed to sufficiently answer the research questions in Chapter 1. A number of gaps relating to information needs and information-seeking of library users were discovered and it is evident from the results of the questionnaires that Msunduzi branch libraries need to pay attention to the actual needs of their members.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion of results**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Chapter 5 reflects on the findings of the study presented in Chapter 4. These findings are considered in light of the research problem and objectives presented in Chapter 1 as well as the literature review.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of community library users in Msunduzi branch libraries, Pietermaritzburg.

The research intended to answer the following questions:

1. What are the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of community library users?
2. What are the factors that influence or shape their information needs and information-seeking behaviour?
3. What barriers do they encounter with regard to their information needs and information searching behaviour?
4. How do users meet their information needs?
5. How are these information needs being presently satisfied by the library?

This chapter discusses the information collated from the self-administered questionnaire that was presented in the previous chapter. The information behaviour model that was referred to in Chapter 2 is used as a framework for discussing the community user's information needs and information-seeking behaviour patterns in the Msunduzi branch libraries.

### **5.2 Demographic data of the respondents**

This section starts by giving a brief overview of the background information of the respondents. The survey results of the demographic information and attributes that are common to some of the population studied will be considered in relation to other factors observed in the study.

#### **5.2.1 Gender**

The results of the survey indicated that there were proportionally more female respondents than male respondents in Northdale, Woodlands and Sobantu Libraries. There were slightly more males than females in the respondents from the Eastwood Library. Applegate (n.d.) in

her study of gender differences in the use of a public library claims that men and women use public libraries in different ways and amounts. The study analyses over 1,200 user respondents as part of a strategic planning process for a public library. Male patrons in many aspects were simply below average in many areas (fewer visits, fewer services or resources used).

### **5.2.2 The age of the community library users**

In Northdale Library, there was a relatively even spread of users throughout all age groups. The largest frequency of users occurs in the 35-44 age groups with 33% of the total population. The main tendency in Woodlands was towards the older age groups with the highest frequency of responses (31%) occurring in the 55+ age group. This could be attributed to the fact that there is an old age home in close proximity to the library. It was observed in the Sobantu Library that two of the five respondents were between the ages of 35-44, while there were no respondents from the 55+ age group. This can be attributed to the distrust of public libraries by urban Blacks in South Africa who perceive them as integral parts of a repressive system (Bekker and Lategan 1988). This perception would apply especially to the older generation who were directly affected by the apartheid era. The results of Eastwood Library were surprising, with 46% of the respondents being from the 18-24 age group. This is somewhat surprising because Eastwood is a traditionally impoverished area that suffers from gang violence and drug/alcohol abuse amongst the youth. For this reason one would not expect the youth to utilise the library, perhaps this is an indication that the youth have a deep rooted desire to improve their lives and overcome their problems and the library is perceived to be a place that can assist.

### **5.2.3 Marital status**

In Northdale and Woodlands Library, the largest number of respondents was married, while Sobantu Library had an even distribution of single and divorced respondents with one respondent out of five being married. In Eastwood Library, the majority of the respondents (72%) were single. This can be attributed to the reason that the majority of the respondents were in the 18-24 age group.

### **5.2.4 Race group**

There were no surprising results with regard to Northdale, Woodlands and Sobantu Libraries. Northdale is a predominantly Indian area and the majority of the users were Indian, likewise,

Woodlands is a predominantly Coloured area, and as expected the majority of the users were Coloured, while Sobantu being a predominantly Black area had only Black respondents. Eastwood, which was previously regarded as a Coloured area, surprisingly had Blacks (58%) as the majority of respondents, followed by the Coloured community (40%).

There were no white respondents in any of the libraries.

Whilst Northdale, Eastwood and Woodlands Libraries had a combination of Indian, Coloured and Black respondents; Sobantu Library consisted of only Black membership. Based on her own experience, the researcher is of the opinion that the sample population of Sobantu is a true representation of the population of Sobantu Library.

### **5.2.5 Level of education**

In comparison to Eastwood, Woodlands and Sobantu, Northdale can be viewed as a comparatively affluent area and has traditionally been regarded as an “Indian area”. Since the 1994 democratic election, this area has lost much of its race classification. This area has attracted numerous families from other race groups. However, the majority of people remaining here are still Indians. A large number of businesses, schools, wards, clinics and religious centres are still run only by Indians. Under the apartheid education system, the non-whites were given an education that was of a lower standard compared with that of white people. Indians and Coloureds received an education that was of a decent standard, which in turn allowed them to occupy professional and semi-professional jobs. Black’s however were given Bantu education which restricted them to an almost subservient role in society. The Indian community managed to maintain a good socio-economic standing in South Africa. As such, most Indian areas thrived (to an extent) despite the adverse conditions. Northdale is no exception.

