

**Unionising library and information staff in the tertiary sector:
a feasibility study.**

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this whole thesis, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the feasibility of unionising the employees of the LIS sector in South Africa in the context of the new South African labour dispensation. The study examined the factors that have been identified as having an influence on the growth of trade unionism.

The review of the literature revealed that the factors that have influenced unionism were, *inter alia*, collective bargaining, legislation and employee concentration. The unionism versus professionalism debate also influenced the growth of trade unionism. The factors that were identified as influencing the growth of white collar unionism, at the national and international level, were applied to LIS sector employees to determine their influence on the growth of unionism in this sector. The findings from the survey of employees confirm the findings in the literature with regard to the factors that have influenced trade unionism.

While trade unionism has continued to grow and fulfils the industrial needs of the LIS employees in South Africa, professional associations here fulfilled the professional needs of those employed in the LIS tertiary education sector. This study also examined the roles and characteristics of professional library associations in the international arena with particular reference to two African countries. The factors that have influenced the continuance of professional associations amidst pressure from trade unions for the same membership, were also investigated.

Self-administered questionnaires were used to survey the views of LIS employees regarding factors that have influenced their affiliation to the different employee representative bodies. Self-administered questionnaires were also used to survey trade union officials of the three national unions that service the tertiary sector in South Africa, regarding their views on the infra-structural capacity of unions to incorporate a sector specific union. Percentages and frequency distributions as well as content analysis were used to analyse the data collected.

The findings from the survey of the LIS employees reveal that the factors that have influenced the growth of trade unionism at the national and international levels are evident in the LIS sector in South Africa. The findings also reveal that factors that have negated the growth of trade unionism in this sector. Further, the employee population expressed preference for a single representative body to represent the industrial and professional interests of the LIS sector.

The findings from the survey of the LIS employees revealed a need which could not be accommodated by the current trade union structures. In suggesting a way forward, the researcher proposes a model. The aim of the model is to stimulate discussion about how change can be achieved.

The researcher draws conclusions based on the analysis of data and in the context of related literature and proposes a way forward for the tertiary LIS sector in South Africa.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	i	
Abstract	ii	
Table of contents	iv	
List of tables and figures	xv	
List of appendices	xvi	
List of abbreviations	xvii	
Chapter One: Introduction to the study		
1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Definition of terms	2
1.3	Background to the study	4
1.4	Conceptual framework	8
1.5	Objectives of the study and research questions	10
1.6	Justification of the study	12
1.7	Original contribution of the study	13
1.8	Research design	14
1.8.1	Research methodology	14
1.8.1.1	Survey of the literature	14
1.8.1.2	Empirical research: surveys	15
1.8.1.2.1	Questionnaire to employees	15
1.8.1.2.2	Questionnaire to union officials	16
1.9	Limitations of the study	16
1.10	Delimitations of the study	17
1.11	Outline of the study	18
1.12	Summary	20

Chapter Two: Trade unionism and a historical overview of unionism in South Africa

2.1	Introduction	21
2.2	Definition of trade unions	22
2.3	Objectives of a trade union	24
2.4	Types of trade unions	24
2.4.1	Craft unions	24
2.4.2	Industrial unions	25
2.4.3	General unions	25
2.4.4	White collar unions	25
2.4.4.1	White collar trade unionism as a relatively new phenomenon	26
2.4.4.2	Definition of white collar unionism	27
2.4.4.3	Bain's finding on the growth of white collar unionism	29
2.4.4.4	Associations as white collar unions	31
2.4.4.5	Factors that have encouraged unionisation	32
2.4.4.5.1	Collective bargaining	33
2.4.4.5.2	Job security	33
2.4.4.5.3	Income policy	34
2.4.4.6	Professional activities and services of white collar unions	34
2.4.4.7	Social status as a factor that has negated the growth of unionisation of white collar workers	35
2.4.4.8	Summary on growth of white collar unionism	38
2.5	Employment of women and trade unionism	39
2.6	Historical development of trade unionism in South Africa	40
2.6.1	Period from 1652 to 1869	41
2.6.2	Period from 1870 to 1923	42
2.6.2.1	Birth of black trade unions	48
2.6.3	Period from 1924 to 1956	52
2.6.3.1	The Black Labour Relations Regulations Act 48 of 1953	54
2.6.3.2	The Industrial Conciliation Act 28 of 1956	55

2.6.4	Period from 1957 to 1976	56
2.6.5	Period from 1977 to 1989	59
2.6.6	Period post 1989	62
2.6.7	Summary of historical development of unionism in South Africa	63
2.7	Summary	64

Chapter Three: Trade unionism in libraries

3.1	Introduction	65
3.2	Definitions	66
3.3	History of library unionisation	67
3.3.1	History of library unionisation: the North American experience	67
3.4.	Factors influencing library unionisation	70
3.4.1	Employment concentration	70
3.4.2	Legislation	72
3.4.3	Economic reasons for unionising	74
3.4.3.1	Collective bargaining in the Library and Information Services (LIS) context	74
3.4.3.2	Conditions of service	77
3.4.3.2.1	Job security in a LIS environment	77
3.4.3.2.2	Job description	79
3.4.3.2.3	Promotions	79
3.4.3.2.4	Institutional fairness	80
3.4.3.2.5	Staff training and development	80
3.4.3.3	Support staff	82
3.5	Factors negating library unionisation	83
3.5.1	Fragmentation of the profession	83
3.5.2	Effect of unions on efficiency	84
3.5.3	Women and unionisation	85
3.5.4	Criticism of library unionisation	86

3.6	Professionalism versus unionism	88
3.6.1	The perceived differences between professionalism and unionism	89
3.6.2	Debate on economic versus professional values	91
3.6.3	Professional associations as a deterrent to unionism	92
3.6.4	Support staff, librarians and unionism	93
3.6.5	Do unions destroy harmony of interest?	93
3.6.6	Union developments to meet professionalism	94
3.6.7	Bringing the debate to a conclusion	96
3.7	Options for the way forward	97
3.7.1	Affiliation to larger unions	97
3.7.2	Quasi-union	97
3.7.3	Union for all library employees	98
3.8	Co-determination	100
3.9	Summary	102

Chapter Four: The new labour dispensation in South Africa

4.1	Introduction	103
4.2	Definitions	104
4.3	The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa	105
4.4	Labour legislation	108
4.4.1	Labour Relations Act (LRA) 66 of 1995	108
4.4.1.1	Principal aims of the LRA	108
4.4.1.2	The need to simplify collective bargaining	110
4.4.1.3	Compliance with the Constitution and international obligations	111
4.4.1.4	Efficient and effective dispute resolution procedures and mechanisms	111
4.4.1.5	The promotion of collective bargaining	112
4.4.1.6	The promotion of workplace democracy	112
4.4.1.7	Freedom of association	113
4.4.1.8	Voluntarism	113

4.4.1.9	Workplace forums	114
4.4.1.9.1	Mandatory consultation	115
4.4.1.9.2	Joint decision making	116
4.4.2	Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) 75 of 1997	117
4.4.3	Employment Equity Act (EEA) 55 of 1998	118
4.4.3.1	Consultation	119
4.4.4	Skills Development Act 97 (SDA) of 1998	120
4.4.4.1	National Skills Authority (NSA)	121
4.4.4.2	Sectoral Education and Training Authorities (SETA)	121
4.5	Impact of the South African labour dispensation on trade unionism	123
4.5.1	Employment concentration	123
4.5.2	Labour legislation	125
4.5.3	Employer recognition of unions	131
4.5.4	The new labour legislation and collective bargaining as an economic factor influencing the growth of unionism	132
4.5.5	Women, unionisation and the new labour dispensation	134
4.5.6	Job security in terms of the new labour legislation	135
4.5.7	Staff training and development	137
4.5.8	Job grading	138
4.5.9	Co-determination	139
4.6	Summary	141

Chapter Five: Professional library associations

5.1	Introduction	142
5.2	Purposes of professional associations	144
5.3	What brings librarians together?	146
5.4	Support and professional staff within the profession	147
5.5	Factors which influence the continuance of professional associations	148
5.5.1	Need for belonging	149
5.5.2	Security	150

5.5.3	Personal development	151
5.5.4	Self help	152
5.5.5	Communication	152
5.5.6	Library ethics	153
5.5.7	Intellectual freedom	154
5.5.8	Library associations as relevant sources of information	155
5.6	Library associations in Africa	157
5.6.1	Problems with library associations in Africa	157
5.6.2	Ghana Library Association	158
5.6.3	Botswana Library Association	160
5.7	Library associations in the South African context	161
5.7.1	South African Library Association (SALA)/South African Institute for Librarianship and Information Science (SAILIS)	162
5.7.1.1	SAILIS conferences	164
5.7.1.2	Publication of journals	164
5.7.1.3	Influence on library legislation	165
5.7.1.4	Promotion of research	165
5.7.1.5	Influence on the education of professional members	165
5.7.2	African Library Association of South Africa (ALASA)	166
5.7.3	Library and Information Workers' Organisation (LIWO)	167
5.7.4	Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA)	170
5.8	Summary	174

Chapter Six: Research methodology and data collection techniques

6.1	Introduction	175
6.2	Research objectives and research questions	176
6.3	Research design	178
6.3.1	Review of related literature	178
6.3.1.1	Limitations of the review of the literature	183
6.3.2	Data collection	183
6.3.2.1	Survey populations	184

6.3.2.2	Questionnaires	185
6.3.2.2.1	Construction of questionnaires	187
6.3.2.3	The electronic data collection method	189
6.3.2.3.1	E-mail as a research tool	190
6.3.2.3.2	E-mail versus post mail	191
6.3.2.3.2.1	Speed	192
6.3.2.3.2.2	Cost	192
6.3.2.3.2.3	Sample control	192
6.3.2.3.2.4	Convenience	193
6.3.2.3.2.5	Response rate	193
6.3.2.3.3	Advantages and disadvantages of the E-mail method of delivering questionnaires	194
6.3.2.4	Database of E-mail addresses	195
6.3.2.5	Format of the questionnaire	200
6.3.2.5.1	Using word-processing packages and E-mail	200
6.3.2.5.2	Creating an online web questionnaire	201
6.3.2.6	Pretest and pilot study	202
6.3.2.7	Return date	203
6.3.3	Analysing data	204
6.3.3.1	Preparing the data	204
6.3.3.1.1	Quantitative data	204
6.3.3.1.2	Qualitative data	205
6.3.3.2	Presenting the data	207
6.3.4	Developing a model	208
6.3.5	Evaluation of the research methodology	209
6.3.5.1	Ethical considerations	209
6.3.5.2	Reliability and validity	211
6.3.5.3	Problems related to using electronically delivered questionnaires	213
6.4	Summary	215

Chapter Seven: Presentation of findings

7.1	Introduction	216
7.2	Presentation of findings	217
7.2.1	Survey of LIS tertiary education sector employees	218
7.2.1.1	Distribution of respondents	218
7.2.1.2	Age and gender distribution in the tertiary education LIS sector	223
7.2.1.3	Designations of respondents	226
7.2.1.4	Support for the respective representative bodies	228
7.2.1.5	Representative bodies within the LIS tertiary education sector	229
7.2.1.6	Factors that influence or negate the growth of unionism in the tertiary education sector in South Africa	231
7.2.1.6.1	Industrial factors influencing the growth of unionism: collective bargaining	231
7.2.1.6.1.1	Organisation/s that address industrial issues	231
7.2.1.6.1.2	Other industrial factors that influence the growth of trade unionism	235
7.2.1.6.1.2.1	Job grading	236
7.2.1.6.1.2.2	Staff training and development	237
7.2.1.6.2	Industrial factors negating the growth of unionism	240
7.2.1.6.2.1	Fragmentation of the LIS profession	240
7.2.1.6.2.2	Women and trade unionism	242
7.2.1.6.3	Summary of factors influencing or negating the growth of unionism	246
7.2.1.7	The need for an organisation to address the industrial concerns of the LIS tertiary education sector employees	247
7.2.1.7.1	The necessity for an organisation to address the industrial issues of the sector	247
7.2.1.7.2	The organisation most capable of representing the industrial concerns of the sector	249
7.2.1.7.3	Participation in the activities of the trade union and/or the professional body	251

7.2.1.7.4	Summary of findings: the necessity for an organisation to address industrial concerns of tertiary education LIS employees	253
7.2.1.8	Unionism versus professionalism	254
7.2.1.8.1	Compatibility of unionism and professionalism	255
7.2.1.8.2	Unionism undermining professionalism	258
7.2.1.8.3	Unionism being detrimental to the image of the LIS profession	260
7.2.1.8.4	Summary of findings: LIS issues impacting on the growth of unionism in the sector	262
7.2.1.9	The way forward for the LIS sector	264
7.2.1.9.1	The professional association and statutory status	264
7.2.1.9.2	Retention of the status quo and support for one union	266
7.2.1.9.3	Broadening of the constitution of the professional association	267
7.2.1.9.4	Summary of findings on the way forward	269
7.2.1.10	General comments	271
7.2.2	Survey of trade union officials	276
7.2.2.1	Response rate	276
7.2.2.2	Representation	277
7.2.2.3	Knowledge of the sector	277
7.2.2.4	Training and development	278
7.2.2.5	Sector specific union	278
7.2.2.6	Advantages and disadvantages of the different representative bodies	279
7.2.2.7	Workplace forums	280
7.2.2.8	Summary of findings	281
7.3	Some trends in the responses from both survey populations	281
7.3.1	Distribution of membership	281
7.3.2	Knowledge of the sector	284
7.3.3	Staff training and development	284
7.4	Towards a model of the way forward	286
7.5	Summary	286

Chapter Eight: Discussion of the findings

8.1	Introduction	289
8.2	Research objectives of the study and research questions	290
8.2.1	First research objective: factors influencing trade unionism	291
8.2.2	Third research objective: the role of legislation in influencing unionisation in the tertiary education LIS sector in South Africa	295
8.2.2.1	Summary of first and third objectives	297
8.2.3	Second research objective: to identify the factors that have influenced the growth of unionism in the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa	297
8.2.3.1	Co-operation by the heads of tertiary education sector libraries	298
8.2.3.2	Response rate from employees	299
8.2.3.3	Distribution and designation of respondents	299
8.2.3.4	The ‘glass ceiling’ and women in the LIS tertiary education sector	302
8.2.3.5	Representative bodies within the LIS tertiary education sector	302
8.2.3.6	Factors that influence or negate the growth of unionism	303
8.2.3.6.1	Factors influencing the growth of trade unionism in the LIS tertiary education sector	305
8.2.3.6.2	Factors negating the growth of trade unionism in the LIS tertiary education sector	309
8.2.3.6.3	Unionism versus professionalism	312
8.2.3.6.4	Summary of factors influencing or negating trade unionism	314
8.2.4	Fourth research objective: to investigate the need for an organisation to address the industrial needs of LIS employees	316
8.2.4.1	Summary of the need for an organisation to address the industrial needs of LIS employees	319
8.2.5	Sixth research objective: to determine the feasibility of combining the industrial objectives of a trade union and the professional objectives of a professional association into a single organisation that will represent the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa	320

8.2.6	Fifth research objective: to investigate the feasibility of unionising the sector under a single employee representative body	322
8.2.6.1	Representation	323
8.2.6.2	Knowledge of the sector	323
8.2.6.3	Staff training and development	324
8.2.6.4	Workplace forums	325
8.2.6.5	Sector specific union	326
8.3	Seventh research objective: to propose a model that will address the industrial and professional concerns of the sector	326
8.3.1	The structure of a LIS sector union at site level	329
8.3.2	Federal structure: the integration of a LIS sector union with the national union	332
8.4	Summary	335

Chapter Nine: Conclusions and recommendations

9.1	Introduction	336
9.2	The research objectives and conclusions of the study	337
9.3	The implications of this study for theory	341
9.4	Recommendations for further study	342
9.5	Summary and conclusion	343
	Literature cited	344
	Appendices	362

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

List of Tables

<i>Table 1</i>	Technikon libraries	198
<i>Table 2</i>	University libraries	199
<i>Table 3</i>	Distribution of technikon respondents	219
<i>Table 4</i>	Distribution of university respondents	220
<i>Table 5</i>	National trade union employee members' responses to a one sector union	285

List of Figures

<i>Figure 1</i>	Distribution of survey participants by type of institution	222
<i>Figure 2</i>	Cross tabulation between age, gender and support for statutory status	225
<i>Figure 3</i>	Distribution of women and men in the LIS tertiary education sector by rank and category	227
<i>Figure 4</i>	Distribution of membership of trade unions and/or professional association	228
<i>Figure 5a</i>	Provincial level: support for minimum salaries and conditions of service	233
<i>Figure 5b</i>	National level: support for minimum salaries and conditions of service	234
<i>Figure 6</i>	Workshops and conferences organised by the representative employee bodies	239
<i>Figure 7</i>	Respondents' views of the fragmentation of the LIS sector by gender and age group	241
<i>Figure 8</i>	Women and membership of representative bodies	245
<i>Figure 9</i>	Compatibility of unionism with professionalism	256
<i>Figure 10</i>	Respondents' views on unionism versus professionalism	263
<i>Figure 11</i>	Summary of respondents' views on the way forward	270
<i>Figure 12</i>	Support for the various ways forward	271
<i>Figure 13</i>	Distribution of the NEHAWU membership by type of institution	282
<i>Figure 14</i>	Proposed institutional structure for a LIS tertiary education sector union	330
<i>Figure 15</i>	Provincial and national structure of a LIS tertiary education sector union	331
<i>Figure 16</i>	Federal structure	333

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire for library and information services employees	362
Appendix 2: Questionnaire for trade union officials	369
Appendix 3: Covering letters and reminders to the survey populations	374
Appendix 4: Job designations	388

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALA	American Library Association
ALASA	African Library Association of South Africa
ANC	African National Congress
APSA	Associated Publishers' Association of South Africa
ASAIB	Association of South African Indexers and Bibliographers
AUT	Association of University Teachers
BCEA	Basic Conditions of Employment Act
BLA	Botswana Library Association
CCMA	Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration
CEPD	Continuing Education and Professional Development
COMSA	Combined Staff Association
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
DIT	Durban Institute of Technology
EEA	Employment Equity Act
HICSA	Health Information Community of South Africa
HTML	HyperText Markup Language
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
ICU	Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union
IFLA	International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IT	Information technology
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LIASA	Library and Information Association of South Africa
LIS	Library and Information Services
LIWO	Library and Information Workers' Organisation
LRA	Labour Relations Act
LWO	Library Workers' Organisation
MDM	Mass Democratic Movement
MUSA	Museums Union of South Africa
NACTU	National Council of Trade Unions

NEDLAC	National Economic Development and Labour Council
NEHAWU	National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSA	National Skills Authority
NTESU	National Tertiary Education Staff Union
NUTESA	National Union of Technikon Employees of South Africa
PA	Professional Association
PTEU	Peninsula Technikon Employees' Union
SACP	South African Communist Party
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SAILIS	South African Institute for Librarianship and Information Science
SALA	South African Library Association
SAMA	South African Museums Association
SANHIP	South African National Health Information Partnership
SAOUG	South African Online User Group
SAPTU	South African Parastatal and Tertiary Institutions Union
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SASA	South African Society of Archivists
SASBO	South African Society of Bank Officials
SDA	Skills Development Act
SETA	Sectoral Education and Training Authority
SLIS	Special Libraries and Information Services
TENUSA	Tertiary Education National Union of South Africa
TSA	Technikon South Africa
TU	Trade Union
UCTEU	University of Cape Town Employees' Union
UDF	United Democratic Front
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
Unisa	University of South Africa
UNSU	University of Natal Staff Union
UPWO	University of Pretoria Employees' Organisation

USA	United States of America
UVPERSU	Union of Personnel of the University of the Free State
UWUSA	United Workers' Union of South Africa
VAT	Value added tax

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Historically, in most countries, there has been hostile legal reaction to trade unions, their aims and methods. Some countries had legislation banning trade unions or restricting their activities. In others, judges applied or adapted existing principles to discourage trade unionism. This hostile attitude towards trade unions began to dwindle as countries moved towards accepting unionism as an important element of a democratic society. Laws were passed permitting trade unions to exist. Trade unionism, collective bargaining, strikes and other forms of industrial action became an integral part of the democracy package (Basson *et al.* 1998: 3).

South Africa held its first democratic elections in 1994. The newly democratically elected government set about transforming the legislative framework of labour relations to give effect to that section of the Constitution that deals specifically with labour relations, that is, section 23 of Chapter II of the Constitution. The government also brought South African labour relations into line with international standards of the International Labour Organization (ILO). The government's intention to democratise the workplace was effected with the passing of the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997, the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 and the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998. Finnemore (1999: 40) argues that, "the combination of these acts with other legislation is seen as the engine of socio-economic policy espoused by the ANC government."

There has been rapid growth in unionism since the 1994 elections. This growth was prompted by the enactment of the above mentioned statutes which, while restricting the powers of staff associations, drastically expanded the powers of the trade unions. Many staff associations, especially those in the public sector, transformed themselves into unions. The unionisation trend brought a number of white collar and professional employees into the trade union fold (Baskin 1996: 27-28).

This study examines the feasibility of unionising the white collar support and professional employees of the library and information services (LIS) sector, within the tertiary education sector, in the context of the new South African labour dispensation. In the current LIS environment, the sector is represented by a professional association and a number of generic trade unions with the professional association addressing the professional concerns of the sector and the trade unions addressing the industrial concerns of the same sector.

L2 DEFINITION OF TERMS

In this study the definition or clarification of terms will be done in the chapter in which these terms are introduced or receive greatest emphasis. In the context of the study, the following terms have been identified as core concepts which will be explained in the beginning of the study.

The concept **free riders** is used to mean those employees who are not members of a trade union but benefit from the activities of the trade union (Barker and Holtzhausen 1996: 60). **Generic unions** in the South African context, in the opinion of the researcher, refers to unions that are not sector specific, that is, unions that protect or advance the interests of employees from a number of different employment sectors. A typical example of a generic union is the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU). NEHAWU services a number of different employment sectors *inter alia* the health and the education sectors (specifically tertiary education and private schools). A **sector specific union** is a union that protects and advances the interests of members within a specific sector, for example, the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) protects the interests of school educators.

The researcher uses the term **industrial issues**, in this study, to mean those issues that affect the working conditions of employees, for example wages, benefits (such as medical aid), terms and conditions of employment (such as maternity leave, annual leave), training and development and, rights to representation during disciplinary or grievance hearings.

In a tertiary education environment, the norm is for the staffing complement to be split into academic and support staff. The essential function of the library within this tertiary education environment is the provision of information for teaching and research. It is generally accepted that the provision of information is the core responsibility of the professionally trained librarian and the administrative staff provide support in meeting the primary responsibility of information provision. The researcher draws the distinction, for the purposes of this study, between the professional librarian and the support staff member within the library and information environment in the tertiary education sector. A **professional librarian** is a person who has formal education and training in librarianship, usually a degree qualification. **Support staff** are members of staff employed in a library and information environment to provide clerical, administrative and technical support. Further, the researcher uses the term **paraprofessional staff** to refer to those members of staff who have library technician qualifications from institutions such as technikons in South Africa and who are employed in a non-professional capacity.

In Chapter Two, the researcher uses the concept **tertiary sector**. The reference here is to the service sector. The concept **tertiary education sector** is used to refer to the post-secondary education sector.

The definition of a **trade union** in terms of the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 is an association of employees whose principal purpose is to regulate relations between employees and employers (*Labour legislation service* 1998: 338). The phrase 'principal purpose' indicates that the regulation of relations between the two parties is but only one of the functions of a trade union. Essentially, a trade union is an association of employees created primarily to protect and advance the industrial interests of its members. The interests of its members range from bargaining with employers on wages to improving the conditions of employment (Finnemore 2002: 76; Grogan 2001: 259).

A **white collar worker** is "a worker in non manual areas of employment, [for example] a clerical, administrative, [professional], or sales employee" (Barker and Holtzhausen 1996: 166). A **blue collar worker** is "a worker doing manual work or involved in maintenance or production, as distinct from administrative or office work. Such workers are primarily involved in physical labour..." (Barker and

Holtzhausen 1996: 17). The researcher notes that there is no distinction in South African law between white collar and blue collar workers.

Barker and Holtzhausen (1996: 168) define a **workplace** as a

...place or places where the employees of an employer work. If an employer carries on or conducts two or more operations which are independent of one another by reason of their size, function or organisation, each such operation shall be regarded as a separate workplace.

A **workplace forum** is a forum where employees can exercise their statutory right to participate in management decisions that may affect them as employees (Basson *et al.* 1998: 159). "Such forums have the functions of promoting the interests of all employees in the workplace, enhancing efficiency and engaging in consultation and joint decision making..." (Barker and Holtzhausen 1996: 168).

1.3 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Library associations have played a significant role in addressing the professional issues relating to the LIS sector (Harvard-Williams 1972; Sullivan 1976; Fisher 1994; Frank 1997; Oppenheim and Pollecutt 2000). In South Africa, the LIS sector has been represented primarily by three different professional associations to address the professional issues of the sector. However, Kusack (1984: 4) reveals that the number of professional employees within the sector, at the international level, is far fewer than the support staff. Essentially, the support staff outnumber the professional staff. This staffing split is also true for the South African LIS sector. Therefore, there is a substantial cohort of support staff who could see, as preferable, an organisation that would represent their specific support staff interests as opposed to an organisation that would represent the interest of the profession. For instance, the primary interests of the support staff centre around the industrial issues affecting the sector whereas professional staff interests centre around professional issues.

In a study conducted by Thapisa (1992), in the United Kingdom, it was found that professionally trained librarians emphasized the need for intellectually challenging work. On the other hand, individuals in typically lower levels of occupation such as Library Assistants "... emphasize the necessity for direct activity which occupies their time" (Thapisa 1992: 38). According to the research, for the support staff (that is, the Library Assistants) work had no meaning other than that of earning a living. Thapisa concludes that the Library Assistants were generally unhappy with promotional opportunities and inadequate pay. "As a result it would appear that most Library Assistants would not be enthusiastic about continuing in the same library environment if they could get better jobs elsewhere" (1992: 39). In essence, Library Assistants concerned themselves to a greater extent with industrial issues.

The South African workplace environment has been dominated by trade unions which have addressed the industrial issues of employees. The LIS sector is not precluded from this dominance of trade unions in addressing industrial issues. On the contrary, many professional members of the sector have actively participated in the activities of trade unions. Professional librarians and support staff, in the main, are members of generic trade unions. Simultaneously, a number of professional librarians and paraprofessional staff have found it necessary to belong to a generic trade union as well as to the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA). However, the professional association has, over the years, restricted itself to addressing issues of a professional nature thereby alienating itself from a large support staff base (Hooper 1986; Louw 1990).

The generic trade unions have played a parallel role to that of the professional associations, that is, the professional associations address the professional concerns of the sector and the unions address the industrial issues of the same sector. However, the LIS sector is a single segment of a much broader community that the generic union represents. The study probes the situation that, given the fact that these generic unions are so heterogeneous, the industrial issues of the LIS sector are not adequately addressed. The debate arising from the LIS sector being represented by a generic trade union and the professional association is whether a single organisation would provide better representation of the sector when addressing both industrial and professional issues. Guyton (1975) affirms the role of a

trade union when he points out that trade unions have a significant role to play in any environment that has employees, including the library and information environment. He goes on to say, when describing the formation of the Los Angeles Public Library Union, that the formation of that union can be described as a “unique adventure - a search by a group of librarians for greater control over their own profession and an exploration of unionism as a vehicle for gaining that control” (Guyton 1975: 85). This statement suggests that a single body can address both the professional and the industrial issues of the LIS sector, or alternatively, that both the professional body and the trade union could co-exist or work as one organisation. It is important that all staff working in the LIS sector have a sense of belonging to the sector to ensure the growth and development of the profession. Alienation from the core concerns of the profession could retard its growth and development.

However, it is clear from the literature that the Los Angeles Public Library Union is an isolated case (Guyton 1975: 85). The norm is for professional associations and generic unions to work parallel with each other with one organisation representing the professional component of the profession and the other representing the industrial component. However, there is overlap between the two, for example, both organisations address the broad issue of training and development.

This divide between professional association and trade union is universal. Schlachter (1976: 451) says that,

professional organizations have been established to perform one or more of the following functions: to facilitate social fraternization; to promote occupational identification; to further professional objectives by self-regulation and entry restriction [education and training]....

The above is expanded by Bird and Johnson (1983: 20) who argue that,

professional organizations are both enriched and constrained by their nature; they are goal orientated; they attract members who are united by a common vision; and they obtain their strengths from a volunteer membership characterized by diversity, dynamism, education and training.

The education and training characteristic of the professional is the key to the recognition of a professional association. The desire to fix a minimum entry qualification was to ensure limited entry

into the professional ranks (Havard-Williams 1972: 187). These statements confirm prerequisite entry qualification into a professional association. Such prerequisites serve to exclude the large support staff body.

The source of industrial and professional protection, for the excluded majority, is a trade union. Workers form or join trade unions to achieve a collective defence and enhancement of their conditions of work:

It follows in a general sense that forming or joining unions indicates that individual defence, bargaining or regulation is no longer adequate or effective for a group of workers, particularly in matters relating to pay and job security (Thakur and Naylor 1976: 7).

Irrespective of whether the individual is a professional or a support staff member of the LIS sector, the individual has to have representation to address issues such as pay, conditions of service and job security. The latter is crucial in an economic climate where retrenchment is rife.

Trade unions have the capacity to protect the industrial concerns of its members. The stronger the union, the greater the protection for its members. The fact that the larger proportion of the professional body members are themselves employees, means that they need the same industrial protection that their support staff counterparts enjoy. Smith (1968: 717) says that,

... the real reason that many professions have remained opposed to unionisation is that their professional associations have performed the crucial function of the labour union; they have established standards, limited membership, improved working conditions and helped achieve a high level of financial reward. And they have done this without striking or threatening to strike...

If the dividing line between professional associations and trade unions is so thin would it not make good sense to unite all employees of the profession? Such unity, within the South African context where the distinction between white collar and blue collar workers is not found in the law, could see major protection of the employees which could inadvertently lead to the growth and development of the profession. Further, this unity must be viewed in the light of the potential that such an organisation could have in a country which has made every effort to revolutionise labour relations.

1.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

It is pointed out by Devenish (1991: 1) that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 is the most revered human rights instrument in the world. The Declaration and other human rights instruments remained remote for South Africans because of its system of apartheid. This changed irrevocably with the 1996 constitution which entrenched a very liberal bill of rights. Devenish (1999: 7) argues that the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa is one of the most progressive in the world. A significant contributor to this status is the Bill of Rights (Chapter II of the Constitution) which embodies universally accepted fundamental rights and civil liberties. Du Toit (2003: 59) states,

Chapter 2 of the Constitution ('the Bill of Rights') enshrines a number of fundamental human rights and freedoms which, by virtue of the supremacy of the Constitution, are protected from encroachment by either the legislative or executive organs of government. These include political and civil rights, ... socio-economic and cultural rights.... Included amongst the socio-economic rights are the 'labour relations' set out in section 23 of the Constitution.

The Bill of Rights guarantees the citizens of South Africa the right to 'fair labour practices' which includes, amongst others, the rights to equality, freedom of assembly, expression and association (Currie and de Waal 2005:499).

The Labour Relations Act, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act and Employment Equity Act are the chosen vehicles for giving expression to the above mentioned rights (Du Toit 2003: 60).

The Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 (LRA) marked a major transformation in South Africa's statutory industrial relations system. Following the transition to political democracy, the LRA encapsulated the new government's aim to reconstruct and democratise the economy and society in the labour relations arena. It therefore introduced new legislation with the intention of giving employers and workers an opportunity to break with the intense adversarialism that characterised their relationship in the past.

The LRA was followed by three core labour statutes supporting government's labour legislation reform programme. The Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997 extends a single floor of employment equity standards to all workers covered by the LRA, providing a safety net for workers not protected by collective bargaining. The Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 has two objectives: firstly, to promote equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination; and, secondly, to redress, through affirmative action measures, the disadvantages experienced by the designated group¹. Finally, the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 establishes a new institutional and financial framework for training and skills development. Its aims are to address the skills shortage in the country and change the skills profile of the workforce to suit the needs of the economy.

The above legislation have been promulgated after extensive consultation with labour, that is, the trade unions. The purpose of a trade union, as stated in the LRA, is to regulate relations between employees and employers (*Labour legislation service* 1998: 338). As mentioned earlier, Grogan (2001: 259) states that the phrase 'principal purpose' indicates that the regulation of relations between the two parties is but only one of the functions of a trade union: "In other words, a union is free to engage in such activities as bringing pressure to bear on government, involvement in social and community affairs..." (Grogan 2001: 259).

One of the fundamental provisions of the LRA is the creation of workplace forums. Workplace forums provide trade unions with the platform to engage in participative management. The fact that library and information workers belong to generic unions negates the possibility of having a sectoral workplace forum which has the potential to develop the profession. Given the provisions of South Africa's present labour dispensation, a professional association would have a limited role to play in addressing all issues affecting the sector. The present labour dispensation openly promotes trade unionism. As

¹"designated groups" means black people, women and people with disabilities (*Labour legislation service* 1998: 2609).

much as trade unions seek better industrial conditions for all employees, there is an essential element within the sector that needs to be addressed, that is, the element of professionalism (Hovenden 1972; Schlachter 1976). The concepts of professionalism and trade unionism have historically been regarded as incompatible. This study will *inter alia* assess current views on the compatibility of professionalism and trade unionism. The continued perception of the impossibility of fusing the principles of professionalism with that of trade unionism will ensure that the sector does not benefit from the provisions in the new labour dispensation.

In its present constitution, the professional library association in South Africa cannot utilise the statutory provisions maximally to address issues affecting the large support staff grouping within the sector. One of the core provisions of the legislation that has been promulgated over the last decade is to provide for the development of the workforce, including the large support group within the LIS sector. Given the fact that the profession is divided between support staff and professional staff and, that representation is divided between the professional association and generic unions, the core research problem for examination in this study is the feasibility of unifying the whole LIS sector under a single statutory body empowered to address professional and industrial issues of both professional and support staff. Such a reorganisation could provide a single platform for the profession to exploit the progressive labour legislation to the benefit of the profession as a whole.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As stated, the core research problem guiding this study is to examine the feasibility of unionising the LIS sector in the context of the new South African labour dispensation with special reference to the tertiary education sector of the library and information environment. In pursuing such a study the objectives would be to:

1. Examine the factors that have influenced trade unionism in South Africa;
2. Identify the factors that have influenced the growth of unionism in the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa;

3. Investigate the role of legislation in influencing unionisation in the tertiary education LIS sector in South Africa;
4. Investigate the need for an organisation to address the industrial needs of LIS employees in this sector;
5. Investigate the feasibility of unionising the sector under a single employee representative body;
6. Investigate the feasibility of combining the industrial objectives of a trade union and the professional objectives of a professional association into a single organisation that will represent the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa; and
7. Depending on the findings, propose a model that will address the industrial and professional concerns of the sector.

The following research questions will guide the above objectives:

1. What are the factors that have influenced the growth of unions in South Africa?;
2. What are the factors that have influenced the growth of unions in the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa?;
3. What role has legislation played in influencing unionisation in the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa?;
4. Do the employees of the sector need an organisation to address their industrial issues?;
5. To what extent can the present union structure accommodate a sector specific organisation addressing the issues of that sector?;
6. Is it feasible to combine the industrial objectives of a trade union and the professional objectives of a professional association into a single organisation to represent the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa?; and
7. Depending on the findings above, what sort of model might be appropriate for the tertiary education LIS sector of South Africa?

1.6 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The growth of white collar unionism, nationally or internationally, has not been as rapid as the growth of blue collar unionism. In the LIS sector the dominant factor in this slow growth is the argument as to which of the two, that is professionalism or unionism, is of greater value to the sector. This professionalism versus unionism argument is confined, in the main, to professional librarians. A large pool of support staff are not effectively utilised in contributing to the development of the profession.

The issue of unionising or not unionising the LIS sector has been examined in the international arena. This study investigates the issue of unionising of employees in the tertiary education LIS sector in South Africa (which has not been done before) under the auspices of a sector specific union. This potential reorganisation was viewed against the backdrop of South Africa's progressive labour legislation.

Works by authors such as Brooks (1974) and Hovekamp (1997) draw attention to the fact that trade unions play a significant role in representing the industrial interests of LIS employees. Authors such as Oppenheim and Pollecutt (2000), Bird and Johnson (1983) and Scepaniski and Wells (1997) bring to the fore the argument that professional associations are active in representing the professional interests of those in the LIS sector. Over a period of time, it has become an accepted practice that trade unions would represent the industrial interests of the sector while the professional body would address the professional interests. This two-stream approach has contributed to the fragmentation of the LIS sector (Hovenden 1972; Kleingartner and Kennelly 1975; Coleman 1988).

The current South African labour dispensation vigorously promotes trade unionism and reduces the effectiveness of non-statutory associations. Given the fact that the labour dispensation is progressive, it is important that the representative organisation acquires a status that will be able to utilise the dispensation for the benefit of all in the sector. Further, it is stated in section 1.7 that very little has been written, in post 1980s, on unionisation in the LIS sector. This study could stimulate the debate on unionisation within the LIS sector and could contribute to addressing the divide between professional

and support staff in the LIS sector. This divide can be seen as being out of harmony with the 1995 labour dispensation that actively promotes workers unifying.

1.7 ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The unique defining characteristic of a good quality thesis is that it makes an original contribution to knowledge in a particular field of academic enquiry. However, the concept of originality can be operationalized in a number of different ways such as originality in the use of tools, techniques and procedures; originality in exploring the unknown; originality in exploring the unanticipated; originality in the use of data; originality in outcomes; and originality in by-products (Burton 2000c: 429).

A thorough review of the relevant literature had revealed 'gaps' in the LIS body of knowledge, that is, the unionisation of the LIS sector, even at the international level. The debate on the unionisation of the LIS sector under a single independent trade union in the South African context is non-existent. The researcher designed, carried out and reported on a research project to address these gaps in the body of knowledge, thereby making an original contribution to the LIS discipline.

This research is the first empirical attempt to interrogate the scope of the new labour dispensation in South Africa and its influence on the LIS sector in simultaneously addressing the professional and industrial concerns of the sector. A critical examination of the current trade union structures in South Africa, review of relevant literature and the empirical findings of this study, afforded the researcher the opportunity to examine the feasibility of unionizing all LIS employees within a sector specific union. In exploring this feasibility, the researcher proposes a model to generate debate to further unravel this unknown.

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Leedy (1993: 125) it is important that the researcher has “some idea of the manner in which the data will be secured and how they will be interpreted so that the principal problem under research will be resolved”. To meet the research objectives, the researcher surveyed the relevant literature and engaged in empirical research.

1.8.1 Research methodology

This study surveyed and analysed the literature relating to the unionising of the LIS sector. The empirical component entailed surveying employees within the LIS sector to investigate the feasibility of unionising the sector. Trade union officials were also surveyed to investigate the feasibility of incorporating a sector specific union within the present union structure.

1.8.1.1 Survey of the literature

A thorough survey of the literature was essential as this study was guided by the debate as to whether or not employees within the LIS sector should unionise. The ‘to unionise or not to unionise’ debate, at the international arena, has continued for almost a century (Hovenden 1972; Schlachter 1976; Beresford 1983; Hovenkamp 1997). As this debate is the fundamental point of discussion in this study, it was essential that the literature on this issue be surveyed thoroughly.

It was important that both the international databases covering the discipline of library and information science were searched systematically. The *Library and information science abstracts* is United Kingdom based while *Library literature* is United States based and is more selective than the former in its coverage of the literature. Despite their regional bias, both databases provide substantial coverage of the other regions of the world such as Australasia, Europe and the rest of the Americas.

A thorough survey of the literature via *Library and information science abstracts* and *Library literature* revealed a large number of writings on the unionisation of the LIS sector. The researcher also conducted a thorough search of the theses database at the Library of Congress. It was found that the unionisation of the LIS sector was discussed within certain broad areas such as history of unionisation, the professionalism versus unionism debate, the 'to join or not to join' dilemma, the issue of collective bargaining, the respective governments' support of unions and the legislation enacted to support the organisations. There were a number of specific issues that were also discussed such as the agitation by professionals for the professional association to engage in collective bargaining or joining unions, and employee job grading systems.

While the distinction between white collar and blue collar unionism does not exist in South African law, over and above the substantial number of works on white collar unionism, there are works specifically on white collar unionism in the library and information environment. The doctoral study by Lilore (1982) examined the unionisation of librarians and the present-day phenomenon of white collar workers. The masters thesis by Marsh (1980) examined the 'white collar unionisation' of library staff. Where relevant these sources were drawn on.

1.8.1.2 Empirical research: surveys

The researcher developed two questionnaires - one for employees and the other for trade union officials.