Eastwood and Woodlands can be considered to have similar socio-economic backgrounds, with Eastwood perhaps experiencing more severe problems than Woodlands. However, Eastwood has a relatively high level of education, while in Woodlands, 64% of the observed population did not have a matric qualification. The reason for this could be attributed to the fact that the responses from Eastwood were from a younger age group, while the majority responses from the Woodlands population occurred in the 55+ age group. It would stand to reason that these respondents were educated during the apartheid era, therefore did not have the same opportunities as the younger generation in Eastwood.

From the respondents we observed, we can extrapolate that Sobantu has a comparatively low level of education. This is of course not a commentary on the people of Sobantu, but rather the legacy of apartheid (Sobantu was, in fact, the first black township in Pietermaritzburg).

### **5.2.6 Occupation**

Northdale and Woodlands Libraries had a high frequency of employed respondents, while Sobantu and Eastwood Libraries had a majority of unemployed respondents. This is in keeping with the geographical areas and socio-economic standards. Unemployment is a major factor that affects information needs, as most unemployed people's greatest concern is how and where to get a job or find income generating activities.

In Eastwood Library, a large number of the respondents were students (42%). Here again this has an impact on information needs and information-seeking behaviour. Most students like to know or find out where and how they can improve themselves through career or vocational training, as well as how to obtain educational financial aid. This is especially true in the disadvantaged areas. Naturally, students would regard reference sources such as books required for study and general reference works as important.

It was also interesting to note that Northdale had a higher frequency rate of housewives than the other libraries. Once again, this could affect their information needs, as they might require more family related material, eg, family rearing, running a home, housekeeping and so forth.

There were a number of self-employed respondents in the Northdale, Eastwood and Woodlands Libraries. Self-employed residents in these communities could be engaged in small businesses such as running hair salons, motor mechanics, selling vegetables, buying and selling various products and groceries, sewing and so forth. This particular group of people would require information pertaining to their activities.

### **5.2.7 Size of household**

In general, respondents from the four libraries had households of between 2-5 persons. The reasoning behind this question was to ascertain the socio-economic status of the respondents.

### **5.2.8 Access to electricity**

Here again, the researcher wished to ascertain the socio-economic status of the respondents. In Northdale, 100% of the respondents had access to electricity, while 98% of respondents in Eastwood had access to electricity. In Woodlands, 86% of the respondents have access to electricity. This is interesting to note as it suggests that Woodlands has experienced some sort of socio-economic decline relative to Eastwood.

In Sobantu, 60% have access to electricity.

### **5.2.9 Library membership**

A proportional number of questionnaires were given out in each branch according to the total number of registered members. Northdale Library had the largest number of registered members, followed by Eastwood, Woodlands and then the Sobantu Library. Northdale is traditionally the suburb with the highest frequency of educated people amongst the four observed districts (this is supported by the results observed in the study). As such, it stands to reason that people would visit the library more often for education/work reasons in this suburb. Eastwood has the second highest membership because it has internet, which is in great demand, especially among the youth (majority of Eastwood library users are students). Woodlands Library has a membership is comprised consisting mostly of the older generation; there were in fact only two students at the library. Woodlands has the third highest number of members and is a slightly under resourced library in terms of student needs.

Sobantu Library is unfortunately the least utilised library. There is a combined level of illiteracy as well as a culture that is not particularly prone towards reading. This is no surprise as the black community suffers from crippling deep seated issues such as immense poverty, unemployment and crime. Furthermore, Bekker and Lategan (1988) claim that that there is a deep distrust of public libraries by urban blacks in South Africa who see them as integral parts of a repressive system.

## **5.3 Information needs of the respondents**

This section will discuss the factors affecting the information needs of the respondents in the questionnaire.

### **5.3.1 Reason for requiring information**

The main reason given by the respondents for requiring information in both Northdale and Eastwood Libraries is for educational purposes. This is in line with the results that reveal that both the above libraries have a large number of students that use the library.

Woodlands Library deviates from this pattern in that the majority of the users use the library for leisure purposes, followed by education and personal needs. There could be two possible reasons for this, one being that the majority of the users belong to the 55+ age group and the second is that Woodlands Library does not have a tertiary section for students to use.

The 55+ user group would most probably have more time on their hands and perhaps less money, therefore leisure materials would be popular amongst them as this provides a relaxing and inexpensive way to pass their time. Turock (1981) states that the materials and services elders may want and need include information in preparation for and adjusting to retirement, including both financial and leisure issues.