1.8.1.2.1 Questionnaire to employees

A questionnaire was developed to determine whether staff in the LIS sector belonged to generic unions and/or to the professional association. This survey solicited information to determine whether there was a need for one or more profession specific organisation/s to address professional and/or industrial issues.

1.8.1.2.2 Questionnaire to union officials

A second questionnaire was developed and administered to trade union officials, at a national level, to determine the impact of a white collar library and information specific union on the present trade union structures.

1.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In certain sections of this study, such as unionisation in libraries and white collar unionisation, the researcher had to rely on dated material. An example of a specific section of where the researcher had to rely on dated material is section 2.4.4.5 **Factors that have encouraged unionisation**. There is a distinct pattern of publication on unionisation in libraries. The literature reveals that material on unionisation in libraries was published in spurts with the latest being in the 1970s. Very little has been written in subsequent decades. This dearth of literature on unionism in libraries is confirmed in a more recent writing by Garcha and Phillips (2001: 122) who pointed out that, “a review of the literature seems to indicate that little, if anything, has been published...” The paucity of current information reinforces the need for a study such as this one.

The researcher engaged in a detailed discussion, in Chapter Two, of core principles of white collar unionism based on the work of Bain (1970). This was the first empirically based work to examine white collar unionism and its growth. Adams (1975:1) argues that, although Bain primarily intended the model to explain the growth and distribution of white collar unionism in the British manufacturing sector, its implications are universal in scope. The researcher acknowledges that the socio-political factors influencing unionisation in the United Kingdom are very different to that of South Africa. However, it was important for the researcher to identify core principles of white collar unionism and the extent to which these applied to the South African LIS environment.

Another limitation identified by the researcher was the method of delivering the tried and tested questionnaire method of gathering data. The electronic method of delivering the questionnaire and soliciting responses electronically, especially in South Africa, is still in its infancy. This methodology, although suitable for the study, in the opinion of the researcher, had certain limitations. For example, during the period of gathering the data, almost all tertiary institutions in South Africa were plagued with a number of computer viruses. There were other technical problems such as computer servers being down and respondents being 'timed out' while completing the questionnaire. However, this method of delivering the questionnaire accorded the researcher the opportunity of sending three reminders to almost 1500 potential respondents at the 'press of a button'. The ability to send the reminders as quickly and as cost effectively, in the opinion of the researcher, was a major contributor to achieving a 20.98 percent response rate with such a geographically dispersed population. This response rate enabled the researcher to address the research questions generated for this study.

It is argued, in Chapter Six, that low response rate is an inherent disadvantage in the use of self-administered questionnaires in survey research. The response rate of 20.98 percent may be considered low for generalisations regarding the views of employees within the LIS sector in identifying the factors that have influenced the growth of unionism in the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa.

1.10 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The LIS sector has a very broad coverage - including public institutions (public libraries), tertiary institutions (academic libraries), school libraries and industry (special libraries). School librarians have the option of belonging to a sector specific union in the form of the unions that represent teachers. Of the other mentioned LIS institutions, the tertiary education sector is one of the more tightly knit

segments within the LIS sector. Furthermore, there are three national unions which, in one way or another, represent almost the entire tertiary education sector. It is for the above reasons that only the employees of the LIS sector at tertiary institutions have been identified as the research population.

The researcher focused on surveying all tertiary institutions in South Africa with the target population being employees within the LIS sector who were engaged, as their primary function, in the provision of information or in the support thereof. The study did not survey those employees from the tertiary education sector who work in libraries or resource centres within academic departments. Neither did the study survey employees in libraries or resource centres in departments that are affiliates to the main institution.

1.11 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The study is structured in such a way that important principles and/or concepts are identified and discussed in early chapters. These principles and/or concepts are discussed further, in subsequent chapters, with a different focus. An example of this is collective bargaining. In Chapter Two, the researcher discusses collective bargaining in the context of trade unionism in general. Collective bargaining, in Chapter Three, is discussed within the LIS context. In the following chapter, collective bargaining is discussed in terms of the new labour dispensation. This principle is discussed in Chapters Seven and Eight in an integrated manner and not under a specific heading. As much as it may seem repetitious, the focus of the discussions are different but relevant to the study.

With regard to the outline of the study, Chapter Two presents a historical overview of trade unionism in South Africa. Trade unionism itself would be a topic on its own for a number of studies. This chapter focuses on the definition of trade unions and identifies characteristics that can be adopted to further the interest of LIS sector workers and the profession. The chapter also discusses the factors that promote or retard the growth of unionism.

Unionism in libraries began in the early 1900s but only gained momentum, internationally, in the mid 1960s. It is important that the study explores the history of trade unionism and the effect that the legislative system had in shaping trade unionism in the South African workplace. Such a discussion provides an understanding of the changing ethos of trade unions in South Africa. Given the fact that libraries cut across a number of different sectors and the employees are presently represented by a number of different unions, it is therefore important to examine the trade union structures that are in existence in South Africa.

In Chapter Three there is an examination of the role that the trade union movement had played, in the international arena, in the LIS sector. Discussion in Chapter Three centres around an examination of the factors that influenced the growth of unionism in libraries at an international level.

Chapter Four focuses on an examination of the new labour dispensation in South Africa. Not many areas of law have undergone more dynamic change in recent years than the law relating to employment. Chapter Four examines the four most relevant laws affecting labour relations. This examination is done in the context of the provisions of the Constitution of South Africa and government's encouragement of employees to organise themselves within trade union structures.

Library associations have been for decades the co-ordinating body within the LIS sector. Chapter Five examines the roles and characteristics of professional library associations with an emphasis on the South African professional body. Despite the alleged growth of trade unions, library associations continue to represent the interest of the profession and professionally qualified staff. This chapter examines the reasons for the continued existence of library associations amid growing demand for attention to industrial issues.

Chapters Two to Five review the literature to determine the historical perspective of unions and professional associations within the library and information environment. Having reviewed the literature, this study focuses on the empirical component of the research. The methodology underpinning the research is discussed in Chapter Six. Surveys in the form of questionnaires were used

to solicit the opinions of the employees in terms of the feasibility of forming a structure that represents their interests. The survey of the union officials generated data about union structures within the country and whether the current union structures could accommodate an amendment to incorporate an affiliate worker union from within the LIS sector.

The discussion in the preceding chapters serve as a framework for the analysis in terms of national and international trends towards or away from professional library associations. The empirical data provides the basis for discussion on the opinions of employees and trade unionists on the issue of unionising employees from the LIS sector. The empirical data was analysed to determine whether the development of a professional union, with a professional arm within the current trade union structures, would be feasible. Chapter Seven presents the findings.

The findings in relation to the literature were discussed in Chapter Eight. Chapter Nine presents the conclusions and recommendations.

1.12 SUMMARY

This introductory chapter presents the background to the study. A survey of the literature revealed that professional issues of the LIS sector are addressed by a professional association and industrial issues by a number of different generic unions. In determining the feasibility of unifying the sector, an in-depth survey of the literature was done to determine international trends, followed by an analysis of the data collected through the surveys of the employees within the sector and the officials of the three trade unions that are currently servicing the tertiary education sector.

Chapter One has identified the research objectives and their corresponding research questions that are relevant to this study. The researcher has explained the significance of the study as well as the limitations and delimitations of the study.

Chapter Two discusses trade unionism and presents a historical overview of unionism in South Africa.

CHAPTER TWO: TRADE UNIONISM AND A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF UNIONISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Industrial relations in South Africa started with the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck at the Cape in 1652. For the following two hundred years South Africa was basically an agricultural economy with industrial relations being limited to interaction between employer and domestic servant or agricultural worker. According to Nel and Van Rooyen (1989: 54-55), the industrial relationship between employer and employee became complicated with the discovery of diamonds and gold in the mid nineteenth century which catapulted South Africa into an era of mining, manufacturing and business. A third component, that is, the government and politics of the day further exacerbated the complex situation around South Africa's industrial relations. The political component was interwoven with the economic or industrial component to give South Africa a unique dualistic industrial relations system.

Twentieth century South African industrial relations was underpinned by this dualistic system of industrial relations with the black component (referring to Africans, Coloureds and Indians) of the South African community relying heavily on trade unions to engage the government and the employer on political and industrial issues (Nel and Van Rooyen 1989: 53).

As was evident throughout the world, industrialisation resulted in a shift of concentration of workers from the primary (agricultural) and secondary (manufacturing) sectors to the tertiary (service) sector. This shift caused a drastic increase in the white collar component of the labour force (Nel and Van Rooyen 1989: 54-55; Baskin 1996: 27- 28). The amendments to the labour dispensation in 1995 wooed a large number of white collar workers into the fold of trade unionism. Stilwell (2005) points out that the Labour Relations Act of 1995 makes no distinction between white and blue collar workers. The fact that the Act only recognises the trade union as the body representing the interests of employees is a significant contributor to the growing number of white collar workers joining trade unions (Stilwell 2005).

This chapter provides an overview, in six chronological phases, of the historical development of worker representation in South Africa. The growth of worker representation or trade unionism, in the South African context, is unique in that the growth was guided by a policy of dualism, that is, different systems of worker representation for the whites and blacks. Such a dualistic system was governed by a myriad of legislation which was promulgated over a period of time. Therefore, it is safe to say that legislation played a critical role in the development of trade unionism in South Africa.

As stated above, there has been a shift in concentration of workers to the tertiary (service) sector. The LIS sector is located within the tertiary or service sector. The library, being part of the tertiary education sector, will also be affected by the shift in worker concentration. Worker concentration within the LIS sector internationally would impact on the unionisation of the employees as white collar workers. Hence, a detailed discussion of white collar unionism under the heading of **Types of trade unions** will be provided. The researcher acknowledges that there is no distinction in South African law between white and blue collar workers. However, this background discussion on white collar unionisation from the international literature adds substance to the investigation of the feasibility of unionising library personnel who have been categorised as white collar workers.

2.2 DEFINITION OF TRADE UNIONS

The fundamental principle underpinning trade unions is the coming together of employees to defend their rights to fair treatment at the workplace and to be adequately compensated for their labour. According to Finnemore and Van der Merwe (1986:33), "a trade union may be defined as an organisation of workers who, by collective action, strive to defend and advance their interests". Therefore, to challenge the power of the employer, workers found it necessary to unite in their actions. This unity would ensure that workers could gain better benefits (wages and conditions of service) and at the same time reduce the power of the employer to unilaterally control the workforce. Blackburn (1967: 14) believes that,

...unionism [is] the existence and activity of any organisation of employees in protecting and furthering the interests of its members, as employees. [Trade] unionism refers to the presence of an organisation, one of whose aims is to represent members individually or collectively on such matters as pay and conditions of service.

The definition of trade unions, in this study, centres around the two items of core legislation governing labour relations in South Africa, namely the Industrial Conciliation Act 28 of 1956 and the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995. A trade union is defined in the Industrial Conciliation Act as follows:

[A]“trade union” means any number of employees in any particular undertaking, industry, trade or occupation associated together primarily for the purpose of regulating relations in that undertaking, industry or occupation between themselves or some of them and their employers or some of their employers (Union of South Africa 1956: 527).

The Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 (Republic of South Africa 1995: 215) defines a trade union as an association of employees whose principal purpose is to regulate relations between employees and employers.

The true character of a trade union is located in the definition given by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) which states that a trade union is a continuing permanent organisation by the workers to protect themselves at their work, to improve conditions of their work through collective bargaining, to seek to better the conditions of their lives, and to provide a means of expression for the workers' views on matters of society (Dreyfus 2000: 27-28).

The above definition of a trade union by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions makes it clear that trade unions act on behalf of their members, beyond the limits of the enterprise, in social life as well (Nel and Van Rooyen 1989: 142). This principle is implicit in the purpose of the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995. Therefore, it is important that this principle should form part of the objectives of trade unions in South Africa.

2.3 OBJECTIVES OF A TRADE UNION

The objectives of a trade union are to protect and to promote the particular interests of the individual worker or groups of workers. Du Toit (1976: 1) states that the objective of the trade union is more than economic, it includes the social well being of the workers: "... the union can today be regarded as a social institution, besides being occupied with economic matters."

The objectives of trade unions, during the early phases of trade unionism in South Africa, were centred around the fight for better working conditions and adequate compensation for the labour of the worker. It was also a fight for the fundamental principle of the recognition of the collective bargaining system (Horrell 1961: 1).

Despite the fact that government politics did impact on unions, union objectives continued along economic lines. However, in the 1980s, the objectives of black unions incorporated overtly political motives. The purpose for the incorporation of the political objective by black unions was to make the country ungovernable and thereby force a change in government. However, that objective was dropped in the 1990s when there was a change in government. Unions now placed greater emphasis on the economic objective, especially the reconstruction of the economy (Von Holdt 2000: 103-110).

2.4 TYPES OF TRADE UNIONS

There are basically four types of trade unions, namely, craft, industrial, general and white collar unions. These are discussed below. White collar unions are discussed in more detail as they have relevance for the professionalism versus unionism discussions (see section 3.6.1).

2.4.1 Craft unions

Craft unions organise all workers in a specified skilled occupation regardless of the industry in which the work is performed. The motivation for the formation of craft unions was protection of the skills of

its membership and the maintenance of their status. Therefore, it was essential that the workers protected themselves not only from the employers but also from the rest of the working class. Two important objectives of the craft unions were to:

- retain a high standard of training and restrict the entry of new apprentices, thus controlling the supply of workers in the trade; and
- prevent job fragmentation and the taking over of parts of their job by semi-skilled workers at low rates of pay (Finnemore and Van der Merwe 1986: 38).

These objectives were clearly displayed during the early phases of trade unionism in South Africa, which are discussed later in this chapter.

2.4.2 Industrial unions

The aim of industrial unions is to organise all workers in a single well defined industry regardless of the job being performed. The majority of the membership of industrial unions are drawn from the semi-skilled and unskilled categories of workers (Finnemore and Van der Merwe 1986: 38).

2.4.3 General unions

General unions are not restricted to any particular industry. The principles governing the development of general unions were to assist unskilled workers, across the labour force, who were perceived to have insignificant labour power. Any member of this category of worker, demanding better wages or better conditions of service could easily be replaced from the mass of unemployed (Finnemore and Van der Merwe 1986: 39), thus the need for general unions.

2.4.4 White collar unions

White collar unions organise white collar workers and cover areas such as government, insurance and the banking sector. The union may be organised on a basis of special skills, for example, teachers or journalists, on an industry basis or on a general basis (Finnemore and Van der Merwe 1986: 39).

Originally white collar workers enjoyed a status that was superior to that of blue collar² workers. As white collar jobs became increasingly mechanised and computerised, this status was eroded. Simultaneously, the wages of blue collar workers began to rise in the mid 1970s and early 1980s. The rise in wages of blue collar workers and the erosion of the status of white collar workers created a sense of uneasiness among white collar workers who sought collective action to defend their position (Finnemore and Van der Merwe 1986: 39-40).

While some South African 'white collar' unions exist, for example the South African Society of Bank Officials, they are not a prominent aspect of industrial relations. This reflects the protected position that these workers have enjoyed in the past in South Africa. Finnemore and Van der Merwe (1986: 40) argued in 1986 that the growth of white collar unions, in South Africa, was beginning to gain momentum. Recent reactions by teachers to their pay award indicates that economic pressures are also affecting white collar workers.

As stated in Chapter One, it is common knowledge that workers employed within the LIS sector are classified as white collar workers. Therefore, it is important to engage in a detailed discussion of core issues of white collar trade unionism. It must be reiterated that there is no distinction in South African law between blue and white collar workers. However, the service sector or tertiary sector is the least unionised of the three sectors (primary, secondary and tertiary sectors) - there is major scope for the unionising of the tertiary sector.

2.4.4.1 White collar trade unionism as a relatively new phenomenon

According to Adams (1975: 1) trade unionism is a powerful political, economic and social force in the industrialised countries. Traditionally this power was derived from the largest sector of the workforce, that is, the blue collar (or manual) sector. However, the twentieth century has seen a growing demand

² 'Blue collar workers' are defined in Chapter One.

for services and technical expertise held by white collar workers which has resulted in rapid growth in the number of people that are classified as white collar workers. The growth of the white collar sector of the workforce has not significantly changed the source of union membership as the strategy and tactics of trade unionism has very little appeal to white collar workers (Adams 1975:1; Kassalow 1977: 9).

The rapid growth in the number of white collar workers is due to the shift in employment from the primary sector (agricultural sector), and to a lesser extent from the secondary sector (manufacturing), to the tertiary (service) sector. The tertiary sector is relatively intensive in its use of white collar labour and it is characteristic of the more developed economies as an increasing proportion of employment is accounted for by this sector (Elliot 1977: 39-40).

White collar unionism is a relatively new phenomenon. Prior to 1970 the understanding of white collar unionism was rudimentary. This understanding was greatly expanded with the publication, in 1970, of Bain's work *The growth of white collar unionism*. This was the first empirically based work to examine white collar unionism and its growth. Although Bain primarily intended the model to explain the growth and distribution of white collar unionism in the British manufacturing sector, its implications are universal in scope (Adams 1975: 1).

2.4.4.2 Definition of white collar unionism

Before embarking on a discussion of Bain's findings on the growth of white collar unionism, it is important to define white collar unionism. Lumley (1973: 20) defines white collar unionism as the existence and activity of any organisation of employees in protecting and furthering the interests of its members, as employees. White collar unionism is concerned with organisations composed in total or in part of white collar employees who can belong to any of the following categories of workers: administrators, managers, executives, supervisors, professionals, scientists, technologists, technicians and draughtsmen. These organisations include not only trade unions, but also staff associations and multi-purpose bodies such as professional associations which have influence, through collective

bargaining, in the employment field. Collective bargaining is a fundamental characteristic that must be displayed for an organisation to be categorised as a trade union (Bain 1970: 5; Lumley 1973: 20).

The definition proposed by Bain and Price (1972: 326-333) has a sociological bias. Bain and Price (1972: 326) argue that there are essentially two approaches in defining a white collar worker, namely the brain-brawn approach and the functional approach. The brain-brawn approach is the more popular approach. The notion of a white collar employee first crystallized around the clerical employment at a time when access to the minimum educational qualifications required for such work was restricted and when manual work typically involved a high level of direct exertion.

Bain and Price view white collar workers as all those employees who do not work in purely manual occupations. They go on to say that white collar work is fundamentally characterised by its intellectual and non-manual character whereas manual occupations could be defined as those involving physical labour or labour done with the hands. White collar workers are those who make their living using their heads and not their hands. White collar jobs require mental activity and attention; brain work that makes demands of varying intensities on the mind of the performer. The brain-brawn approach definition has become entrenched in popular thinking. It has been reinforced by the International Labour Organisation which claims that 'manual workers' are any persons engaging in manual labour and working for an employer, while the white collar workers are employed in commerce and industry and their labour is mental rather than physical (Bain and Price 1972: 326-327).

The major criticism of the brain-brawn approach is that it merely shifts the definition problem from the terms 'white collar' and 'blue collar' to two different but equally problematic terms, that is, 'intellectual' and 'manual'. This approach will have to show that work of an intellectual nature is exclusively performed by white collar employees. This would be an extremely difficult task for there can be no white collar employment so intellectual in nature that it requires no physical effort. Conversely, there can be no manual work that requires no intellectual effort. Since virtually every job contains some elements of both intellectual and manual work, the problem becomes one of

distinguishing between predominantly intellectual and predominantly manual labour (Bain and Price 1972: 329).

The functional approach provides a very different definition of white collar worker. This definition is based on objective aspects of job content. According to Bain and Price (1972: 331-332), white collar employees are defined as those who perform the following functions:

- **Administrative** such as general administration, political-legal and related occupations, health and welfare occupations, education and training occupations, financial occupations and data processing;
- **Design, analysis and planning** which include, amongst others, production of goods, artistic work, preventive maintenance work and experimental, statistical, conceptual occupations;
- **Supervisory or managerial**; and
- **Commercial**.

Bain and Price (1972: 331-332) stated that these four functions are the distinguishing mark of white collar employment because they were once performed by the employer. In the early stages of capitalist development, the employer had to personally perform a large number of these functions over and above the typical entrepreneurial functions of innovation and risk-bearing.

The major criticism of the functional approach, as with the brain-brawn approach, is the shifting of the definitional argument from white collar to the terms supervisory and managerial; design, analysis and planning; administrative; and commercial (Bain and Price 1972: 333).

2.4.4.3 Bain's finding on the growth of white collar unionism

The primary finding of Bain is that the growth of white collar unionism is determined by three factors, namely, employment concentration or bureaucratic nature of employment structure, union recognition by management and government policy.

In a large organisation the organisational rules apply to employees as members of a group. The most effective way to favourably influence the rules is through collective bargaining. Therefore, the more employee concentrated or the more bureaucratic the employment structure is, the greater the possibility of employees joining a trade union. This is so because the individual white collar worker finds that he or she has less and less ability to influence the making and administration of the rules by which he or she is governed on the job. In order to address this situation, white collar workers join trade unions and engage in collective bargaining (Bain 1970: 14-40; White 1971: 80; Adams 1975: 20).

However, not only does the bureaucratic organisation encourage unionism, but a trade union, by attempting to extend the scope of collective representation, upholds the impersonality of the system. Thus trade unionism and bureaucracy are mutually supporting (Blackburn and Prandy 1965: 117).

The second component of the Bain model is the implication that the level of white collar unionisation is dominated by employer policy which may range from intense resistance to unionism to complete recognition. Employer policy in turn is governed by government policy. Government may intervene and apply pressure on employers who refuse to grant white collar unions recognition or attempt to abort white collar unionisation efforts (Bain 1970: 14-40; White 1971: 80; Adams 1975: 20).

Adams (1975: 20) argues that white collar unionisation is greater in those sectors where employer policies and practices favour unionism. In the public sector employers have generally agreed to negotiate with unions and in most cases management has actively encouraged their employees to join unions. As a result, over eighty percent of public employees in Britain, according to research conducted by Adams (1975: 20), are union members. Most private employers do not recognise white collar unions, and many discourage their white collar employees from joining. This explains the low percentage of white collar employees in the private sector who are members of unions (Adams 1975: 20).

The last component of the Bain model is that of government policy. Most white collar union recognition in private industry has come about as a result of government policies and the favourable climate that they have created for trade unionism. However, research has shown that government has given no more than normal support to the principle of trade union recognition (White 1971: 80).

One of Bain's critics is Adams (1975: 20-27; 1977: 317-321) who, in criticising the Bain model argues that "in Britain the decisive factor in the preponderance of white collar recognition concessions was union militancy rather than government policy" (1975: 27). He goes on to argue that white collar workers join trade unions primarily because of discontent with their economic situation and the ability of a union to represent their needs through collective bargaining. The major thrust of collective bargaining produces terms and conditions of employment that are generally granted by employers to all employees whether or not they are union members. As a result of this situation, the propensity of covered non-union members to join is weakened, and one might expect unions to be faced with a substantial 'free rider' problem (Adams 1975: 44).

However, Adams did, at the time, concur with Bain with regard to employer policy in that employer policies do play a critical role in union growth. Adams (1975: 27) pointed out that,

hostility to unions usually thwarts growth, while genuine acceptance and cooperation is a very powerful force for union expansion. The greater degree of recognition in Sweden is one of the primary reasons for the greater extent of white collar unionism in that country as compared to Britain.

2.4.4.4 Associations as white collar unions

Any grouping of employees organised for the purposes of protecting and furthering the interests of its members, including that of associations, fall within the ambit of Lumley and Bains' definitions of white collar unions. There are different forms or types of associations and each carries its own claim to white collar unionism. The dominant association is the professional association which is formed by members

of a profession. The fundamental purpose of such an association is to organise, defend and advance the interests of the profession and its members.

There are four broad basic types of professional associations. These are the 'Prestige Association', the 'Study Association', the 'Qualifying Association' and the 'Occupational Association' which may be sub-divided into the 'Co-ordinating Association' and the 'Protective Association'. Any one of these function as organised labour with different emphases (Lumley 1973: 21).

The association that comes closest to resembling a white collar union is the occupational association. Occupational associations organise professional employees within a particular occupation, without attempting to qualify them. Occupational associations are subdivided into co-ordinating associations and protective associations. Co-ordinating associations bring together professionals working in a specialised field, thus enabling them to discuss occupational problems. Protective associations provide an organised means of exercising pressure to protect and improve the working conditions and remuneration of the individual professional. Both associations are concerned with the protection of the members' occupational interests and therefore can be categorised as white collar unions (Blackburn 1967: 25; Lumley 1973: 22).

Chapter Five discusses the role of the professional association in furthering the interests of workers in the library and information environment in South Africa. This chapter attempts to locate the library and information professional association in South Africa within one of the types of professional associations mentioned above.

2.4.4.5 Factors that have encouraged unionisation

In addition to the above discussion on factors influencing the growth of white collar unionism, there are a number of other factors that have contributed to the growth of unionism. These factors are discussed here in Chapter Two and are expanded on in subsequent chapters (sections 3.4 and 4.5) in the context of the focus of these chapters. Despite the fact that collective bargaining opens itself to

'free riders' and the fact that some white collar workers object to collective bargaining because it results in uniformity of treatment and has little regard for individual merit (Strauss 1961: 78), collective bargaining is still a major contributor to the growth of white collar unionism.

2.4.4.5.1 Collective bargaining

The main source of industrial interaction between employers and employees takes place through joint consultation and collective bargaining. Collective bargaining is the main conduit for determining the industrial relationship between employers and unions organising white collar employees. Collective bargaining is one of the critical processes in negotiating improved terms and conditions of employment and the settlement of issues arising over the interpretation of existing procedural and substantive agreements. The negotiation of salary increases is a key component of collective bargaining (Lumley 1973: 96-97).

In collective bargaining, disputes sometimes occur and are resolved through conciliation or arbitration depending on the attitude and circumstances of the union involved. However, should that fail the industrial action taken by white collar workers is often more passive, for example, a ban on overtime and 'work-to-rule'. Formal strike action is retained as a last resort (Lumley 1973: 98-99).

Collective bargaining is a tool used not only to enhance remuneration for labour but also to secure employment.

2.4.4.5.2 Job security

One of the striking aspects of the British industry in the 1960s and early 1970s was the rapid increase in the number of mergers and amalgamations. The effect of this was not only the continuation of the long term trend towards larger productive, clerical and technical units, but also an inevitable increase in job loss and disruption with centralisation and rationalisation which tends to follow a merger or an amalgamation. White collar workers have to share in the negative effects of mergers either directly in

terms of redundancy or indirectly through natural wastage with greater pressure of work on the remaining workforce (Thakur and Naylor 1976: 12). The tertiary education sector in South Africa is currently undergoing mergers and it is in this climate that we have to view the feasibility of unionising the LIS staff.

Resistance to redundancies or the establishment of adequate compensation, unless guaranteed by law, almost presupposes effective and vocal collective representation. A 'good' redundancy agreement is now part of the initial 'package' that any self-respecting union will seek after recognition and is an important attraction to white collar workers, who probably feel all the more bitter as they are not accustomed to redundancy (Thakur and Naylor 1976: 12).

2.4.4.5.3 Income policy

The apparent success, rightly or wrongly, attributed to unions of blue collar workers in closing the wage gap between themselves and white collar workers is undoubtedly an important part of the new consciousness of white collar workers. The gap in earnings between white collar workers and blue collar workers narrowed considerably and in some instances the blue collar workers have overtaken white collar workers. Thus the privileges of white collar employment are now confined to a top layer of senior management and certain highly paid professions. Therefore, it is imperative that white collar workers unionise to achieve the same wage gains as their blue collar counterparts (Thakur and Naylor 1976: 12).

2.4.4.6 Professional activities and services of white collar unions

In addition to their principal protective function, many unions organising white collar employees seek to assist their members in professional activities and services. One of the professional activities that a white collar union will get involved in is the continuous attempts to improve the professional status of the occupation by maintaining standards of professional conduct. To accomplish this, the union makes representation to serve on all bodies that will have an impact on the future of the profession and makes

representation to government for funding for the growth and development of the profession (Lumley 1973: 104).

The white collar union also campaigns for a lengthening of the period of training required for the professional activity and for the withdrawal of permission to employ any unqualified persons to the professional ranks. The union also determines standards of entry, keeps a register of the professionals and assumes responsibility for professional discipline (Lumley 1973: 104). All of these are currently areas of challenge in the South Africa LIS environment.

By engaging in such professional activities unions are more likely to be viewed as more responsible bodies by white collar employees, by employers and by the government. Their function is seen as having broadened from a position of solely self-centred advancement to one of concern with industry as a whole. This enhanced status of the union makes recruitment of members an easier task and advances members' individual status along with that of the occupation. It may also help the union to be more effective in carrying out its protective function (Lumley 1973: 104-105).

2.4.4.7 Social status as a factor that has negated the growth of unionisation of white collar workers

The social status of white collar workers is a key issue negating the growth of white collar unionisation. The other factor identified as having an influence in this regard is the employment of women which is covered in the next section on its own as it forms an important focus for this study.

A basic factor in the understanding of white collar unionism is a knowledge of the kinds of people that constitute white collar employees. Lumley (1973: 30) suggests that the behaviour of any group can probably best be summarised in terms of the social class to which they belong. Therefore, it is useful to investigate the social status of white collar employees.

The social status of an individual or group is their position in a hierarchy of prestige using various criteria. Status is based on an assessor's subjective opinion. The status of an occupation is generally assessed on criteria which include its economic position, education and training required for it, and the background of individuals entering it (Lumley 1973: 30).

A fairly common view of the effect of social status on white collar unionism is that white collar employees see themselves as of a higher status than blue collar employees, and that this 'snobbish' outlook makes them avoid patterns of behaviour which might identify them with blue collar employees, for example, joining a trade union. To exacerbate such a perception the key tool available to a trade union is the withdrawal of labour which is considered unprofessional and too militant (Blackburn 1967: 32; Lumley 1973: 31).

Blackburn (1967: 31-32) saw this unprofessional militant conduct as a cause of concern to white collar workers because it can result in a loss of status. Thus, these organisations are faced with a dilemma. If they avoid militancy they maintain status at the cost of being ineffective, but if they take action to get results they lose status. In most cases the response has been to limit militancy in the hope of achieving results by more acceptable methods. The extreme position taken up by those bodies which reject what they regard as the trade union approach, is to engage in no form of bargaining or negotiation. Taking a less extreme approach, are other organisations which prefer to think of their approaches to employers as making representation rather than bargaining, believing that the reasonableness of their approach will be perceived and acted upon (Blackburn 1967: 31-32).

However, it must be understood that any industrial bargaining process brings to the table two forces, that is, the employers with the financial resources and the unions with their numbers and potential to withdraw their labour. Organisations which are concerned about status are therefore particularly unwilling to use the strike weapon. Yet, if an organisation is going to engage in bargaining there comes a time when the only way to make progress against an employer is for the employee to withdraw his/her labour. Accordingly many white collar organisations have come to the point where they were prepared to take action. In England the concern with status may have had a greater effect in curbing

militancy. However, diverse white collar groups such as railway clerks, bank clerks, school teachers and doctors have shown a willingness to strike. There are many organisations that have displayed their preference to avoid such militancy thereby preserving their status but allowing an advantage to the employer in bargaining power (Blackburn 1967: 32).

The higher social status of white collar workers is generally regarded as having a retarding effect on the growth of unionisation. It is argued that white collar workers fear they will lose prestige if they join a union as their membership may be seen as carrying a working class stigma, or at least as removing one of the differences between white collar and manual workers. There is fear that unionism may damage professional status. Therefore, the onus is on the union organiser to strike a balance between the loss of prestige and the economic gains, in terms of the expectation of white collar workers. The union needs to strike a balance between respectability and effectiveness (Blackburn 1967: 51).

As white collar employees' perception of the social status of their occupation alters, so do their attitudes to unionism. An example given by Lumley (1973: 33) is that of British teachers who, in the face of falling economic position and dissatisfaction over employment conditions and their degree of autonomy, shifted the emphasis of the professional association into a militant trade union. The majority of teachers, in Britain, thought that they would lose public sympathy by striking. They were, however, willing to sacrifice status on one factor in order to gain it on another. At the same time a minority of teachers have shown their concern for professionalism and status by breaking away from the union to form a Professional Association of Teachers, a non-militant body (Lumley 1973: 33). In the South African school education environment, teachers have engaged in strike action to better their salaries and conditions of service. As recent as September 2004,

the country's two largest teacher unions - the National Professional Teachers' Organisation of SA and the SA Democratic Teachers' Union - will strike with 700 000 public servants following a dispute with government over salaries and conditions of service (*Weekend post* 2004).

The teachers have demonstrated their willingness to withhold their skilled labour for economic gain.

Another issue, which is open to dispute, that serves to negate the growth of white collar unions is “...the large and growing proportion of women in the white collar labour force...” (Bain 1970: 14).

2.4.4.8 Summary on growth of white collar unionism

White collar unionism is a relatively new phenomenon. The greater part of the discussion on white collar unions is based on the empirical research conducted by Bain (1970). Bain argued that there are three primary factors influencing the growth and development of trade unions which are employment concentration, union recognition by management and government policy.

Bain’s critics state that economics is the primary reason for the growth of white collar unionism. The economic factor is split into sub-factors which include the ability of organised labour to bargain collectively, secure employment and address the wage gap issue. White collar unions also assist the membership in professional activities and services. On the other hand, there are factors which negate the growth and development of white collar unions. One such factor is social status of white collar workers. It has also been argued that white collar workers did not join unions because there were no unions to cater for their needs.

The LIS sector is part of the service or tertiary sector and therefore, it will be dominated by white collar workers. The factors identified above as influencing or negating the growth of unionism will be examined in the next chapter in the context of its influence on the growth of unions in the LIS sector.

It is clear, from the preceding discussion, that government policy influences the growth of trade unionism. In the discussion below, the researcher provides a brief overview of the historical developments of trade unionism in South Africa and the role played by government in shaping industrial relations in South Africa. The issue of the contribution of government to the shaping of industrial relations in South Africa is expanded via an investigation, in Chapter Four, of the legislation that has been promulgated. A key aspect of the new legislation is the potential that such legislation has in encouraging white collar workers to unionise.

2.5

EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN AND TRADE UNIONISM

The discussion on the negative impact of women on the growth of trade unionism is split into two. The initial discussion is on the historical research conducted, primarily in the United Kingdom, by Bain (1970), Lumley (1973) and Adams (1975). The later discussion is on more recent research conducted by Cunnison (2002), the European Industrial Relations Observatory (2002) and the ILO (Australian Council of Trade Unions 2003). The researcher illustrates the radical change in the unionising of women since the days of Bain, Lumley and Adams.

Bain (1970: 40) writing in 1970 pointed out that women made up a large proportion of the white collar labour force. Many women did not participate continuously in the labour market because of marriage and family responsibilities. He argued that women were generally supplementary earners in the sense that their pay was not the family's main source of income but merely supplemented the earnings of their husbands. These characteristics tended to reduce women's commitment to work thereby increasing their indifference to trade unionism.

A survey conducted by Lumley (1973: 35-36) among British teachers showed that, within an organisation of white collar unionism women typically took a less militant attitude than men. One of the explanations for the reduced level of militancy, as stated above, was the fact that many women played the dual role of housewife and employee. Therefore, their focus was on holding together the family life. The fact that a large proportion of women, forty-six percent of the white collar labour force according to research conducted by Lumley (1973: 34) in Britain, were white collar workers was a contributory factor to the low density of unionisation among white collar workers.

Most white collar workers were outside unions, not because of lack of interest but because unions had not been available to them. For most white collar employees to join or not to join a union, had never been an authentic question, for no union had been available. For these employees, the question had

been to organise a union, which is a very different proposition from joining or not joining an available union (Blackburn 1967: 56-57; Adams 1975: 42).

However, in a more recent study conducted by the ILO on trade union membership in European countries it was found that,

...since the early 1980s...all of the trade union membership growth has come from women and never before have so many women joined trade unions.... While in many countries there is still a considerable gap between male and female unionisation rates, differences are narrowing partly on account of the rising propensity of women to join unions, especially when they work in the public or subsidised sector (Australian Council of Trade Unions 2003).

Corroborating this finding is Cunnison's (2002: 168) argument that as the mining sector began to decline in the 1980s and 1990s, the service sector, which is dominated by women, began to grow and the membership of the trade unions servicing this sector began to grow. The end result is a drastic increase in trade union membership of women. It is further argued that the trade union membership of the service sector is increasing faster among women than men (Cunnison 2002: 168).

Another factor adding to an environment conducive to the increase of unionised women is the political environment. With increasing democratisation and feminisation, the union movement has the potential to bring women more gains which positively influences the growth of women in unions (Cunnison 2002: 169). It is also argued that as the distribution of family responsibilities becomes more balanced, women trade union membership begins to increase and women are taking up positions of responsibility within the trade union movement (European Industrial Relations Observatory 2002).

2.6 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE UNIONISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

Nel and Van Rooyen (1989) provide a comprehensive account of the historical development of trade unions at the turn of the last century. Given there is little conflict, in the literature, with regard to the historical development of unions, the researcher draws largely from this source.

The historical development of trade unionism in South Africa has a pattern of development. The first period was from 1652 to 1869.

2.6.1 Period from 1652 to 1869

After the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck in 1652 South Africa was basically an agrarian community and for the first two centuries was regarded as an exclusively agricultural economy. The early settlers and other inhabitants required help to farm the land and to build towns. Domestic servants and agricultural workers thus constituted the major part of the labour force during this period. The local black population was initially unwilling to work with the result that large numbers of Indian and Chinese slaves were imported, between 1850 and 1910, to meet the country's labour needs (Nel and Van Rooyen 1989: 54).

The expansion of the economy necessitated formal regulation of employer-worker relations which gave rise to the Master and Servants Act of 1841 which applied only to the Colony of Natal. Riekert (1983: 38) maintains that the Act may have been introduced to address the rights of employees. However, the introduction of the Act must "be viewed as a response to the labour shortage" (Riekert 1983: 36). Given that the local black population was unwilling to work, the employer had to ensure that the available labour was as productive as possible. Therefore, it was unlawful for the servant not to commence work at an agreed date. Further, it was an offence if the servant was intoxicated, unlawfully away from work, performed work that was improper or negligent and, refusing to obey a command of the master. Although this and other related legislation remained in existence for many years, the legislation related only to bilateral individual relations, that is, negotiation between the employer and the individual employee. They did not provide for matters relating to general worker representation, that is, negotiation between employers and workers in general (Nel and Van Rooyen 1989: 54).

As the South African economy developed, the early labour laws regulating bilateral individual relations proved inadequate to cope with the continuously changing employer-worker relations. Therefore, it became necessary to update legislation to cater for the needs of employers and workers. The Master

and Servants Act 15 of 1856 provided for the tightening-up of the measures concerning employer-worker relations. This Act had a negative effect on employer-black worker relations, primarily because the scope of the offences provided for in the Act was widened. Thus failure by a servant or apprentice to commence work at an agreed date, unlawful absence from work, intoxication, negligent or improperly performed work, refusal to obey an instruction of the master, and fighting or abusive language were all offences warranting imprisonment with or without hard labour for a period not exceeding one month (Riekert 1983: 38; Nel and Van Rooyen 1989: 54).

From mid-seventeenth century until mid-nineteenth century, South Africa was essentially a country where the large majority of people engaged in agricultural activities. In these circumstances worker representation as such was non-existent. Industrial relations was essentially face-to-face master-servant interactions (Nel and Van Rooyen 1989: 54).

2.6.2 Period from 1870 to 1923

This period was considered to be the initial phase of trade unionism in South Africa and was called the period of conflict. It was a period in which workers came together as organised labour to fight not only for better working conditions but also for the fundamental principle of the recognition of the collective bargaining system (Horrell 1961:1).

The discovery of diamonds and gold in 1867 and 1885 respectively, increased the demand for those with engineering and mining skills to extract these minerals. The skilled workers most needed were artisans who were mainly recruited from Britain and Australia. In order to attract and retain the required skills, these immigrants were paid high wages and accorded privileged status. The artisans brought with them not only the knowledge and skills necessary for mining, but also British trade unionism, which provided them with a power base in the work environment when interacting with their employers (Horrell 1961:1; Ncube 1985: 22; Nel and Van Rooyen 1989: 55). The period realised the beginning of an industrial economy in South Africa.

The first organised workers were mainly artisans. According to Horrell (1961: 2) these workers organised themselves to secure recognition of their status as craftsmen, and were concerned mainly with obtaining increased pay, concessions such as leave, and recognition of their union. The technical expertise and their understanding of trade unionism modeled on the British guild system provided the necessary skills to organise artisans into properly constituted trade unions. In some cases the craft unions that were started in South Africa were affiliated and loyal to British unions. These recruited skilled workers were well versed in socialist ideology and were very militant in their approach. In effect, trade unionism was imported into South Africa by immigrant skilled labour which was required for the profitable operation of the country's business enterprise (Ncube 1985: 22).