Once again, Sobantu Library differs from the other libraries in that 3 (60%) of the respondents use the library for personal matters and one (20%) uses the library for work and educational purposes respectively. Bekker and Lategan (1988) examined the information needs of residents of black urban communities and townships. They identified problems associated with the labour market, the housing delivery process and transport as three areas in which difficulties were experienced. These problems could be indicative of some of the personal matters that are evident in the community of Sobantu, as well as the following issues identified by Bekker and Lategan, which include, access to health services, water, sanitation and schools. Kaniki (1995) refers to personal matters such as health issues, social problems, family matters and legal matters.

### **5.3.2 Day-to-day information needs**

Respondents were asked to tick the most important needs. As such multiple responses were received for this question.

A very clear pattern is emerging with Northdale, where it can be seen that education is regarded as a priority. Education was regarded as the most important information need by 20% of the respondents, while 44 (15%) require information on business/job opportunities and 43 (15%) regard information on health/medical services as important. Quite rightly, libraries that exist in the more advantaged areas, will have members that will regard

education as an important information need, while in libraries that serve a population such as Sobantu, education needs can often be regarded as a luxury. A hungry, thirsty, homeless or cold person is unlikely to be interested in a book.

Eastwood Library follows a similar trend to that of Northdale, where it would appear that the younger generation is keen to advance themselves and regard education as the key to a better life. Harmse (1985:7) actually defines education as “an activity or happening by means of which the way of life of a living being is changed and directed towards his effective survival”. There was also a very high unemployment rate in Eastwood, which means that there are possibly a number of users who are trying to uplift themselves.

In Woodlands the majority of the respondents (21%) required information on business/job opportunities, followed by 17% respondents who regard education as an important information need. This was closely followed by 16% who require information on health/medical services. It was interesting to note there was almost the same number of self-employed respondents as that of unemployed respondents. This number of self-employed and unemployed respondents could explain the reason why information on business/job opportunities is a priority in Woodlands. Although only 5% of the respondents were students in Woodlands, 17% of the respondents still regard education as an information need. This could imply that there is a need for a tertiary section in the Woodlands Library, which could fulfil the education needs of the community. In terms of 16% of respondents who require information on health/medical services, this could be explained by the large number of respondents who belong to the 55+ age group. Frase (2004) states that the older generation (55+) usually have information needs such as health, long-term care, leisure activities, housing and accommodation, consumer information, employment, volunteer, and educational opportunities which were also of interest to seniors.

In Sobantu Library, four of the respondents (27%) require information on business/job opportunities, followed by 20% of the respondents who regard information on family matters as being important. Two (13%) of the respondents agreed that they require information on education, legal matters, and local and community and events' news. Here again, the large number of respondents requiring information on business/job opportunities is as a result of the high rate of unemployment. Family matters include the well-being of a family, parenting, divorce, violence in the home, substance or drug abuse, and so forth.

### **5.3.3 Most important function of the library**

Respondents were asked to tick the three most important functions of the library. However, in every single branch, this question was incorrectly answered. People did not tick the correct amount of times/did not tick at all.

As we can see from the graph in Figure 15, a very clear pattern arises. The two most highly valued functions in each branch were the provision of information and internet access. Services for children were also a very highly valued function, though not to the same extent as the other two.

As suggested by Fouche (1971:219-221) and from the questionnaire it is evident that the categories of information that should be offered in the library include:

- Education
- Leisure activities for children and adults (print and non-print)
- Personal, family and community concerns
- Travel
- Physical and spiritual health and welfare
- Consumers, trade and business
- Finance and law

In all the branches, internet access was regarded as an important function in the library. According to Manama in Nothegaan (2012), for students to be successful they need to have a global view of the future, and the internet is one of, if not the most important tool a person needs to use in order to be successful. In the researcher's opinion, this statement does not just apply to students, but the population at large.

In many communities, and in the communities in this study, libraries are the only place where any person regardless of education or skill level, can have access to information and the internet free of charge. Unfortunately, in three of the libraries in this study, namely Northdale, Woodlands and Sobantu, there is no internet access. Although Eastwood Library has an Internet Cafe that offers internet access with five computers, most often than not, there are technological problems that affect internet connectivity. Through the internet, individuals can search for jobs, compile their CV's, access government programs, learn new skills

through on-line programs, research important health issues, and engage in social interactions with family members and friends.

Internet access in the library would have a positive effect on library users in areas such as health, employment, education, income, and finance and so forth.

Regarding children's services, according to IFLA (2003), library services for children have never been as important for children and their families all over the world, as they are today. Access to the knowledge and the multicultural riches of the world, as well as lifelong learning and literacy skills have become a priority of our society. The article continues to add that a quality children's library equips children with lifelong learning and literacy skills, enabling them to participate and contribute to the community. It should constantly respond to the increasing changes in the society and meet the information, cultural and entertainment needs of all children.

#### **5.3.4 Frequency of library visits**

In Northdale Library, 52% of the respondents visited the library weekly, with a further 32% visiting monthly. Only 8(8%) of respondents were daily visitors.

It was interesting to note that in Eastwood Library, 42% users were daily visitors. This could perhaps be because of the high number of students using this library. The public library is often called "the peoples university" because it is available to all, regardless of age, skill level or ability to pay. This does, indeed apply to the Eastwood Library.

In Woodlands Library, it is important to note that 86% of users visited on either a daily or weekly basis (considered to be regular by the researcher). This is far higher than the frequencies observed at any other branch. Here again, this can be explained by the fact that the majority of the respondent were over 55. This would imply that a number of these respondents would be retired and therefore have time on their hands to visit the library. The library could be considered to be an important part of their daily lives.

It was observed that 80% of the respondents in Sobantu visited the library weekly, while 20% of the respondent visits the library daily. One of the reasons for this could be the high level of unemployment, and the fact that the library keeps the daily paper and various local newspapers so the users can view the employment vacancies.

#### **5.3.5 Main reason for library visit**

Eastwood is the only library that offers internet services. It is crucial to note that the majority of users in Eastwood visit the library just to use the internet. It is quite clear that internet usage is an extremely highly valued service, and it is likely that the other three libraries would see far more usage if they provided internet services.

The typical library user continues to perceive the public library as a place to either borrow or return material. Therefore it was expected that this would be a main reason for a library visit. However, this proved to be true only in Northdale Library.

What was interesting to note in all four libraries was the number of respondents visiting the library for their day-to-day needs. People need accessible information in order to solve problems in their everyday lives. This information provides them with a sense of security, achievement and control. Day-to-day needs could include any of the following topics:

- Employment
- Housing
- Legal matters
- Education
- Studying
- Health care
- Crime and safety
- Financial matters
- Religious matters
- Child care

It is interesting to note that four out of five respondents in Sobantu came to the library for information on day- to-day needs. This could be as a result that Sobantu is one of the most disadvantaged of the communities; therefore, the population would most likely experience numerous day-to-day problems.

This question had an “other” option. In Northdale and Eastwood Libraries, where respondents chose the “other” option, they all listed studying as the reason for their library visit.

### **5.3.6 Did this library provide what you needed today?**

The majority of the respondents in the Northdale, Eastwood and Woodlands Libraries felt that the library did provide what they needed, while the minority of the respondents felt that the library did to a degree provide what they needed.

Information need is defined as a state or process started when one perceives that there is a gap between the information and knowledge available to solve a problem and the actual solution of the problem. However, it is important to recognise the fact that often an individual does not recognise that they do in fact have an information need.

Out of the four libraries, Sobantu Library does face the most challenges in terms of maintenance, library stock and staffing issues; therefore, this could be the reason for the slight user dissatisfaction.

## **5.4 Information-seeking behaviour**

This section of the questionnaire contained questions related to information-seeking behaviour.

### **5.4.1 Most preferred format**

In Northdale Library the most preferred format listed by 59% respondents was the print format. It was followed by the electronic format reported by 27% respondents.

In Eastwood Library, print and electronic formats were the most highly valued mediums with 78% of respondents preferring these formats with the electronic format being slightly more preferred. There are two reasons why we see that electronic medium is preferred over print in Eastwood. The first is that Eastwood is the only branch with internet access, and you can access relevant information more easily from the internet than you can from print. The second reason is that Eastwood has a majority of young users (between 18-24). Young people generally prefer their information in electronic format as they are more comfortable with it.

In Woodlands we see something very interesting. A total of 52% of the respondents preferred face-to-face delivery of information over anything else. This is not a result that was expected. The possible reason for this is that the vast majority of Woodlands users were in fact of the older generation (45 +). This generation is generally highly uncomfortable with technology, which is why only 7% of users in Woodlands preferred an electronic format. They are generally more comfortable with face-to-face interaction.

It is interesting to note that not a single person in Sobantu was comfortable with an electronic format. This could be due to the fact that many households do not have computers and have had minimal exposure to them growing up (especially in areas like Sobantu). This is indicated by the results observed. We see that the people of Sobantu also prefer their information given to them face-to-face (three out of five users preferred this). September (1993) refers to disadvantaged communities, especially those with low literacy levels, so that individuals when faced with the need for “coping” information, seek out sources which are primarily informal, for example community organizations such as churches, legal aid services and so forth.

#### **5.4.2 Do you feel your needs can be met at this library?**

A majority of 54% respondents at Northdale Library agree that their needs cannot be met at the library, 43% of respondents feel that these needs can be met to a certain degree and two (2%) feel that the library can meet their information needs. The reason for such a high degree of uncertainty is probably the lack of internet at the Northdale Library (which we know is probably becoming the most highly demanded service of a public library).