The experienced British model unions immediately emphasised the colour bar question and support for the English worker by excluding the unskilled Afrikaans speaking workers and blacks from such unions. These unions specifically excluded blacks because they were regarded as cheap, unskilled labour which could be used by employers to undermine their job security and high standard of living. Horrell (1961: 2) pointed out that trade union issues were bound with the racial question and that the trade unionists often appealed to colour prejudice to reinforce their monopolistic policies. Black labour was confined to unskilled jobs and thus fell outside the scope of the trade unions which were aimed at protecting the English craftsmen. Skilled workers consequently kept their labour scarce by limiting trade union membership, thereby maintaining job standards which prevented job dilution and fragmentation, and thus deprived other workers of the opportunity to acquire the relevant job skills (Ncube 1985: 22; Nel and Van Rooyen 1989: 55).

The rapid change-over from individualism in a predominantly agricultural environment to an industrialised economy denied labour the opportunity to evolve its own labour relations system. As stated above, most skilled workers who had trade union experience were immigrants from Britain and thus became the leading figures in industrial relations developments. The result was that foreign industrial relations systems of worker representation were imposed on the South African industrial relations system. South African workers had no experience of trade unions nor did they know how to operate such a worker representation system (Nel and Van Rooyen 1989: 56).

After the discovery of diamonds and gold, many thousands of blacks were drawn into South Africa's industrialisation process, but no formal trade unionism was recorded. Therefore, the relationship between employers and black employees was mainly on an individual basis. Blacks soon realised that involvement in a trade union system could have distinct advantages. A strike by black workers at the Kimberley diamond fields in 1883 was one of the first recorded strikes by blacks in the country, although it was unorganised. In 1884 South Africa had its first official strike which originated at the Kimberley diamond fields. This strike arose out of refusal by white miners to be strip-searched for illegal diamonds when they came off duty, a practice already applicable to all black workers. The result of the action saw five miners dead and forty injured (Du Toit 1976: 11; Nel and Van Rooyen 1989: 56).

At the turn of the twentieth century, the white trade unions were often in conflict with management, particularly over membership and pay. This conflict resulted in hostility and retaliation by employers. Employers tried to contain British-oriented trade unions, which dominated South African industrial relations, by introducing South African whites as well as blacks into what might have been considered as skilled jobs previously held by union members. The fact that strikes were prohibited by law, despite the existence of trade unions in all four provinces, allowed management to perpetuate the hostility without threat of retaliation through strike action (Nel and Van Rooyen 1989: 56).

The abundance of natural resources contributed to rapid growth of the mining sector. The extensive development of the sector placed great demand for a supply of necessary skills. White miners did not have the capacity to meet the increased demand for the necessary skills and had to share the job opportunities with blacks. Black workers were introduced into the system with some of the blacks filling skilled jobs. However, those blacks that were working as skilled workers were paid at unskilled wage rates. The cheaper cost of black labour intensified the friction between the unionised white workers and the employers (Nel and Van Rooyen 1989: 57).

The period between 1904 and 1908 saw a total of seven strikes by both blacks and whites. A proposal by employers that skilled work should be officially extended to blacks resulted in a serious strike by white workers at the Knights Deep Mine in 1907 which spread across the Witwatersrand. Government recognised the need to pass legislation to amend the employer-worker relations. The Industrial Disputes Prevention Act 20 of 1909 was promulgated. However, the Act was unsuccessful in achieving its objectives³. Government gave in to pressure by white unions to protect white workers by passing the Mines and Works Act 12 of 1911. The Act attempted to consolidate all previous legislation relating to the mining sector as well as to entrench racially discriminating legislation. A key component of the Act was the power of the Governor-General in granting, cancelling or suspending certificates of competency of skilled mine employees. Regulation 285 which stipulated, *inter alia*, that certificates of competency should not be granted to coloured persons in the Transvaal and the Free State, was passed. Further, certificates granted to coloured persons in the Cape and Natal were not recognised in other provinces. By the end of 1911, the principle of protecting white jobs legislatively was firmly entrenched by prohibiting blacks from doing skilled jobs. The Act was aimed at institutionalising racial discrimination (Nel and Van Rooyen 1989: 57).

According to Slabbert and Swanepoel (2002: 27) the Mines and Works Act 12 of 1911 had sowed the seeds for the concept of job reservation. This principle of job reservation coupled with the Natives Land Act 27 of 1913 can “be regarded as the foundation of segregation and of apartheid politics” (Slabbert and Swanepoel 2002: 27).

The number of strikes, by black workers, between 1904 and 1910 compelled the government to pass legislation pertaining specifically to employment relations for blacks. This was particularly urgent in view of the fact that the Master and Servants Act 15 of 1856 was outdated.

³ The objectives of the Act were to “...aid in the prevention of strikes and lockouts and for the settlement of industrial disputes by conciliation...” (Jeppe and Van Pittius 1911: 2377).

The Black Labour Regulations Act 15 of 1911 was promulgated as one of the first instances of legislation designed to regulate black labour matters in the changed labour environment. The Act placed the recruitment and employment of blacks on a more satisfactory basis. It also recognised the rights and obligations of employers. Furthermore, the Act was aimed at improving the protection of the black mine workers. However, it made no provision for collective bargaining and negotiation between employers and black workers or for the redressing of grievances (Nel and Van Rooyen 1989: 58).

From 1910 onwards it became increasingly clear that white trade unions were becoming more aware that they might achieve their objectives by actively participating in politics. The majority of white trade unions became politically active resulting in the formation of the South African Labour Party. The South African Labour Party drew its support primarily from trade union members. The South African Labour Party in turn put pressure on the government to accept white trade unions and their objectives. This exertion of pressure demonstrated the relationship that developed between industrial relations and politics in South Africa (Nel and Van Rooyen 1989: 58).

Numerous strikes occurred in 1913 and 1914. The government tried to cope with these strikes and general industrial unrest by passing the Riotous Assemblies Act and Criminal Law Amendments Act 27 of 1914. This Act gave the government wider powers to curtail public unrest caused by individuals and trade unions (Friedman 1987: 13-14).

The strikes in 1914 highlighted the

... problems of social and economic relationships, between industry and labour, between skilled and unskilled workers, and between White and Black ... trade unionism had taken on a further dimension, namely that it was not only labour's struggle for recognition but that it had also adopted a politico-racial motif.. (Nel and Van Rooyen 1989 : 59).

By 1915, the power of white unions had become so great that the Transvaal Chamber of Mines decided to give official recognition to the miners' trade union. The recognition of the miners' union was a popular decision. Negotiations through trade unions became a common practice. Many forums

were established, such as reference boards or joint boards, in the spirit of negotiating labour agreements. Trade unions grew fourfold and by 1917 government decided to convene a national congress of employers and workers (Nel and Van Rooyen 1989: 59).

There were three important resolutions passed at the congress:

- the free recognition of worker organisations by employers would take place, that is, labour had the right to organise and to bargain collectively;
- the principle of equal pay for equal work, irrespective of sex; and
- no person should be victimised because of his/her union membership or participation in union activities.

The period after World War I was characterised by higher cost of living, shortages of food and bad housing. Black workers were exploited by their employers. Black workers had to work long hours, wages were unstable and there was continued prosecution under the Master and Servants Act and the Pass Laws. Black workers rallied and formed various trade unions to protect their interests. The growth of black trade unionism began to gain momentum (Nel and Van Rooyen 1989: 59).

The period immediately after the war was characterised by large foreign debt, rising cost of living and economic depression together with the other factors mentioned above. In order to contain costs, the mines embarked on a programme of rationalisation which included the retrenchment of white workers and the employment of cheap black labour. There was a great deal of discontent among the white mine workers. The discontent grew until it flared into strike action in January 1922. The white Afrikaans workers came out in support of the immigrant workers who blamed the supply of cheap black labour as a source of the strike action. The strike spread throughout the Witwatersrand. The government acted strongly against the striking workers, and the strike, which was called the Rand Rebellion, was crushed with loss of life. This increased the hostility towards blacks (Du Toit 1976: 11; Finnemore and Van der Merwe 1986: 4). Stilwell (2005) points out that this was the first time that the white South African government had acted so strongly against white workers. To ensure that the likelihood of strike action such as the Rand Rebellion was limited, the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924 (which is

discussed later in this chapter) made provisions for white trade unions to engage employers on wage and conditions of service negotiation a year in advance. The government believed that the lengthy period of negotiation (a year) was sufficient to ensure that trade unions and employers resolved wage and conditions of service negotiation thereby minimising the option of strike action (Stilwell 2005).

Nel and Van Rooyen (1989: 60) argue that the Rand Rebellion was probably the most critical turning point in South Africa's pattern of industrial relations. It marked the final parting of the ways for black and white workers.

One of the most successful black trade unions, during this early period of trade unionism in South Africa, was the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union which was founded by Clements Kadalie in order to meet the needs of the black workers. Slabbert and Swanepoel (2002: 26) state that, "The black movement of Cadali (*sic*) ... laid the foundation for the establishment of black trade unions in South Africa." The rise and fall of this union is discussed below under the heading of **Birth of black trade unions**.

2.6.2.1 Birth of black trade unions

The issue of the history of black trade unions in South Africa is comprehensively discussed by Ncube (1985). The researcher will rely mainly on the works by Ncube (1985) and Lodge (1984) in the discussion on the birth of black trade unions in South Africa.

The first black worker organisation was initiated by politically motivated whites who were members of the International Socialist League. This was a militant body which had broken away from the South African Labour Party in 1915 when they differed on the issue of whether or not to join the First World War (Ncube 1985: 25).

It was not difficult to organise black workers into unions because blacks worked under deplorable conditions which were exacerbated by the harsh economic circumstances of the war. Opportunities

such as the exclusion of black workers from craft unions assisted white political interest groups in mobilising blacks into unions (Ncube 1985: 25-26).

Another important factor which facilitated the unionisation of black workers was the series of strikes and consumer boycotts which highlighted worker grievances. The effectiveness of such strikes and consumer boycotts was dependent on the level of organisation. These strike activities created an environment that was conducive to the establishment of trade unions. Black workers recognised the potential of strike action by observing white workers engaging in industrial action to resolve their disputes (Ncube 1985: 26).

Blacks began to use industrial action to resolve their disputes. In 1918 blacks participated in the East Rand boycott of stores because of exorbitant wartime prices; and there was the bucket strike by sanitary workers who declared a work stoppage demanding a wage increase. This was suppressed by the government when it arrested the strikers under the Master and Servants Act. Government used the prevailing legislation to suppress the action by arresting the African leadership. Other planned industrial action was neutralised by such arrests (Ncube 1985: 26).

Black economic demands were inextricably linked to political demands which unavoidably affected all black people. The Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) was established in 1919 by white socialists to organise black labour in Cape Town as there was an absence of a strong and meaningful black labour organisation to articulate the demands of the masses. According to Lodge (1984: 5),

a temporary shortage of unskilled labour and a tradition of multiracial (white and coloured) trade unionism in the Cape - predisposing the local labour movement to favour African trade unionism - both help[ed] to explain the early emergence of African labour organisation.

The ICU developed out of several attempts to organise dockworkers in Cape Town. The ICU as an organisation spread from Cape Town, linking with other embryonic trade union groupings in the eastern Cape and Durban. A branch of the ICU was established in Johannesburg in 1924 and from that

year on the ICU began to attract the attention of the Communist Party which was seeking to expand its African support (Lodge 1984: 5; Ncube 1985: 28).

Ncube (1985: 30) points out that,

...worker grievances provided an impetus for the growth of the ICU, they flooded it with members from a diverse and a wide cross-section of the black population [including the coloureds], thus making it appear more like a populist mass movement rather than a bona fide trade union, modelled along the traditional lines of craft or industrial unions.

The policies and strategies that the ICU subscribed to for the improvement of wages and working conditions were through peaceful and constitutional means. Emphasis was placed on the fact that the ICU was a bona fide trade union whose principal goal was the socio-economic advancement of black workers and not a political body. This was an apolitical organisation which condemned the government's use of the pass laws and the contract labour system to manage black industrial relations.

As stated above, the Rand Rebellion had significant repercussions on South African industrial relations. The rebellion was sparked by the Chamber of Mine's recommendation of a reduction in high wages and privileges of the white mine workers and a change in the white-black ratio of mine workers. This was perceived as capitalist English using blacks to get the better of the Afrikaners. However, the threat of competition from the black workforce brought the English and the Afrikaner mine workers together. The revolt spilled into a racial conflict when armed whites assaulted blacks whom they perceived as a threat to white privilege. By attacking the blacks, the white workers changed the ideological struggle from that of a white working class struggle to one of racial domination. The conflict between black and white intensified when the ICU urged blacks to render their undivided loyalty to the Smuts government and called for the abolition of the colour bar practice (Ncube 1985: 33).

After the Rebellion the Nationalist Socialist Party and the South African Labour Party formed a coalition. The Pact enjoyed an overwhelming support from the white workers. When the Pact government came into power in 1924, it implemented the Industrial Conciliation Act 11 of 1924

(which will be discussed further in section 2.6.3). The primary purpose of this act was to curb strikes by providing a dispute settlement mechanism which encouraged organised workers and employers to bargain on issues of basic wages and conditions of service. However, blacks were excluded from these statutory provisions. They were treated as a separate entity whose conditions of employment were governed by the Native Regulations Act of 1911 and the Master and Servants Act which served to standardise the procedure for the recruitment and treatment of blacks on the mines, to streamline the contract labour system and to prohibit and prevent black worker stoppages. In this way the dualistic framework in the field of labour law and labour relations was created and enforced. Undoubtedly, it served to legitimise and institutionalise the already existing racial polarisation in the sphere of trade unionism (Ncube 1985: 35).

Further legislation deepened the rift between white workers and black workers. Realising its inability to influence the government, the ICU, in 1927, applied for affiliation to the South African Trade Union Council, a confederation of established white unions. The Council turned down the application because:

- it feared that the ICU would overwhelm it by the size of its membership, and
- the constitution of ICU excluded whites from holding office (Ncube 1985: 40).

The ICU leadership turned to the international labour movement to exert pressure on the authorities and the white unions. During the process of seeking international intervention, cracks within the ICU began to appear and over a period of time deepened. Strikes became a more frequent tool to address grievances. The ICU leadership began to spend more time playing the role of mediator or conciliator by attempting to persuade the striking workers to return to work. Further, Lodge (1984: 6) points out that all the ICU had to offer in terms of trade union representation were “some rather shady land purchase schemes, legal manoeuvres, and attempts to improve conditions by negotiations with farmers.” However, these tactics did not work with the result that there was a breakaway from the provincial leadership. This was the beginning of the decay of the ICU (Ncube 1985: 41).

2.6.3 Period from 1924 to 1956

According to Nel and Van Rooyen (1989: 60), a distinct feature of this period was the privileged position of white workers over black workers as a direct result of legislation. The aforementioned Industrial Conciliation Act 11 of 1924 was promulgated for three specific reasons. The first reason, which was labour oriented (and discussed above), was to curb strikes. The other two reasons were more politically oriented, namely:

- the prevention of disputes between employees and employers following the experience of the Rand Rebellion; and
- providing preferential employment for whites in an attempt to alleviate the 'poor white problem'.

These two reasons represented an attempt to appease the white workers in an effort to muster electoral support.

The Industrial Conciliation Act brought the government into the industrial conflict arena in that it provided the necessary machinery for settling disputes in industry by establishing a system of industrial councils and the registration of white trade unions and employers' organisations. The underlying principle of the Act was self-government in industrial and public enterprises. Section 24 of the Act is of particular importance in that the term 'employee' was defined to exclude a person whose contract of service or employment was regulated by any of the pass laws. This section of the Act ensured that the majority of the black male workers were excluded from membership of any registered trade unions. However, black females were not compelled to carry a pass and therefore were included in the definition.

The Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924 paved the way for state recognition of white trade unions in South Africa. White trade unions were not only legally recognised but their members were also protected against employers (Slabbert and Swanepoel 2002: 28). Nel and Van Rooyen (1989: 60) point out that, "It was clear that blacks were not entitled to take part in collective bargaining, and that the Act was also an instrument of racial domination."

Further legislation, in the form of the Wage Act 27 of 1925, was passed primarily to establish machinery for the formulation of conditions of service and minimum wage levels for workers in cases where the relevant employers and workers were unorganised. The Act also provided for the establishment of a wage board to investigate and recommend minimum wage levels in any industry or trade.

By 1935 it became clear that the Industrial Conciliation Act 11 of 1924 was in need of revision. The Industrial Conciliation Act 36 of 1937 was enacted which repealed the Act of 1924. The prime objective of the 1937 Act was to create industrial peace between employers and white workers on the basis of self government and through the mechanisms of negotiation between employers and workers, arbitration, conciliation and mediation. The Act covered every undertaking, industry, trade or occupation in the private sector but excluded agricultural workers, domestic servants, government workers and certain categories of workers in the field of education, training and charitable institutions (Nel and Van Rooyen 1989: 60).

Act 36 of 1937 was no less confusing than its predecessor. The main area of confusion was in the definition of an employee⁴ as certain blacks were included while others were excluded. The

⁴“‘employee’ means any person employed by, or working for any employer, and receiving, or being entitled to receive, any remuneration, and any other person whatsoever who in any manner assists in the carrying on or conducting of the business of an employer but does not include a person, whose contract of service or labour is regulated by Act No.40 of 1894 of Natal, or, in terms of section two of the Masters and Servants Law (Transvaal and Natal) Amendment Act, 1926 (Act No. 26 of 1926), is regarded for the purpose of Act No. 40 of 1984 of Natal as a contract between master and servant, or is regulated by the Native Labour Regulation Act, 1911 (Act No. 15 of 1911), or by the Natives (Urban Areas) Act, 1923 (Act No.21 of 1923), or by any amendment of or any regulation made under, any of those laws; and “employed” and “employment” have corresponding meaning” (Union of South Africa. [Industrial Conciliation Act, No. 36 of 1937]: 911).

subsequent Wage Act 44 of 1937 regulated the affairs of blacks who were not included under the definition of an employee as well as whites who were not unionised (Nel and Van Rooyen 1989: 62).

The Industrial Conciliation Act of 1937 and the Wage Act of the same year provided for the welfare, rights and obligations of workers on the one hand and regulated the rights and obligations of the employers on the other. These Acts attempted to obviate the need for trade union intervention to represent the interests of workers, and thus eliminate the need for trade union membership. It is obvious that the government tried to discourage workers from joining trade unions by attempting to regulate matters through non-union means. This attempt was not successful because the number of white and black trade unions were, in fact, on the increase.

The Nationalist Party became government in 1948 and ushered in a new era in South Africa's history with its policy of segregation. The new government ensured that any new labour legislation was in line with its own party ideology and policy of segregation. This meant separate legislation for blacks and whites. The legislation promulgated to meet the dualistic system of industrial relations was the Black Labour Relations Regulations Act 48 of 1953, the Industrial Conciliation Act 28 of 1956 and the Wage Act 5 of 1957. The above Acts were promulgated in response to the recommendations of the Botha Commission which was commissioned to investigate and report on industrial legislation (Nel and Van Rooyen 1989: 63; Slabbert and Swanepoel 2002: 28-29).

During this period it became clear that the country's political system was inextricably linked to its industrial relations system as government attempted to determine where black people should sell their labour (Slabbert and Swanepoel 2002: 28). Testimony to this was the promulgation of the Black Labour Relations Regulations Act of 1953.

2.6.3.1 The Black Labour Relations Regulations Act 48 of 1953

This Act applied to blacks employed in every trade or section of a trade with the exception of those employed in farming operations, domestic workers in private households, government employees,

provincial administration employees, and employees of charitable and educational institutions (Union of South Africa 1953: 432-434). Nel and Van Rooyen (1989: 62) sum-up the aims of the Act as follows:

- to establish machinery whereby the interests of black workers could be protected when agreements, which concerned blacks in terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act 36 of 1937, were considered; and
- to make provision for the resolution of disputes which might develop between black workers and their employers.

The purpose of this Act was to create a labour relations system for blacks. In terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act 36 of 1937 blacks could not formally join trade unions and make use of the industrial council system. This Act, on the other hand, made provision for a hierarchy of committees whereby workers could negotiate and communicate with their employers (Nel and Van Rooyen 1989: 64).

In terms of the Act, the Minister of Labour would set up a labour committee to resolve labour disputes. All members of the labour committee were appointed by the Minister who also appointed a white chairperson. The primary function of the committees was to address issues relating to conditions of service of blacks and their wages (Nel and Van Rooyen 1989: 64-65).

It is the opinion of Slabbert and Swanepoel (2002: 29) that the committee system could not function because workers did not have the authority or a mandate. Workers were represented in a paternalistic way in matters which affected their conditions of employment and wages. Such representation was not considered in the same light as that of a trade union. Therefore, the committee system could not replace the trade union system.

2.6.3.2 The Industrial Conciliation Act 28 of 1956

This Act introduced far reaching discrimination in labour relations. Blacks were totally excluded from registered trade unions at the same time prohibiting the registration of new multi-racial trade unions. The already registered multi-racial trade unions were severely restricted in terms of their operations. Section 77 of the Act was regarded as a safeguard against inter-racial competition, which became known as statutory job reservation.

Blacks were excluded from representation by a trade union in terms of the definition of an employee in the Industrial Conciliation Act. However, the Wage Act of 1957 was specifically aimed at the unorganised worker and that included the black workers. Blacks would have benefitted from wage regulating measures as prescribed by the Wage Act (Du Toit 1976: 31-32).

2.6.4 Period from 1957 to 1976

By 1956 South Africa was practising a statutory dualistic system of worker representation. This period is said to have been the period of industrial peace in South Africa for the white sector. This was largely due to the operation of the Industrial Conciliation Act. A significant contributing factor to this industrial peace was the attitude displayed by the white South African unions. Du Toit (1976:67) states that,

trade union leaders often stress[ed] the fact that they would not participate in a strike without reason or without devoting considerable thought to the matter, since the disadvantages often outweigh[ed] the advantages to be gained. Shortage of labour in certain sectors may be regarded as another contributory factor.

However, for the black sector this was a period of much turmoil. The 1950s were characterised by stay-aways, boycotts and riots. There were alliances between political parties such as the African National Congress (ANC), the South African Communist Party (SACP) and labour in the form of racially mixed trade unions. The principle of social obligation as defined by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) was what drove labour into this alliance. In addressing racism at an industrial level, the mixed trade unions found strong allies in political parties whose fundamental fight was, *inter alia*, against racism (Slabbert and Swanepoel 2002: 29).

This alliance reflected the reverse of what happened earlier in the century when white trade unions rallied around political parties to entrench racial separation at an industrial level (Slabbert and Swanepoel 2002: 30).

During the 1960s trade unions with black membership almost ceased to exist. There were only a few black trade unions in 1969. However, the 1970s were characterised by a new wave of nationalism and militancy among black workers. As a result of countrywide labour unrest among black workers the Black Labour Relations Regulations Act 70 of 1973 was promulgated (Slabbert and Swanepoel 2002: 30). It has been argued by Friedman (1987: 37), Von Holdt (2003: 22) and Stilwell (2005) that 1973 was a watershed year for black trade unionism in South Africa.

The new wave of militancy among black workers started in 1973 with the Coronation Brick and Tile Works strike. The strike lasted two days and the workers returned to the factory having secured an increase in their wages. Two weeks later the textile workers in Durban went on strike. Friedman (1987: 38) observed that “the isolated brush fires became a conflagration...”. According to Finnemore (2002: 24),

For the first time the real power of black workers was demonstrated and it was shown that even without the backing of any formal organisation, worker action was able to bring pressure to bear on a labour issue. No trade unions were involved and the problems inherent in such a situation were brought forcibly home to employers who were unable to identify with whom they could negotiate...

In summarising the significance of strike actions in 1973, Friedman (1987: 40) claims that, “the strikes hastened the rebirth of African unions and jolted employers and the government into change which would help the new organisations survive...”

The events of 1973 highlighted the shortcomings of the labour legislation for blacks. It became apparent, to government, that a dangerous vacuum existed because of a lack of formal and acceptable negotiating structures and procedures. The government acted by passing the Black Labour Relations Regulations Act 70 of 1973 which provided for the establishment of liaison and co-ordinating work committees (Finnemore 2002: 24; Slabbert and Swanepoel 2002: 30). Friedman (1987: 53) points out that the Act “contained two measures which gave African workers slightly more power.” The first was the right to strike. The government recognised, through the Act, that black workers were entitled to withhold their labour. The second significant change was allowing workers and liaison committee members to attend industrial council meetings. Although black workers were not allowed to vote, for the first time, they were allowed access to industrial councils.

Another major development, in this period from 1957 to 1975, took place in July 1974. Friedman (1987: 94) writes that the unions won their biggest breakthrough when the National Union of Textile Workers was recognised by the British owned company Smith and Nephew.

This was the first formal recognition agreement signed by a South African union and it gave unions their first bargaining rights - winning similar agreements would become their chief goal and they would cite it repeatedly to other employers as proof that they did not need government approval to deal with African unions. It also boosted the factory strategy by suggesting that unions who were denied bargaining rights by the law and industry-wide employer associations could win them in individual factories (Friedman 1987: 94).

During this period the power of unregistered black trade unions grew steadily. Further, there was a growing number of employers who began to recognise and bargain with these unions. The government began to realise that there was a need to amend the labour legislation and wisely decided in 1977 to appoint the Wiehahn Commission (Friedman 1987: 95-96; Slabbert and Swanepoel 2002: 30; Stilwell 2005).

2.6.5 Period from 1977 to 1989

In June 1977 Professor Nic Wiehahn was commissioned to investigate the labour legislation and the entire system of industrial relations in South Africa. The brief was to make recommendations in respect of industrial peace for the future (Slabbert and Swanepoel 2002: 31).

The Wiehahn Commission identified South Africa's major legislative problems, amongst others, as follows:

- blacks were excluded from the definition of an employee in terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1956;
- the Black Labour Relations Regulations Amendment Act of 1977 was opposed by organised labour as it was discriminatory;
- introduction of statutory job reservation (section 77 of the Industrial Conciliation Act);
- prohibition of registration of multiracial trade unions; and
- unregistered trade unions for blacks were becoming a very prominent and permanent feature of the industrial relations environment (Nel and Van Rooyen 1989: 73).

The Commission recommended,

...fundamental changes to the system of industrial relations in South Africa and certain of these recommendations have been translated into law by the Amendment Act [Industrial Conciliation Amendment Act 94 of 1979]. These include the admission of blacks, the establishment of the National Manpower Commission, the creation of an industrial court and the abolition of job reservation... (Mureinik and Cheadle 1979: 353).

The definition of employee was changed to include all employees who may legally reside in South Africa, that would include black people. The effect of this was to bring all employees under the ambit of the Act except foreign migrants and those employed as farm workers and domestic servants. The National Manpower Commission would engage in future planning and adopting proper methods of identifying industrial relations tendencies. The objectives were to:

- survey on a continuous basis and analyse the total manpower situation;**
- keep abreast of developments and tendencies on the international labour front; and**
- continually evaluate the application and effectiveness of labour legislation (Mureinik and Cheadle 1979: 353-354).**

Stilwell (2005) points out that the Act (94 of 1979) introduced the establishment of the Industrial Court with jurisdiction to determine unfair labour practice disputes. He states that for the first time in South African law the concept of unfair labour practice was introduced. Further, the provisions of the Act introduced the principle of compulsory conciliation for all unfair labour practice disputes (Stilwell 2005). Section 77 of the Act repealed statutory job reservation based on race (Mureinik and Cheadle 1979: 357).

The modification to the labour dispensation led to the establishment of various trade unions and trade union federations. The most influential of these was the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). There were other federations such as the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU), a federation of black awareness trade unions, and the United Workers' Union of South Africa (UWUSA) (Slabbert and Swanepoel 2002: 32-33).

In the mid-1980s, the government and numerous employers felt that trade unions were too powerful and in 1988 amendments were consequently made to the Labour Relations Act which curtailed the power of trade unions. The trade unions reacted strongly (Slabbert and Swanepoel 2002: 30).

In the period 1984-1986 the ANC launched a campaign from outside the country through its underground structures in South Africa for a so-called 'people's war' to develop 'people's power' for the establishment of alternative structures whereby the country could be made ungovernable,

as indicated by Slabbert and Swanepoel (2002: 30). The dualistic practices at the workplace, together with oppression by apartheid beyond the workplace, generated a new form of unionism, that is, political unionism. This political unionism was based on the development of linkages with community and youth organisations, and the liberation movement in the form of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the banned ANC and SACP. Political unionism became increasingly militant, coordinating and participating in a range of mass actions. But political unionism did not only focus on struggles beyond the workplace. It also added a new dimension to struggles within the workplace (Von Holdt 2000: 107; Slabbert and Swanepoel 2002: 30).

In 1988 the government, besides banning a number of political organisations, banned the political activities of the labour confederation COSATU. At a COSATU congress in 1989, it was decided to establish a community of forums through the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM). COSATU was an integral component of the MDM which was a "structureless, faceless organisation whose only function was to launch campaigns" (Slabbert and Swanepoel 2002: 33). These campaigns, which included labour unrest (that is, strike action) were launched to make the country ungovernable.

The years between 1976 and 1989 were characterised by the liberalisation of industrial relations and the rising of a strong militant black trade union movement (Slabbert and Swanepoel 2002: 33).

2.6.6 Period post 1989

This era can be regarded as an interim transitional phase during which a new political dispensation was built and formalised. The State President, in 1990, announced that the government wanted to negotiate a democratic system of governance. Government was committed to every citizen enjoying equal rights and opportunities. This meant that South Africa would have to undergo fundamental social, political and economic transformation. Political parties, such as the ANC and the SACP, were unbanned in the same year. Notable was the immediate formalisation of the alliance between the ANC, the SACP and labour through COSATU (Slabbert and Swanepoel 2002: 34).

Basson *et al.* (1998: 5) point out that the new political dispensation during the early 1990s brought about fundamental changes in the way in which South Africa was governed. This dispensation was based on a new Constitution which guaranteed a number of basic human rights. One of the fundamental rights enshrined in section 23 of the Constitution is the right to fair labour practices. In 1995, the democratically elected government passed the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995. The main features of this and supporting legislation are discussed in Chapter Four.

The new labour legislation paved the way for black trade unions to play a more meaningful role in South Africa in the so called reconstruction of the workplace. The unions began to contribute to the development of policy on matters such as the economy, human resources development and workplace democracy. According to Slabbert and Swanepoel (2002: 35), "Trade unions ... began to accept responsibility for the reconstruction of a post-apartheid South Africa".

Trade union officials were discussing new challenges, possibilities and responsibilities in a South Africa moving towards democracy. The trade union movement was rapidly moving away from 'politics of resistance' to 'politics of reconstruction'. Unions were now committed to establishing a new form of proactive unionism by instilling the ideals of reconstructing the workplace (Von Holdt 2000: 109).

Baskin (1996: 21) is of the opinion that the historic strength of South Africa's union movement has allowed it to win unprecedented rights in the post-apartheid period. Stilwell (2005) argues that these rights were "clearly a reward to workers for their role in the struggle and the bringing about of democracy". Ironically, the current labour movement is struggling to make the most of these dramatic gains because they lack the capacity and experience to exploit the new opportunities. The challenge for organised labour is how to revitalize and sustain itself, and use its power in a new context (Baskin 1996: 21).

It was suggested by Baskin (1996: 21) that the labour movement needed to expand into the tertiary sector to recapture the lost capacity and experience. The Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 has encouraged many 'tame' staff associations to transform themselves into unions. This transformation has seen a large number of white collar and professional workers join trade unions. The affiliation of the South African Society of Bank Officials (SASBO) to COSATU is an illustration of this trend. Previously a conservative staff association, SASBO has grown, de-racialised and has become a militant white collar union (Baskin 1996: 27- 28).

2.6.7 Summary of historical development of unionism in South Africa

Labour or industrial relations in South Africa began during the early period of Jan van Riebeeck. Industrial relations inclusive of the concept of collective bargaining began in the early twentieth century. The formation of trade unions by the British immigrant mine workers raised white labour unrest which culminated in the Rand Rebellion of 1922. This was the turning point in South Africa's pattern of industrial relations for it marked the beginning of a dualistic system of industrial relations in South Africa. It affirmed the government's policy of intervention in industrial relations.

The South African government introduced a number of pieces of legislation to maintain the dualistic industrial relations system which saw white workers successfully muted through the offer of a collective bargaining system and a 'civilised labour' policy providing preferential employment opportunities for whites in the public sector. Black workers were excluded, through legislation, from

the official industrial relations system, and their unions were dealt with through repression, an approach which effectively crushed a succession of union initiatives among black workers throughout the 1960s.

In South Africa, liberalisation of labour repression started in the 1970s following recommendations of the Wiehahn Commission. The recommendations cleared a path for the disenfranchised black workers to organise trade unions, mobilise for purposes of collective bargaining, and seek redress for unfair labour practices. The 1995 Labour Relations Act ushered in a democratic and equality based industrial relations system which actively promoted the formation of trade unions. This system created an environment so conducive for collective bargaining that staff associations began transforming into trade unions to reap the benefits of an Act that was openly advocating the growth of unionism. The shift of staff associations increased the pool of workers and created an environment for the development of unions which in the international context would be termed white collar.

2.7 SUMMARY

Chapter Two has examined trade unionism and the historical development of unionism in South Africa. An important factor influencing the historical development of unionism has been the role played by government through the introduction of a myriad of legislation.

A common thread throughout this study is an examination of the role that legislation has played in unionisation, including unionisation in the library and information environment. It is evident from the discussion in this chapter that legislation has played a significant role in industrial relations in South Africa.

Chapter Three will examine the factors that have influenced or negated the growth of unionisation in the LIS sector specifically. The chapter will also examine the 'professionalism versus unionism' debate and scenarios for the future representation of library and information employees.

CHAPTER THREE: TRADE UNIONISM IN LIBRARIES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

There is an abundance of writings on certain aspects of the North American experience of unionism in libraries. However, the same is not true of other countries. Hudson (1996: 2) points out that serious discussion about the role played by trade unionism in libraries as a whole is largely absent from British librarianship periodicals. These limitations are exacerbated by the fact that there has been very little written in recent years on unionism in libraries. The authors that have written on unionism in libraries bring with them their own bias. For example, Cottam (1968) argues that unions are not inevitable, and states that the labour union is concerned only with employee welfare, but the professional association is concerned with the advancement of the entire profession. Smith (1968), on the other hand, believes that unions can help in the solution of professional problems as well as workplace bread and butter issues. There are authors (Brooks 1974; Hovenkamp 1997) whose writings on unionism give the impression that everything works well in the union and that there is no conflict between professionals and support staff. Boaz (1971) argues that unions may be the answer to the 'uneducated person' because he or she lacks education and status to be able to fend for himself or herself.

Although unionisation in libraries began in the early 1900s, there has been no categorical direction taken by the profession in terms of the unification of the profession, within individual countries, under the auspices of a trade union. The fact that professional associations and unions in libraries continue to grow indicates that both organisations are playing meaningful roles in representing employees through collective action. Hovenkamp (1997: 233) argues that unionisation and professionalism are two processes by which members of an occupation seek to achieve collective mobility. However, this study focuses on the role of unions and the growth of unionism in libraries.

The growth of unionism is influenced by three environmental factors, which have been discussed in Chapter Two. The first factor is employment concentration. The bureaucratisation inherent in large libraries tend to create a structural barrier between management and library employees which inhibit

the degree of personal contact and communication (Guyton 1975: 177). The second factor is the legislative climate. There is a high positive relationship between the existence of legislation granting public employees the right to organise and bargain collectively, and the formation of library unions (Guyton 1975: 177). It is unfortunate that the discussion in the literature on the influence of legislation on library unionisation is limited. The third factor is the influence of economic factors on unionisation.

It has often been stated that one of the main factors influencing or negating unionisation is the attitude of librarians. Librarians are of the opinion that they are professionals and that unionisation damages the status and prestige of the profession. The attitude of librarians is important in the unionisation process. Therefore, it is important to engage the 'professionalism versus unionism' debate.

It is highly unlikely that one can come to conclusive decisions, based on the literature, about the most appropriate organisation to holistically represent the profession. However, it would be useful to investigate possible scenarios to determine a way forward.

As stated, unionisation in libraries began in the early 1900s. It is important to examine the history of unionism in libraries to determine the factors that initiated and propagated unionism in libraries.

3.2 DEFINITIONS

The term **collective bargaining** as used in this study refers to the negotiations process entered into by librarians and employers or their representative body with the intention of bringing about bilateral determination of employment matters of mutual concern (Barker and Holtzhausen 1996: 25).

For the purposes of this study, **support staff** are defined as members of staff employed in a library and information environment to provide clerical, administrative and technical support (refer to section 1.2).

Conditions of service or conditions of employment are determined by organisational policies and work rules that apply to employees, for example hours of work, probationary periods, payment for overtime and such (Barker and Holtzhausen 1996: 29).

3.3 HISTORY OF LIBRARY UNIONISATION

According to Schlachter (1973: 189), Sweden and Britain have experienced widespread unionisation by librarians and that North American librarianship was some way behind these countries. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of literature on the history of unionisation⁵ of staff within the library and information environment from these leading countries. There is slightly more material on the unionisation of libraries in certain other countries and hence the focus in this chapter on the United States of America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Guyana.

The historical events that have shaped the growth of trade unionism in libraries in North America are described in the next section.

3.3.1 History of library unionisation: the North American experience

The history of library trade unionism in the United States of America (USA) has a chronological pattern of development. The first phase of unionisation started during the First World War but faded in the mid 1920s. The second phase started in 1934 and continued to about 1949. The third phase of library trade unionism started in the 1960s and continues to present. Some generalities about these

⁵ The researcher had conducted extensive searches, especially for more recent literature, in databases such as *LISA*, *Library literature*, *The Informed librarian online* and *EbscoHost*. However, very little was found that was substantial or pertinent to this research.

bursts of development may be made: firstly, each accompanied a period of general growth, secondly, each occurred in times of permissive governmental measures, and thirdly, each grew out of an era of economic unrest for library employees (Guyton 1975: 2; Biblo 1976: 423; Lilore 1984: 14).

The First World War created an environment that was ideal for the growth of trade unions. However, the early history of library unions has been generally a history of public library unions. The growth of public library unionism was stimulated by economic factors that were related to the war. An essential characteristic of this early history was the organisation into unions of both professional librarians and support staff working in public libraries. However, that unity over a period of time disintegrated (Biblo 1976: 423-428; Kusack 1984: 9-11; Lilore 1984: 15).

The second phase in the development of library trade unionism began during the Great Depression of the 1930s. The economic and social conditions of the depression, together with the political climate, gave rise to a phenomenal growth in unionisation on a national scale. The second phase saw the unionisation of academic libraries. Howard University library was the first college library to organise staff and the first with a collective bargaining agreement in 1946. This union was an organisation of 'library employees' rather than one of librarians (Kleingartner and Kennelly 1975: 1; Kusack 1984: 9-11; Lilore 1984: 15).

The third phase, starting in the 1960s, began with a period of intense union activity in American libraries. For the first time academic libraries were significantly involved in collective bargaining sometimes even leading the movement. This period was enhanced by the extension of legislative protection for union activity in the public and non-profit sectors. Neither librarians nor most other salaried professionals could escape the challenges posed by the legislative developments (Kleingartner and Kennelly 1975: 3; Kusack 1984: 11; Lilore 1984: 15).

The atmosphere post 1960s was different from that of the 1930s. Union growth and collective bargaining among professionals had a slow but continuous expansion since the 1930s. In the third phase, few professionals would argue that collective bargaining per se was incompatible with

professionalism. Both established unions and traditional professional associations became more sophisticated in effectively representing salaried professionals, that is, librarians. Library management as well as leaders of professional organisations everywhere were being forced into a reappraisal of their style of leadership, their relationship to individual professionals, and their role in the collective bargaining process. The concept of participation in decision making became, for many professions, a slogan in promoting various methods of bringing about a greater degree of involvement in the management of the employing organisation. One of these methods was collective bargaining (Kleingartner and Kennelly 1975: 3; Lilore 1984: 15).

The initial growth of trade unionism in libraries was determined by economic factors that were related to World War I and the Great Depression. Another contributing factor to the growth of unionism in libraries was the extension of legislative protection for union activity among the library sector. There was a high positive relationship between the existence of legislation granting public employees the right to organise and bargain collectively, and the formation of library unions. The recognition of trade unions in libraries by management assisted the growth of library unionism. Guyton (1975: 177) adds another important factor that influenced unionisation in libraries and that is, employment concentration. The bureaucratisation inherent in large libraries tended to create structural barriers between management and library staff which inhibited their degree of personal contact and communication.