In Eastwood Library most respondents (72%) agree that their needs cannot be met at the library and 28% of respondents feel that these needs can be met to a certain degree. Eastwood had the highest proportion of users who felt that their needs could not be met.

In Woodlands and Sobantu Libraries, the majority of the users agree that the library cannot meet their needs.

#### **5.4.3 Unmet information needs**

This question was linked to Question 17. If respondents answered “no” or “to some degree” to Question 17, they were asked to list up to three of those information needs.

Please note that in this question, there was a very high response rate in “other”. Almost all of the people who answered “other” elaborated that internet access was the major unmet need. For this reason, it was an error not to include an “internet connectivity” group in the answer boxes. What we can clearly tell from this however, is that internet access is fast becoming a highly demanded service.

In Northdale, Eastwood and Woodlands Libraries, a large number of respondents identified specific reference material as an unmet information need. Similarly, respondents from Northdale and Eastwood Libraries also listed community information as an unmet information need. Community Information is ‘information for everyday living’ and should provide information to the public about local community groups, organisations, services, programs, courses, facilities and events that are available within the community.

In line with the demographic data of respondents from Eastwood Library, 15% of the respondents identified career information as an unmet information need. It follows that Eastwood Library has a user population that highly values education and study opportunities.

In Woodlands, the second largest request was for religious material. Here again, this can be attributed to fact that the majority of the respondents were of the older generation.

All five respondents from Sobantu Library required community information. Community information has already been discussed, and the same would apply to the users of Sobantu.

#### **5.4.4 Importance of the library**

In all four libraries, the majority of the respondents regarded the library as a highly important institution. Despite the different socio-economic levels and the inequalities that some portions of the communities experience, it is very inspiring that these communities still regard the library as a highly important gateway to knowledge.

#### **5.4.5 Major information sources**

In Question 20 respondents were asked to indicate what their major source of information was.

Once again, the group “other” had a high response rate. The majority of respondent’s elaborated that the internet (or Google) was their primary source of information. It must be noted that one of the most important information sources identified by this study, the internet, is not provided by three out of four of the libraries studied. These libraries therefore are not able to satisfy many users’ information needs.

Out of the four areas observed, Northdale residents were the most likely to have internet connectivity in their homes. Respondents from Northdale preferred to get their information

online, with 23% of the users preferring this. Interestingly enough, word of mouth was the group with the second highest frequency with 21% of users.

Eastwood Library respondents showed a very clear preference towards the newspaper as the most preferred medium of information. It is likely that internet was far less popular here (even though the users are mostly the youth) because Eastwood has very poor internet connectivity in the residential area. As such, internet and other libraries had the next highest frequency of users, with 18% respondents each.

In Woodlands Library, some of the respondents chose more than one option therefore the number of responses was 67 instead of 42. The percentages were based on 67 responses instead of 42.

As previously discussed, the Woodlands Library is mostly used by the older generation, who traditionally prefer newspapers as their preferred method of receiving information. This is reflected in the data, with 31% users preferring the newspaper. Surprisingly, TV (which is generally not thought of as being highly used by the older generation, was the second highest response group with 22% of respondents preferring this format.

There were no surprises in Sobantu, with three out of the five respondents choosing word of mouth as their preferred source of information. Kaniki (1995) in his study of two disadvantaged communities discovered that the most heavily used information provider in both communities was personal communication involving friends, relatives or neighbours. One of the main sources of information in disadvantaged communities is “word -of-mouth or hearsay” (Bekker & Lategan 1988: 66).

#### **5.4.6 User satisfaction**

The majority of the respondents of the four libraries rated the library as good. However, Du Plooy (1988:5) suggest that while information-alert persons may refer to the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of an information provider based upon such criteria as accuracy of information provided, timeliness of information and so forth, the information poor seem to be easily satisfied by an information provider as long as perceived appropriate information is rendered.

## **5.5 Barriers to information-seeking**

The following barriers or problems were identified by respondents:

### **5.5.1 Factors hindering library services**

The majority of respondents in both Northdale (58%) and Eastwood (38%) libraries agree that poor or no internet connectivity is a major factor that hinders library services, followed by inadequate information resources.

In Woodlands Library, the majority of respondents (40%) agree that inadequate information resources is a major factor that hinders library services, 27% respondents believe it is the lack of information resources, closely followed by 25% who believe it is poor or no internet connectivity.

Two library users (40%) in Sobantu believed it was both the lack of or poor internet connectivity and the inability to get useful information from the library most times and one (20%) felt it was the inadequate information resources.

## **5.6. Additional comments**

This question was an open-ended question regarding additional factors. Listed below are the comments:

1. Lack of internet
2. The library needs more prescribed textbooks.

## **5.7. Limitations**

The study was confined to the community users of Eastwood, Northdale, Woodlands and Sobantu Libraries. Although there are eight branch libraries, due to the limited timeframe and cost of travelling, only the four branches mentioned above were chosen. Furthermore, the study utilized the convenience sampling method which does not represent the wider population. The population size was deemed adequate for the study, although it would seem that Sobantu Library had a small number of respondents.

## **5.8 Summary**

In this Chapter, the data presented in Chapter 4 are discussed. The information needs of community library users and their information-seeking behaviour in Msunduzi branch libraries were identified and depicted using graphs.

The next Chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study based on these findings.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The purpose of the study was to identify the information needs and information seeking behaviour of community library users in Msunduzi branch libraries, Pietermaritzburg. In this

final chapter, a summary of the study will be given. Conclusions and recommendations will be made in response to the analysis of data and interpretation of results covered in Chapters 4 and 5.

## **6.2 Revisiting the research questions**

The following research questions formed the basis of the investigation.

1. What are the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of community library users?
2. What are the factors that influence their information needs and information-seeking behaviour?
3. What barriers do they encounter with regard to their information needs and information searching behaviour?
4. How do users fulfil their information needs?
5. How are their information needs being catered for by the library?

## **6.3 Summary of the study**

This thesis began with an introductory chapter which provided a background to the study, outlined the research problem, the purpose and objectives of the study, the rationale for the scope and limitations. The definition of key terms used and a brief outline of the structure of the study were also provided.

Chapter 2 involved exploring the conceptual framework used for the study and the literature review relating to the information needs and information seeking behaviour of community library users in Msunduzi branch libraries. The conceptual framework was based on Wilson's 1981 second model of information behaviour.

Chapter 3 described the research methodology adopted in this study. This included sampling methods, the size and characteristics of the population, data collection methods and analytical procedures.

Chapter 4 provided the presentation of the results and the analysis of the data. Information collected from the respondents was reported in the form of tables and graphs.

Chapter 5 discussed the results of study which were presented in Chapter 4. The discussion of the findings was considered in the light of the research questions underpinning the study, the literature review and the conceptual framework.

## **6.4 Conclusions**

Based on the arguments and findings of the research presented in the earlier chapters of the study, the following conclusions are made.

### **6.4.1 Information needs**

As communities change, so do the information needs of people. Therefore, according to Kaniki (1995), a resource centre /community or public library, cannot continue to attract its current and new or potential users without tailoring information and resources to meet the “new needs” of the community. Regardless of the fact that there was a strong expressed need for all categories of information, each individual respondent had specific information needs. Therefore it can be concluded that people have specific information needs which relate to the specific problems they face and the decision they have to make. It was identified that respondent’s occupation, age, and level of education influenced the need for some types of information.

For a detailed analysis of the information needs, please refer to Chapter 5.

### **6.4.2 Information-seeking behaviour**

#### **6.4.2.1 Most preferred format**

It is evident that in the four communities the most preferred format is related to the demographic and socio-economic status of the communities. However, it is important to note that collections and services in all the branch libraries have to include all types of appropriate media and modern technologies as well as traditional materials. If users were to be offered various formats, as in the case of internet access at Eastwood Library, they would most likely use this format.

#### **6.4.2.2 Information sources**

The choice of information sources among the respondents was influenced by demographic, social, cultural and economic factors. The demographic variables which influenced the

choice of information sources included age and level of education. The researcher also recognised that in seeking information individuals often use more than one information provider.

In disadvantaged communities, especially where literacy is low, one of the main sources of information is “word of mouth” (Bekker & Lategan: 66) indicating the enduring power of oral tradition. Kaniki (1995) confirms this by stating that the most heavily used information provider in his study was personal communication involving friends, relatives or neighbours.

#### **6.4.3 Satisfaction of needs**

The findings of the study revealed that the majority of the users felt that the library did not provide what they needed, while a minority agreed that the library did provide what they require. However, this might also be due to the lack of awareness of what an information provider should provide, as Du Plooy (1985:5) in Kaniki suggests. He states that it may also be the nature of most “information poor” who have “limited access to information, but also less aware of the value of information”. He continues to suggest that “while information-alert persons may refer to the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of an information provider based on such criteria as accuracy of information provided, timeliness of the information, time spent in accessing and using the information and so on, the information poor seem to be easily satisfied by an information provider, as long as appropriate information or assistance is rendered” (Du Plooy 1985:5).

#### **6.4.4 Factors hindering library services**

As we can clearly observe from the data, the major factors hindering library services are those relating to limited resources. Internet access was the major concern in all branches, along with a lack of adequate information sources.

### **6.5 Recommendations**

In the light of the findings of the previous chapters and the conclusions made above, the following recommendations are made to assist in improving information services rendered to community library users in Msunduzi branch libraries. This will be followed by recommendations for further research.