The factors mentioned above conform to the proposals by Bain (1970) and others, which have been discussed in the previous chapter, for the growth of white collar unionism. It is clear that the precipitating factors for the initiation of the phases of union growth were a combination of one or more of the economic, social and legislative factors. The economic factor dominated the first two phases. The third phase was dominated by legislative changes. During phase one and two, public libraries led the unionisation process. The third phase saw an unprecedented increase in unionisation among staff in academic libraries.

3.4 FACTORS INFLUENCING LIBRARY UNIONISATION

There has been a definite growth in unionism in libraries since the early 1900s. A number of factors contributed to this growth, *vis-a-vis*, what Bain (1970) terms employment concentration, legislative changes that have impacted on industrial relations and economic reasons.

3.4.1 Employment concentration

As stated in Chapter Two, employment concentration is one of the key factors influencing the growth of white collar unionisation. Employee concentration creates barriers in communication and personal contact between management and employees. Guyton (1975: 156) argues that an important factor leading to the emergence of library unions is the diminished degree of contact and communication between management and employees. Unionisation is a reaction to this diminished level of interaction between management and employee which is created by the hierarchical structures of bureaucratisation (Guyton 1975: 156). The diminished level of interaction in a bureaucratic structure has alienated the employee from the decision making process. Ballard (1982: 506) states that the union movement is spearheaded by professional librarians primarily to have greater control over professional decision making. He goes on to say that librarians seek the ability to force management to listen to and implement employee suggestions.

Literature on library unionisation (Guyton 1975; Oberg, Blackburn and Dible 1976; Garry, L.S. 1977; Ballard 1982) draws attention to the power unions are assumed to have in forcing library management to share professional decision making. Their actual power is based on court decisions, legislation, and executive orders (Ballard 1982: 508). The literature also reveals that librarians interested in unions were seeking greater control over personnel policies, input into decisions on professional methods, and increased communication with management. It is not possible to predict the ability of a specific union to influence personnel policies. However, by curbing the power of management to act in an arbitrary fashion, the union increases the very bureaucratic inflexibility that employees deplore (Guyton 1975; Ballard 1982: 506-508). Oberg, Blackburn and Dible (1976) observe that unionisation is bound to

increase the time and money spent on procedural resolution of conflict. This observation lends credence to the view that unionisation may tend to add its own bureaucratic presence to the institutional setting, especially with regard to the formalisation of practices and procedures (Guyton 1975; Oberg, Blackburn and Dible 1976; Ballard 1982: 506-508).

Garry, C.G. (1977: 503) wrote in 1977 that Canadian librarians demanded a more participatory management system and that librarians revolted against traditional authoritarian employer-employee relationships. In Canada, the democratisation process had resulted in the demand, by librarians, for fuller disclosure and openness on the part of library management. Librarians wanted greater participation in decisions which affect their careers or the type of services which they could offer. Bureaucratisation had made Canadian librarians powerless and somewhat alienated. They searched for ways whereby they could effectively change power structures to enable them to participate in decisions affecting the workplace and the profession. They first turned to the library associations. These were voluntary associations organised at the local, provincial and national level. As instruments for equalising power within the profession, the professional library associations proved unsatisfactory as the associations had no real status in law to negotiate with employers and were therefore virtually powerless to enforce resolutions which were passed by their members. In order to secure the changes desired by their members, Canada's professional library associations had to rely almost exclusively on moral persuasion and on 'good will' within the profession. However, very few library managers had any propensity to granting librarians on their professional staff the prerogatives which they were demanding. In addition, the voluntary library associations were headed by the same managers who were running the libraries. In this sense, the voluntary library associations represented, to a very large extent, the vested interests of management and other elites within the profession as a whole. Rank and file librarians voiced their concern that the elite of the profession would appear to be using the voluntary associations as vehicles for retaining power and generally maintaining the status quo within the profession. The librarians had come to the realisation that while the professional associations were useful for some types of development, they had neither the strength nor the leadership necessary to bring in the type of changes that were required (Garry, C.G. 1977: 504).

Furthermore, without legal status, the professional associations were powerless to respond to intimidatory tactics of management which frustrated the rank and file librarians. They realised that under the circumstances the only alternative open to them was unionisation (Garry, C.G. 1977: 505). To achieve the desired consultations in decision making, scores of Canadian librarians organised themselves into unions. According to Ballard (1982: 508) librarians believed that unionisation was the medium for participation in decision making and increased communication with management. Unionisation would ensure that management talks to union representatives on matters of mutual interest. At the same time unionisation would mean that communication between individual employees and management would be restricted. Such restrictions would eliminate intimidation. However, the reverse is also true in that, by joining a union, individual librarians lose their ability to contact management on their own behalf. It is unfair labour practice for management to encourage such one-on-one communication. Contacts with management must now filter through a union bureaucracy that was usually neither professional nor knowledgeable about library concerns (Ballard 1982: 508).

Guyton (1975: 123) presents the argument that unionisation is more likely to occur in large organisations because employees possess more bargaining power. This bargaining power refers to the extent to which workers can exert pressure upon the employer. If employees have no bargaining power, it is impossible for them to provide inducements for employers to concede to organised demands. The most common source of bargaining power for employees is strike action which is very seldom utilised. The lack of bargaining power is undoubtedly a significant deterrent to unionisation in some small libraries since the staff question their power to influence management and legislative bodies through their own organised efforts. Most unions, in large and small libraries, have undoubtedly sought labour affiliation for this very reason (Guyton 1975: 123). The ability to bargain is complemented by legislation that ensures that negotiated decisions are upheld.

3.4.2 Legislation

Despite the limited literature on the role of legislation in influencing the growth of unionisation in libraries, Guyton (1975), Mika (1980) and Coleman (1988) write convincingly about the relationship

between prevailing labour legislation and the growth of unionisation. The previous chapter illustrates the dominant role of labour legislation in unionisation generally.

The pattern of unionisation in libraries is, to a large extent, determined by the relevant labour legislation. There is a "... strong relationship between labour legislation supporting public employee rights to organise and library union formation..." (Guyton 1975: 169). As protective legislation becomes more widespread and unionisation becomes a more accepted institution among all employees, the conditions for union formation among librarians becomes more favourable (Guyton 1975: 169).

Mika (1980) comments specifically on the Wagner Act of 1935 (USA) as one of the acts influencing the growth of unionisation. According to Mika (1980: 5),

... the basic purposes of the Act were to define and protect the rights of employees and employers, to prohibit unfair labour practices by employers and unions, and to authorise the National Labour Relations Board ... to designate appropriate collective bargaining units, conduct elections, and hear cases of unfair labour practice...

Referring to the situation in New Zealand, Coleman (1988: 271) stated in 1988 that, "Librarians have often dreamed and discussed the possibility of belonging to a single union...that discussion has been re-animating by the Labour Relations Act 1988..." He commented on the role of the Labour Relations Act in influencing the growth of unionisation against the backdrop of fragmented representation of library employees in New Zealand. This fragmentation was exacerbated by the lack of confidence, by librarians, in the professional associations to address their concerns. The aim of the New Zealand labour dispensation was to eliminate strikes and lockouts and to ensure that there was 'equitable distribution of the fruits of production'. This was to be achieved by the registration of trade unions, compulsory conciliation and arbitration, and the enforcement of awards by a government agency backed by the court of arbitration. The legislation had created an environment that was conducive to unionisation by enticing management to engage in communication to resolve issues. Such communication would ensure the employees, through their union, play a more meaningful role at their place of work (Coleman 1988: 271).

3.4.3 Economic reasons for unionising

As much as employment concentration and enabling legislation play an important role in the growth of unionisation, one must be realistic and accept that human nature will play the most significant role. Human nature is guided, very often, by personal gain. More often than not, economic satisfaction addresses personal gain.

Wood (1999: 12) states that the primary reasons for forming a union are to increase the strength of the bargaining position of employees with employers on economic issues, including compensation and benefits, job security, and institutional fairness. Duda (1981: 120) is more forth-right in his view and purports that “we all want better wages and working conditions and fair treatment on the job.” The negotiation for better wages and working conditions, through collective bargaining, is a key responsibility of any union.

3.4.3.1 Collective bargaining in the LIS context

The conditions of service and pay of all library workers are central to the development of library services. The quality of the service must be reflected by the rewards given to the staff; not least in ensuring that talent of sufficient calibre is attracted into the library to perform the many and varied tasks the jobs demand (Crawshaw 1984: 20).

It has been suggested by Kleingartner and Kennelly (1975: 15) that wages, hours of work, and other terms and conditions of employment for librarians will increasingly be established through negotiations between the employer and a certified bargaining agent, that is, a recognised union. However, bargaining in the library and information environment creates a number of difficult problems for librarians because of the fragmentation of the profession. For example, school librarians find themselves in the same unit with teachers, where they constitute a small minority. Similarly, college and university librarians find themselves in the same bargaining unit as the lecturers, where again they

constitute a small percentage of the unit or with other non-teacher professionals such as professional researchers, extension specialists and accountants (Kleingartner and Kennelly 1975: 15).

As individual bargaining units, unions have promoted librarianship through negotiating better salaries and conditions of service for its membership. A number of writers have regarded gains in salaries and conditions of service as major gains for librarianship. As a result of negotiations by unions for higher salaries, libraries are better placed to recruit and retain capable and qualified people. Such capabilities increase the librarian's status as they cease to hire themselves out as cheap labour and can acquire the material success symbols of an affluent society. It has been suggested that unions can, by increasing the affluence of librarians, enhance the claim to professionalism. However, this argument is not especially convincing. Professionals are highly paid because society recognises their status. They are not professionals simply because they are highly paid (Hovenden 1972: 189).

Guyton (1975: 151) is of the opinion that one of the key concerns of library unions is to 'professionalise' librarians' positions, or more exactly, to achieve professional equality. To support this thinking he quotes the objectives of the San Francisco Public Library Guild which are,

...to promote the profession of librarianship by improving salaries and working conditions, by promoting the active participation of members in the formulation of library policies, by providing a forum from which members can speak to the community from the profession's needs, services and objectives (Guyton 1975: 151).

The constitutions and programmes of library unions are underpinned by the attempt to achieve professional equality with management through negotiating salaries and utilisation of skills and knowledge which are commensurate with librarians' professional training (Guyton 1975: 166).

The principle of professionalism through earnings is expanded by Kusack (1984). He claims that higher wages in unionised libraries make it more likely that better quality workers will be hired. This higher investment in personnel would mean that more time will be spent training staff in order to get full value out of 'expensive' labour. Higher wages and better training often improve the turnover rate. Improved

turnover rate means fewer employees leaving the job which in itself would mean less disruption and ultimately lower hiring and training costs. The result of all this is a comparatively higher quality unionised worker who produces a greater output than an otherwise comparable non-union worker. The improved quality of labour will do nothing less than improve the professional status of librarians (Kusack 1984: 42).

In the Guyanese public library service, and in other major library organisations, the qualifications sought and the salary scales mentioned in advertisements for librarians show that there is little understanding of the nature of library work and of the training necessary to equip a person with the skills which would enable them to function effectively as librarians. The term **librarian** is used to refer to anyone who is employed in a library. It has been argued that, had there been a 'recognised' organisation representing libraries, be it a trade union or a professional organisation, and a pattern of collective bargaining based on the principle of 'rate for the job' on a national scale, there would not be such widely varied conditions and terms of employment in the many organisations in which librarians are employed. While it may not be feasible for all libraries to have the same salaries and conditions of employment, there should be acceptable minimum salaries and acceptable minimum qualifications (Jackson 1976: 9).

As much as the function of a union is to negotiate the best possible salary for its membership, the union has to accept that management can demand a fair day's work. Jackson (1976: 10) is of the opinion that collective bargaining will ensure that library employees receive a fair day's pay. But an equally important aspect of labour relations which is one of the trade unions' governing principles is 'a fair day's work for a fair day's pay'. It is extremely important, in a library, that an employee gives a fair day's work. All sections of a library must function interdependently if the library's goal is to be achieved. Materials must be bought, processed, the information contained therein catalogued and finally the material has to be placed in the hands of the people who need it. These operations encompass all sections of a library. If a worker does not give a fair day's work, then one section of the operations could be jeopardised and the library will fail in its objectives. The library employee must be able to understand that what to the librarian may be a tedious job (and there are many routine and

tedious jobs in a library) is a very necessary link in the chain to provide a good library service. To fully appreciate this position, the employee must be educated about the role and function of the library. Therefore worker education becomes an essential aspect of labour relations to which trade unions are paying increasing attention (Jackson 1976: 10).

3.4.3.2 Conditions of service

To reiterate, the two basic economic reasons for unionisation are salary and conditions of service. Although many observers of unionism consider 'salaries and working conditions' as one concern and discuss other reasons for unionisation under a variety of different headings, 'working conditions' are really a separate area that encompasses a number of different problems relating to the nature of the work being performed and the category of staff involved. Some of the issues debated under the heading of working conditions or conditions of service are job security, job descriptions, criteria for promotion, institutional fairness and, staff training and development. As stated earlier, conditions of service, like salaries, are negotiated or bargained for collectively.

3.4.3.2.1 Job security in a LIS environment

Since the 1960s professional library employees have experienced an awakening to the erosion of their traditional security of employment. This erosion of security is an important factor steering professionals towards the acceptance of unionism (Guyton 1975: 110).

One of the primary functions of any union is the securing of employment of its members or to bargain for the best possible compensation should retrenchments be unavoidable. Unionisation with its traditional emphasis on seniority offered some measure of rationality and job security in a potential layoff situation. In the absence of a union, practising librarians feared that, in a period of tight budgets and growing inflation, there was a possibility that management might be inclined to release senior librarians, in favour of bringing in beginning junior librarians or library technicians at much lower salaries. In the light of this possibility, practising librarians saw unionisation as a means of securing a

reasonable level of job security, and the right to resort to a formalised and legalised grievance procedure should the management attempt to act arbitrarily (Garry, C.G. 1977: 507).

The lack of jobs has threatened job security in Canada. Garry, C.G. (1977: 506-507) points out that pressure to unionise was also created by Canada's library schools which, because of their increased number and growing enrolments, began graduating more professional librarians than there were jobs available. The appearance of large numbers of recent graduates on the job market created concern among practising librarians about their own job security. Some of these new graduates had been forced to take positions in other occupations (Garry, C.G. 1977: 506-507).

Garry, C.G. (1977) argues that job security has also been threatened by technology and the blurring of occupational roles within the library environment. There is an increased reliance on technology occurring both in the cataloging of library collections and in the accessing of electronic information. Increased automation has decreased the amount of skilled judgment needed to perform many jobs. This has been particularly true in technical services, work once performed only by professional librarians is now routinely done by paraprofessionals. Therefore, it makes economic sense for management to employ more paraprofessionals as they are less of a strain to the compensation budget. However, Wood (1999: 15) argues that the

values that professional librarians bring to their work, are missing. Inherent in these values is service to the profession as well as the individual institution. We are not only employees of the library, we are part of a profession with a rich history and shared ethics. By contractually defining our status, unions protect our standing as highly educated academic professionals separated by function and responsibilities from non-librarians.

As technological changes become more entrenched in the library environment, professional librarians find their jobs becoming increasingly routine and clerical in nature thus blurring the distinction between professional and clerical staff. The groups polarise until a classic employer-employee confrontation emerges. In this situation professional ideals become less tenable and union ideas become more

credible (Hovenden 1972: 188). The debate about professionalism versus unionism is explored in detail later in this chapter.

3.4.3.2.2 Job description

Given the fact that there is a blurring of occupation roles in the library and information environment, it is important that unions negotiate with management for detailed and accurate job descriptions. A detailed and accurate job description is an appropriate way to reduce problems. Further it must be linked to regular formal performance appraisals and accurate grading. This documentation would also help minimise problems relating to promotion and transfer (Kusack 1984: 45). The ability to negotiate and possibly eliminate future confrontation enhances the growth of unionisation.

3.4.3.2.3 Promotions

Management's ability to promote and transfer employees is also seriously undermined by many collective bargaining agreements. Library managers say that they want to promote personnel on the basis of merit, skill and proficiency. Unions, on the other hand, usually argue that these characteristics are largely unmeasurable and, can only result in injustice and favouritism. The union alternative, according to Kusack (1984: 45), is promotion and transfer based on seniority.

Unions often argue that seniority rights are advantageous for the organisation. This argument is based on the fact that more experienced and better qualified workers are retained in the organisation. Further, conflict and rivalry between employees are less likely in unionised libraries while the amount of informal training and assistance that workers are willing to provide one another, is greater (Kusack 1984: 45).

3.4.3.2.4 Institutional fairness

Fundamental to good relations among workers and management is institutional fairness. Degradation of salaries and medical benefits, the hiring of paraprofessionals to perform professional work, a grievance process that favours management prerogatives, and a disdain for collegial decision-making violate the principles of institutional fairness. Such unfairness will result in a breakdown in communication between employees and management. This is an ideal environment for the introduction of a trade union to serve as a conduit between management and employees (Wood 1999: 15).

3.4.3.2.5 Staff training and development

The union is often considered to be a reactionary organisation reacting to situations of conflict. The one area in which a union has played a proactive role is through staff training and development. According to Nyren (1967: 2117) library employees have indicated a strong desire for 'educational opportunities' which include leave with pay to attend courses, institutes, and professional meetings.

In playing this all important role, the union must ensure that educational opportunities include formal education and training. Besides developing the individual, formal education and training is linked to pay, grading, recruitment and the status within the occupation. Given the positive spin-offs of education and training, the union must ensure that the opportunities are available to all its members. For those who were not free to undertake full-time study to qualify as professional librarians, provisions must be made by allowing them to take evening classes (Marsh 1980: 41).

Akers (1985: 25) quotes a case where a union fought for the creation of a staff training and development officer. This fight was in an era of serious library budget cuts. The union was of the opinion that the position of a training and development officer was necessary in order to train new and existing staff and to advise on staff development. After much debate it was agreed to create the position of a training and development officer. Such positive union intervention augurs well for the acceptance of unionism (Akers 1985: 25).

The word 'union' is synonymous with a fight for wages, grievances, and most dreaded of all, strikes. But few associate unions with education, training and staff development, especially for support staff. Support staff frequently out-number librarians by a ratio of two to one. Yet at the same time, library work is becoming increasingly technical, with librarians undertaking duties more in common with administrators than work traditionally identified as librarianship (Buller 1995: 42).

In many libraries, it is the support staff that 'pick-up the slack'. In some cases, libraries increasingly depend on educational programmes to enable support staff to take on the more complex duties once ascribed to professional librarians. As unions become a force in libraries, programmes to engage in staff education are becoming more common, especially in academic libraries where the proximity to resources for such programmes may be conveniently at hand. In contrast, some non-union institutions offer nothing by way of educational development for support staff, career-related or not (Buller 1995: 42).

As pointed out earlier, unions have shown a keen interest in staff training and development. In some instances unions have participated in establishing formal staff training and development programmes (Brandwein 1979: 683). The Association of University Teachers (AUT)⁶ has successfully negotiated conditions of service covering not only such general matters as pension schemes, expenses and allowances and grievances and disciplinary procedures, but also matters such as study leave and extra-mural activities which have particular relevance to universities. The condition of service relating to study leave states that senior library staff should be entitled to study leave on full pay, perhaps for purposes of research and publication. Furthermore, the criteria that apply to members of the academic staff, such as, the contribution that such study/research will make to the member's experience, the need to improve in the subject area or profession, or to enhance the duties within the institution, must apply to library staff. Unfortunately, library staff are burdened with finding alternative arrangements to

⁶ AUT is a British union which recruits academic librarians in universities who have not necessarily graduated.

ensure the completion of the member of staff's normal work load (Marsh 1980:30). Further this burden limits the completion of research and as Ocholla (2000) argues, research is only complete when it is published. The fact that there is no pressure to publish for career growth in a LIS environment adds to the limited number of publications. Therefore, there is little contribution, by LIS professionals, to the body of knowledge in the discipline. This vicious cycle negatively impacts on staff training and development.

In summary, the success that unions achieve in negotiating better conditions of service augurs well for their growth. Often employees make decisions on affiliation based on achieved successes. Over a period of time, unions in libraries have displayed successes which have enticed library employees into unionism. Hence the growth of unions in libraries.

3.4.3.3 Support staff

As stated above, support staff in libraries generally out-number librarians by a ratio of two to one. Support staff have always played an important role in library collective bargaining. Despite their superiority in numbers and the fact that they are highly unionised, most publicity and serious research has focused on librarians in unions. It must be stated that unions first came to libraries through support staff (Kusack 1984: 4).

Despite great interest in labour unions and the awareness that support staff are critical to the smooth functioning of most libraries, there has been very little systematic or comprehensive examination of collective bargaining by library support staff employees. Thus far, research on library unions has focused on the unionisation of the professional staff. The effect of unions on academic or public library support staff has received little more than cursory examination despite union activity among them since early in the 1900s (Kusack 1984: 5).

3.5 FACTORS NEGATING LIBRARY UNIONISATION

While there are a number of factors that contributed to the growth of unionism, there are also factors which have negated the growth of unionism. Factors which have negated the growth of unions include, amongst others, fragmentation of the profession, effect of unions on efficiency and, women and unionisation.

However, the greatest obstacle to the growth of unionisation has probably been librarian's attitude towards aggressive employee organisations. Over the years, many librarians believed that professionalism is inherently incompatible with unionism and that a union-like professional association is a more acceptable vehicle than the traditional labour union (Schlachter 1976: 467). The professionalism versus unionism debate is substantial and will be discussed later in this chapter.

3.5.1 Fragmentation of the profession

The negativism linked to the fragmentation of the profession and its effect on unionisation has been briefly mentioned earlier. As Coleman (1988) states, the New Zealand LIS profession is represented by a number of different organisations portraying a fragmented profession which does not bode well especially when making representation on such issues as national sources for funding. The lack of cohesiveness is understandable given the fact that libraries are fragmented by the type of clientele they serve, by size, by source of financial support, and by a range of occupational groups working within the library. The unions are also fragmented by diversity in that library employees may have their own independent library union or they may be lumped into larger, more generic unions (Kusack 1984: 5).

It is beyond debate that unions need a fairly large membership to be economically viable and politically effective. It is only in cities with a large library or in areas with a number of libraries together that sufficient members can be recruited. Where a pattern of small scattered libraries exists, unionism is likely to be seriously retarded. In any case the small library is less likely to be receptive to unionisation. In a small institution all staff members are in close personal contact and conflict will tend to be along

personal rather than employer versus employee lines. Hovenden (1972: 186) argues that “these factors have operated against union development in the US and have obvious implications for the future of library unionism in Australia.”

In presenting the Canadian situation, Hovenden writing in 1972 pointed out that library staff are far from united. Each of the groups within the library, that is, professional, sub (para) professional, clerical and maintenance staff, could each conceivably form an autonomous group. This fragmentation is perpetuated by the Council of the Canadian Library Association which took the resolution that “if any collective bargaining units are formed the professional librarians should be either in a category of their own or be among a group of other professionals.” This fragmentation, if allowed to continue, will severely retard the possibility of a single viable union with a common outlook (Hovenden 1972: 191).

3.5.2 Effect of unions on efficiency

As stated in Chapter Two, the acceptance of unions by management plays an important role in the growth of unionisation. Kusack (1984: 41) argues that the concern by library management with regard to unionisation and collective bargaining can be traced to their fear that unions will reduce efficiency and productivity. Library managers are concerned that they will lose managerial power to influence what employees do and how they do it. They anticipate that the introduction of negotiated work rules and cumbersome grievance procedures will reduce efficiency and dilute their influence. Furthermore, they fear that new work rules will mean lower quantity of work (for example, fewer books catalogued) while, at the same time, the union causes time consuming disruptions, lengthy discussion and much paper shuffling (Kusack 1984: 41).

Many managers feel that unions induce inefficiency. Managers feel that their flexibility and ability to respond to changing conditions is greatly weakened. It has been argued by managers that in their desire to protect workers' jobs and rights, unions may resist innovation and change. This may include resistance to new technologies in libraries (Kusack 1984: 41). This negative perception of unions by management serves as a retarding factor in the quest for unionisation.

3.5.3 Women and unionisation

It has been argued that the composition of the library workforce has negatively impacted on attempts to unionise the library profession. Women constitute a majority within the library workforce and Hovenden (1972: 180) writing in the 1970s argued that given the fact that women are generally considered submissive in their behaviour within formal organisations, the road to the formation of an aggressive representative body has been difficult. The passive nature of the women in the organisation is exacerbated by a large proportion of submissive male librarians (Hovenden 1972: 186). It has been argued that males working in libraries are said to be more submissive than males in general. Librarians, according to this analysis, are not motivated to challenge the power of management, and trade unionism with its emphasis on confrontation with management has little psychological appeal to them (Hovenden 1972: 186; Guyton 1975: 93).

Whether a union directs its attention to a campaign for a shorter working week, adequate physical working conditions and fair wage fixing procedures, it is still a matter for the individual members of that union to decide. However, the individual workers can only make those decisions if they are active members of the union. Given the fact that the majority of librarians are women, participation in unions will be influenced accordingly. Union membership has been beneficial to women librarians at both an individual and a collective level, yet the cliché that women are reluctant to involve themselves in union activities continues to hold some truth in Beresford's view (1983: 32).

Beresford (1983: 32) is of the opinion that women's reluctance to involve themselves in union activity is attributed to meetings being held at inconvenient times for women who have family responsibilities. It does not explain, however, the absence of women who do not have such responsibilities.

There is substantial negativism about women and unionisation. However, attention must be paid to the comments of Milden (1977: 151) who stated in 1977 that the membership of the first public library union, the New York Public Library Employees' Union, was largely dominated by women. Its first

executive board was comprised exclusively of women, and its programme and resolutions revealed a deep sensitivity toward the injustices suffered by library women. The union fought strongly for equality of opportunity, including the principle of 'equal pay for equal work' and a total revision of the library's hiring procedures.

The above is not an isolated case. The Worker's Union of Boston Public Library was founded by fifty employees, most of them being women. The reason for the formation of the union was to counter a proposed re-organisation plan to substitute female college graduates with clerical and paraprofessional workers. Confronted with the prospect of unemployment, the low-grade librarians organised to halt what appeared to them to be the dire consequence to professionalism (Milden 1977: 152).

Despite the fact that the literature does present the argument that women have contributed to the retarding of the unionisation of the profession, women have played decisive roles in the formation and growth of unions. This is corroborated by more recent research (Cunnison 2002; European Industrial Relations Observatory 2002; Australian Council of Trade Unions 2003) which indicates that there is a drastic increase in the number of women that are joining the trade union movement, especially in the service sector.

3.5.4 Criticism of library unionisation

There are a number of authors that have been critical of the unionisation of employees within the library environment. Two such authors are Cottam (1968) and Boaz (1971). Cottam (1968: 4106) believes that the improvement of employee welfare issues such as grievance procedures, working conditions and salaries are common objectives of both professional organisations and trade unions. However, labour unions are concerned only with employee welfare whereas the professional associations are concerned with the advancement of the entire profession. The professional association is partial to the interests of its members and has the background and knowledge to develop its own standards. That is, standards of excellence in educating its members, with personnel and management relations, and with service. Cottam is also of the opinion that with more active support and interest in

and by professional associations they could also develop the machinery for the enforcement of ethical conduct and direction, both for librarians and management.

The labour movement has been characterised as a movement for freedom of people standing up on their own feet and organising and carrying out the democratic process. However, Cottam does not believe that the rank and file member has a controlling interest in a labour union nor does the rank and file have an adequate voice in shaping union policies. He is convinced that union activities are not trying to improve the professional position but rather looking for an easy way out of industrial 'predicaments' (Cottam 1968: 4106).

Labour unions have been classified as voluntary associations. It may be technically true that no person is physically forced to join a union, but according to Cottam (1968: 4106), it is equally true that in a unionised area a person must join a union if he or she wants to work and make a living. For Cottam, this is nothing, but a form of coercion which demonstrates the hypocrisy of the idea that unions are 'voluntary associations'.

According to Cottam (1968:4106),

... individual and professional rights do not belong to organised labor groups. An individual librarian who associates himself with a labor union organization must immediately share responsibility with a group which is in all probability not partial to the aims and objectives of librarianship. An individual who associates himself with a labor union organization removes from his control several elements which are integral to the rights of the individual: his personal responsibility, freedom of initiative and incentive, and freedom for ambition above and beyond his associates. No amount of rationalization or action can justify this infringement simply because a majority approves. Labor leaders conveniently ignore the rights of the minority and the rights of the individual.

In criticising unions, Cottam provides viable alternatives. He believes that strong, vigorous professional associations with backbone to defend the rights of librarians offer what may be the most acceptable alternative for those who would prefer collective action. Professional associations by their very nature

provide high motivation to work for the good of the members and the betterment of the profession. They are at all levels in a better position to provide and interpret accurate facts concerning the library profession. Professional associations can lead not only to sound employee welfare, but also to sound library policy (Cottam 1968: 4106).

Another critic of unionism is Boaz (1971: 106) who is of the opinion that

...labour unions, in the historical tradition, have been coercive associations, for although union membership is not legally compulsory, in an area where unionism prevails, an individual must be a union member if he wishes to have employment. Furthermore, in most unions there is no place for a librarian as a professional person or for the development of the specific goals of any one profession. Hence, the individual librarian, in a union, becomes a member of a heterogenous group and pursues only employee welfare for the whole group.

3.6 PROFESSIONALISM VERSUS UNIONISM

The crucial debate relating to the growth of unionism in libraries centres around the issue of 'professionalism versus unionism'. Haug and Sussman (1973: 89-90) argue that,

Unionisation and professionalism are two processes by which members of an occupation seek to achieve collective upward mobility...[However,] conceptualising unionism and professionalism as alternative forms of collective upward mobility does not mean that there are no differences between the two processes...differences can be distinguished in goal priorities and ... strategies of achieving these goals.

It is a commonly held view that professionalism is inherently incompatible with trade unionism. Librarians believe that their prime professional duty is to serve the library users whereas unions seek to reduce the amount of self sacrifice. It is also held that to press for one's demands by withholding one's services, as in a strike, runs counter to the librarian's sense of duty (Hovenden 1972: 185; Schlachter 1976: 467).

To some, professionalism means striving to provide a quality service to the detriment of oneself and fellow workers. It means holding to a doctrine of individual performance rather than collective organisation. It means status through qualifications and the differentiation of workers into so-called professionals and sub-professionals. It is a concept which asserts superiority and exclusiveness (Beresford 1983: 32). Unionism means, to some holders of the ideology of professionalism, a number of people motivated by greed using their collective strength in a destructive way, for example, through strike action. It also means people resisting the will of governments and employers without justification and without concern for the consequence to individuals of their actions. According to Beresford (1983: 32), both views are wide of the mark.

Before engaging in the 'professionalism versus unionism' debate, it is important to take cognisance of the comments of Hovenkamp. Hovenkamp (1997: 236) is of the opinion that both professional associations and unions have the ability to help a profession communicate and stay cohesive by recognising both commonalities and differences. Whereas professional associations bring the professionalism from outside the arena of individual institutions and work environment and unite it on the basis of common knowledge and expertise, unionisation acknowledges distinction in power and interests as these are determined by the position such professionals occupy in his/her work organisation. Consequently, one may approach these two interest groups as an opportunity for integration in a professional community which can take advantage of both their similarities and differences to promote internal unity (Hovenkamp 1997: 236).

It is generally accepted that there are differences between professionalism and unionism. However, what is important is the extent of the difference between professionalism and unionism.

3.6.1 The perceived differences between professionalism and unionism

Although unionism and professionalism are viewed by some as alternatives there are many similarities as well as differences in objectives. Both unionists and professionals endeavour to serve the public but the element of self-interest for one is interpreted differently by the other. Unions seek client support to

achieve their objectives and thus a payoff, while professional associations relate to their client from an exclusivity standpoint surrounded by a community of peers. Both, unionists and professionals, want the best wages and working conditions for themselves and their colleagues. Hazell (1983: 452-453) is of the opinion that the unionist employs an open dialogue of rights, demands, grievances, needs and privileges while the professional cloaks his hidden agenda of higher pay and ideal work environment behind the works of service, skill, mystery and privileges.

The aspirations of professionals and unionists are very similar. To perpetually seek a distinction between the two is potentially divisive and weakening to both. Professionalism can be viewed positively as a concern by a worker to do a job well. In the jargon of the trade union it is called job satisfaction, and all responsible trade unions attempt to ensure that employees are happy with the content and design of their work along with the remuneration they receive for it. The pursuit of professionalism in its positive sense is therefore a legitimate activity for a trade union. In its negative aspects, however, it can be inconsistent with the aims of a trade union (Beresford 1983: 32).

A perceived difference between 'professionalism' and 'unionism' is the conflict between 'professionalism' and 'unionism'. Professionals believe that they are entirely responsible for their actions and that success or failures are objective criteria of competence. Therefore, the incompetent or those lacking in ambition rely on group action and explicit rules concerning salaries and conditions of employment. However, the growing extent of unionisation among several professional occupations suggests that the conflict may not be as real as suspected (Guyton 1975: 83).

In the current climate of collective action, it is not practical for individuals to negotiate on a continuous basis for salaries and conditions of service. Such a practice would mean that management spends all its time negotiating salaries and conditions of services with individuals at the neglect of other management responsibilities that will ensure more than adequate library services to the users.

3.6.2 Debate on economic versus professional values

Historically, the labour movement has placed an emphasis on demands for better pay, benefits, or for job security, which are considered 'traditional' issues on the bargaining table. Some have even accused the union leadership of, contrary to the membership's wish, placing higher priority on these issues, sacrificing concerns of more intrinsic value. The implication is that unions tend to cultivate, among rank and file, a higher value on bread and butter issues to the detriment of an appreciation of other types of rewards (Hovenkamp 1997: 239).

Research conducted by Hovenkamp (1997: 239), mainly among non-professional groups, confirms that both union officials and union membership rank traditional bargaining issues higher than quality of work issues. However, what needs to be investigated is whether concern over salaries and benefits is really unprofessional. Salary and benefits often reflect the quality of professional work in an institution since adequate salaries and benefits help employers attract and retain better professional employees, as discussed earlier under the heading **Collective bargaining**. Referring specifically to library employees, it is argued that adequate salaries are necessary in order to be able to move beyond bread and butter concerns.

Besides arguments for the importance of bread and butter issues, Hovenkamp's (1997) study of professional librarians in academic research library institutions found that librarians in both unionised and non-unionised campuses tended to place similar importance on bread and butter issues, professional growth, and work environment issues. In an analysis of just the union group of respondents, the research found that registered union members tended to place a higher degree of importance on professional growth issues than did non-registered members. Moreover, union commitment was found statistically significant and positively related to the degree of value placed on the same issues. In other words, those librarians most committed to their union tended to place a higher value on professional issues (Hovenkamp 1997: 240).

It is evident that collective bargaining can improve not only economic but also professional interests.

3.6.3 Professional associations as a deterrent to unionism

Smith (1968: 717) is of the opinion that the lack of interest by librarians in unionisation is not surprising in view of the apathy that most professionals have traditionally felt toward unions. All professions have recognised the importance of organisation, but they have formed professional associations rather than unions. Indeed, the formation of associations is generally regarded as one of the basic features of professionalisation (Smith 1968: 717). A possible reason as to why many professions have remained opposed to unionisation is that their professional associations have performed the crucial functions of the labour union. Their professional associations have established standards, limited membership, improved working conditions, and helped achieve a high level of financial reward. And they have done this without striking or threatening to strike. In short, without that activity which the public disapproves of most in labour unions (Smith 1968: 717).

However, the professions which have benefited most from their associations (law, medicine, dentistry, architecture) are those whose members are largely self-employed, paid chiefly by fee. In the salaried professions, notably teaching, social work, and librarianship, where the members are organised into relatively large staff, and directed by managers or boards, associations have been far less successful. Where the emphasis on service and self-sacrifice has helped justify high fees and status in the self-employed profession, they have often militated against adequate payment and the improvement of working conditions in the salaried professions (Smith 1968: 717).

In recent times these professions have shown an increased interest in unionisation. Teachers, social workers and nurses are organising themselves into unions. However, librarians have lagged far behind. One of the reasons for this is that professional librarians have always contended that their advanced training and relative scarcity in the labour market allowed them to effectively secure better employment situations independently than they can collectively. They view collective action as being incompatible with their professional status. However, this 'scarcity ace card' has been eroded. This erosion has been compounded by the decline in demand for professional librarians. This has affected the professional's

ability to secure satisfactory working and professional conditions through traditional independent action. This, compounded by the realisation that the improvement to their 'bread and butter' conditions is via negotiation, has convinced librarians that unionisation is necessary (Smith 1968: 717; Schlachter 1976: 452; Gleeson 1987: 280).

Another important issue in the debate is the role that support staff colleagues in the library and information environment, who have already secured the support and protection of unions, have played in influencing unionisation. The coming together of both the groups, into a single union, could augur well for the profession.

3.6.4 Support staff, librarians and unionism

Support staff employees and librarians have progressively mobilised into a single union, especially in public libraries. In general, relationships between professional employees and unionised support staff employees appear to be good, although not without some friction. This is often the case whether librarians share a common bargaining unit, re-organise into separate units, or only one group of employees is organised for collective bargaining. In most libraries, successful negotiations by one group of employees will positively affect negotiations by other groups. For example, when support staff employees gain significant wage concessions, professional salaries usually increase by comparable amounts. The history of library unions records many instances of close co-operation between professionals and support staff employees (Kusack 1984: 21). It is evident that there is little conflict between professional and support staff. However, one needs to address the argument that unions create disharmony within the library environment.

3.6.5 Do unions destroy harmony of interest?

Schlachter (1976: 457) argues that an important tenet in professional ideology is the 'harmony of interest' that exists between professional staff and managers. Because they operate in the same field, it

is argued that these two professional groups share the same concern and interest in developing the profession. Therefore, co-operation, rather than conflict, is expected to characterise their relationship.

If harmony and loyalty between managers and professionals are essential elements in professionalism, then any force which appears disruptive would be viewed as disloyal and therefore unprofessional. Frequently, unions are viewed as instruments which create a damaging and adversarial relationship with management by fostering conflict and hostility between staff professionals and management. As a result, unions have often been considered quite unnecessary and unprofessional (Schlachter 1976: 457). Pro-union writers state that conflict is inherent in any work environment and that unions do not promote the problem, but may actually prevent it. According to this view, it is the managerial hierarchy rather than union activity which causes the split between professional workers and their managers (Schlachter 1976: 459).

Library unions rarely have engaged in strike action. Research has revealed that the library unions were generally hesitant to use strike action as a method of advancing its interest. Library unions generally work through negotiation, publicity and education, petitioning, and promotion of legislation (Berelson 1939; Schlachter 1976: 460). Therefore, to maintain that unions foster disharmony is not fair.

3.6.6 Union developments to meet professionalism

Historically blue collar workers have joined unions, whereas white collar workers have chosen professional organisations. Commerton (1975: 129) argues that unions grow faster in times of unemployment and professional organisations in times of labour shortages. In light of the spread of unionisation to professional fields, unionism began to adapt to meet the demands of a growing number of professionals joining its ranks.

An example of this transformation is the actions of the Los Angeles Public Library Union. The union was formed with the purpose of regaining control of the profession. The formation of the union was

described as a unique adventure, a search by a group of librarians for greater control over their own profession and an exploration of unionism as a vehicle for gaining that control:

Any library employee knows that while we may not be lacking in respectability, ... we certainly have none at all of the money and prestige we deserve...Perhaps with a more interested, involved organisation, we could obtain the prestige and the money we deserve (Guyton 1975: 85).

An example of the close co-operation between union and management is discussed under the heading of **co-determination** which is an example of employee (via the union) and employer working together to determine the future of the organisation.

Guyton (1975: 85) points out that

many have argued that the inability of the trade union movement to bring itself up-to-date and to present a better image of itself was a major factor hindering its expansion among white collar workers.

However, unions have developed new formats and introduced new methods of organising to appeal to professional librarians. As a result of these modifications and in response to aggressive membership drives, numerous professional librarians have joined unions. Thus recent changes in labour union activity and membership make it difficult to label union affiliation as unprofessional. Studies have also revealed that stereotype of union focus on solely 'bread and butter' benefits does not hold true for professional librarians. Once unions representing professional members have successfully negotiated for economic needs, they move on to professional issues (Schlachter 1976: 468). The example given above is testimony to this.

The acceptance of unions by library management is encouraging as it illustrates an acceptance of the level of professionalism inherent in library unions. Nyren (1967) quotes the University Librarian of Berkeley (Donald Coney) as having some approving things to say about unions. This University Librarian presented the view that he

believes that unions in libraries are a factor to be reckoned with now and in the future. They appear to be more effective instruments for representing the interests of employees to

management than are professional organisations. Consequently (we) will seek the kind of competition for employees' allegiance and support between unions and library associations similar to that which has developed in the teaching profession (Nyren 1967: 2116).

3.6.7 Bringing the debate to a conclusion

According to Brooks (1974: 241) the dilemma of whether to preserve professionalism or embrace some form of trade unionism is an artificial issue. There is sufficient evidence that the two concepts are not mutually exclusive and this point could reduce the problem to insignificance.

It is argued by Brooks (1974: 241) that there is no substance to the apparent, and often articulated, conflict between professionalism and trade unionism. White collar workers, including employees within the library environment, must take careful stock of their social situation and recognise that they are workers selling their labour just as any other employee, that they can no longer resolve their employment problems alone and that they need the protection of a union. Once they do this then they will be protecting not only their own terms and conditions of employment but, equally important, will be ensuring that hard-won professional standards will be preserved for the future (Brooks 1974: 241).

There is sufficient evidence to assume that unionism within the library and information environment is here to stay. Cottam (1968: 4106) in as early as the 1960s believed that the
union movement has been launched among librarians with relatively effective results. Now is the time for the library profession to define its direction. Now is the time to shake off the prevailing attitude of complacency....

There are a number of scenarios that present themselves as ways forward in terms of providing adequate representation for those employed in libraries.

3.7 OPTIONS FOR THE WAY FORWARD

There are basically four possibilities that can guide representation within the profession. The first possibility is that the profession retains the status quo, that is, having a union represent the workers on industrial issues and the professional association represent professional workers on professional issues. The second possibility is for organised library employees to affiliate to larger unions. The option of having quasi-unions is the third possibility. The last option is one union for all library staff. It should be stated that these possibilities, which are elaborated on later in this chapter, will guide this study in determining a scenario that could be investigated for adoption by the library and information community of South Africa.

3.7.1 Affiliation to larger unions

In the USA, library unions are affiliated to the union movement while in Britain librarians form a segment of a large trade union. There are valid reasons for association with existing unions. An established union has a stable, functioning organisation with a clear defined legal status and is recognised by employing authorities. There is an expectation that full-time union officials will give more attention to union activities than the best intentioned part-time, do-it-yourself library unionist. Further, the union official's career cannot be prejudiced by union activities (Hovenden 1972: 189).

3.7.2 Quasi-union

Those professionals who are still not comfortable with unionism would find the proposal of quasi-union more acceptable. Schlachter (1976) has identified the quasi-union as a professional organisation which, while maintaining its original professional base, adopts an employee orientation. A kind of metamorphosis has occurred. Often during membership drives professional associations have attempted to make professional associations unnecessary by behaving like a union in order to meet the interests and needs of their membership. Given the fact some professional librarians often feel that unions cannot deal competently with professional issues, Schlachter's alternative of a professional association turned

collective bargaining organisation may be more acceptable than a traditional labour union (Schlachter 1976: 463; Hazell 1983: 454).

Marsh (1980: 82) toys with the idea of the Library Association (UK) becoming a trade union. If this was to happen, the Association would need to restructure itself entirely in order to represent the entire range of library employees (professional, technical and clerical employees) who are essentially and practically constituent members of the profession. The one advantage of basing a union on the Library Association would be that it would be the best placed organisation to represent all librarians. Further, it would be a direct extension of its existing service on professional standards for librarians. The British Medical Association and the Professional Engineers' Association are examples of professional bodies which act like unions without having to become such (Marsh 1980: 82).

Librarians in the USA have periodically suggested that professional associations, particularly the American Library Association (ALA), become more militant in the advancement of their profession and the welfare of professionals. In essence, they request that professional associations function as labour unions. Of principal concern in this demand is dissatisfaction with the economic and professional position of the librarian. According to Mika (1980: 46) professionals favour the ALA acting as a quasi-union to address professional and industrial concerns as opposed to joining a recognised labour organisation.

3.7.3 Union for all library employees

This scenario is based on the premise that support staff, who are generally already unionised, will be willing to belong to a sector specific union. It would be logical for the support staff to move into a union that is sector specific rather than belong to a generic union, if the level of representation is the same.

In the study conducted by Marsh (1980) in the United Kingdom, it was found that some librarians were dissatisfied with the representation from their union. They complained that belonging to a generic union

did not meet the professional needs of librarians. Thus librarians, collectively and individually, began suggesting alternative arrangements, including the establishment of a librarian's union. Further, there was dissatisfaction with the pattern of union representation for library staff, that is, different sectors of the library were organised into different unions. This has been compounded by the fact that individual libraries also had their own union. It has been suggested that there should be one trade union for all sectors of librarianship (Marsh 1980: 78).

Turning to the suggestion of a trade union for all librarians, we see that its obvious advantage would be that librarians would have one body to which they could turn to with regard to trade union matters. Moreover, that body would have an understanding of their work and their particular difficulties and would not neglect labour interests in favour of those of larger, more important or more influential groups. This organisation would also cater for librarians employed in small numbers in individual firms and small organisations as well as for those in larger library units. However, there are disadvantages in that it has the potential of being a union with small numbers. It would be without the resources and the experience of established unions and is not likely to be favoured by employers. There is a preference among employers to negotiate with one large union (Marsh 1980: 80).

It has been argued that the profession needs a strong independent union. To quote Spicer (1959: 11),

What we must do, I think, is seek to form a strong and independent professional union of our own as we can manage, an association with entrance standards as high in their own way - and equally intelligible to the layman, if possible - as those of the American Medical Association or the American Bar Association.

Irrespective of the scenario adopted there has to be a close working relationship between management and the representative body. The library as an organisation will only thrive if both parties are able to work together. If there is conflict unnecessary attention and energy will be spent fighting each other at the expense of the membership, the client (users), standards and the profession as a whole.

3.8 CO-DETERMINATION

Co-determination, in terms of South African labour law, is the coming together of employee and employer to make management decisions. It is a process of joint decision making between management and employee in the management of the organisation (Barker and Holtzhausen 1996: 24).

Brandwein (1979: 682) discusses the relationship between the union and management of the New York City Library. The discussion is from the time that management of the Library changed and with that came a change in management styles. Prior to the period under discussion, management had adopted an authoritarian style of management which led to a great deal of conflict between management and employees. When the new City Librarian was appointed, he adopted a participative style of management, emphasising co-operation between management and employees in the management of the organisation.

According to Brandwein (1979: 682) the decision to move from conflict to co-operation was made practically overnight. However, the actual accomplishments, as a result of co-operation between management and employees, grew over a period of time and shared experience. The key to this change was the growth of a feeling of mutual trust and respect for the efforts and opinions of both parties. This mutual trust stemmed from keeping one's word and the fact that there was no double dealing or misrepresentation. When either side felt a legitimate difference of opinion and/or interest, it was stated. Both parties learnt to accept and live with those differences. An acceptance of differences and aims is crucial when evaluating an overall working relationship. The prime function of management is to manage, while that of the union is to represent the aims and aspirations of its membership. The responsibility of both parties is to maximize the opportunity for mutual effort and to minimise the legitimate divergent points of view that must develop from time to time. Neither the union nor library management should be judged on a single act or point of view, but from a body of evidence showing their overall performance over a period of time (Brandwein 1979: 682).

A prime example of co-operation between management and employee was the joint handling of cost of living adjustment payments. On several occasions the union was willing to modify its cost of living demands and contractual rights so that the library or its services would not be prejudiced. Furthermore, the union fought side by side with the library management to ensure that the New York City Library was not disproportionately treated in the application of the city's severe budget cuts. The union supported management and other libraries throughout the budget crisis, which, for the New York City Library, actually began eight years earlier. The union was also helpful in fighting for or against legislation that would have had a significant impact on the library and its public service programme (Brandwein 1979: 683).

It should be clear from the above that these efforts and assistances are of substance and not just a catalogue of minor accommodations and accomplishments. Another factor in the overall success of this policy of co-operation might well be the background of the manager of the New York City Library who was the president of the Library Guild. According to Brandwein (1979: 683), knowledge of union concerns, interests, ideology and methods of operation was a contributory factor in the harmonious relationship between management and union.

The example of the New York City Library clearly shows that the library and union working together have been successful in these efforts. No policy of co-operation can succeed without the clear understanding that it is a two-way street. Both sides must believe in it, and, even more importantly, work at it. The essence of this policy, aside from its good will, is the principle of accommodation. Accommodation is a logical extension of the collective bargaining process, that is to give and take; to see, recognise, and meet the needs of both parties. The only result of a state of continual conflict and controversy is a drain on the time, energy, and resources of both parties (Brandwein 1979: 683).

3.9 SUMMARY

Library unionism began in the early 1900s. The history of unions in libraries was influenced by economic factors and legislative changes, factors regarded by Bain (as discussed in Chapter Two) as influencing the growth of unionisation.

Chapter Three has identified the following factors as influencing unionisation within the LIS environment:

- i) Employment concentration:** Growth of libraries has resulted in high levels of bureaucratisation which has reduced employee participation in decision making. It is believed that unions would assist in ensuring that employees are engaged in decision making;
- ii) Legislation:** As government introduces new legislation protecting employees, employees become organised; and
- iii) Economic reasons:** These are underpinned by collective bargaining for better salaries and conditions of service. The achievements of unions in addressing economic issues has influenced the growth of unions.

This chapter has also explored the debate that unionism is incompatible with professionalism. The researcher shares the view that there is no inherent incompatibility between professionalism and unionism. Chapter Three has also examined the different possible scenarios to take library employee representation forward.

As reflected in the previous chapter and reiterated in this chapter, government policy through legislation has influenced the growth of unions. Chapter Four will examine the legislation which is currently reshaping labour relations in a post-apartheid South Africa. A key aspect here is the potential that such legislation has in encouraging unionisation.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE NEW LABOUR DISPENSATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The Republic of South Africa had its first democratic elections in 1994. The people of the country elected a new government which ushered in a new supreme law of the country, that is, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. This Constitution laid the foundation for a new labour dispensation. To give effect to this dispensation a number of statutes have been legislated. The core of the dispensation was set within four statutes:

- The Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 which revolutionised industrial relations in the country;
- The Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997 which prescribed minimum conditions of employment;
- The Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 which was aimed at correcting the demographic imbalance in the workplace, removing barriers and advancing the development of employees from disadvantaged backgrounds; and
- The Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 was promulgated for the purpose of developing the skills of the workforce.

At the centre of this quartet of statutes is the Labour Relations Act (LRA) 66 of 1995. According to Botha and Mischke (1997: 134), the LRA represents a watershed in the often troubled history of labour law in South Africa. It is the opinion of the researcher that the other three Acts serve as a support structure to ensure the success of the new dispensation which is centred around the LRA. Given South Africa's track record with regard to industrial relations, there had to be statutory support mechanisms to compel employers and employees, via their unions, to improve industrial relations. Hence the other three statutes.

It does not serve the purpose of this study to do an analysis of the above mentioned statutes. This chapter presents the legislation in terms of the factors that have influenced or negated the growth of

unionism in libraries. The factors identified in Chapters Two and Three as influencing unionism will be examined in this chapter against the backdrop of the new labour dispensation. The examination will be done to determine how well the new labour dispensation addresses these factors and the influence that a trade union has in meeting the demands of a LIS sector in the current dispensation. For example, how does the new labour dispensation address the issue of decision making (co-determination), how does the LRA address the issue of the acceptance of trade unions by employers which is one of the factors that Bain (1970) argues influences unionisation and, the influence of the Skills Development Act on staff training and development.

This chapter is split into two. The first section examines the legislation and the second examines the impact of the labour dispensation on unionism and the influence of trade unions. The discussion of workplace forums in the first section will be in slightly greater depth as compared with the rest of the provisions in the labour dispensation as it has, in the opinion of the researcher, the potential to address a number of issues raised in Chapter Three.

4.2 DEFINITIONS

As stated in Chapter One, the definition or clarification of terms will be given in the chapter in which these terms are introduced or receive greatest emphasis. In the context of the study, the following terms have been identified as core concepts which will be explained in this chapter.

Co-determination is union participation in aspects of management. It is consultation and joint decision making between employee and employer normally via a workplace forum. The establishment of the forum is initiated by the majority trade union (Barker and Holtzhausen 1996: 24).

Dispute of interest arises when there is disagreement with terms and conditions of employment, or the renewal of those which have expired. Disputes arising out of collective bargaining processes are also dispute of interests; for example, annual salary negotiation (Barker and Holtzhausen 1996: 41).

Dispute of right is a dispute relating to the interpretation, implementation or violation of existing rights. These are rights that may emanate from statutory law, collective agreements or individual employment contracts; for example, denying the employees the right to unionise (Barker and Holtzhausen 1996: 41).

Workplace is a term used in the LRA (section 213) to mean the place or places where the employees of an employer work. If an employer carries on or conducts two or more operations which are independent of one another by reason of their size, function or organisation, each such operation shall be regarded as a separate workplace (Barker and Holtzhausen 1996: 168).

4.3 THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

The Constitution is the supreme law of the country and therefore, any law or conduct inconsistent with the Constitution has no force or effect. Further, the obligations imposed by the Constitution must be fulfilled (Du Toit *et al.* 2000: 514).

The Constitution which affirms human dignity, equality and freedom, has had a profound effect on all branches of law. Chapter II of the Constitution contains several provisions relevant to employment and labour law. These include protection against servitude, forced labour and discrimination, the right to pursue a livelihood, and protection of children against exploitative labour practices and work that is hazardous to their work and well-being (Finnemore 1999: 45; Grogan 2001: 13-14).

Section 23 of Chapter II of the Constitution deals specifically with labour relations. This section of the Constitution states:

- 1. Everyone has the right to fair labour practices.**
- 2. Every worker has the right -**
 - a. to form a trade union;**
 - b. to participate in the activities and programmes of a trade union; and,**
 - c. to strike.**
- 3. Every employer has the right -**
 - a. to form and join an employers' organisation; and**
 - b. to participate in the activities and programmes of an employers' organisation.**
- 4. Every trade union and every employers' organisation has the right -**
 - a. to determine its own administration, programmes and activities;**
 - b. to organise, and**
 - c. to form and join a federation.**
- 5. Every trade union, employers' organisation and employer has the right to engage in collective bargaining. National legislation may be enacted to regulate collective bargaining. To the extent that the legislation may limit a right in this Chapter, the limitation must comply with section 36(1).**
- 6. National legislation may recognise union security arrangements contained in collective agreements. To the extent that the legislation may limit a right in this Chapter, the limitation must comply with section 36(1) (Republic of South Africa 1996: 9).**

The rights enshrined in section 23 protect rights in the workplace. However, there are other fundamental rights which are also guaranteed by the Constitution. Some of these fundamental rights include provisions that:-

- protect the right of all persons to freedom of association (section 18);
- guarantee equality before the law and prohibits discrimination on a variety of grounds (section 9);
- guarantee freedom of expression (section 16);
- protect the right to assemble, to demonstrate, to picket and to present petitions (section 17);
- protect the right of citizens to choose their trade, occupation or profession (section 22); and
- guarantee the right to just administration action (section 33).

The drafters of the LRA took into account the above mentioned constitutional rights and attempted to formulate the LRA in such a way as to protect these rights. For example, the LRA protects the right to freedom of association, the right to join and form trade unions, and the right to strike and to picket. Section 3 of the LRA also states that it must be interpreted in compliance with the provisions of the Constitution. However, because these rights are, of necessity, often generally defined, it is possible that some of the provisions of the LRA may be challenged on the basis that they are unconstitutional.

It is increasingly being argued that at least certain fundamental or human rights should have wider effect and they should apply to private individuals. In the employment sphere, this would mean that an employee could allege that his or her employer has infringed a constitutional right that he or she possesses or even that the employer infringed a right of the employer protected in the Constitution. For example, the refusal by an employer to promote an employee because she is a woman. If the prohibition against discrimination contained in section 9 of the Constitution has wider effect then the woman will be able to challenge the employer's decision not to promote her. This would be in addition to relying on any specific rights granted to her by the labour statute to challenge discrimination (Basson *et al.* 1998: 7).

4.4 LABOUR LEGISLATION

The LRA is intended to expand on the labour rights mentioned above. The Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) is also designed to give effect to the right to fair labour practices referred to in subsection (1) of section 23 of the Constitution. The BCEA sets down minimum conditions of employment. The Employment Equity Act and the Skills Development Act complete the new labour dispensation picture (Grogan 2001: 14).

4.4.1 Labour Relations Act (LRA) 66 of 1995

The South African Government, when drafting the LRA, borrowed heavily from the European experience, especially from Germany. The Act envisages changing the labour-management relationship in South Africa in three ways:

- moving from adversarialism to co-operation;
- from intermittent dealings between employer and employee to a continual, ongoing interaction; and
- from a zero-sum to a positive-sum ('win-win') approach.

This is an ambitious agenda and a radical break with the past, raising difficult challenges for all parties, especially for trade unions who are accustomed to adversarialism, sporadic interaction, and 'win-lose' approaches (Baskin and Satgar 1995: 46).

4.4.1.1 Principal aims of the LRA

The LRA is a significant departure from past legislation and is consistent with fundamental rights contained in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the International Labour Organisation conventions (Finnemore and Van Rensburg 2000: 262).

The general purpose of the LRA is to advance economic development, social justice, labour peace and the democratisation of the workplace. The Act achieves this by giving effect to the fundamental rights

conferred by the Constitution and by giving effect to the obligations incurred by South Africa as a member state of the International Labour Organisation. Section 1 of the Act sets out the primary objectives, to meet the requirements of the above purpose, which are:

1. to give effect to and regulate the fundamental rights conferred by section 23 of the Constitution;
2. to give effect to the obligations incurred by the Republic as a member state of the International Labour Organisation;
3. to provide a framework within which employees and their trade unions, employers and employers' organisation can:
 - a. collectively bargain to determine wages, terms and conditions of employment and other matters of mutual interests; and
 - b. formulate industrial policy; and
4. to promote
 - a. orderly collective bargaining;
 - b. collective bargaining at sectoral level;
 - c. employee participation in decision-making in the workplace; and
 - d. the effective resolution of labour disputes (Republic of South Africa 1995: 1).

When the stated purpose and primary objectives of the LRA are analysed with reference to the general provisions, a number of broad policy objectives become apparent, namely,

- the need to simplify collective bargaining;
- compliance with the Constitution and international obligations;
- efficient and effective dispute-resolution procedures and mechanisms;
- the promotion of collective bargaining; and
- the promotion of workplace democracy

(Botha and Mischke 1997: 135; Basson *et al.* 1998:18).

The above objectives indicate that the aims of the LRA are wider and more ambitious than those of its predecessor, the emphasis of which was on the avoidance of industrial unrest. While under the LRA of 1956, the labour courts sought to encourage collective bargaining as the preferred method of resolving workplace disputes, the 1996 Act expressly commits employers and employees to workplace democracy, which entails the active promotion of participative management and joint decision making (Grogan 2001: 257).

4.4.1.2 The need to simplify collective bargaining

Prior to the enactment of the LRA, the rules regulating collective labour law were contained in the LRA of 1956, the Public Service LRA of 1993, the Education LRA of 1993 and the Agricultural Labour Act of 1993. Each of these statutes had its own sphere of application and each was fairly detailed and complex. This resulted in a system of collective labour law that was fragmented, complex and confusing (Basson *et al.* 1998: 18).

Therefore, it was necessary to simplify and streamline collective labour law. The LRA of 1996 achieved this and also brought uniformity to collective labour law as all sectors, including the above mentioned, fell within the jurisdiction of this Act. The simplified and streamlined procedures are especially true in the area of dispute resolution. Further, the Act has been drafted in a revolutionary style and language that is simple and free of technicality. As a result it is a more accessible piece of legislation and easy to understand. However, it is not straightforward with many provisions requiring careful interpretation (Basson *et al.* 1998: 19).

4.4.1.3 Compliance with the Constitution and international obligations

The issue of compliance with the Constitution has already been mentioned above. The provisions of section 23 of the Constitution are the core principles guiding the LRA.

South Africa is a member of the International Labour Organisation and therefore has to comply with ILO Conventions. For example, Conventions 87 and 98 relate to freedom of association and collective bargaining respectively. The Conventions protect the right of employees and employers to form and join trade unions and the right of trade unions and employers' organisations to be active without undue restriction. The LRA is in compliance with these ILO Conventions (Basson *et al.* 1998: 19; Du Toit *et al.* 2003: 63-64).

4.4.1.4 Efficient and effective dispute resolution procedures and mechanisms

The drafters of labour legislation have always taken the view that disputes of right are best left to the courts to decide on, while disputes of interest should be left to negotiation between the parties to the dispute.

In terms of the old LRA, disputes of right had to be resolved via the Industrial Courts. The procedures in the Industrial Court were complex and technical and, in effect excluded the parties from participating in their resolution. As far as disputes of interest were concerned, the high incidence of strike action in South Africa has been blamed on the ineffectiveness of pre-strike dispute resolution procedures and mechanisms (Basson *et al.* 1998: 20-21; Grogan 2003: 381).

The intention of the new LRA was to provide for more effective dispute resolution procedures and mechanisms for both disputes of right and disputes of interest. At the core of the dispute resolution scheme is the process of conciliation. The process of engaging in conciliation is very simple. The new LRA requires virtually all disputes that arise between employers and employee to be subjected to a conciliation process before any other dispute resolution procedure is followed. Conciliation is facilitated

by specially trained conciliators who must attempt to facilitate the conclusion of a settlement agreement by the parties out of their own free will. By focusing on the process that precedes strikes and litigation, it is hoped that a significant number of disputes will be eliminated at an early stage (Basson *et al.* 1998: 21; Grogan 2003: 381-382).

4.4.1.5 The promotion of collective bargaining

A central theme of collective labour law is that collective bargaining be the preferred method of establishing and changing terms and conditions of employment as well as the resolution of interest disputes. The promotion of collective bargaining is also central to the new LRA.

To promote and encourage collective bargaining the Act uses a variety of protections, rights and procedures. Such protections, rights and procedures include protection of freedom of association, protection of strikes and lock-outs, the right to organise, advisory arbitration where an employer refuses to bargain and the role of conciliation (Basson *et al.* 1998: 21-22; Du Toit *et al.* 2003: 227; Grogan 2003: 304).

4.4.1.6 The promotion of workplace democracy

In terms of the new LRA, employees are afforded an opportunity to engage in the governance of the workplace. Participation in the governance of the workplace would be via the workplace forum which will be discussed later.

Another broad objective of the LRA is the promotion of the principle of freedom of association.

4.4.1.7 Freedom of association

Thompson (1999: AA1-5) states that Chapter II of the Act sets out basic labour rights. Chief amongst these is the freedom of association, that is the right of employees and employers to join and participate in the lawful activities of unions and employers' associations respectively. This right is already protected by section 23(2) of the Constitution.

On the employee side, the right to freedom of association protects against both state interference and anti-union discrimination on the part of an employer. Now that the unfair labour practice remedy has been limited to individual employees, considerable union attention will shift to protect members interest. Employers who seek to favour non-strikers over strikers by way of rewards, for instance, will need to be wary of these provisions (Thompson 1999: AA1-6).

Protection of employees against more general acts of discrimination were initially set out in the residual unfair labour practice provisions. However, these anti-discrimination provisions have been moved across to the Employment Equity Act.

4.4.1.8 Voluntarism

A noticeable theme which runs through the LRA is a preference for voluntarism. Employers and unions are expected to work together as the Act provides for workplace forums. By providing for workplace forums and limiting protected strikes to such matters which cannot be resolved by statutory dispute settlement procedures, the legislation is intended to limit adversarial bargaining to issues such as wages and general conditions of service. For the rest, it is hoped that co-operation between labour and management will be promoted by compulsory consultation and joint decision making or by conciliation (Grogan 2001: 257).

It is clear that the government, in terms of the Act, is promoting unionism by providing a greater degree of protection to employees and unions and yet to maintain, as far as possible, the principles of voluntarism and free collective bargaining. It must be noted that the Act makes no compulsion to bargain, but does make provision for disputes relating to a refusal to bargain to be first submitted for advisory arbitration. To enhance employee protection and to further employee participation in the organisation, the Act makes provision for the formation of workplace forums should a majority union request such. The onus is on the employees to engage in consultation and co-decision making via workplace forums on certain prescribed matters and the onus is on the employer to disclose information required for the purpose of collective bargaining. It is hoped that, by promoting this kind of co-operation and information sharing, the Act will promote voluntarism and ultimately industrial peace (Bendix 2001: 115).

4.4.1.9 Workplace forums

Araujo (1996: 47) states that workplace forums are intended to be one of the primary instruments in the Act to democratise the workplace. He goes on to say that industrial relations in South Africa can be characterised as generally demonstrating low levels of trust between employers and employees. Workplace forums are intended to assist in redressing the low levels of trust.

The objective of a workplace forum should be the promotion of the interests of all employees, irrespective of whether they are union members or not. The functions of the forum are to enhance efficiency at the workplace, provide for consultation between management and labour on specified and other issues, to engage in joint decision making on issues such as disciplinary codes and procedures, rules regarding conduct and behaviour, measures to protect individuals against discrimination and changes to the rules applicable to social benefits. Joint decision making envisages that management may not take certain decisions without the consensus of the workplace forum. This is a new concept to most

South African employers, who are accustomed only to the duty to consult (Araujo 1996: 47; Bendix 2001: 123).

Workplace forums are intended to promote participative management rather than adversarial bargaining between the union and the employer within a particular organisation. The shift is toward joint problem solving. It has been stated that workplace forums are charged with promoting the interests of all employees in the workplace, not just those of union members. However, there are certain conditions that have to be met before a workplace forum can be established. Firstly, the employee threshold must be more than 100. Secondly, the request for the establishment of a workplace forum must be made by a majority union. It is a statutory provision that the workplace forum be consulted by the employer on certain issues. This is termed mandatory consultation. Further, there are statutory issues that compel the employer to engage the union in joint decision making at the workplace forum (Du Toit *et al.* 2003: 329-330; Grogan 2003: 293-295).

4.4.1.9.1 Mandatory consultation

The right of workplace forums to be consulted by the employer is conferred and regulated by section 84 (1) of the LRA. A workplace forum is entitled to be consulted by the employer about matters relating to the following:

- a. restructuring of the workplace, including the introduction of new technology and new work methods;
- b. changes in the organisation of work;
- c. partial or total plant closure;
- d. mergers and transfers of ownership as far as they have an impact on the employees;
- e. the dismissal of employees for reasons based on operational requirements;
- f. exemptions from any collective agreement or any law;
- g. job grading;
- h. criteria for merit increases or the payment of discretionary bonuses;
- i. education and training;

- j. product development plans; and
- k. export promotion.

Section 84(1) brings to the fore the intention of providing the workforce with the opportunity to be consulted and be informed. Furthermore, the section makes provision for employees to make suggestions and representations on issues that were formerly considered to be managerial prerogatives. The matters listed above can be expanded or reduced through a collective agreement with a representative union or unions (Grogan 2001: 276).

It must be noted that consultation is different from joint decision making. Consultation requires the employer to do no more than notify the forum of any proposal. However, the employer must consider, in good faith, any suggestion that the workplace forum may make.

4.4.1.9.2 Joint decision making

Joint decision making goes much further than consultation. The employer is prohibited from implementing any proposal without the forum's agreement. Further, the employer cannot implement its proposal until consensus is reached (Grogan 2001: 278).

Section 86 of the Act makes provisions regulating decision making when it states,
unless the matters for joint decision-making are regulated by a collective agreement with the representative trade union, an employer must consult and reach consensus with a workplace forum before implementing any proposal... (Republic of South Africa 1995: 100).

To reiterate, the matters that require joint decision making include disciplinary codes and procedures; rules relating to the proper regulation of the workplace in so far as they apply to conduct not related to the work performance of employees; measures designed to protect and advance persons disadvantaged by unfair discrimination; changes by the employer or by employer-appointed representatives on trust or

boards of employer-controlled schemes to the rules regulating social benefit schemes. As already stated, the range of matters can be expanded or limited by law or collective agreement (Grogan 2001: 278).

It is clear from the above that the legislation has sought to limit the matters reserved for joint decision making to issues which have a direct bearing on the conditions of service of employees. In a simplistic evaluation of the LRA, the Act does achieve its general purpose of advancing economic development by promoting collective bargaining; its social justice purpose by removing discriminatory practices from the workplace and by promulgating supporting legislation; labour peace by improving the dispute resolution mechanism; and, democratisation of the workplace by introducing revolutionary principles in the provision for workplace forums.

4.4.2 Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) 75 of 1997

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) applies to all employees and employers except members of the National Defence force, the National Intelligence Agency and the South African Secret Service. The Act sets minimum conditions of employment for all employees in South Africa except for those mentioned above. It is the most comprehensive statute to set minimum conditions of employment in South Africa and the first to set conditions for both the private and public sector (Du Toit *et al.* 2000: 514; Benjamin 2002: BB1-1).

The purpose of the Act is in line with that of the LRA and that is, to advance economic development and social justice. The BCEA achieves this by establishing and enforcing basic conditions of employment. The basic conditions of employment established by the Act form part of every contract of employment unless they have been replaced, varied or excluded in accordance with the Act. Further, it could be expanded by more favourable conditions negotiated between the employee and the employer (Du Toit *et al.* 2000: 514; Nel 2001: 103).

The Act achieves the economic development and social justice purposes by giving effect to and regulating the right to fair labour practices contained in section 23(1) of the Constitution. It does this by:

- establishing a set of basic conditions of employment that apply to most South African employees;
- creating institutions and mechanisms to enforce those basic conditions of employment; and
- defining the limits within which those basic conditions of employment may be varied.

(Du Toit *et al.* 2000: 514; Benjamin 2002: BB1-1)

The Department of Labour has described the BCEA's approach as one of 'regulated flexibility' in which the protection of basic worker rights is balanced with demands for higher productivity, improved efficiency and the promotion of flexibility. The Act seeks to provide minimum working conditions for South African workers, particularly unorganised and vulnerable workers (Benjamin 2002: BB1-1). As indicated earlier, the LRA provides a broad framework governing labour relations while the BCEA provides specifically for one area of labour law and that is the minimum conditions of employment. The Employment Equity Act takes another area of the LRA and makes specific provisions for the correction of the demographic imbalance as a result of discriminatory practices of the past.

4.4.3 Employment Equity Act (EEA) 55 of 1998

The Employment Equity Act (EEA) gives effect to section 9(4) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa which states that "National legislation must be enacted to prevent and prohibit unfair discrimination" (Republic of South Africa 1996: 7). Section 9 of the Constitution which is the Equity Clause, excludes from the concept of discrimination any differentiation designed to promote, protect or advance persons previously disadvantaged by unfair discrimination. Thus differentiation for the purpose of Affirmative Action is regarded as 'fair' discrimination (Bendix 2001: 133).

Section 5(1) of the EEA forces all employers to promote equal opportunity by eliminating discrimination in all employment policies and practices. It further prohibits discrimination on any arbitrary grounds, including, but not limited to, race, gender, sex, pregnancy and marital status.

Harassment can also be classified as unfair discrimination. The Act makes provision for the promotion of previously disadvantaged groups under the provision of 'fair' discrimination (Bendix 2001: 133).

The Employment Equity Act aims to correct the demographic imbalance in South Africa's workforce by compelling employers to remove barriers for advancement of the designated group (as defined in Chapter One). Furthermore, the Act aims to actively advance this category of the workforce in all categories of employment by 'affirmative action'. The Act, in terms of section 5, begins by placing a positive obligation on all employers to promote equal opportunity in the workplace by eliminating unfair discrimination in any employment policy or practice. This obligation is reinforced by a prohibition on unfair discrimination (Grogan 2001: 247).

There are subtle ways in which employers discriminate and the Act tries to pre-empt such discrimination. For example, when recruiting, in terms of section 20(5), the employer may not "unfairly discriminate against a person on the grounds of that person's lack of relevant experience" (Republic of South Africa 1998: 24). The onus of proof against all allegation of discrimination rests on the employer. The employer must ensure that the selection process was conducted in terms of provable assessment criteria and that no person was unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged during the process (Bendix 2001: 133).

4.4.3.1 Consultation

A significant component of the Act addresses the issue of consultation. Consultation with a representative employee body is an absolute imperative. The Act stipulates that the employer has to consult with regard to the demographic analysis of the workforce, on the preparation and implementation of the plan and the report to be submitted. Such consultation must be conducted with a representative trade union or, if none exists, representatives elected by employees. In terms of the LRA, affirmative action is subject to co-decision making between the employer and the workplace forum. Thus where a forum exists, the employer has to consult jointly with this body and the trade union, if both exist (Bendix 2001: 135).

Just as the LRA expanded on certain areas of the Constitution and the BCEA expanded on areas of the LRA, it is the opinion of the researcher that the Skills Development Act (SDA) expands on areas of the EEA. The aim of the EEA is to correct the demographic imbalances of the workplace. Therefore, it is essential that there are sufficient skills if such an exercise is to succeed. Further, when making an affirmative action appointment, it is necessary to have training and development programmes to provide the necessary developmental support.

4.4.4 Skills Development Act (SDA) 97 of 1998

The Skills Development Act seeks to develop the skills of the workforce and thereby increase the quality of working life for workers, improve the productivity of the workplace, promote self-employment and the delivery of social services. The Act seeks to encourage employers to use the workplace as an active learning environment and to provide opportunities for new entrants to the labour market to gain work experience. The focus is to improve the employment prospects of previously disadvantaged persons through education and training (Finnemore and Van Rensburg 2000: 270).

According to Bendix (2001: 139-140), this Act attempts to co-ordinate industrial training in a more structured and purposeful manner. Its objectives, amongst others, are:

- to develop the skills of the South African workforce;
- to increase the return on such investment;
- to encourage employers to use the workplace as an active learning environment, so that employees can acquire new skills and new entrants can gain work experience;
- to encourage workers to participate in learnerships and other training programmes;
- to ensure quality of education and training at the workplace;
- to improve the employment prospects of those who were previously disadvantaged;
- to assist work seekers and retrenched persons to find employment; and
- to assist employers to find qualified workers.

The Skills Development Act should be seen as support legislation to the EEA in that it encourages employers to develop persons who were previously disadvantaged. All employers have to buy into the skills development process as they have to contribute to a levy equivalent to 0.5 percent of the payroll of the company. The levy is collected by the Sectoral Education and Training Authority (SETA). Twenty percent of those funds are paid into the National Skills Fund. The remaining eighty percent is retained by the SETA to fund accredited training. By obliging all employers to contribute to regionally based training funds and by providing that funds for training may be released only for approved programmes, the Act aims to ensure that money spent on training has the necessary effect (Bendix 2001: 140).

The Act provides for the establishment of various structures to advise on and regulate industrial training. These structures are discussed in the sections that follow.

4.4.4.1 National Skills Authority (NSA)

The NSA forms the overarching body. Its main function is to advise and report to the Minister of Labour on policy, strategy, allocation of funds and regulations. It liaises with the Sectoral Education and Training Authorities and conducts investigations into any matters arising from the application of the Act (Bendix 2001: 140).

4.4.4.2 Sectoral Education and Training Authorities (SETA)

The Act allows the Minister to establish a SETA for any national economic sector. SETAs are composed of representatives from trade unions, employer organisations, relevant Government departments and, if the Minister approves, representatives from interested professional bodies and the Bargaining Council that has jurisdiction in that sector (Bendix 2001: 141).

The SETAs perform the following functions:

- develop and implement a sector skills plan within the framework of the national skills strategy. This entails establishing learnerships⁷, approving workplace plans, allocating grants to employers and to education and training providers;
- monitor and assure quality of provision in a sector;
- promote learnerships by identifying workplaces for practical experience, supporting development of materials and assisting with the conclusion of learnership agreements;
- register learnership agreements; and
- liaise with the NSA, the Director-General of Labour and the employment services of the Department of Labour (Bendix 2001: 141).

It is clear that there is commitment from government to ensure that the workforce is more skillful. A skillful workforce will satisfy part of the LRA's general purpose, that is, 'to advance economic development.' A more skillful workforce will enhance the employment equity process thereby fulfilling the 'social justice' component of the general purpose of the LRA.

⁷ Learnerships constitute a partnership between a learner, an employer and training provider who will enter into an agreement whereby the learner will work for the employer, thereby gaining practical experience of a specified nature and duration and will also participate in a structured learning component offered by the education and training provider (Bendix 2001: 141).

4.5 IMPACT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR DISPENSATION ON TRADE UNIONISM

It is clear that the new labour dispensation is, as Baskin and Satgar (1996: 104) claim, union friendly. The wide scope of the LRA with an emphasis on conciliation and co-determination indicates the government's intention for labour and management to maintain a close working relationship.

Chapter Two of this study has traced the historical development of trade unionism against the background of changing legislation to the point where political parties, in collaboration with predominantly black labour, initiated a change in government and a new labour dispensation. This new labour dispensation saw many 'tame' staff associations transform into unions which has positively impacted on the growth of white collar unionism. One of the leading researchers on white collar unionism in the international arena, Bain (1970), has identified three factors that significantly affect the growth of unionism, namely, employment concentration, union recognition by management and government policy. Economic factors have also influenced the growth of unionism. These factors have been discussed in detail in Chapter Two (section 2.4.4.5).

4.5.1 Employment concentration

In recent years, in South Africa, there has been a great deal of restructuring in places of work. The amalgamation or incorporation of districts to form larger metropolitans has had a ripple effect, impacting on libraries as well. The merging of tertiary education institutions as a direct response to government's restructuring of higher education has also affected libraries. Such restructuring of major employers (that is, tertiary education libraries and metropolitan libraries) of library personnel has impacted on employee concentration.

The diminished level of interaction in a bureaucratic structure, which is a direct result of the growth of employee concentration, has alienated the employee from the decision making process. This concern was raised in Chapters 2 and 3. Library employees have complained that the lack of consultation on

professional issues has reduced their contribution as professionals. However, the distancing of employees from management is addressed in the South African LRA. One of the fundamental principles guiding the LRA is co-determination, that is, employees and employers working together for the benefit of the organisation and, in the case of libraries, the library as an organisation. The workplace forum is the primary conduit for the application of the principle of co-determination. Joint decision making and consultation can also take place outside of the workplace forum.

Workplace forums are aimed at facilitating a shift from adversarial collective bargaining on all matters to joint problem solving and participation on certain issues. Wages and terms of employment are seen as the primary domain of collective bargaining between employers and trade unions, preferably at sectoral level. Workplace forums are intended to deal with non-wage matters, such as restructuring, the introduction of new technologies and work methods and changes in the organisation of work. An interesting departure from traditional thinking that management must manage alone is set out in section 79 of the LRA. Du Toit *et al.* (2000: 313) points out that this section seeks to enhance efficiency in the workplace by engaging or consulting staff when making decisions. This clearly indicates that the employees, through their union, have a significant role to play in the efficient management of the workplace.

As stated in Chapter Three, the union movement in libraries was spearheaded by professional librarians seeking to have greater control over professional issues. There is also mention, in Chapter Three, that the power of unions can force library management to share in decision making. The interpretation is that unions can exercise their muscle to force management to listen to employees. The muscle flexing process has the potential of creating an environment of confrontation and conflict. However, the South African labour dispensation makes it a statutory requirement for management to consult or jointly make decisions with employees. The element of adversarialism is removed to allow for a more cordial relationship between employers and employees.

The provisions in the workplace forum can only improve industrial relations in the library environment. White collar workers, especially librarians, seem loath to unionise because of the 'adversarialism'

stigma that unionism brings with it. The transfer of adversarialism out of the employer-employee relationship can only augur well for improved services due to absence of conflict between employee and employer. The profession as a whole will be the better for it.

Workplace forums, as discussed earlier in this chapter, are intended to democratise the workplace and in the process enhance efficiency. The issue of unions creating inefficiency is contradicted by this aim of the workplace forum. The rationale is that employees, through their unions, will engage employers in the management of the organisation. Decisions taken jointly will commit the union and its members to ensure that these decisions are implemented successfully.

How the workplace forum is going to be practically implemented in the South African library and information environment is difficult to assess. The people of the profession, that is the managers, professionals and support staff, need to come together and determine the necessity for a workplace forum and how it will be implemented. However, it is the opinion of the researcher that it will have to be driven by a worker representative body to ensure that it is given a chance to succeed in an environment where management still holds close to the principle that it will manage the institution, alone.

There are provisions in the LRA for employees to have a say in management issues of their libraries. However, such provisions can only be utilised after a request for the establishment of a workplace forum has been initiated by a registered trade union.