#### **6.5.1 Community information services**

There should be a concerted effort made to offer community information services at Msunduzi branch libraries. Public libraries, being the libraries of communities can play an important role in providing effective community information services. These are the only institutions entrusted with the duties of providing the right information to users at the right time, thereby helping people to deal with daily problem solving or improving the quality of their lives. Although the public library and branch libraries, do offer some form of community information, they need to extend these services. Truter (1982) and Cilliers(1987) in Aitchison (1991) state that it is the duty of the public library to collect, organise and provide up-to-date local information that is not necessarily neatly encased in books, and to provide (even to repackage) such information in a form that is appropriate to the skills of the information seeker. Community information for the branches should include but is not limited to the following information:

- Health
- Housing
- Income
- Economic opportunity
- Education
- Employment
- Family and personal
- Community concerns

Bunch (1987) maintains that the library can help disadvantaged groups in a variety of ways, including the production of directories of local community information, information packs in specific subjects, current awareness bulletins, updated fact sheets, advice to groups on obtaining and organising information, loaning collections of books, helping groups publicise services by organising displays or producing leaflets.

Some of the materials that could possibly be collected for a community-based information service in the branch libraries include the following:

- Pamphlets on issues of local concern for example, AIDS, crime, and so forth.
- Posters on issues of local concern for example substance abuse, teenage pregnancy and so forth.
- Lists of local functionaries.

### **6.5.2 Library stock**

Findings from the research indicate that there were some gaps in the library collection. Therefore, the researcher recommends that the library needs to develop high quality collections that reflect the needs of particular users. Users indicated the need for more specific reference books, religious material, DIY books, self-help books, health and study materials. According to the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (2000) “high quality and relevance to local needs and conditions are fundamental”.

### **6.5.3 Internet**

Internet access was cited as a critical need and it should be the goal of the Msunduzi Municipal Library to ensure that all its members in all its libraries, especially in disadvantaged communities have access to information through technology in public libraries. In an age where economic, educational, health and social opportunities increasingly depend on access to the internet, lack of access means lack of opportunity. Therefore it is imperative that all the branch libraries have internet access. Furthermore, it is suggested that all branch libraries be provided with proper hardware and software and online access to related resources.

### **6.5.4 Outreach programmes**

As discussed previously, the library needs to extend its services and one of the ways is through outreach programmes. The goal of community outreach is to develop library outreach programs for non-users, the disadvantaged and special needs people within the community. In addition to providing these much needed services to community members, community outreach programmes within the Msunduzi branch libraries will provide a unique opportunity to improve the public image within the community and offer excellent partnership opportunities with community leaders, groups and organizations that will enhance overall library services. Such outreach programmes which may be suitable for the branch libraries may include:

- Literacy programmes
- Coping strategies for assisting with study needs
- Advice and assistance to the aged
- Life skill programmes
- Promotion of work skills programmes.

### **6.5.5 Role of the librarian**

The librarian is a crucial role-player in working towards delivering information services that are geared towards enhancing the socio-economic development in the community. To succeed, librarians should be actively involved in finding out what the community needs are and developing and implementing new ideas to provide improved library services.

It is also obvious from the acquired results that library users use books as well as face-to-face communication with the branch librarians. Keeping this fact in view, branch librarians should enhance their communication and interpersonal skills to provide better services.

### **6.6 Suggestions for further research**

During this study, certain areas were identified that can provide opportunities for further research. The following suggestions have been made for further research:

- The information behaviour of non-users and potential users in the communities of study.
- The role of library staff in providing community information.
- The role of the public library in providing internet access.

### **6.7 Summary of the chapter**

This chapter provided an overview of the entire study into the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of community library users in Msunduzi branch libraries in Pietermaritzburg. Conclusions based on the research findings were formulated and recommendations based on the findings were presented. Finally, suggestions for further research were identified.

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## **Appendix 1: Letter of consent for community library users**

4 October 2013

I, Tracy Moodley, am a student currently registered for a Masters of Information Studies Degree at the Pietermaritzburg campus of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). The topic of my thesis is: **“The information needs and information seeking behaviour of community library users in Msunduzi Branch Libraries, Pietermaritzburg.”**

You are invited to participate in the research which will be conducted in my personal capacity. The purpose of this study is to identify the information needs and information seeking behaviour of community library users at Msunduzi Branch Libraries. The research will assist in determining whether the services that are provided by Msunduzi Branch Libraries meet your information needs or not, and to identify problems that you come across as you seek information. The findings may be able to assist the Msunduzi Library to improve delivery systems.

Anonymity and confidentiality will be strictly observed when presenting the data. Please note that you are not required to provide your name.

You are kindly asked to answer all questions to the best of your ability.

The questionnaires will be distributed and collected during your visit to the library. Please be so kind as to give of 5-10 minutes of your time.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

**Tracy Moodley**

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**Please complete this form**

**Informed Consent form for the sample population**

**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

**Title of study:**

The information needs and information seeking behaviour of community library users in Msunduzi Branch Libraries, Pietermaritzburg.

I, ....., hereby consent to participate in the study as outlined in the document about the study/ as explained to me by the researcher.

I acknowledge that I have been informed about why the questionnaire/interview is being administered to me. I am aware that participation in the study is voluntary and I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any stage and for any reason without any form of disadvantage.

I, ....., acknowledge that I understand the contents of this form and freely consent to participating in the study.

**Participant**

Signed: .....

Date: .....

**Researcher**

Signed: .....

Date: .....

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Appendix 1: Community library user's questionnaire**

Survey questionnaire for collecting data on the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of community library users in Msunduzi Branch Libraries, Pietermaritzburg.

Please note: All the information collected in this study will be used strictly for writing an academic thesis. Participation in this study will be anonymous.

**Instructions**

Please indicate your appropriate response by means of a cross or tick. Where possible please elaborate in the space provided.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**1. Gender**

- Male
- Female

**2. Age**

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55+

**3. Marital Status**

- Single
- Married
- Divorced
- Widowed
- Other (*Please specify*) \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Race Group**

- African
- Indian
- White
- Coloured

**5. Level of Education**

- Some primary school
- Some high school
- Grade 12/Standard 10
- FET College
- Technikon
- University
- Post graduate studies
- Other (*Please specify*) \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Occupation**

- Students
- Employed
-

- Unemployed
- Self-employed
- Retired
- Housewife
- Other (*Please specify*) \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Size of household**

- 2-5
- 6-11
- 12+

**8. Electricity**

- Yes
- No

**9. Which Library do you belong to?**

- Eastwood
- Northdale
- Sobantu
- Woodlands

**10. For what purpose do you require information (*Please tick only one*)**

- Education
- Work
- Personal
- Leisure

**11. On a day-to-day how important is it to you to have information on the following topics? (*Please tick*)**

- Education (for example bursary information)
- Business job opportunities (for example job vacancies or starting up a business)
- Legal matters (e.g. how to apply for maintenance)
- Health / medical services
- Local social services (e.g. social grants / housing)
- Matters of self-improvement
- How to do it / reference
- Hobby / crafts
- Local community & events
- Family matters for example, a family member has a drinking problem
- Other (*Please specify*) \_\_\_\_\_

**12. What do you think should be the most important goal of this library?**

Sponsor programs

- 
- To provide information
- Services for children
- To provide a quiet place
- Leisure materials (books, magazines)
- Leisure materials (DVD's, CD's)
- Internet Access
- Other (*Please specify*) \_\_\_\_\_

**13. How often do you come to this library?**

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Rarely

**14. What was the major reason for coming to the library today?**

- Return materials
- Children's services / materials
- Information on day-to-day needs
- Reference
- Magazines
- Newspapers
- Leisure materials – print books
- Leisure materials – non print
- Photocopying
- Browsing
- Place to relax
- Other (*Please specify*) \_\_\_\_\_

**15. Did this library provide what you needed today?**

- Yes
- No
- To some degree

**16. In relation to satisfying your information needs which information format is the most preferable to you? (*Please tick only one*)**

- Print
- Electronic
- Local councillor
- Face-to-face
- Audio
- Other (*Please specify*) \_\_\_\_\_

**17. Do you feel you have information needs which cannot be met at this library?**

- Yes
-

- No
- To some degree

**18. If you answered “yes” or “to some degree” list up to three of these unmet information needs.**

- More specific reference books
- Religious materials
- Local social services information
- Community information
- Self-help / self instruction
- National newspapers
- Better periodicals / more & periodicals
- Current politics / current events
- Career information
- Best sellers
- Medical / health
- Other (*Please specify*) \_\_\_\_\_

**19. How important is this library to the well-being of your community**

- Not important
- Somewhat important
- Important
- Highly important
- Critically important

**20. In addition to the library, where else do you regularly get information to answer your questions?**

- Newspapers
- Word of mouth
- Professionals
- Own book, magazines, etc
- T.V
- Other libraries
- Govt agencies / non profit organisations
- Other (*Please specify*) \_\_\_\_\_

**21. In overall services, rate this library**

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent

**22. What are the major factors that hinder library services to library users?**

- Inadequate information resources
-

- Lack of relevant materials to meet my needs
- Inability to get useful information from the library most times
- Non cooperation of other library staff
- Poor or no internet connectivity
- Uncomfortable environment

**23. Any other comments? *Please elaborate.***

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*Thank you for your time and participation.*