4.5.2 Labour legislation

Adams (1975; 1977) is critical of Bain's (1970) assertion (which has been discussed in Chapter Three) that legislation plays a significant role in the growth of unionisation. In the opinion of many, the present South African labour dispensation creates an environment that encourages unionisation. Baskin and Satgar (1996: 104) say that the LRA is union friendly. They go on to point out that for the first time South Africa has a "dispensation which accommodates unions as an equal partner" (1996: 106). The

new law aims to strengthen unions, give greater structure to the employment and bargaining relationship and makes disputes easier to resolve. If it achieves this, it will make a major contribution to industrial and social peace which, in turn, is vital for economic growth and the rule of law (Baskin and Satgar 1996: 106-107). Every effort has been made by drafters of the Act for greater interaction between union and employer and to minimise conflict, which should encourage unionisation especially among white collar workers.

Chapter II of the LRA accords employees the right to form and join unions and to form federations (Lagrange 1995: 505). Section 4 of the same Chapter, under the heading **Employees' rights to freedom of association** states "(1) Every employee has the right - (a) to participate in forming a trade union or federation of trade unions, and (b) to join a trade union, subject to its constitution" (Republic of South Africa 1995: 3).

Although the Act provides for 'freedom of association', the provisions of the Act extensively support the activities of registered trade unions. According to Finnemore and Van Rensburg (2000: 267), the Act gives considerable clout to trade unions. Bendix (2001: 124) reaffirms the Act's support of trade unions when she argues that

all [organisational] rights in terms of the Labour Relations Act are granted only to registered unions and employers' association. It is to be inferred that a body which remains unregistered [with the Registrar of Labour Relations] will have no status within the statutory labour relations system.

Du Plessis (1996:218) concurs with the above writers when he writes "Registration of a trade union or an employer's organisation is required in order to exercise the [organisational] rights contained in the Act".

Unregistered trade unions, however, do have a number of rights which are set out in section 8 of the LRA which includes the right to:

- determine its own constitution and rules;
- plan and organise its administration and lawful activities;

- participate in forming a federation of trade unions or a federation of trade unions; and
- affiliate to an international workers' organisation (Republic of South Africa 1995: 7-8; Stilwell 2005).

Despite the fact that there are provisions in the LRA for unregistered trade unions, Basson *et al.* (1998: 35) states that “only registered trade unions may exercise organisational rights, conclude collective agreements, apply for the establishment of a bargaining council or a statutory council or apply for a workplace forum...”. It is these rights that will contribute significantly to the growth of unionisation. Guyton (1975: 169) argues that there is a strong relationship between labour legislation supporting public employee rights to organise and library union formation. He goes on to say that as protective legislation becomes more widespread and unionisation becomes a more accepted institution among all employees, the conditions for union formation among librarians becomes more favourable. The South African labour dispensation will be a major factor guiding the growth of unionisation as the labour laws are supportive of trade unions.

The LRA guarantees employees' right to organise. However, employee organisations not registered with the Registrar of Labour Relations (an official in the Department of Labour) cannot make maximum use of the provisions of the new labour dispensation. The new labour laws create an environment that is conducive to the formation and growth of trade unions.

Stilwell (2005) points out that the LRA promotes the interests of trade unions by affording registered trade unions certain organisational rights. These rights are accorded to registered trade unions which are deemed to be sufficiently representative⁸ of the employees in a workplace (Finnemore 2002: 161-162). Registered trade unions have the following organisational rights:

⁸Barker and Holtzhausen (1996: 146) define sufficiently representative as a concept that “is undefined, but in the context it appears to be a union which has as its members a significant number of employees employed in the workplace, even though this might not be the majority.”

- **deduction of trade unions' subscriptions by way of stop orders on member's wages.** Unions require members to pay a monthly subscription. In order to lessen the administrative burden of collecting the subscriptions, trade unions often request stop order facilities. This is where the employer agrees to deduct union subscriptions from the remuneration paid to each member. The entire amount deducted from the union members is paid over to the union (Basson *et al.* 1998: 37; Du Toit *et al.* 2000: 210-21; Grogan 2003: 283);
- **the right of access to the workplace by union officials for trade union business.** Office bearers or officials of sufficiently representative unions are entitled to enter the employer's premises in order to recruit members, communicate with members or serve the members' interests. A sufficiently representative union is entitled to hold meetings, on the employers' premises, with employees outside their working hours. Further, the union is entitled to vote in a ballot at the workplace (Basson *et al.* 1998: 36; Du Toit *et al.* 2000: 209; Grogan 2003: 282);
- **the right of workers who are union office bearers to have a reasonable amount of time off for union business.** Section 15 of the LRA gives employees who are office bearers of trade unions the right to 'reasonable' paid leave during working hours for performing the functions attached to their union offices. If the parties cannot agree on how much leave is reasonable, that ruling is at the discretion of the CCMA. However, the ruling is effective for 12 months only (Du Toit *et al.* 2000: 212-213; Grogan 2003: 285);
- **the right of unions to have access to information which they need for the purpose of performing union functions.** The union that has the majority of employees in a workplace is entitled to disclosure by the employer of 'all relevant information' needed to permit its representatives to perform their functions effectively and to allow the union to engage effectively in collective bargaining. This right is conferred by section 16 (Grogan 2003: 284); and
- **the right of unions to approach the CCMA to compel employers to afford them organisational rights** (Finnemore 2002: 162; Stilwell 2005).

Stilwell (2005) points out that the rights discussed above and others discussed below are enshrined in the LRA. He claims that these rights could be considered as a “great milestone for the strengthening of the position of unions in the bargaining process”. The following rights, amongst others, are considered to be major a break-through for industrial relations in South Africa:

- **right to strike.** The Constitution of the country conferred on employees the right to strike and provided statutory protection against dismissal for employees who exercised this right. One of the aims of the LRA is to provide such protection in accordance with the Constitution (Du Toit *et al.* 2000: 439). On the other hand, there is statutory provision for the employer to lock out striking workers.

Van Jaarsveld and Van Eck (1998: 316-317) state that the right to strike is a fundamental labour right of employees. They caution that

the right to strike must not be seen in isolation but must be viewed against the background and in the context of the employees’ right to associate and organise themselves and then to exercise the right to bargain collectively.... [As a collective, employees] are able to conduct negotiations with the employer on a more or less equal footing.

Van Jaarsveld and Van Eck (1998: 317) go on to point out that collective bargaining can only take place if the demands of the unions are accompanied by the capacity to embark on collective action in the form of a collective withdrawal of labour. It is believed that such a withdrawal will serve as a “counterweight to the power of the employer to hire and fire employees” (Van Jaarsveld and Van Eck 1998: 317). It is now accepted that strike action is a legitimate weapon in the hands of employees and could be implemented as a corollary to or an integral part of collective bargaining. The striking employees are protected from dismissal (Van Jaarsveld and Van Eck 1998: 316-317; Du Toit *et al.* 2000: 439).

- **right not to be unfairly dismissed.** The principle aim of the doctrine of unfair dismissal is to protect the employee against dismissal without substantive grounds and/or in a procedurally arbitrary manner. This doctrine is recognised as a basic right in the new LRA

which states that every employee has the right not to be unfairly dismissed (Van Jaarsveld and Van Eck 1998: 280; Finnemore 2002: 170).

- **right not to be subjected to unfair labour practices.** An unfair labour practice is a new concept which has its rooting in the recommendations of the Wiehahn Commission (which is discussed in section 2.6.5 Period from 1977 to 1989) and is now incorporated in the new labour dispensation. In terms of section 185(b) of the LRA every employee has the right not to be subjected to unfair labour practices (Du Plessis, Fouche and Van Wyk 2001: 306; Grogan 2003: 228-229).

Section 186(2) defines an unfair labour practice as follows:

‘Unfair labour practice’ means any unfair act or omission that arises between an employer and an employee involving:-

- (a) unfair conduct by the employer relating to the promotion, demotion, probation (excluding disputes about dismissals for a reason relating to probation) or training of an employee or relating to the provision of benefits to an employee;
- (b) the unfair suspension of an employee or any other unfair disciplinary action short of dismissal in respect of an employee;
- (c) a failure or refusal by an employer to reinstate or re-employ a former employee in terms of any agreement; and
- (d) an occupational detriment, other than dismissal, in contravention of the Protected Disclosure Act of 2000, on account of the employee having made a protected disclosure defined in the Act (Republic of South Africa 1995: 188).

The very specific language adopted by the legislature appears to make this an exhaustive list and no other unfair treatment will qualify as an unfair labour practice (Du Plessis, Fouche and Van Wyk 2001: 306; Grogan 2003: 228-229).

All of the above, according to Stilwell (2005), are important rights for all workers whether they be white or blue collar workers as the South African legislation does not draw a distinction between these categories of workers. Employer policy, according to the Bain (1970) model, is one of the significant factors influencing the growth of unionism. Adams (1975: 20) maintains that unionisation is greater in those sectors where employer policies and practices favour unionism. However, in the South African industrial relations system, employers are compelled by law to recognise and work with trade unions. If one accepts the theory of Bain and his contemporaries with regard to employer recognition of trade unions influencing the growth of unionism, then one must accept that the compulsory recognition of trade unions by employers will positively impact on the growth of unionism generally in South Africa.

4.5.3 Employer recognition of unions

The LRA, in terms of section 21, compels employers to recognise registered trade unions (Republic of South Africa 1995: 17-20). It also provides protection for employees to become members of a registered trade union. The Act subscribes to the principle of freedom of association which is essentially the freedom, by employees, to join a trade union or to take part in the formation of a union. The Act not only protects the freedom of association of employees, but also affords protection against discrimination and victimisation for exercising this right. In terms of the Act, the employer may not discriminate against the employee or victimise the employee for exercising his or her rights. Section 5(1) of the Act states, "No person may discriminate against an employee for exercising any right conferred by this Act" (Republic of South Africa 1995: 4).

Du Toit *et al.* (2000: 85-86) states that section 5 of the LRA strengthens employees' protection against victimisation for trade union activity and for exercising rights established by the Act. There are a number sections in the Act that compel the employer to recognise and work with trade unions. For example,

- section 12 provides for union access to the workplace to recruit new members, to communicate with members, or to serve the interests of members in any other way;
- section 13 provides for the deduction of trade union subscriptions; and

- section 15(1) provides for an office bearer of a registered union to take reasonable leave during working hours for the purposes of conducting union activities (Basson *et al.* 1998:37-39).

These are but few examples where the employer has no option but to recognise and work with registered trade unions. The compelled recognition and the statutory removal of discrimination and victimisation can only influence the growth of unionism.

Bain (1970) has identified employment concentration, prevailing legislation and employer policy as factors influencing the growth of unionism. The economic factor is another significant contributor to the growth of unionism. Central to the economic factor for unionising is collective bargaining.

4.5.4 The new labour legislation and collective bargaining as an economic factor influencing the growth of unionism

Finnemore and Van Rensburg (2000: 275) state that collective bargaining is a process of negotiation to reach a perceived equitable settlement on matters of mutual interest. The terms of this settlement are recorded as a collective agreement signed by all parties. The agreement is then applied uniformly across a specified group of employees. Employers, unions and their members are bound by the terms of the agreement.

Collective bargaining, in the South African industrial relations arena, is the preferred method of establishing and changing terms and conditions of employment as well as achieving resolution to disputes of interest. According to Nel (2001: 164) a central theme of the LRA is the promotion of collective bargaining. The structures involved in collective bargaining have been changed drastically by the LRA. Structures such as industrial councils and conciliation boards have been replaced by the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA), bargaining councils, statutory councils and workplace forums.

According to Du Toit *et al.* (2000: 33-34) the LRA sets out to provide a firm foundation for collective bargaining by creating a bargaining-friendly environment. Sufficiently representative trade unions, acting alone or together, can acquire a number of statutory rights, including access to the employers' premises, meetings, ballots, stop-order facilities, and leave for trade union office bearers to conduct trade union activities. Sections 11 to 16 of the LRA provides for one or more unions representing the majority of workers to acquire further rights, including the election of trade union representatives and the right to information for bargaining and monitoring purposes. In terms of sections 23 to 24, collective agreements are legally binding and enforceable by arbitration.

The LRA encourages the employer and the trade unions to engage each other in the collective bargaining process. The intention is to make the collective bargaining process voluntary. This points to a key theme in the Act which is the provision for employers and unions to structure their relationship through collective agreements according to their specific needs. In most cases the Act allows the form and content of this relationship to be arrived at voluntarily. However, there are a number of points at which the Act introduces incipient bargaining obligations. For example, on issues such as the exercise of organisational rights, the creation of workplace forums, and decisions involving a reduction of the workforce, the Act obliges employers to meet with trade unions in an attempt to reach agreement (Du Toit *et al.* 2000: 34).

It has been suggested by Kleingartner and Kennelly (1975: 15) that wages, hours of work, and other terms and conditions of employment for librarians will increasingly be established through negotiations between the employer and a recognised union. In terms of the South African labour dispensation, the BCEA prescribes minimum conditions of employment. However, the union and the employer can engage in negotiation to expand and improve on the minimum prescribed by the BCEA. A typical extension would be the expansion of study leave benefits to enhance the provisions of the Skills Development Act. Some tertiary institution libraries grant sabbatical leave for staff to acquire relevant academic qualifications. Such negotiations could be conducted by a sectoral union that could be applicable to all staff employed within libraries.

4.5.5 Women, unionisation and the new labour dispensation

It has been pointed out in Chapter Three that the LIS sector is dominated by women employees. Over the years women have been subjected to different levels of discrimination. Hazell (1983) quotes a time in Australian librarianship when women had to resign from their posts when they became pregnant. However, such discriminatory practices have been completely eradicated from the South African labour statute books. With regard to maternity leave, Finnemore (1999: 84) points out that paid maternity leave has been strongly fought for in companies where employees are mostly women. Until 1995, when the LRA prohibited dismissal of women on the basis of pregnancy, there was no real protection for women from discrimination. Thus maternity issues provided fertile ground for disputes with employers. Paternity leave was also strongly canvassed for and in 1995 three days paternity leave was accorded to mine workers. The success of the mine workers union has set a precedent for consideration for such provisions to be included into the BCEA. This provision has now been incorporated into the Act.

It has been argued by Beresford (1983: 32) that women are reluctant to participate in union activities because the activities are held at inconvenient times. The LRA makes provision, in terms of section 15, for reasonable time-off for union office bearers to engage in union activity (Republic of South Africa 1995: 13-14). The EEA addresses the issue of discrimination of women at the workplace allowing women to participate on an equal basis with their male counterparts. Further, the EEA also makes provision for the advancement of the rights of women as part of the designated group within the context of the EEA.

There is no dispute that the new labour laws attempt to remove all forms of discrimination against women. However, a sectoral union representing a 'women majority occupation' will ensure that the statutory provisions are not violated. Further, the union could propose extensions to provisions that will promote women within the library environment. Employers are compelled by law to ensure that women are treated fairly and that barriers to their advancement, within the workforce, must be removed. It is now part of the South African labour legislation that unions must be party to the drafting

of employment equity policies and the implementation of employment equity processes in the workplace.

4.5.6 Job security in terms of the new labour legislation

The termination of a contract of employment of a woman because she is pregnant is an automatically unfair dismissal in terms of South African labour law. The LRA prescribes that an employer can terminate an appointment for one of three reasons, namely, misconduct, incapacity and operational requirement. If an employee breaks the rules of behaviour set in the disciplinary code, the employer has the right to terminate the contract of employment. However, such a termination can only take place after due process and that includes a fair hearing. With regard to incapacity, the employer can dismiss an employee if the employee is incapacitated due to ill health or poor work performance. Again, processes stipulated by the LRA have to be adhered to. Similarly, dismissal for operational requirements must follow procedures set out in the LRA. Dismissal of employees without following due process is considered an unfair dismissal. In the previous chapter, a number of arguments about job security, supported by Guyton (1975: 110), lead to the conclusion that the erosion of job security is an important factor steering professionals towards the acceptance of unionism. In terms of South African industrial relations, employers cannot terminate a contract of employment on arbitrary grounds. Job security is protected by the LRA under the provisions of termination for operational requirements.

According to Grogan (2001: 185), employers are frequently compelled, for economic reasons, to review their staffing levels, and to terminate the employment of some of their employees to effect savings. While employers have an undoubted right to do so for economic, technical or structural reasons, this form of termination, generally known as 'retrenchment', has the same social and economic ill-effects as other dismissals. Dismissals based on operational requirements are expressly regulated in section 189 of the LRA, which must be read together with certain other provisions relating to trade union rights, workplace forums and severance pay.

Section 189(1) provides that, before retrenching, an employer must consult any person whom the employer is obliged to consult in terms of a collective agreement, or a workplace forum, or any registered union whose members are likely to be affected by the proposed dismissals. Even minority unions are entitled to be consulted if their members face retrenchment.

The LRA, in terms of section 189(2)(a)(i)⁹, makes it clear that the main purpose of consultation is to attempt to avoid the retrenchments altogether. An obvious measure to avoid dismissal is redeployment of the affected employee to an appropriate alternative position. Other alternatives to retrenchments may include, amongst others, a moratorium on recruitment or overtime, and voluntary early retirements. Voluntary severance packages are often resorted to as a means of avoiding dismissals, and may therefore not be implemented unilaterally but are subject to consultation in terms of section 189(2)(a)(I) (Du Toit *et al.* 2000: 390).

It is clear that the LRA protects against arbitrary retrenchments. Garry, C.G. (1977: 507), writing in 1977 in the Canadian context, argued that senior librarians feared that they would be released in favour of bringing in junior librarians or library technicians to save on the staff compensation budget. The South African LRA will not allow for such retrenchments and will declare such retrenchments unfair. Unions have a significant role to play when employers embark on retrenchments, and this is in accordance with section 189 of the LRA.

⁹Section 189(2)(a)(I) reads as follows:

“(2) The employer and the other consulting parties must in the consultation envisaged by subsections (1) and (3) engage in a meaningful joint consensus-seeking process and attempt to reach consensus on-

(a) appropriate measures-

(i) to avoid the dismissals” (Republic of South Africa 1995: 191).

4.5.7 Staff training and development

The Skills Development Act (SDA) makes provision for the skilling of the workforce to support the labour dispensation. The more skillful the workforce the greater the chances of mobility which enhances employment equity and ultimately giving credence to the promulgation of the LRA and the entire new labour dispensation.

According to Finnemore (1999: 67) the skills development system is used to strengthen the educational base of existing employees in order to equip them to be able to benefit from further technical training. This also benefits employers who need a better educated and more trainable workforce, which is a necessity for the use of new technologies and multi-skilling. Career path development offers progression to the highest levels to which a competent employee may aspire. The objective is the empowerment of employees.

The previous boundaries between formal and non-formal education and between education and training are being made less rigid. The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) was established to develop a framework for certifying competencies achieved by individuals. It has launched the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The NQF is an outcomes based model of education and training. It does not set down the curriculum for any course, but it does stipulate what learners must be able to do at the end of the course. Sector education and training authorities (SETAs) are tasked with developing training programmes within this proposed framework. The new SDA is set to have a major impact on training and development in South Africa (Finnemore 1999: 67).

It was stated, earlier in the chapter, that there are provisions for unions to become members of SETAs representing a specific sector. A sectoral union representing the library and information profession can make a significant contribution to the formulation of training and development policies and practices for the sector. The Minister of Labour has the right to invite professional bodies to serve on a SETA. However, trade unions have a statutory right to serve on SETAs. It would be most unfortunate for the professional body representing the LIS sector to serve on a SETA as it would represent the interests of

professional staff. The professional body cannot represent the large support staff contingent as it does not have jurisdiction. The intention of the SDA, in the opinion of the researcher, is to provide development opportunities to the previously disadvantaged. It can be argued that those who have professional qualifications may not have been as disadvantaged as support staff. The Act, again in the opinion of the researcher, is aimed at developing the large support staff base with the aim of creating a more skillful workforce, and at the same time enhancing mobility of the previously disadvantaged.

Frequently employers do not engage in training and development complaining about the lack of funding. Raju (2001) has shown that staff at the then University of Natal Libraries (now the University of KwaZulu-Natal) have been actively engaged in training and development despite the lack of funding. The case study has shown that if there is commitment, funding becomes a secondary issue. A sectoral union, co-ordinating training and development from a national perspective is bound to achieve far more than the experience of the University of Natal Libraries (Durban).

4.5.8 Job grading

The LRA makes provision for workplace forums. One of the issues that employers have to consult on at the workplace forum is job grading systems. Research conducted by Raju (1995) shows that, in the province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), the dominant job grading system is Peromnes. That research has also shown that library staff performing similar functions at different institutions are on different grades despite the fact that the system is supposed to produce the same grades for jobs of equal levels of responsibility.

It is important for unions to negotiate, via the workplace forums, broad-banding of functions to ensure parity in terms of grading and hopefully in terms of salary. This level of parity will ensure that mobility within the profession will not be affected by inappropriate grading of similar functions.

4.5.9 Co-determination

One of the most revolutionary principles underpinning the LRA is the principle of co-determination. According to Barker and Holtzhausen (1996: 24), co-determination is union participation in aspects of management. "It is consultation and joint decision making between employee and employer normally via a workplace forum."

According to Miles (1996: 36), co-determination has for some time been an accepted part of the labour relations system of many European countries. However, the understanding of co-determination differs depending on the historical, economic and socio-political backgrounds of the country's industrial relations system. It would be wrong to assume that the co-determination of another country could be transplanted into South Africa.

South Africa has to develop its own system of co-determination for it to operate effectively in the South African environment. However, there are some universal principles which both labour and management have to accept. One of the principles is that of industrial democracy. Industrial democracy and worker participation are based on the notion that the traditional strategy of 'labour opposes and fights capital' must be overcome. Democratisation aims at a partnership between these two forces in the organisation. The democratisation of the economic life should result in far reaching participation of employees in the development of their organisation and in a strong interest in the efficient workings of the organisation (Miles 1996: 37). Democratisation means that employees elect representatives who act on their behalf. This trend imposes an important responsibility on trade unions which cannot think and act in terms of conflict strategy, but they have to practise co-operation.

Co-determination is the implementation and practise of worker participation. It is a move away from an adversarial system of industrial relations towards a more collaborative system, hence a more co-determinant system. The trade unions in South Africa must accept that they can no longer only pursue a strategy of struggle and demand, whether it be at national policy forums or securing the interests of their members in the workplace (Miles 1996: 38).

In terms of the LRA 66 of 1995, provisions are made for trade unions to represent the interests of its members as best as they can. This can only be achieved if they share in the decision making of those policies which affect their members. Therefore, a move to a determinant approach to labour-management relations must be accompanied by worker participation beyond simple task related participation. In fact, task related participation cannot effectively work unless policy-related participation is effective (Miles 1996: 39).

Policy related participation, in terms of the LRA (Chapter V), should take place at the workplace forum. According to Du Toit *et al.* (2000: 290) when the LRA was being drafted, provision was made for legislation to facilitate worker participation and decision making in the world of work. In fact, section 1(d)(iii) of the LRA mentions the promotion of employee participation in the workplace as one of its primary objectives. To repeat, workplace forums are the means by which the LRA seeks to promote employee participation. This employee participation is set down to give effect to the principle of co-determination.

The example of co-determination given in Chapter Three was as a result of two consenting parties (the employer and the union) coming together. It can be argued that if parties are compelled to work together, it would not be as successful as the example given in Chapter Three. However, consenting parties will continue to achieve great successes while compelled parties will have to work together, maybe with limited success. Be that as it may, the parties will have to work together which means some level of co-operation or co-determination.

The fragmentation of the LIS profession is another factor potentially negating the growth of unionism. The concept 'union' basically means the coming together of employees. The fundamental purpose of unionism is the unification of employees for the principle purpose of representing such employees at the workplace. It is clear from the discussion that the intention of the LRA is give trade unions greater recognition and the opportunity to work with the employer for the economic uplifting of the workplace

and the country as a whole. The LIS profession is such that while it may be divided in terms of its clientele, it could be unified in terms of the representation of its employees.

There is sufficient evidence to conclude that the LRA is union friendly. Therefore it would be advisable for the LIS profession to seriously consider organising themselves into a unit that can utilise the progressive labour dispensation to its maximum.

4.6 SUMMARY

Chapter Four has examined the purpose of four significant labour laws against the backdrop of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. These laws were examined against the factors that were identified in the previous chapters as influencing or negating the growth of white collar library unionism.

Chapter Five will examine the role of a professional body representing the South African LIS sector.

CHAPTER FIVE: PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

It has been argued by Lockhart (1967: 250) that professional associations serve the fundamental purpose of resolving problems through a co-operative approach. They are voluntary associations and voluntary associations date back to when people worked together in groups to conquer the wilderness, to open new frontiers and to develop trade routes to the East. The 16th century saw the development of guilds devoted to the promotion of various business interests, later reflected in the 19th century by trade unions, adult education organisations, co-operatives, farm organisations and the foundations of today's trade associations and professional societies. Bird and Johnson (1983: 20) add further dimensions to the principles of voluntarism and co-operation within a professional context when they state that

Professional organisations are both enriched and constrained by their nature: they are goal orientated; they attract members who are united by a common vision; and they obtain their strengths from a volunteer membership characterised by diversity, dynamism, education and training. However, professional organisations must be especially sensitive to their multi-dimensional character. To maintain their vitality and justify member commitment, they must be responsive to the evolving standards, attitudes and values of their members and the profession they represent.

The issue of unity is fundamental to a professional association as is the commitment to the membership which Oppenheim and Pollecutt (2000: 187) point out when they argue that professional organisations exist to serve their members and the society in which they operate. Professional associations act as a focus for the members of the profession, bringing together individuals into a collective body.

Chapter Five focuses on a discussion of professional library associations, the role that they play and the factors that have influenced their continued existence given the challenge for the same membership by trade unions. It is generally accepted that professional associations focus on professional issues. Therefore, it must be assumed that those professional issues are substantial and lend weight to the retention and growth of the membership of the organisation.

There is a continuing debate in the literature, as discussed below, about whether librarianship meets the attributes of a profession. It does not serve the purpose of this study to engage in the debate. The study assumes that librarianship is a profession. This assumption is based on the support, in the literature, for librarianship meeting the attributes of a profession. It must be stated that while there is support in the literature for librarianship being a profession, simultaneously, there are authors that argue that librarianship has not met the attributes of a profession. The following are some of the works that debate the issue that librarianship is a profession: Savard (1986); Fisher (1997) and Oppenheim and Pollecutt (2000). Oppenheim and Pollecutt (2000: 187) quote a number of other works that support the argument that librarianship is a profession. Schlacter (1976: 454-455) quotes leading scholars Dewey and Ranagathan as supporting the fact that 'librarianship is a profession.' However, there are authors such as Louw (1990) who are not convinced that librarianship measures-up to the defined attributes of a profession.

The purpose of a professional library association is examined in this chapter, as the purpose of an organisation will form the foundation from which the organisation will develop or function. There is also discussion on the factors that bring librarians together. Further, there is discussion on support staff within a LIS sector, and on the characteristics of a professional association. The chapter also examines the factors which have influenced the continued existence of professional associations at the international arena. The researcher is of the opinion that the chapter would be incomplete without an examination of professional associations in some of the African countries. The discussion on the role of the professional library association in the South African context is limited to, in the main, factors that have influenced the continued existence of these associations amid a growing trend toward unionism and the government's support for trade unions. The researcher refrains from engaging in a detailed examination of apartheid and its influence on librarianship. Neither is it the intention of the researcher to undertake an in-depth historical analysis of any of the library associations. Again, the focus is on the role of the professional association leading-up to the formation of a single body in the form of the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA).

The role played by professional library associations at the international and national level is also examined. The role played by the professional library association in South Africa must be examined in the context of a country where the legislation and government are biased towards trade unions. It is against this background that the researcher tries to identify, in subsequent chapters, an organisation that may be most representative of the library and information occupation, an organisation that can address professional as well as industrial issues that affect the library and information environment.

As stated above, the purpose of a professional association plays a fundamental role in the continuance of the organisation.

5.2 PURPOSES OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The purposes of professional associations are captured by Hilliard (1976: 62-63) as follows:

- to act as a trustee for the body of knowledge built up by common effort over the years. This reflects the corporate nature of the profession - it implies that there is a corpus of knowledge which exists in the minds, records and activities of the members of the profession. This body of knowledge is the foundation of any claim for the existence of a profession and is preserved and enhanced through individual and corporate efforts;
- to seek to improve the skills and to set the standards to which its members work, and to pass them on to new members. The profession is concerned with ensuring that those who claim membership of the profession work to the highest appropriate standards. To facilitate the achievement of appropriate standards, the association will strive to make available proper training facilities and research activities. It is important that the association concerns itself with the development of professional competence beyond that achieved in formal education;
- to ensure that entrants of the right quality are attracted to the profession. Associations provide information at career seminars and in response to direct queries concerning the nature of professional work and the opportunities which it provides;

- to encourage existing members to keep their technical competence at a high level and to avoid intellectual obsolescence. The association's activities in this area are largely informal and are developed through short courses and its publications;
- to set a standard for professional conduct. The application of the definition of professional conduct is specific to the field of librarianship;
- to seek to provide the framework within which the profession and its members can progress. There is a need for any profession to have a corporate identity represented in the form of an institution which is capable of giving expression to the interests and concerns of the profession. The associations are concerned with ensuring that the profession is represented effectively in decision formulation and are capable of making its voice heard; and
- to co-operate, so far as is relevant, with government and other public agencies and allied bodies to represent the interests of the profession.

According to Scepanski and Wells (1997: 248) no profession can exist without an association as "it is through associations that members share information, further their careers and promote their profession." Carr-Saunders and Wilson cited by Ramsey (1972: 329) argue that a number of people, though they perform similar functions, do not make a profession if they remain apart. A profession can only be said to exist when there are bonds between the practitioners, and the bonds can take but one shape, that of a formal association.

An association enables practitioners engaged in a particular kind of work to meet and communicate on a more than haphazard basis. It encourages the development of strong collegial relations and a feeling of collective responsibility for the pursuit of the objectives and beliefs which the practitioners have in common. These objectives and beliefs relate typically to the provision of certain kinds of service and to ensuring that practitioners gain the specialised knowledge and skills needed in their work. Further, the practitioners must carry out their work in a way which their colleagues approve (Ramsey 1972: 329).

The association operates as the representative body in the community. As the representative body in the community, the association must try to uncover the needs which the profession should meet. It should also respond to expressed needs in cases where the knowledge and skills of the profession are relevant. It should try to influence opinion to ensure that the objectives of the profession are achieved, and should provide some guarantee of the performance of the profession (Ramsey 1972: 329). The principles of unity and representivity are key to bringing the profession together, especially the librarians in the profession.

5.3 WHAT BRINGS LIBRARIANS TOGETHER?

It has been stated in the introduction to this chapter that professional organisations are characterised by a diversified volunteer membership. The library and information profession is not exempt from this diversification as it is made-up of different types of librarians ranging from university librarians to public librarians and, within those groupings there are further splits such as medical librarians, law librarians, music librarians and archivists. These librarians are in turn split into cataloguers, reference librarians, acquisition librarians and such. The issue that needs probing is, can these librarians be brought together? Stockham (1979: 22) points out that in one way or another, all these people are concerned with the collection, storage and use of recorded information and the recorded products. This serves as the basis for uniting librarians, it give librarians a sense of identity with each other. This sense of identity is of particular importance to those working in small libraries or information centres who rely on colleagues from other institutions for professional support and development.

Building on this desire to come together is the desire to speak with a single authoritative voice on matters of concern to the profession of librarianship. In this way a professional association reaffirms its function as the representative voice of librarianship and it finds itself offering advice to government and other outside bodies, devising standards of service and encouraging research and technical development in any aspect of library and information work (Stockham 1979: 22).

However, this principle of coming together is negated by a tendency for members of a professional association to be divided into interest groups. Nonetheless, there are positive spin-offs. Partitioning off as an interest group makes the group specialised and more focused which is good for the whole association provided the interest groups do not become splinter groups. Such splintering should be guarded against as it defeats the principles of unity in a profession that is relatively small. The philosophies and practices that unite librarians should be stronger than an individual special interest (Stockham 1979: 22).

In many countries of the world, the interdependence of all kinds of libraries, public and academic, industrial and national, has been clearly shown in the complex national and international network of interloan arrangements, and in co-operation in cataloguing, classification and other matters. The interdependence has long become a practical necessity, for libraries and their personnel can only gain from supporting and co-operating with each other. This co-operation is becoming more and more an essential component of librarianship which highlights the necessity of moving away from voluntary co-operation to formal co-ordination (Stockham 1979: 22-23). The need for a united profession becomes increasingly apparent as financial constraints become more stringent. The reduction in funding of libraries is reflected in the reduced materials budget of libraries making it essential to co-operate on a formal basis to ensure access to material through co-operation, that is, through interlending.

5.4 SUPPORT AND PROFESSIONAL STAFF WITHIN THE PROFESSION

The future of the library profession, all over the world, is becoming or has become a graduate one. It is necessary for the work that needs to be performed as opposed to the accompanying prestige. It has become all that more important that the librarian should be more educated and knowledgeable in the educational world of today, therefore the librarian must have, at the least, a first degree (Stockham 1979: 23). This is confirmed by research undertaken in the South African context by Raju (2002).

As a result of the increasing academic demands, librarianship is being split into three principal levels:-

- the professional, highly qualified person
- the qualified paraprofessional or library technician
- the support/administrative personnel.

This situation already exists in many academic and public libraries and in these libraries the majority of the total workforce is not professional. For some time now the professional staff have been in the minority and the question that needs to be asked is: is there a place for all library workers in a professional association? If the association does not accept these support staff, that is, the paraprofessionals and administrative staff, they will find other organisations to express their wants and fulfil their needs. This three tier staff structure places increasing pressure on a library association to consider the question of differing classes of membership so that support staff can join. The inclusion of support staff would strengthen the power and the voice of an association that is concerned for the improvement of library services (Stockham 1979: 23).

The issue of whether professional associations should accept support staff into its ranks has been debated over a period of time. Stockham (1979: 25) is of the opinion that it is far better to have a united profession, with a more active involvement of its members, with an open and flexible approach to the conduct of its affairs and having within it, many categories of membership. The other is of a reduced library association of a highly qualified elite, but just one among a number of organisations in the field of librarianship and clinging to an esoteric concept of professional purity.

5.5 FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE THE CONTINUANCE OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

There are a number of factors that have influenced the continued existence of the professional association. It is the opinion of the researcher that these factors contributed to retaining a spirit of cohesiveness and a need for belonging. The library association has relied on a number of factors, in

different combinations, to retain or grow its membership. The membership has been influenced by the principle of unity, the need for belonging, a sense of professional security, personal professional development, good communication on the part of the association, high library ethics and the support for intellectual freedom, to retain membership to the association.

5.5.1 Need for belonging

Library associations have played an important role in bringing librarians together. By coming together, library association members were given the opportunity to develop a sense of professionalism. Furthermore, by banding together, librarians were able to share professional concerns with other librarians. For example, prior to World War II social values, in most parts of the world, with respect to working women were such that women entering the work force usually received little or no community support. The absence of psychological support, plus the fact that many librarians were required to move from their homes to acquire formal library education and employment is what led to the formation of library associations. The support that women had from fellow librarians contributed to the growth of library associations which represented both women and men in the profession (Garry, L.S. 1977: 317).

Sullivan (1976: 137) argues that the individual member seeks association membership in order to establish his/her own identity as a member of the library profession or, given the latitude most library associations offer, to indicate his/her interest in librarianship and its improvement. This argument is expanded by Garry, L.S. (1977: 318) who points out that graduating librarians have used membership in professional associations to help themselves develop a new professional identity. This is especially true of librarians working in small libraries who are deprived of continuous interaction and support that is generally available to librarians employed in large libraries. The library association provides the opportunity for librarians to come together and provide support and reinforce a sense of professionalism and belonging (Garry, L.S. 1977: 318). The sense of professionalism and need for belonging are nurtured via participation in professional associations. Conferencing with professionals from other institutions not only provides additional perspectives on issues but also enhances one's status as a

professional. The values and ethics of professionalism rise to the surface and are very evident in the activities of professional associations (Frank 1997: 314).

Havard-Williams (1972: 189) provides another dimension to librarians coming together and that is, the unification of the profession: "The Association attaches to the unity of the profession and - in these days of pressure groups - the importance for the profession in having *one* association which...speak[s] for the whole profession...". Havard-Williams argues that speaking with one voice not only projects a unified profession but also serves to bring professional librarians to support each other, professionally.

5.5.2 Security

Library associations, writes Garry, L.S. (1977: 318), serve the important function of providing their members with a sense of security. By coming together in groups, librarians have developed and strengthened professional ideologies which are shared with fellow members of the library profession.

Given the nature of the professional task and the incomplete body of professional knowledge, ideologies provide librarians with a set of shared meanings and beliefs to guide their behaviour in given circumstances and to help in their relationships with their clients. These shared beliefs also provide a sense of comradeship when the group is under attack (Garry, L.S. 1977: 318).

Library associations also serve to protect individual members from unjust treatment by their seniors thereby providing a sense of security. This help and protection can be administered in different ways, for example, problems at institutional level can be discussed at a workshop or a committee meeting and members of the group can offer support as individuals while placing pressure on the institution. While the association does not have the statutory support during intervention, it has the ability to employ moral persuasion (Garry, L.S. 1977: 318-319).

5.5.3 Personal development

Education, continuing professional development, lobbying and accreditation of qualifications have always been an attraction of library associations for library staff. To meet the education and continuing professional development of its membership, associations have sponsored workshops, panel discussions and guest speakers, for example, either as special events or incorporated into regular meetings (Garry, L.S. 1977: 320; Fisher 1994: 167).

Library associations have played an important role in personal and professional development of their membership. This is especially true in an academic organisation where library staff have to adjust to changing circumstances which often lead to a re-distribution of 'professional' tasks. As a direct product of this re-distribution, some of the work that used to be performed by professional staff is now performed by support staff as they have sufficient experience and institutional training. Rather than stop this 'de-skilling' and 'de-professionalising', library associations are obliged to support it. In supporting this 'de-skilling' and 'de-professionalising', library associations are extending their developmental role towards those without conventional qualifications. It is essential to ensure that competence in library procedures remain the single most important feature governing the future education and training of all those engaged in library and information work (Fisher 1994: 167-168).

Library associations play an important role in professional practice and, qualifications must reflect the current situation and anticipate future needs. Associations must ensure that there is disengagement of traditional practices in the face of technological or educational innovation which have outdated the original concepts. Library associations must prepare and support its membership in accommodating these changes. Fisher (1994: 168) argues that the professional bodies in the United Kingdom acknowledge this need and prepare programmes of events, conferences, seminars and training courses to complement in-house or organisational based training and development initiatives. Such pro-activity brings together the profession and portrays an organisation with vision and strategy.

5.5.4 Self help

The library association has provided the forum for librarians to come together to form a number of formal or informal networks to share resources, ranging from exclusive networks of university libraries to informal networks of specialised librarians. The mutual assistance offered by members of these networks has become formalised in different ways (Garry, L.S. 1977: 321).

Professional associations also provide the basis for the development of effective leadership. Frank (1997: 310-311) argues that leadership, administration, management and supervision are interdependent concepts and practises. All are concerned with behaviours and interaction patterns, role relationships, influence, motivation and goals or desired outcomes. Further, all are concerned with the ability or capacity to provide focus and direction for individuals and groups. Opportunities to develop these skills are numerous via active participation in professional associations. Service on committees, for example, exposes the librarian to various planning and implementation processes. According to Sullivan (1976:144-145) the activity and accomplishments in an association have led many librarians to positions to which they might never have aspired to or even been aware of, if not for their affiliation with the association.

5.5.5 Communication

National library associations have the capacity to maintain a national and cultural identity by keeping the profession informed and maintaining cohesiveness. Effective communication channels, which most national library associations have, keep members of the profession informed of new practices and procedures and emerging technological developments. Further, the association will communicate the ways in which library systems and individual libraries are meeting the technological developments and problems resulting from these developments (Garry, L.S. 1977: 326-327).

Professional associations provide an opportunity by which librarians can be mentored by experienced colleagues. Formal mentoring programmes exist in national organisations. Frank (1997: 313) claims that the issue of good communication is frequently discussed by the mentor and the one being mentored. Articulation of ideas and the techniques of assertive communication become relevant tools in the development of communication.

Professional associations also use their publications as tools for communicating with their membership. Besides using the publication as a communication tool, it is also used as a development tool. Participation in professional associations provides opportunities to become familiar with the processes of research and publication. These important processes contribute to the librarian's professional development. Creativity and innovation are expressed as ideas, concepts are considered and integrated, and new information is generated (Frank 1997: 311).

Further, publication creates the opportunity to engage in scholarly processes. Professional associations sponsor conferences at local and national levels. Associations call for papers to be presented at these conferences thereby providing the membership with the opportunities to do research and to discuss the results of such research at a forum of colleagues. Presenting a paper to a group of peers, listening to their comments and suggestions, and responding to their questions constitute several of the key elements of critical dialogue. Such participation tends to bring the profession closer as it presents the opportunity of developing the profession through research and engaging colleagues in discussion (Frank 1997: 313).

5.5.6 Library ethics

Oppenheim and Pollecutt (2000: 189-190) state that a professional association often has a code of ethics or conduct which is the embodiment of the ideals and responsibilities of a professional group. The general guidance of the code may be used when a practitioner has to make a difficult judgement. It gives reassurance that the decision taken is in accordance with the generally agreed principles and values of the profession. It can also be used by the individual to defend his or her actions. However,

such a code needs to be backed by a professional association to be effective in protecting the profession and its clients. Clients expect a high level of ethical commitment from practitioners and should be assured that they will receive this. Sanction by the association protects the reputation of the profession.

The roles of professional associations with regard to ethical issues have not been debated in depth in the library and information science literature. However, according to Oppenheim and Pollecutt (2000: 197) and Stabbins (1990: 19-22) there is sufficient evidence to indicate that professional associations do provide a valuable role in focusing the attention of its members on ethical issues. Such focus and protection by the association has served the association well in attracting and retaining its membership, especially the professional members.

5.5.7 Intellectual freedom

Intellectual freedom of opinion and expression, and its support thereof, are core principles governing librarianship. Frank (1997: 315) points out that “intellectual freedom must be protected” by the professional association. The user, in principle, should have unfettered access to most information. Any exceptions to such access should be tightly monitored. Government should make available to its citizens the information used by them for decision making. They should disclose such information to those requesting it, except for a small number of exceptional circumstances, for example, to protect national security.

Oppenheim and Pollecutt (2000: 188-189) argue that for a democratic society to function correctly, its citizenry must be able to make informed decisions about the actions of the legislature and all other powerful groups. Further, the citizens should be free to express themselves provided such expressions do not harm others. Given the fact that such intellectual property resides in a library environment, library staff should encourage transparency and at the same time protect copyright. The underlying principle is that freedom of information and data protection are vital to enable society to keep a check on those advantaged in the unequal relationship.

However, the profession needs the support of a body to assist in the defence of fair access to information. Library associations have played a key role in supporting intellectual freedom and access. For example, the ALA has made successful applications to the courts in defence of intellectual freedom. Oppenheim and Pollecutt (2000: 197) claim that the ALA's role as lead plaintiff in the action against the Communications Decency Act is a testament to mounting a successful campaign in protection of intellectual freedom. According to Sullivan (1976: 149),

intellectual freedom as a general concept has probably been defended most ably by representatives of library associations in times of stress. ... [T]he library community is better able to provide support to individual librarians under attack for their beliefs than it ever has been in the past.

This level of support augurs well for the growth and retention of the membership of professional associations.

5.5.8 Library associations as relevant sources of information

According to Virgo (1991: 189) associations are a body of people who collectively have a wealth of experiences to draw upon from a common discipline. This collection of experiences is what gives value to a professional association for the librarian.

The librarian's expertise and experiences are initially influenced by the professional associations that participate in the accreditation of graduate schools. The curricula and core competencies of the various schools of library and information science are influenced and monitored by professional associations. Academic courses studied by graduate students are shaped by a professional association. Before librarians assume their first professional position, they have generally been influenced significantly by the association (Frank 1997: 308).

Practical up-to-date information is readily available and openly shared at conferences conducted or sponsored by professional associations. In addition to the formal programmes at conferences,

discussion groups and other less formal options, such as interest groups, are ideal forums for information sharing (Frank 1997: 308).

Furthermore, active participation on committees in professional associations is a particularly effective method of obtaining relevant information. Most librarians agree that committees are important and that effectively run committees are fundamental to the success of the associations. Committees and task forces have specific responsibilities. Participants of committees become familiar with the committee's responsibilities as well as the rationale for the existence of the committee. Becoming familiar and experienced with collegial processes in professional associations contributes to success in the respective libraries. Working effectively in groups to examine issues critically and to attain a positive consensus in decisions is a collegial skill that is valued in librarianship (Frank 1997: 308). This collegiality has helped bring librarians together. As stated earlier, the need for belonging has played an important role in retaining membership.

It is evident that library associations have a role to play and have been playing this role for decades. The professional librarian spends many years training to qualify as a librarian or information worker and relies on the professional association to provide professional support for issues such as intellectual freedom and support for professional development through the association's publications and conferences. It is the opinion of the researcher that the need for unity plays a significant role, as discussed above, in keeping the association together as a united and cohesive professional body which serves as the building block for all professional support mechanisms, be it for security, research publications or personal professional development.

It is evident from the above discussion that there is little doubt that professional associations have played a significant role in librarianship. However, can that be true of professional associations in Africa, including South Africa?

5.6 LIBRARY ASSOCIATIONS IN AFRICA

According to Alemna (1991: 288; 1995: 56) the 1953 UNESCO Seminar laid the foundation for the development of libraries in Africa. Further, the Seminar provided a strong impetus for the crystallisation of the content of librarianship. There was a call for, *inter alia*,

- the establishment of a professional library association in each African country to unite all persons and institutions interested in libraries and library development;
- the need to safeguard and promote the professional interests of librarians; and
- the need to assist in promoting the establishment and development of libraries.

The West African Library Association was founded in 1954 as a result of the recommendations of the Seminar. It comprised of Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Gambia, with Ghana and Nigeria being the dominant members. The East African Library Association was founded in March 1957 with Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania being its members. In Central and Southern Africa, the South African Library Association was the first to be established (Alemna 1995: 56).

5.6.1 Problems with library associations in Africa

Professional library associations in Africa did not have the same growth patterns as the rest of the world as members of the library profession paid little attention to joining professional associations. This apathy towards professional associations was compounded by the fact that those who were members did not attend meetings, did not pay their subscriptions and did not accept responsibilities in the association. Despite member apathy, the associations did have an influence on education for the profession, status of the profession and professional standards. While the intention was to make the association a 'public voice' of the profession, given the fact that the strength of the voice depended on the contribution of the membership, that 'public voice' did not materialise (Alemna 1995: 57).

According to Alemna (1995: 57-59), the one major negative contributor to professional associations in Africa is the marginalisation of the support staff, that is, the paraprofessionals and the library assistants. This marginalisation has contributed to the fragmentation of the profession. This fragmentation or lack of unity is exacerbated by other issues of concern for associations in Africa which include, amongst others:

- the lack of a code of ethics for the profession;
- the lack of standards - the common practice is to refer to all library staff as librarians;
- the non existence of legal recognition of professional associations by the respective governments. With the exception of Ghana and Zimbabwe, the other associations do not have statutory status;
- the dearth of research publications to enhance the intellectual development within the field of library and information science; and
- the lack of finance.

The above mentioned issues have been major contributors to the retardation of the growth of library associations in Africa. However, there are some associations that have succeeded albeit in a limited way. One of the associations that has achieved some measure of success is the Ghana Library Association.

5.6.2 Ghana Library Association

As stated earlier, there is a dearth of research and publications in the LIS sector in Africa, including a paucity of publications on library associations in Africa. Alemna (1991) writes about the Ghanaian experience and the researcher relies on his work to discuss the Ghana Library Association.

The Ghana Library Association is an association that does not restrict membership, that is, the Association's membership is open to librarians and to anyone interested in the development of libraries in Ghana. As an organisation, it has links with international bodies with similar interests. It is a member of the Commonwealth Library Association and the International Federation of Library Associations.

Alemna (1991: 288) summarises the objectives of the Association as follows:

- bringing people interested in libraries and librarianship together;
- holding conferences and meetings relating to libraries and librarianship; and
- safeguarding and protecting the interests of librarians and libraries.

The Association has a conference biannually where papers are presented on major issues and important library matters are discussed. Other achievements of the Association are:

- **Recognition by the Ghanaian Government;** Alemna (1991: 288) is of the opinion that the major achievement of the Ghana Library Association has been its recognition by the government as a professional association in 1986. It was the first library association in the sub-region to be recognised by the government. Such recognition raises the prestige and morale of members. Further, such recognition makes it easier to make contacts with the government when discussing issues affecting librarianship;
- **Membership:** This is open to professionals and as well as non-professionals. “This has gone a long way towards providing a large body of interest in libraries and librarianship, as every member helps in educating the public about the profession” (Alemna 1991: 288).
- **Library education:** The Association contributes to the development of the curriculum for library education. Education and training of members is one of the elements of a professional association and enables the Ghana Library Association to regulate the practice of library professionals in Ghana. Further, the Association collaborates with the Library School with regard to field work for students during the vacation periods. This collaboration is in the form of providing work schedules to students and supervising them (Alemna 1991: 288-289).

However, as with most library associations in Africa, one of Ghana’s major problems is that of finance. Funding of libraries is poor and this has affected the delivery of an adequate service to the user. This has a ripple effect on the ability of professional associations to provide an adequate service which could enhance its reputation as a forceful body. Another problem is one of apathy among members of the Association and other people employed in the profession. Alemna (1991: 289) points out that the situation is so bad that it is having a negative impact on the development of the profession. An

important tool of communication of a professional association and a means of publicising research, that is, the journal, has had many difficulties since it was launched in the mid 1970s.

The inconsistent conditions of service of professional employees has contributed negatively to the growth of the profession. Only one of the universities in Ghana grants its professional employees academic status which qualifies them for sabbatical leave. The other institutions are caught between granting study leave and not granting any leave for staff to further their studies in librarianship. The argument proposed by those not granting leave is that there is no need for further training after completing the formative years of training in librarianship. Alemna (1991: 291) suggests that the Association fight this discrimination. He also urges the Association to hold more conferences and seminars which will help in the professional development and growth of librarians.

5.6.3 Botswana Library Association

Lumande and Mutshewa (2002) conducted research as to why librarians in Botswana do or do not join the Botswana Library Association (BLA). The core aims of the BLA are to:

- unite all persons interested in libraries and librarianship by holding conferences and meetings, by issuing publications, and by other means;
- safeguard the professional interests of librarians and promote the establishment of libraries; and
- promote bibliographic study and research.

Similar to the Ghanaian situation, the publication of a *Newsletter* and *Journal* has been intermittent since 1979 due to lack of funding. Apathy among the membership is also rife in Botswana and has proven itself as a drawback to the development of the profession and the professional association. Lumande and Mutshewa (2002: 117) believe that “membership of professional associations leads to professional growth and development.” The results of the research indicate that the dominant reason for people joining, albeit a small percentage, is the maintenance of professional contact. The dominant reason for people not joining the professional association was the fact that the meetings were always

held at one location and that a particular institution dominated the Association. Another key factor retarding the growth of the BLA is the poor marketing of the Association.

5.7 LIBRARY ASSOCIATIONS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

Despite the relative affluence of South Africa and the support for research and publications, there is very limited discussion in the literature on professional associations in South Africa. The researcher, in examining the South African professional library associations, had to rely on a limited amount of published material. In the initial discussion on library associations in the South African context, the researcher relies heavily on the work of Louw (1990).

Louw (1990: 147) extracts from writings by Winter, Hanks and Schmidt and Goode the attributes that have to be fulfilled for an organisation to be considered as a professional association. These attributes are:

- that it must be a representative occupational association which concerns itself with standards of professional activity;
- that there is a prolonged educational process and an organised body of systematic and theoretical knowledge;
- that the organisation is oriented to servicing a community rather than the self-interest of the individual practitioner;
- that the organisation is autonomous;
- that the organisation controls practice through licensure and a code of ethics;
- that the organisation has a monopoly of its practice; and
- that the occupation is recognised as a profession by the community that the organisation represents.

It is against these attributes that Louw (1990) presents the evolution of the South African Library Association (SALA), which was later called the South African Institute for Librarianship and Information Science (SAILIS), from an organisation representing an occupation to a professional institute.

5.7.1 South African Library Association (SALA)/South African Institute for Librarianship and Information Science (SAILIS)

Louw (1990: 148) argues that the development of library services in South Africa really began with the South African Library Conference which was held in Bloemfontein in 1928. One of the main outcomes of this conference was the formation, in 1930, of the South African Library Association (SALA). In those early days it was an occupational association of all persons who worked in libraries or who were interested in libraries or librarianship. Subsequently, the organisation began to forge ahead toward professionalism. To support its move towards a professional association, the Association periodically reviewed the possibility of acquiring statutory status. However, the move toward statutory status did not come to fruition.

The transformation into a professional association was hampered by the fact that the Association accepted as its members all persons who worked in libraries, including 'non-professionals'. In its drive towards professionalisation the Association, over a period of time, began to review its membership policy. This review was to ensure that it came as close as possible to meeting the requirements of a professional association. The Association engaged in a process of continually revising the qualifications for membership which was of significant importance for the Association to transform from an occupational association to a fully professional association.

When SALA was launched in 1930, it was an association for all persons who worked in libraries or who were interested in libraries. In 1961 there was a motion to amend the constitution to create a category of 'professional member'. This was the first step toward limiting membership to professional members, that is, those who had a formal qualification in librarianship. The following year steps were taken to exclude blacks from becoming members of the Association (see section 5.7.2). In 1970, the president of the Association notified the SALA conference, of the same year, of the concern of the membership with regard to the status of librarians. The suggestion from the membership was that the Association register as a statutory body thereby confirming the professional status of librarians. The

1971 conference was a turning point in the evolution into a professional institute. The conference adopted a motion to prescribe the minimum requirements for professional membership. The prerequisite was an academic background and six years experience of information work. This motion was implemented in 1973 (Louw 1990: 148-150).

By 1976 every attempt was made to convert SALA into a fully professional association. At the 1976 conference, a motion was passed proposing that SALA be converted into a professional association to be controlled solely by its professional members. The motion contained proposals for the definition of professional membership of the Association and of the privileges of professional members (Louw 1990: 150).

The consolidation of the attempt to limit membership in the quest for professionalisation came in 1978 when it was confirmed that persons who did not comply with the professional requirements be classified as members who do not have voting power and may not serve as office-bearers but enjoy all other privileges of membership. Further, there was a motivation to change the name from an association to an institute to indicate a strong professional body with a scientific element. In 1980 SALA became the South African Institute for Librarianship and Information Science (Hooper 1986: 19; Louw 1990: 151). The researcher suggests that this dis-enfranchising of 'non-professional' members was discriminatory and that the allowance for such people to enroll as members was merely a tool to boost the numbers.

SALA had been very proactive in its drive toward professionalisation. Another area of proactivity was the exclusion of people of colour from its membership in anticipation of legislation changes forcing such a practice. Such proactivity, in the opinion of the researcher, made the organisation very much an elitist club which seems to have stigmatised the professional associations (namely, SALA and SAILIS) and the profession and, may continue to dog the efforts of the current representative body in its membership drives. Hooper (1986), however, documents the successes of SAILIS from its inception in 1980. These successes are discussed in terms of some of the factors (which have been identified earlier in the chapter) as influencing the continuance of professional associations.

5.7.1.1 SAILIS conferences

The professional association held its conferences annually and these were well attended. However, because there were large numbers of people attending, some members felt isolated as they did not know many of the other librarians that were at the conference. As a result of the feeling of isolation and intimidation, there was growing demand for the formation of sections and interest groups at the conferences, as well as affiliation from organisations with similar interests to SAILIS. The sectional meetings at the conference enabled members to meet and discuss matters of concern with librarians with common areas of interest. Members felt more comfortable and therefore more inclined to participate in discussions in smaller groups (Hooper 1986: 20).

Supplementing the annual national conferences were regional meetings, seminars and workshops to provide the training and the stimulation necessary to maintain the currency of professional knowledge among librarians. Further, there was an increase in the number of short courses, workshops, lectures and meetings that were arranged at branch level which strengthened SAILIS at that level as well as stimulated branch development (Hooper 1986: 20). However, despite all this activity, membership did not grow exponentially as anticipated.

5.7.1.2 Publication of journals

All professional associations publish journals which keep the membership informed and also publicise research undertaken by members. The publication of the *South African journal of library and information science* was an important 'professional developmental' tool for the Association. The standard of research contributions to the journal was high. The high standard of research enhanced the journal's international distribution (Hooper 1986: 21).

The *SAILIS newsletter* had developed into a significant medium of communication for informal matters of concern to members. The newsletter served as an important medium to air and debate important professional issues of concern, such as the Code of Ethics (Hooper 1986: 21-22).

5.7.1.3 Influence on library legislation

The Executive Council of SAILIS contributed to legislation dealing with librarians and librarianship. SAILIS also contributed to the establishment of the National Advisory Council for Librarianship and Information. Furthermore, the organisation was consulted on the National Libraries Act when the Act was in draft format. In those early years, SAILIS also contributed to the Schiebush enquiry into a parliamentary information service. SAILIS influenced the lifting of the ten percent import surcharge on books (Hooper 1986: 25).

5.7.1.4 Promotion of research

SAILIS was active in the promotion of research which was the responsibility of a sub-committee which was called the Committee for Education and Research. The development of the professional journal itself into a vehicle for research publications added impetus to the amount of research in library and information science being conducted. Rapid technological developments, together with the demand for high standards of professional practice meant that research in the discipline was being 'demand driven'. Further, more and more librarians were undertaking higher degree studies and this in turn increased research output. The promotion of research assisted in promoting the status and image of the professional librarian (Hooper 1986: 23).

5.7.1.5 Influence on the education of professional members

The Committee for Education and Research was commissioned to evaluate the education offered by the library schools and to make recommendations to ensure a high standard of teaching and of professional practice by the students of those schools or departments. This activity assisted in promoting communication amongst library and information science academics in various library schools. The activities of the Committee for Education and Research sought to ensure the development of the highest possible standards of education for professional practitioners throughout South Africa. The

Committee was also involved in the accreditation of paraprofessional education at the Technikons. There was an expectation that paraprofessional library education and training would become the domain of the technikons (Hooper 1986: 26) and this did indeed happen (Raju 2002).

Hooper (1986: 31) as the President of SAILIS in the early 1980s wrote about his concern for the 'neglect' of the Association to incorporate support staff. He stated that, "there are large numbers of people without professional qualifications working in libraries in all parts of our country who require a forum in which to discuss their problems." As stated earlier, the exclusion of support staff in professional associations in Africa has seriously affected the capacity of the organisation to grow in terms of membership. Later in this chapter, it will be shown that LIASA, the successor to SAILIS, has made every effort to open its membership to include all persons working in library and information environments.

5.7.2 African Library Association of South Africa (ALASA)

In 1962 SALA prohibited blacks from becoming members¹⁰. The prohibition of blacks from becoming members of the association gave rise to the formation of an association for black people. Manaka (1981: 76) claims that

the birth of the [African Library] Association [of South Africa (ALASA)] resulted from the adoption of a motion by the South African Library Association in 1962 to restrict its membership to whites only and to form separate library associations for the other race groups.

The aims of ALASA were to:

- promote the reading habit and to encourage the use of books among blacks;
- promote the establishment of black libraries and library service, especially in the homelands where such services are not provided by white local authorities; and

¹⁰ Haffajee (2005) states that Indians and Coloureds formed their own associations of library employees. Unfortunately, very little was achieved and they disbanded within six to ten months.

- contribute towards the formation and to protect the interests of a professionally qualified corps of black library workers (Manaka 1981: 77).

ALASA also identified continuing education and encouragement of library workers as important roles to be played by the Association given the fact that most of the blacks that entered library work had a standard eight certificate or less.

The achievements of ALASA are not as notable as that of SALA or SAILIS. This limited success must be viewed against the backdrop of poor funding and the low levels of qualifications among the black people in the formative days of the Republic of South Africa. However, ALASA did hold conferences regularly. The conferences were used as a means of promoting the idea of a library, the use of books among blacks and the adoption of reading as an important component of education and development. Manaka (1981: 79) claims that one of the greatest contributions of ALASA was the Association's ability to bring together persons engaged in library work and for them to know and inspire one another.

When SAILIS opened its membership to include professionally qualified black librarians, many blacks who met the criteria joined the Institute. However, there were those who did not join and those who held dual membership (of SAILIS and ALASA) as they supported those blacks who did not qualify for membership of SAILIS. Further, it was held that there were problems that were peculiar to African librarians which could only be addressed through ALASA. One such problem was the inadequate provision of libraries and library services for black people. Such race specific issues had to be taken up by ALASA (Syphus 1995: 3-4).

5.7.3 Library and Information Workers' Organisation (LIWO)

SALA or SAILIS and ALASA were two formal library organisations. There were other informal organisations such as the resource centre forums. However, there was a third formal library organisation that made its presence felt within the South African library and information environment. Syphus (1995: 2) is of the opinion that this organisation, the Library and Information Workers'

Organisation (LIWO), was formed in protest against the nonchalant attitude of SAILIS with regard to government policies and its effect on libraries and librarianship. The opinion of Syphus is confirmed by Merrett (2001: 31) who states that LIWO challenged the library establishment which had collaborated with the apartheid regime "...by failing to speak out and act against restrictions on the flow of information and curtailment of the freedom of expression".

Despite the fact that LIWO had a small membership which operated primarily from the former Natal and the Western Cape, its existence was necessary to provide a 'protest' dimension to South Africa's apartheid system of librarianship. LIWO protested against the professional library organisations that worked within the apartheid structures, accepting discrimination and segregation and complying with the restrictions on the free flow of information. LIWO actively encouraged membership by all library workers. The organisation was committed to engaging in basic research that explored and provided empirical evidence to back fundamental concerns such as the maldistribution of library resources that left many communities destitute of the information that was their right as citizens and user fees for public libraries (Syphus 1995: 2; Merrett 2001: 33).

In the opinion of Merrett (2001: 32-33), LIWO was committed to professional standards within a progressive context. It believed that the oppressed people of South Africa deserved a high quality, appropriate library and information service to drive the acquisition of knowledge essential to a healthy democracy. Merrett (2001: 33) also states that LIWO put together a regular periodical, *Liwolet*, that stands amongst the best literature produced by the South African library profession.

Of the three formal library organisations, SAILIS was held to be the one that had a more comprehensive infrastructure, greater membership and, on the whole, was the more 'successful' professional organisation in South Africa. However, it became more and more evident that the Institute was becoming irrelevant. In 1987, the Institute was questioning its relevance especially in terms of its statutory recognition. It was envisaged that SAILIS should be providing leadership as well as acting as a forum for the discussion of issues such as professional status, conditions of service and compensation. Furthermore, it was envisaged that SAILIS would take the lead in the development of education and

training and the establishment of a national information policy. However, it was becoming increasingly difficult to provide the necessary leadership and guidance as there was the growing question of the credibility of the Institute (Syphus 1995: 5).

The growing lack of credibility forced the Institute to do some introspection. The Institute's leadership began to look at what was best for the library and information community rather than what was best for the Institute. In fact, Matthee (1997: 25) points out that the

library and information profession has been plagued by the absence of a unified, strong and inclusive professional association for a number of years. This unfortunate situation was worsened by the fact that we were divided along racial, political and specialised lines. The fragmentation started in the early 1960s which resulted in three different organisations...each bravely attempted to represent the interests of Library and Information Services (LIS) workers throughout South Africa. It was proved that this scenario was not fruitful and beneficial to Library and Information Services....

This argument is shared by Syphus (1995: 1) who says that

within a profession that is numerically small in this country [South Africa] and at the best of times struggles worldwide for a high profile in society, this suspicion and lack of trust among South African LIS practitioners seem sheer lunacy. A way needs to be found to overcome this impasse.

The route that was taken to resolve this impasse was the formation of a single unified professional association to represent the interests of librarianship.

According to Kagan (2001: 15), the need for a 'one voice' policy was not unique to South Africa. Kagan states that SAILIS argued, with the support of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), that there should be only one association for a unified lobbying of the new ANC Government. ALASA eventually supported the argument by SAILIS and hence the merger between the two associations. However, LIWO refused to collaborate as it argued that the new organisation would be dominated by SAILIS people, ideas and resources as SAILIS was by far the largest and strongest organisation. Kagan (2001) is sceptical about this merger stating that true unity

cannot be imposed from above, it can only come from principled agreement. He goes on to say that it remains to be seen whether or not LIASA will engage the issues that motivated ALASA and LIWO.

5.7.4 Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA)

In July 1997, the two dominant, in terms of membership, professional associations were dissolved and LIASA was launched. The aims of the LIASA are to:

- promote the transformation of LIS into equitable and accessible services for all the people in South Africa;
- unite all persons engaged or interested in library and information work and to actively safeguard and promote their dignity, rights and socio-economic status;
- support and promote the democratic rights of LIS workers in their endeavour to create, acquire, organise and disseminate information without interference;
- promote and provide education and training of LIS workers in co-operation with other institutions;
- promote an ethical delivery of LIS to all the people in South Africa through a code of conduct for its members;
- publicly recognise the contributions and achievements of members;
- engage in, promote, facilitate and encourage activities including meetings, conferences and publications that will result in networking among members, and contact and liaison with the broader LIS sector;
- encourage promotion of service standards and acceptable good practice especially extending services to disadvantaged/unserved communities;
- facilitate and promote research and development in LIS;
- act as one voice, to market, to lobby for and to represent the LIS sector at local, provincial, national and international levels on all aspects of LIS, including legislation;
- facilitate cooperative activities within the broad LIS sector; and
- engage in any other activities that will promote the interest of LIS and LIS workers

(Library and Information Association of South Africa 2003: 2).

the formative years of SALA. As Louw (1990) points out, SALA made a concerted effort to evolve from an occupational association to a professional association, that is, to transform from an association representing the occupation to a professional association. Such a transformation would take librarians and librarianship closer to meeting the attributes of a professional organisation. Further, the transformation would see the materialisation of a professional organisation, with professional librarians providing leadership to an organisation which, for all intents and purposes, was going to address professional issues. The current association representing library and information workers has gone a full circle in that it has transformed from an association representing the occupation to a professional association, and now back to an association representing an occupation.

If the argument that between the years 1948 to 1980 there had been a move toward professionalisation of the professional association is accepted, then the researcher argues that LIASA is not a professional organisation but rather an occupational association. Such a paradigm shift places the association in a state of limbo in that it has consciously moved away from a professional association back to an occupational association. Therefore, the new association cannot enjoy the status of a professional association. At the same time it is not a statutory body and therefore cannot enjoy the privileges of a trade union.

- **Industrial concepts:** The constitution of LIASA makes reference to two very important industrial concepts, namely, socio-economic status and conditions of service. The constitution states that the organisation will actively safeguard and promote the dignity, rights and socio-economic status of all persons engaged in library and information work. Such a statement could be interpreted to mean that the organisation will actively promote the economic status of library and information workers, which is tantamount to engaging in salary negotiation. If the above interpretation is accepted as possible then there is a major overlap with the aims of trade unions. Further, the constitution of LIASA states that the Association will take steps to safeguard and improve conditions of service. Again, this

statement could be interpreted to mean that the Association will engage in negotiating conditions of service or protect current conditions of service. This, again, is a major overlap with fundamental principles of trade unionism.

- **Professional development:** One of the major divisive factors plaguing library associations has been the commitment to developing a specific sector. The LIASA constitution also makes the same provision as it states that steps may be taken to promote the professional development of its members. By implication, it would mean that all of its members are professionals and the association will endeavour to promote these members. However, there are other provisions which, in the opinion of the researcher, negate the element of division between support and professional staff. Such provisions state that the organisation will “organise and administer conventions, seminars, training courses and the like for its members, or the public” (Library and Information Association of South Africa 2003: 3).

Despite the reservations expressed above, there are far greater positives to opening the membership. Opening the membership will ensure that a wider community could seek support from belonging to an organisation, a wider community feeling professionally secure under the banner of a professional body, a wider community benefitting from personal development and, a more informed LIS employee community.

There is clear intent to make the organisation as representative of the library and information environment as possible. Further, there is intent to make provision for growth and development of all employees within the library and information environment. The LIS sector supports this intent which is confirmed by a survey conducted by Kagan (2002).

The survey found that the LIS sector generally accepted LIASA as the body representing the sector despite the fact that LIASA has a relatively small membership compared to the universe of possible members. However, there were those who did not see LIASA as a “sufficiently professional organisation because it is open to all” (Kagan 2002: 5). This negative view is countered by another

interesting finding of Kagan (2002: 9), that is, there is support for LIASA to continue its policy of being open to all including support staff. It was found that there was a “need to uplift library assistants and other staff through continuing education, salary raises, and better benefits including child care”. This finding illustrates the need for the LIS organisation to be more inclusive of the support staff and to address both the industrial and professional issues of the sector. Kagan (2002) quotes respondents who use such terminology as ‘collective bargaining’, ‘fight for salaries’ and ‘act as a union’ which, in the view of the researcher, challenges the LIS organisation, LIASA, to embrace industrial activity.

5.8 SUMMARY

Library associations have for decades been the co-ordinating body within the LIS sector. Chapter Five has examined the roles and characteristics of professional library associations in the international arena with a focus on African LIS associations. Library associations in Africa were examined with particular reference to Ghana and Botswana. The chapter has also examined the professional associations that have represented the profession in South Africa.

LIS professional associations have demonstrated the capacity to address the professional concerns of the sector. In the South African LIS environment, the three formal professional associations were ‘watered down’ to a single organisation to represent the entire LIS sector in South Africa., thus reducing the level of fragmentation.

The professional association in South Africa is active in training and development generally through the holding of conferences and workshops. The organisation encourages research and makes available a journal to publish the findings of the research. The factors that have influenced the continuance of professional associations amid pressure from trade unions for the same membership, have also been examined in this chapter.

Chapter Six will set out the methodology underpinning the empirical component of this study.

CHAPTER SIX: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Throughout this study the terms 'research', 'investigation' and 'study' have been used interchangeably. However, it must be clarified that 'research' is a more rigorous and technically more complicated form of investigation. In fact, Sharp and Howard (1996: 6) define research as "seeking through methodical processes to add to one's own body of knowledge and, hopefully, to that of others, by the discovery of non-trivial facts and insights." Such a definition is expanded by Brause (2000: 37) who points out that research is a process of searching repeatedly, *re-searching* for new insights and a more comprehensive, cohesive, 'elegant' theory. Research intends to advance knowledge.

In an effort to advance knowledge on the possible impact of South Africa's labour dispensation on the growth of unionism particularly in the tertiary education LIS sector, the researcher has reviewed, in Chapters Two to Five, the relevant literature relating to trade unionism in South Africa, trade unionism and libraries, the labour dispensation and its implication for libraries, and the role of professional library associations. Cornford and Smithson (1996: 152) purport that the existing literature forms the academic context of the research. They go on to state that the review of the literature creates the link between the theories and concepts and the contribution of the researcher.

When discussing the issue of research design, Leedy (1993: 114) illustrates the importance of "bring[ing] all together [that is], your resources, your [research] problem and the sources of the data...". This importance is confirmed by Durrheim (1999a: 29) who states that research design is a strategic framework for action that serves as a link between the research questions and the implementation of the research. The research questions, according to Rossman and Rallis (1998: 82), are critically important for guiding the research. They also state that "...recalling the entire conceptual framework keeps you [the researcher] grounded as you gather the data."

In an effort to create an effective link between the conceptual framework and the data gathered, the researcher presents, in this chapter, issues that have been examined in Chapters Two to Five. This chapter also discusses the research design, that is, the manner in which the data was secured and interpreted to address the research questions.

There is a strong emphasis in this chapter on the methods of collecting data, and associated issues, from the respondents who are employed in the LIS sector. The researcher is of the view that the greatest hurdles were presented by this population because of the sheer size of the population and the relatively new method of administering the research instrument. Only three trade unions were surveyed. The LIS sector survey warrants greater attention as the techniques adopted for it were the same as those used for the survey of union officials.

However, before recalling certain areas of the conceptual framework as presented in Chapters Two to Five, it will serve this research well to restate the research objectives and the research questions as recommended by Rossman and Rallis (1998: 82).

6.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The objective of this study was to conduct an exploratory study on the feasibility of unionising the workers employed within the LIS sector. A significant factor influencing the unionisation process is the progressive labour laws of South Africa.

The research objectives guiding this study were to:

- 1. Examine the factors that have influenced trade unionism in South Africa;**
- 2. Identify the factors that have influenced the growth of unionism in the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa;**
- 3. Investigate the role of legislation in influencing unionisation in the tertiary education LIS sector in South Africa;**

4. Investigate the need for an organisation to address the industrial needs of LIS employees in this sector;
5. Investigate the feasibility of unionising the sector under a single employee representative body;
6. Investigate the feasibility of combining the industrial objectives of a trade union and the professional objectives of a professional association into a single organisation that will represent the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa; and
7. Depending on the findings, propose a model that will address the industrial and professional concerns of the sector.

The research questions formulated to achieve the above research objectives were:

1. What are the factors that have influenced the growth of unions in South Africa?;
2. What are the factors that have influenced the growth of unions in the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa?;
3. What role has legislation played in influencing unionisation in the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa?;
4. Do the employees of the sector need an organisation to address their industrial issues?;
5. To what extent can the present union structure accommodate a sector specific organisation addressing the issues of that sector?;
6. Is it feasible to combine the industrial objectives of a trade union and the professional objectives of a professional association into a single organisation to represent the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa?; and
7. Depending on the findings above, what sort of model might be appropriate for the tertiary education LIS sector of South Africa?

The research objectives and questions serve as the foundation for discussion in subsequent chapters as they bring together the related literature and the empirical data. The primary foci of Chapter Six are the review of the related literature and the discussion of the method of collecting the data and briefly, the process adopted for the analysis of the data collected.

6.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The first of the two crucial components guiding this research is the detailed review of the related literature which is presented in Chapters Two to Five. The second is the collection of the data through a survey of the relevant populations, that is, employees in the LIS sector of the tertiary educational institutions and trade union officials, by means of E-mailed, self-administered questionnaires.

6.3.1 Review of related literature

The review of related literature is fundamental as it identifies issues and variables related to the research topic which is one of the more specific purposes of a literature review (Kaniki 1999: 19). As stated earlier, the review of the relevant literature is an essential component of the research design process as it serves as the starting point for the design of the data gathering instruments used in this research. The researcher presents some of the issues examined in Chapters Two to Five to create a link between the conceptual framework and the data to be gathered.

The core issue examined in Chapter Two was the historical development of trade unionism in South Africa. There was also a discussion of white collar unionism.

In the period before 1994, the literature revealed that worker representation in South Africa was significantly affected by legislation. The relevant legislation has played a significant role in the growth of white trade unionism. It is clear from the literature that legislation has also played a major role in restraining the growth of black trade unionism. The restrictive laws forced black trade unions to adopt a political stance, that is, to use labour to make South Africa ungovernable which would lead to a change in government.

In the post-apartheid era, government continued with the policy of intervention in industrial relations. However, the intervention was to ensure that workers were treated equitably and to correct repressive labour practices of the apartheid era. The proposed transformation of industrial relations through legislation encouraged a large number of white collar workers to join trade unions.

The move of white collar workers towards trade unionism in South Africa was in line with international trends, that is, the movement of service workers and technical experts (white collar workers) into trade unions. Bain (1970) presents three core factors influencing unionism, namely, employment concentration, the recognition of trade unions by the management and government policy. The literature reveals other factors that have contributed to the growth of unionism. Such factors include collective bargaining, job security and income. However, the literature also reveals factors that had a negative impact on the growth of unions. Factors such as social status and the employment of a large number of women in the LIS sector have negatively affected the growth of unionism. It must be noted that there is no distinction in South African law between white and blue collar workers.

Another detailed discussion in Chapter Two is the types of associations, based on the international literature on unionism, that can claim to be a union. It has been argued that the association that comes closest to resembling a union is the occupation association representing professional employees within a particular occupation. However, in South African labour law, the professional association lacks certain important organisational rights (refer to section 4.5.2 Labour legislation).

The factors that have been identified as influencing unionism within the LIS context (whether positively or negatively) are examined in Chapter Three. Librarians have complained that employment concentration has resulted in bureaucratic structures. These bureaucratic structures have alienated the librarian from the professional decision making process. As a result of this alienation, librarians have joined or formed trade unions to enable them to participate in the professional decisions affecting the workplace and the profession. However, it has also been argued that unionisation creates another level within the bureaucratic structure and that individual librarians lose their ability to engage management on their own behalf.

Even though there is limited literature on the role of legislation affecting the growth of unionism in libraries, there is sufficient evidence to show that legislation does positively affect unionisation. The literature does present the view that economic reasons are major contributors to unionisation. Collective bargaining, in areas such as conditions of service and remuneration, is a substantial contributor to unionisation. However, collective bargaining is made difficult given the fact that the profession is fragmented.

In a climate of mergers and retrenchments, unions play an important role in job security. It has also been argued in Chapter Three that unions ensure fair institutional practices. The above mentioned issues reflect the unions' protective and reactive roles. However, unions have the capacity to be proactive, especially in the area of staff training and development.

There are a number of factors that have been identified in the literature as having a negative impact on the growth of trade unionism in libraries. Firstly, there is a lack of cohesiveness as the profession is fragmented by the type of clientele it serves, by size and by the range of occupational groups working within the library. This lack of cohesiveness has stifled the growth of trade unionism in libraries. However, the issue of social status seems to be the crucial contributor to the negative growth of unionism in libraries. Central to the social status debate is the issue of professionalism versus unionism. It is argued by authors such as Hovenden (1972) and Schlachter (1976) that professionalism is inherently incompatible with trade unionism.

Some of the other arguments in the professionalism versus unionism debate are:

- the extent of the difference between professionalism and unionism;
- economic versus professional values;
- professional associations as a deterrent to unionism; and
- the destruction of harmony of interest by unions.

The chapter continues with a proposal of four options that can guide worker representation within the profession. The first of the four options is for a professional association to address the professional issues and a registered trade union to address the industrial issues of all those that work within a library and information environment. The second option is for library staff to unionise and affiliate to a larger generic union. Option three is for the profession to form a quasi-union, that is, a professional association which also addresses the industrial issues. The last option is the formation of one union to represent all staff employed in a library and information environment.

As reflected earlier, legislation plays a significant role in the growth of trade unions. Chapter Four examines South Africa's labour dispensation. The core statutes examined are the LRA, BCEA, EEA, and SDA. These statutes are examined against the backdrop of the possible impact the statutes could have on unionism in libraries.

The factors that have been identified in Chapter Two as influencing unionism are examined in the light of South Africa's labour dispensation. One of the fundamental principles guiding the LRA is co-determination. The issue of employment concentration is addressed by the principle of co-determination and the workings of workplace forums. The example of co-determination within the library and information environment given in Chapter Three highlights the potential for employers and employees to work together and make decisions jointly.

Joint decision making and consultation are principles that guide the working of workplace forums. The principles of workplace forums and co-determination are enshrined in the relevant legislation. In fact, the legislation encourages organised labour to register as trade unions and as registered trade unions, employers are obliged by law to recognise the trade unions and work with them. Collective bargaining in terms of the relevant legislation is the preferred method of establishing and changing terms and conditions of employment.

It has been argued, in the literature, that women play a role in negating the growth of trade unionism. There are a number of provisions in the current labour dispensation that encourages the active participation of women in trade union activities. Further, the statutes make provision for the advancement of women at the workplace. The legislation also encourages unions to become more proactive in the training and development of staff through the provisions of the SDA.

It is clear from the literature that the provisions within the South African labour legislation encourage the growth of trade unionism.

The last of the four chapters that reviews the related literature examines the role of the professional library associations at the international and national arena. Chapter Five examines the purposes of professional library associations as these purposes form the foundation from which the organisation will function or develop. It is generally accepted that the professional association serves to unite the profession and to represent the profession with a single authoritative voice on professional matters. However, the majority of the employees within the library and information environment are support staff and have to rely on other organisations such as trade unions to represent their concerns. The majority of the issues that support staff want addressed are industrial issues and professional associations have shied away from addressing industrial matters.

At the international arena the professional association has succeeded in setting standards for librarianship. This together with other factors have influenced the continued existence of professional associations. Factors such as the need for belonging, security, personal development, library ethics and intellectual freedom have contributed to the continuance of professional associations.

Chapter Five also examines the historical development of the three established professional associations in South Africa, namely, SALA/SAILIS, ALASA and LIWO. In the period after 1997 there emerged only one organisation representing the LIS profession. However, if one examines the constitution of this organisation, LIASA, one would see a substantial shift from a professional association to an occupational association. Further, the researcher observes some overlap, in the constitution of LIASA,

with principles that guide trade union activity. This overlap brings the organisation close towards a quasi-union.

6.3.1.1 Limitations of the review of the literature

Bless and Higson-Smith (2000: 20) argues that the purpose of a review of the literature is to familiarise the researcher with the latest developments in the area of research. Unfortunately, the researcher had to rely on dated material for the examination of key issues in the study, namely, unionisation in libraries and white collar unionisation. There is a distinct pattern of publication on unionisation in libraries. The literature reveals that material on unionisation in libraries was published in spurts with the latest being in the 1970s. Very little has been written in subsequent decades.

6.3.2 Data collection

It has been argued by Walliman (2001: 231) that to conduct a good survey, based on an extensive literary framework, requires expertise and professionalism at every stage: the design, sampling, questionnaire development, analysis and reporting stages. An in-depth review of the literature, which has been completed in Chapters Two to Five, is the first component of this research.

The second component of this study is the collection of data through a survey of the relevant populations, that is, employees in the LIS sector of the tertiary educational institutions and trade union officials. Given the fact there is a potential for a large number of respondents from the tertiary educational institutions, the researcher used self-administered questionnaires to gather data. Two different questionnaires, being the primary tool to gather data for this study, were constructed with a balance of open-ended and closed questions. One questionnaire was administered to the three national unions and the other was administered to the employees in the tertiary education LIS sector. The method of delivering the questionnaire is also an important consideration and the researcher has to make a choice from the different methods of delivery. It is the opinion of the researcher that the online method is the most appropriate method of delivering the questionnaires as it is a cost effective way, in

terms of finances and time, in administering a questionnaire. For this method of delivery to work, it is imperative that the researcher has a reliable list of E-mail addresses of the research population that have access to E-mail. The decision to administer the questionnaire electronically necessitated the researcher revisiting the questionnaire to determine a format that will be compatible with the method of delivery - the word-processed format or the hypertext format. Both a pretest and a pilot study (refer to section 6.3.2.6) had to be conducted to remove ambiguities and resolve other problems in the questionnaire and to ensure that the hypertext format was workable.

6.3.2.1 Survey populations

As stated in the previous section, in this study, the primary sources of empirical data were surveys of the relevant populations. It is the view of Walliman (2001: 232) that, "*population* is a collective term used to describe the total quantity of cases of the type which are the subject of your study." The aim of a survey is to obtain information from a population which can be analysed and patterns extracted and comparisons made. Bell (1997: 11) points out that care must be taken to ensure that the sample population is truly representative. There are times when the researcher can survey all the cases in a specific population when the number of relevant cases is small. Surveying all cases in a population is called undertaking a census. A census is what researchers should aim towards if at all possible (Burton 2000a: 307).

The LIS sector has a very broad coverage which includes public libraries, academic libraries, industrial/special libraries and school libraries. The researcher focused on surveying all tertiary education institutions in South Africa with the target population being employees within the LIS sector who were engaged, as their primary function, in the provision of information or in the support thereof. The study did not survey those employees from the tertiary education sector who work in libraries or resource centres within academic departments. Neither did the study survey employees in libraries or resource centres in departments that are affiliates to the main institution.

As the first step in the data collection process, the researcher surveyed all library and information employees within the LIS sector of tertiary institutions as the researcher was of the opinion that it was feasible to conduct such a survey. There were approximately two thousand employees within the library and information population frame for the tertiary education library sector which was manageable for this study. Surveying the entire population, that is doing a census, would contribute to the study being free of bias.

The second step in the data collection process was administering a questionnaire among trade union officials, at a national level, to determine the impact of a white collar library and information specific union on the present trade union structures. There are three national unions that service the tertiary education sector and representatives from all three national unions were surveyed. The researcher used self-administered questionnaires to solicit data from both the library and information employees and trade union officials.

6.3.2.2 Questionnaires

The most obvious method of collecting data for both quantitative and qualitative research, according to Walliman (2001: 236), is by asking questions of the potential participants using the questionnaire as the conduit. Walliman goes on to say that the questionnaire enables the researcher to organise the questions and receive replies without actually having to talk to every respondent. As a method of data collection, the questionnaire is a very flexible tool, but it must be used carefully in order to fulfil the requirements of a particular piece of research.

The main feature of the questionnaire is its impersonality. The questions are fixed, that is, they do not change according to how the replies develop. Further, the questions are the same for each respondent and the person posing the questions is remote. The responses can be completely anonymous, allowing potentially embarrassing questions to be asked with a fair chance of getting a true reply. Another feature is that there is generally no geographical limitation with regard to the location of the respondent. Questionnaires can be a relatively economical method, in terms of cost

and time, of gathering data from a large number of respondents. Time for checking facts and pondering on the questions can also be taken by the respondents, which tends to lead to more accurate information (Busha and Harter 1980: 62; Bless and Higson-Smith 2000: 109; Walliman 2001: 236-237).

However, there are negative implications for using the questionnaire as a data collecting tool which the researcher must make efforts to address. The literature (Busha and Harter 1980: 63; May 1999: 90; Bless and Higson-Smith 2000: 109-110) identifies the following disadvantages of the questionnaire as a data collecting tool:

- questionnaires preclude personal contact with the respondents and therefore do not allow respondents the opportunity to qualify ambiguous questions. Therefore it is necessary to keep the questions relatively simple and straightforward;
- poorly worded or direct questions might arouse antagonism or inhibitions on the part of the respondents;
- if the prepared instrument does not arouse respondent emotions (that is, when the questionnaire is too impersonal), valid responses might not be elicited;
- some potential respondents may be antagonistic toward mail surveys, regardless of the purpose or quality of the instrument distributed;
- the response rate for mailed questionnaires generally tends to be low for a variety of reasons such as those mentioned above and others like participants misplacing the questionnaires, a lack of interest in the research or the participant being too busy to fill out a questionnaire; and
- most questionnaires cannot be designed to uncover causes or reasons for respondents' attitudes, beliefs, or actions.

The first two points raised above are addressed by pretesting and piloting (refer to section 6.3.2.6 for an explanation of these concepts) the questionnaire as pretesting and piloting attempts to ensure that all the questions mean the same to all the respondents. Pretesting and piloting in the context of this research are discussed later in this chapter.

6.3.2.2.1 Construction of questionnaires

Burton (2000b: 320) advises that researchers must ensure that there are not too many open-ended questions as open-ended questions are not the most appropriate form of questions in self-administered questionnaires. At the same time, the researcher cannot rely entirely on quantitative responses as there is also a need to solicit qualitative responses. Therefore it was imperative for the researcher to use in this study an appropriate balance between open-ended questions and closed (or fixed-alternative) questions.

Open-ended questions, according to Phillips (1971: 137-138), do not provide a list of alternative answers. However, they are effective in revealing the respondent's own definition of the situation. Open-ended questions encourage spontaneity on the part of the respondent as well as reinforce the motivation to communicate effectively and thoroughly.

Closed questions are associated with leading the respondent. On the positive side, closed questions do produce greater uniformity among responses along the specific dimensions in which the researcher is interested (Phillips 1971: 138). The provision of the 'other' category allows the respondent to give responses not anticipated by the researcher.

Phillips (1971: 139) advises that "the problem for the researcher is to create an instrument for data collection while taking into account the limitations with respect to resources." Bailey (1994: 118-119) summarises the advantages and disadvantages of both closed or fixed- alternative questions and open-ended questions. The advantages of closed questions are:

- responses are standard and can be compared from one person to another;
- responses are easier to code and analyse and can often be coded directly from the questionnaire, saving time and money;
- responses are relatively complete with a minimum of irrelevant responses; and
- easier to complete.

The disadvantages of closed questions are that the:

- **respondent does not provide his/her opinion;**
- **respondent may feel frustrated at not being able to give an opinion or clarify or qualify a response;**
- **differences in interpretation of what was meant by the question may go undetected whereas in an open-ended question one might be able to tell from the written response that the respondent misinterpreted the question; and**
- **likelihood of a clerical error occurring is greater if the respondent circles the wrong response (Bailey 1994: 119-120).**

In summarising the advantages and disadvantages of open-ended questions, Bailey (1994: 120-121) states that the advantages of open-ended questions are that they:

- **can be used when all possible response categories are not known;**
- **allow the respondent to respond adequately and in as much detail as possible;**
- **allow for responses to complex issues which cannot be condensed into small categories; and**
- **allow the respondent to respond as creatively as possible.**

The disadvantages of open-ended questions are:

- **they may lead to collection of worthless and irrelevant information;**
- **data is not standardised making comparison or statistical analysis difficult;**
- **coding is often very difficult and subjective;**
- **requires that the respondent has superior writing skills to express his/her feelings adequately; and**
- **requires much more of the respondent's time and effort which will result in a low response rate (Bailey 1994: 120-121).**

The researcher took cognisance of the advantages and disadvantages of closed and open-ended questions. Further, the choice of open-ended and close questions or the balance thereof was guided by the method of distribution which, for this study, was the electronic method of distribution. The researcher, recognising the above advantages and disadvantages, opted for a questionnaire with more closed questions than open-ended questions.

6.3.2.3 The electronic data collection method

There are a range of methods of collecting data, which Burton (2000b: 320) argues has created a dilemma for researchers when choosing which one, or which combination to use. Researchers have traditionally relied extensively on postal questionnaires and on interviews to collect information from respondents. As a result of the extensive reliance on these methods of data collection, a large body of knowledge has been generated on innovative ways of improving overall response rates and data quality in postal questionnaires. However, postal questionnaires and interviews, as methods of collecting data, differ in many subtle and important ways. The two most significant differences are in terms of costs and response rates. Interviews are generally more costly in researchers' and respondents' time than are questionnaires but yield a higher response rate on a comparatively smaller sample size. Every researcher faces a cost-response rate tradeoff when choosing a data collection method. Research has focused on the strengths and weaknesses of different methods of data collection, however, very few studies have attempted to evaluate newer 'information technologies' as a way of collecting data (Mehta and Sivadas 1995: 429).

Sproull (1986: 159) discusses a new tool in the data collection process, that is, electronic mail (E-mail). E-mail, together with the Internet, are promising methods of conducting survey research as the proportion of the population who own computers increases (Burton 2000b: 329). E-mail uses computer text-editing and communications tools to provide a high speed message service. It is an appropriate medium for collecting data from respondents as the researcher could easily send out questionnaires via E-mail. Recipients would simply edit in their response to questions and then

return the edited message to the original sender. It would seem that researchers could collect data rapidly and conveniently this way. Postal mail often causes delays (Sproull 1986: 160).

As E-mail becomes more accessible, the possibility of collecting data from a large sample on a computer network becomes a distinct possibility. Mehta and Sivadas (1995: 430) have conducted research on the use of E-mail as a data collection tool and conclude that researchers are viewing E-mail as a routine research tool of the future. Given the fact that this study had the potential of generating a large number of respondents, which had cost implications, the researcher adopted the electronic method of delivering the questionnaire. The researcher recognised the persuasive arguments, including those that will be discussed later in this chapter, of E-mail being a good research instrument delivery tool.

6.3.2.3.1 E-mail as a research tool

As new telecommunications technologies develop, E-mail gains further impetus as a pervasive means of communication. Over the last decade, E-mail has been integrated into all spheres including the academic community. Academics have particular interest in E-mail as a research tool given that most academics have free access to computers and the Internet (Burton 2000b: 329). Although there is a scarcity of discussion of E-mail as an academic research tool, Selwyn and Robson (2003: 86) state that there have been moves toward using E-mail as a research tool primarily in the form of a quantitative instrument such as electronic questionnaires. McAuley (2003b: 217) argues that quantitative survey methods are more conducive to online research because the data required does not rely on 'quality' interaction between the researcher and the respondent.

The principal feature of using the E-mail as a research tool is the speed and immediacy it offers. The E-mail creates an almost instantaneous dialogue between the researcher and the respondent. Selwyn and Robson (2003: 86-87) suggest a failing of E-mail as a research tool in that it is self-selective and therefore tends to cover a biased population. In the academic community, this may be

less of a factor. As the E-mail becomes more widespread the problem of limited coverage may decrease but other difficulties may arise. A further problem with the E-mail is that as electronic communication becomes more common, there will be information overload and research via the E-mail runs the risk of becoming marginalised as a form of electronic 'junk mail'. As E-mail becomes more popular, the average individual will be inundated with E-mail so much so that attending to every E-mail message will be almost impossible. Attempts by researchers to gain information via E-mail may be simply ignored by the deluged recipient at the other end of the line (Selwyn and Robson 2003: 87). However, the negative implications of the E-mail method of delivery are still hypothetical as they have not yet been tested.

The postal system has a track record of being a reliable method of delivery. The electronic method is not a flawless method of delivery. However, its current strengths outweigh its current weaknesses and seemed a very feasible method of delivery for this research.

6.3.2.3.2 E-mail versus post mail

Researchers have traditionally relied on postal questionnaires and interviews as data collection methods. The researcher has selected self-administered questionnaires as the data gathering instrument. However, the researcher had to decide between the postal mail system or the online mail system as the method of delivering the questionnaire.

E-mail is essentially an electronic version of the postal mail. Both have a number of similarities. Like post mail, every individual has a unique E-mail address. Researchers have to contemplate a number of issues when deciding on the method of delivering the data collecting instrument. Important issues such as speed, cost, convenience, response rate and quality of data influence the choice of method of delivery of the questionnaire.

6.3.2.3.2.1 Speed

An E-mail can be sent across the world in a matter of seconds. Similarly, replies can flow back just as fast. Post mail takes much longer. Researchers may find it quicker to send the E-mail questionnaires however, the reply is dependent on E-mail weary respondents opening the mail and responding (Mehta and Sivadas 1995: 430).

6.3.2.3.2.2 Cost

It is suggested by Sproull (1986: 159) that E-mail questionnaires have the potential of producing responses at a lower cost than postal questionnaires.

Once respondents have access to a network, the original costs of collecting and communicating data electronically are much lower than costs of interviewing, telephoning and sending questionnaires through postal mail. These savings may be even more substantial if the respondents are scattered geographically. E-mail is generally free as many have access to E-mail by virtue of their work situations while the cost of post mail could be substantial.

6.3.2.3.2.3 Sample control

Typically, in any mail survey, a researcher has little control on who actually completes the questionnaire once it arrives on the respondents' address. Mehta and Sivadas (1995: 430) argue that E-mail provides more control than postal mail in that most users read their own E-mail. Usually colleagues or secretaries at work do not read and answer someone's E-mail. Individuals with E-mail tend to guard their electronic mailbox. Thus a survey intended for an individual is more likely to be read and answered by that individual.

6.3.2.3.2.4 Convenience

Once a file (questionnaire) is created it can be E-mailed easily. All that is required is to type the respondent's E-mail address. This is time saving. Although E-mail involves personnel costs in that E-mails have to be E-mailed individually to the respondents, when the mail is distributed it can be saved in the mailbox. Thereafter, it becomes extremely convenient for repeated communications with the respondent - like follow-up reminders. Another convenient feature is that all questionnaires that come back have the time and date. Further, if one types an incorrect address, the system will provide an immediate alert (Mehta and Sivadas 1995: 431).

6.3.2.3.2.5 Response rate

Research conducted reveals that more than half of all completed E-mail questionnaires were received in two or three days. In contrast, it took three weeks to receive half the completed questionnaires from the post mail. Thus, on average mail questionnaires take about ten times longer to return (Mehta and Sivadas 1995: 435).

Burton (2000b: 330) cautions that there is evidence to suggest that non-response is high in E-mail surveys. However, the high level of non-response can be countered by making more attempts to reach respondents. Multiple reminders are therefore essential for E-mail surveys to be successful. A review of E-mail surveys in the existing literature suggests that the average response rate for E-mail surveys with a single contact is 28.5% compared with 41 % for two contacts and 57% for three or more contacts (Burton 2000b: 330).

6.3.2.3.3 Advantages and disadvantages of the E-mail method of delivering questionnaires

E-mail potentially offers researchers many advantages such as easy access to certain sample populations, low administration costs (both in terms of finance and time) and its 'friendliness' to respondents. However, Selwyn and Robson (2003: 86-87) argue that E-mail has its constraints as its popularity resides with the young and high income male earners. Further, it is limited to those that have access to computers and the Internet.

It is the opinion of Selwyn and Robson (2003: 88) that E-mail is being used as a replacement for the conventional postal questionnaire. Research indicates that 'electronic' questionnaires have a very favourable response rate when compared to the typical 20-50% response rates usually achieved by conventional mail surveys. However, there is a need to do follow-ups as Burton (2000b: 330) cautions that response rates are not as high as postal mail surveys because of the increase in 'junk E-mail'.

Another positive of the E-mail method of gathering data is the ability of the software to allow the dispatcher of the message the option of notification when the recipient has received the message and when he/she has read it. Although this possibility raises questions of confidentiality, E-mail does offer the researcher slightly more 'control' over the questionnaires once they have been sent (Selwyn and Robson 2003: 88). On the negative side, it is virtually impossible to guarantee the respondent anonymity as their name (or at the least their E-mail address) is automatically included in their reply. McAuley (2003b: 219) disagrees with Selwyn and Robson (2003: 88) and Mehta and Sivadas (1995: 430) as he is of the opinion that the researcher has less control over who responds to the questionnaire as any person could masquerade as the legitimate respondent.

Despite the fact that sending the same E-mail to multiple addresses in one action as a large 'mail-shot' to respondents, is relatively straightforward, conducting a survey online immediately places limitations on the potential sample, in so far as the researcher can only access respondents that have

access to the Internet and respondents that are computer literate (McAuley 2003b: 219). The survey populations, in this study, were limited to those working in a LIS environment at tertiary institutions and the three offices of the national trade unions servicing the tertiary education sector. It was assumed by the researcher that subjects of both population groups had access to computers at their places of work and were functionally computer literate.

It is the view of Selwyn and Robson (2003: 86) that there is considerable practical advantage of the E-mail method of gathering data as it provides 'ready-transcribed' data. This practical advantage is confirmed by the University of KwaZulu-Natal's information technology (IT) consultants, Reynolds and Kara (2003), when they state that the data gathered via E-mail can easily be converted into a format that can be read by most statistical analysis packages. Alternatively, simple programmes can be written to extract relevant information. This information could be in the format of tables that can be cross referenced. Such capabilities are more than adequate for analysis in this study.

Having given serious consideration to the aforementioned arguments, the researcher was convinced that the E-mail method of gathering data was feasible for this study. The decision to deliver the questionnaire electronically had been taken after much deliberation. However, such a decision has repercussions for the format of delivery, namely, was the questionnaire going to be word-processed or was the questionnaire going to be on a web page. The format, which will be discussed later, has implications for an efficient method of gathering data.

6.3.2.4 Database of E-mail addresses

One of the key prerequisites, in the opinion of Burton (2000b: 321), when using the E-mail system for data collection is a good list of mailing addresses. It is argued that the way the researcher selects his/her sample has serious implications for the feasibility of different methods of data collection (Burton 2000b: 321). The researcher, in this study, made substantial efforts to ensure that there was a good E-mail list of the survey population before adopting the online data

collection method. Burton (2000b: 330) states that the E-mail method of delivering the questionnaire is highly suitable in samples where E-mail access is high. Early indications (in this study) were that E-mail access by staff, in the tertiary education LIS environment, was high. The process of generating the list of E-mail addresses is outlined below.

The researcher developed a database of E-mail addresses of staff employed in a number of tertiary institution libraries in South Africa. The initial attempt in developing the database was done informally, that is, requesting colleagues to make available their E-mail addresses. This method was not very successful.

This attempt was followed by a formal process of writing to all directors/heads of libraries requesting a list of E-mail addresses of all library staff employed within their institutions. This request was sent via the E-mail system. Unfortunately, a number of the mail messages bounced back as undelivered. One of the main reasons for the bouncing back of E-mail was that the E-mail address was incorrect. The other problem, according to staff of the Information Technology Networking Division of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Docrat 2004) was with the University's network. For the former problem, that is, the addresses being incorrect, the addresses were corrected and the E-mail resent. For the latter problem, a number of attempts were made to resend the E-mail to ensure that the message was conveyed to the directors/heads of the library.

The feedback from the institutions that did receive the message was generally positive. There was one institution that stated that generating the list was time consuming and that if the researcher sent the questionnaire to the director, the said director would reroute the message to all the staff within that institution. However, there were institutions which refused to provide such a list. The reason given for not meeting the request was that management's policy prohibited the provision of E-mail addresses of their staff to persons outside of the institution. Another reason for the negative response was that the director indicated that s/he did not have the time to generate such a list. Four institutions (refer to *Tables 3 and 4*) did not respond at all.

The above was followed by searches of the web sites of all institutions that had web sites. However, a number of institutions did not have the required information on their web sites. Unfortunately, there was a good match between the institutions that did not respond to the earlier E-mail messages and institutions that did not have web sites or that the web site did not have the required information.

In the case of those institutions that did not respond to the E-mail message, the message was sent to the inter-library loan department requesting that the message be re-routed to the director/head of the library. Success using this method was limited. As a last resort, the message was sent by facsimile to the respective directors/heads of the libraries.

A final effort at securing E-mail address was made at the professional association's (LIASA) national conference held in September 2003. The researcher distributed copies of the letter requesting a list of E-mail addresses of staff of the institution, to representatives of those institutions for which the researcher did not have the necessary E-mail addresses. This method of acquiring the information had limited success as only one of the institutions responded to the request.

It must be noted that some of the larger university/technikon libraries did not respond to the request for E-mail addresses nor did they have the necessary information on their website. The researcher views this as a limitation to the study. In a profession that is relatively confined, it would have been a fair expectation to have a list that gave access to all relevant staff employed within the sector.

Below is a list of technikon and university libraries¹¹ that were surveyed.

Table 1: Technikon libraries (N=13)

Border Technikon
Cape Technikon
Durban Institute of Technology (DIT)
Eastern Cape Technikon
Free State Technikon
Mangosuthu Technikon
Peninsula Technikon
Port Elizabeth Technikon
Pretoria Technikon
Technikon Northern Gauteng
Technikon South Africa (TSA)
Technikon Witwatersrand
Vaal Triangle Technikon

¹¹ At the time of administering the questionnaire, although tertiary institutions were legislatively merged, the only library that was functioning as a merged organisation was the Durban Institute of Technology.

Table 2: University libraries (N=20)

Medical University of Southern Africa
North-West University
Potchefstroom University
Rand Afrikaans University
Rhodes University
University of Cape Town
University of Fort Hare
University of Free State
University of KwaZulu-Natal
University of Port Elizabeth
University of Pretoria
University of South Africa (Unisa)
University of Stellenbosch
University of the North
University of Transkei
University of Venda
University of Western Cape
University of Witwatersrand
University of Zululand
Vista University

6.3.2.5 Format of the questionnaire

The researcher had taken the decision to deliver the questionnaire electronically. However, the format of the questionnaire is important as it has implications for an efficient method of gathering data.

6.3.2.5.1 Using word-processing packages and E-mail

Care must be taken when using word-processed questionnaires to be distributed online. Coombes (2001: 142) cautions that

if you have decided that you are going to distribute your questionnaire on the Internet to a specific discussion group, it is important that you design your questionnaire using specific formats, otherwise your finished questionnaire, that looked great when you sent it, will arrive at the other end looking rather scrambled. Another disadvantage of designing a questionnaire using just word-processing software is that it is difficult to ensure that your respondents can tick or put a cross in the box provided it has been drawn in certain ways.

It was brought to researcher's attention by Coombes (2001: 142) that using 'symbols' such as causes problems, for example, the respondents cannot insert a cross or tick in the symbol. Simple layout issues which researchers may take for granted, such as leaving space for the respondent to key in a response, may affect the questionnaire layout as the alignment may be altered. This could result in the questionnaire layout being untidy and not pleasant for the respondent to answer.

However, Coombes (2001) says that it is possible to send out a questionnaire using word-processing software. The researcher, however, needs to explain to the respondents that there might be a slight display problem. It would seem though that Coombes has a preference for a web page questionnaire and the researcher of this study was convinced that the web page option was a better one than the word-processed option.

6.3.2.5.2 Creating an online web questionnaire

The biggest advantage of creating a questionnaire in a web page format is that its layout can look very professional and when returned to the researcher the responses will be clearly indicated. There can be no mistake as to where the tick is. In a web page questionnaire, the researcher is able to insert small check boxes or options buttons that enable the respondent to click where s/he wishes to indicate an affirmative or negative reply and an automatic tick will appear in that box. The researcher can also insert a box where the respondent can choose from pre-prepared drop-down list of optional replies just by clicking on a downward arrow beside the question. Further, the researcher could add a scroll bar to enable quick access around the questionnaire (Coombes 2001: 147-148).

Another advantage of the web based questionnaire is that the World Wide Web is the fastest growing Internet resource and that HyperText Markup Language (HTML) is the most common language that is currently used. Most computers can view documents written in HTML language which would mean that the questionnaire will be in a format that can be read and completed by the respondent. It is also possible to convert documents created in other computer languages into an HTML document (Coombes 2001: 143).

The researcher, in this study, used the web page format to distribute the questionnaire to solicit data. This decision was made for the following reasons:

- the web based method has better facilities to ensure that the questionnaire is clear and that it can be followed readily and completed easily;
- HTML is much more powerful than word-processing packages;
- HTML allows the researcher to insert small check boxes or option buttons that will enable the respondent to click to indicate an affirmative or negative response and an automatic tick will appear in that box;

- there is a facility to protect the questionnaire so respondents can only enter information where the researcher indicates. The respondents are unable to move text around or inadvertently insert spaces or other unwanted formats which sometimes happens with a word-processed questionnaire sent electronically, and
- the web based method allows the researcher to combine various features when creating the web questionnaire. These special features can make the questionnaire easier to complete

(Coombes 2001: 146-148).

6.3.2.6 Pretest and pilot study

Once the questionnaire has been prepared, it is useful to administer it among a few people to ensure that the questions are clear, that is, that all questions mean the same to all respondents. Further, all other problems with the questionnaire may be identified and ironed out before it is administered to the entire population. Ideally, the people completing the draft questionnaire should be similar to those respondents whom the researcher hopes will complete the final copy. However, this is not always possible. If the researcher cannot secure a sample of the larger population, Bell (1997:11) suggests that the researcher should, at the least try it out on colleagues. Reading over a questionnaire is not at all the same as actually trying to fill it in (Bell 1997: 11; Coombes 2001: 136; Laws 2003: 268). Thus it is important to secure a group of individuals who will actually complete the questionnaire.

Babbie (1990: 220) outlines the difference between pretesting and piloting. Pretesting is the initial testing of the questionnaire. A pilot study refers to “miniaturise walk-throughs of the entire study design” (Babbie 1990: 220). In July 2003, the researcher pretested the questionnaire with a small group of colleagues at the then University of Natal Libraries, Durban. The sample constituted five librarians categorised as professionals and five support staff. All ten questionnaires were completed fully with comments from the professional respondents. The issues raised by the respondents related to ambiguity and leading questions. The respondents also commented on the fact that the

researcher had made assumptions with regard to the level of knowledge of the respondents on certain issues.

The researcher addressed the issues raised by the respondents in a re-drafted questionnaire. The original questionnaire was word-processed, printed and then administered for a second pretest. The re-drafted questionnaire addressed the problems that were brought to the attention of the researcher by the respondents from the pretesting group. The researcher subsequently converted the word-processed questionnaire to HTML format and administered it as a pilot study among the same sample group in September 2003 to ensure that the questionnaire was free of ambiguity. The primary purpose of piloting the HTML version of the questionnaire was to ensure that the questionnaire could be administered electronically.

The questionnaire was successfully delivered to the pilot group. The pilot group completed all the items in the questionnaire which was successfully captured, automatically (refer to section 6.3.3.1), onto a database. There were no changes to the pilot study. In the opinion of the researcher, the entire process (that is, the delivery, the completing of the questionnaire and the automatic capture of the data) was a success. Having secured a successful pilot study, the researcher administered the questionnaire to the employee survey population.

6.3.2.7 Return date

It has been argued by Coombes (2001: 137) that it is essential to give a date by which the questionnaire should be returned. If a return date is not given, it is likely to be put aside to be completed when there is some spare time, in which case the researcher may never receive it. For postal questionnaires, there is a rule of thumb that two weeks is about the right time that should be allowed for the return of a completed questionnaire (Coombes 2001: 137). The researcher assumed that Coombes (2001) had not taken into consideration delays in using postal mail. However, most E-mails are answered within a day or so of receipt. Coombes advises that it would be wise to

include a short sentence at the beginning of the E-mail confirming the return date of the online questionnaire.

According to Reynolds and Kara (2003), delivering the questionnaire via E-mail gives the researcher the advantage of recording on a continuous basis the respondents who have replied and those that have not. Bell (1997: 86) cautions “that higher non-response rate could distort results, and so, if at all possible, some effort should be made to encourage more people to return completed questionnaires.” The researcher is of the opinion that a week is more than ample time for the respondents to complete and return the questionnaire. The researcher did follow-ups as advised by Bell (1997: 86) and Burton (2000b: 330). Given the fact that the method of delivery makes follow-up easier, the researcher sent three reminders (refer to Appendix 3).

6.3.3 Analysing data

According to Durrheim (1999b: 98) the first stage of data analysis is the preparatory stage during which the raw data (for this research it was the completed questionnaires) are transformed into a data set in machine-readable format. This preparatory stage involves coding, entering and cleaning of data.

6.3.3.1 Preparing the data

The researcher drafted a questionnaire that generated two sets of data, that is, quantitative data and qualitative data. The preparation of the two sets of data, for analysis and interpretation, differed.

6.3.3.1.1 Quantitative data

The mass of data that the researcher receives must be reduced and then analysed so that a succinct set of conclusions can be reported. The process of reducing the data to some form suitable for analysis is referred to as data reduction. Essentially, data reduction is the transformation of the raw

data into a form which can be analysed. This may involve transforming qualitative data into quantitative data by some form of numerical coding, or re-coding existing numerical data into different categories. The coding of the data is done to make the data suitable for computer analysis. Data analysis consists of running various appropriate statistical procedures and tests on the data (Bailey 1994: 338; Neuman 1997: 295; Blaikie 2000: 31).

The primary method of reducing quantitative data is by coding. Coding for computer analysis generally consists of assigning a code number to each answer category so that the answers can be stored in the computer. It is much easier to store and retrieve numbers than it is to store and retrieve letters or words. Therefore it is necessary to change word or sentence responses to numbers. In essence it means, rather than punch a 'yes' or a 'no' response into the computer, it is much simpler and take less space to assign each answer a number (for example, 'yes' equals 1 and 'no' equals 2) and simply punch the appropriate number into the computer (Bailey 1994: 339).

The keying-in of the appropriate number into the computer is in essence capturing the data. The data entered onto the computer has to be 'cleaned', especially if a survey has a large number of respondents, as proofreading is very difficult. As an alternative to proofreading, researchers resort to a compromise with a crude method of checking for clerical errors. This is often referred to as data cleaning (Bailey 1994: 346). Neuman (1997: 297) points out the importance of cleaning when he states that "Errors made when coding or entering data into a computer threaten the validity of measures and causing misleading." Therefore it is important to check the accuracy of the coding and entering and to 'clean' the data to ensure that it is free of errors. The researcher of this study had very little 'cleaning' to do as a programme was written to capture the data automatically.

6.3.3.1.2 Qualitative data

Analysing and interpreting qualitative data is the process of systematically organising data received from open-ended questions thereby making the data meaningful. It entails organising the data into

'chunks' (analysis) and bringing meaning to those 'chunks' (interpretation) (Rossman and Rallis 1998: 171; Blaikie 2000: 3).

Qualitative analysis focuses on identifying frequently occurring phenomena which are often referred to as patterns of behaviour. The researcher would have to develop unique categories through a series of cyclical processes, reducing the categories to both discrete and representative patterns found in the range of data collected (Sharp and Howard 1996: 114-115).

In converting the data into 'chunks' and bringing meaning to the 'chunks' the researcher, in essence, will be converting qualitative data into a more quantitative framework. This will be done by:

- identifying the target communication;
- identifying the variety of occurring phenomena in the communication;
- going through each communication assigning statements to reduce the variety and create consistency; and
- counting the number of times each phenomenon is addressed in each communication.

When the researcher took the decision to deliver the questionnaire electronically, attention was paid to the advice given by Laws (2003: 307, 406) which was to pre-code the questionnaires. The method of delivery and the pre-coding of the data were compatible. All the data that was expected to come in from the respondents was coded automatically and in a format that could be analysed. Therefore there was no need to use the tried and tested package of *SPSS* generally used for analysis of data in social science research. Bailey (1994: 413) points out that such statistical packages consist of a substantial number of already written programmes which relieves the researcher of the necessity of writing programmes to suit the research. The researcher in this study opted for developing a programme for analysis to suit the research as it formed an integral part of a bigger process of developing an electronic method of distribution and analysis.

The researcher had used a number of open-ended items in the questionnaires. The data received in response to the open-ended items were subjected to content analysis. Neuman (1997: 272-273) points out that “content analysis is a technique for gathering and analysing the content of text.” The researcher grouped text responses with common themes into ‘chunks’ and analysed these ‘chunks’ of data. Text responses that could not be grouped into common themes were analysed as single theme responses.

6.3.3.2 Presenting the data

The second stage of data analysis is the selection of relevant sets of data from the huge amount of data that is anticipated. The researcher must select and represent the basic data in a concise but understandable format. The usual way of presenting summaries of a large amount of quantitative data is through frequency distributions. Frequency distributions were presented, in this study, in the form of tables and graphs. These show the number or proportion of respondents who gave particular responses or values to a specific item in the questionnaire.

Cornford and Smithson (1996: 116) state that the purpose of “empirical research is not to just describe what is happening in a particular area but rather to find evidence to support (or reject) certain ideas or theories.” The researcher must ensure that the data is presented with conclusive evidence of relationships between particular sets of data. The researcher, in this study, made use of cross-tabulations to show relationships between variables.

It is the opinion of Blaikie (2000: 31) that “if all the other design decisions have been made carefully and consistently, the decisions about the method of analysis should be straightforward.” It is the view of the researcher that due consideration was given to the design of the questionnaire, the method of delivery and the method of analysis.

After engaging in a detailed survey of the literature and the acquisition and analysis of a substantial amount of data gathered from the research populations, a model was developed.

6.3.4 Developing a model

According to Bless and Higson-Smith (2000: 10) in developing a model, certain aspects of the phenomena are singled out, represented in their pure, simplified form and then studied in the absence of the actual object. According to Underwood (1996: 148), “simply defined, a model is anything which represents those parts of reality considered essential for some purpose”. The advantage of developing a model is its reductive property, that is, only the main characteristics are considered. This view expressed by Bless and Higson-Smith (2000: 10) is supported by Kebede (2002: 71) who points out that the strength of modelling is its ability to capture and communicate essential aspects of the phenomena in order to generate a better understanding of the phenomena. The characteristics which do not affect the process under study are ignored and the properties of the model can then be studied in the absence of the original object of the study (Bless and Higson-Smith 2000: 10).

MacKay (2003) points out that there are a number of different types of models. One such example is the conceptual model. In explaining what a conceptual model is, Mackay (2003) says,

People receive information, process this information, and respond accordingly... This sort of processing of information is essentially a conceptual model (or mental model) of how things in our surrounding environment work.

In this study, the findings of the survey of the literature and the findings of the survey of LIS employees and trade union officials (information received) were analysed (information processed). The findings from the survey of LIS employees revealed a need which could not be accommodated by the current trade union structures. In suggesting a way forward, the researcher proposed a model. According to Underwood (1996: 166) the aim of a conceptual model is to stimulate discussion about how a particular change can be achieved. Given that only the tertiary education sector of the LIS environment was examined in this study, the intention of the researcher was to present a tertiary LIS education sector model to stimulate discussion in the hope of bringing about change that would meet the needs of those working in the LIS sector generally.

6.3.5 Evaluation of the research methodology

It is argued by Bless and Higson-Smith (2000: 126) that no measurement technique in social science is perfect. Therefore, it is important for social science researchers to use reliability and validity to evaluate the measures that have been used. Before engaging in a discussion of reliability and validity, it is important to examine the ethical considerations that guided the study.

6.3.5.1 Ethical considerations

Social research is a dynamic process that often involves an intrusion into people's lives and therefore largely depends on the establishment of a successful relationship between the researcher and the respondent(s). Central to this relationship is ethical responsibility, integral to the research topic and to research design and planning...Ethical responsibility is essential at all stages of the research process, from the design of a study, including how participants are recruited, to how they are treated through the course of these procedures, and finally to the consequences of their participation (McAuley 2003a: 95).

The common understanding of ethics is the differentiation between what is legitimate or acceptable in pursuit of an aim. May (1999: 54) places this understanding in a research context illustrating the ethical obligations of the researcher. According to May (1999: 54) ethical decisions are concerned with what is right or just in the interests of the research and the participants in that research. Ngulube (2003: 23) argues that the variables that form the basis of ethics are honesty, integrity, courtesy and consideration. These variables are expanded by Neuman (1997: 452) to include privacy, anonymity and confidentiality, and voluntary consent. Bless and Higson-Smith (2000: 100) adds to the issue of consent. They argue that throughout the process of data collection the problem of persuading participants to co-operate with the researcher is ever present. The researcher must accept that the participants have the right to refuse to participate and the researcher must respect this right.

McAuley (2003a: 96) and Bless and Higson-Smith (2000: 100) point out that participation in research must be voluntary and the respondents can refuse to divulge certain information about themselves. The researcher in this study ensured that this issue of voluntarism was not infringed in any way. For example, in the initial development of the web-based questionnaire, respondents were not allowed to *submit* a reply unless all the items in the questionnaire had been completed. The researcher subsequently had the programme rewritten to allow respondents to answer selectively, thereby respecting the right to privacy.

Ngulube (2003: 233) points out that consent is a key component in ethical considerations. The researcher sent out numerous reminders to the possible respondents for the completion of the questionnaire. Care was taken to urge the possible respondents and not to badger them. A total of 1 514 questionnaires were distributed electronically. The total number of responses received was 307 indicating that those that did respond did so willingly. Another variable, according to Ngulube (2003: 23), underpinning sound ethical principles in research is honesty. In the letter that accompanied the questionnaire, the researcher assured the respondents that anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained by capturing the responses automatically onto a database without reflecting the identity of the individual respondent. Respondents were told that the institutions that they worked at will be reflected. The researcher was honest in indicating that the institution would not remain anonymous. A number of respondents opted to exercise their right to privacy and did not indicate their institution (refer to section 7.2.1.1). The researcher must reiterate that he could not identify any of the respondents - adhering to the principles of anonymity and confidentiality.

The researcher made every effort to uphold the fundamental principles governing ethics when conducting research - from the design of a study to the recruiting of the respondents. Ethical considerations were also applied in the analysis and presentation of the findings. McAuley (2003a: 98) and Ngulube (2003: 234) caution about the dishonest reporting of findings. They agree that deliberate falsification of results is inexcusable. McAuley (2003a: 98) adds that inappropriate analysis and reportage of findings can be as misleading as deliberate falsification of data.

The researcher in this study made every attempt to reveal all processes and data as accurately as possible and that included all the technical shortcomings (for example, refer to section 7.2.1.6.2.1). Further, the researcher reported on all the results irrespective of whether they were positive or negative. It is also acknowledged that there were some unexpected findings (for example, refer to section 8.2.3.4) and these were reported as unexpected. Fortunately, these unexpected findings were not in contradiction with the objectives of the research. In fact, the unexpected findings added value to this study. The researcher was aware that the replication of results is one of the key safeguards against falsification of data and enables checks against the veracity and reliability of any set of results. The researcher is confident that if the study is replicated the results would be very similar to those contained in this study.

6.3.5.2 Reliability and validity

There are two important considerations, according to Leedy (1993: 40), in social research and these are, reliability and validity. Reliability deals with accuracy of the instrument. It asks questions such as: how accurate is the instrument that is used in making the measurement (Leedy 1993: 42)? Validity, on the other hand, is concerned with the soundness or the effectiveness of the instrument. Validity would raise such questions as: what does the test measure? Does it measure what it is supposed to measure? How well, how comprehensively and how accurately does it measure it? Kidder in May (1999: 68) sums-up these two important concepts when he says that

research is valid when the conclusions are true. It is reliable when the findings are repeatable. Reliability and validity are requirements for both the design and the measurement of research. At the level of research design, we examine the conclusions and ask whether they are true and repeatable.

It is clear that the principle of replicating the survey with the same results using the same type of sampling and questionnaire is central to reliability and validity. A replication of a survey producing the same results with different groups at different times will increase confidence in the first findings.

Bless and Higson-Smith (2000: 126) purport that the greater the consistency in the results, the greater the reliability of the measuring procedure. However, Neuman (1997: 138) argues that, in social science research, "perfect reliability and validity are virtually impossible to achieve."

To achieve a high level of reliability, it is suggested by Bless and Higson-Smith (2000: 127-129) and Neuman (1997: 138-139) that the researcher uses one or a combination of the following techniques:

- test-retest reliability - the same measurement procedure is applied to the same group of people on two or more occasions;
- equivalent-form reliability - tries to address the problem of reactivity by changing the original test slightly at the second testing. Thus, instead of giving the same test to the same set of subjects on two or more occasions, this method requires the researcher to use an equivalent form of the instrument after the first testing ; or
- split-halves reliability - concerned with internal consistency of the instrument. A more detailed method of estimating the internal consistency of an instrument is found in item analysis. In this case, the researcher is interested in finding out how well the responses to each item corresponds with the responses to the other items and to the test as a whole. This helps the researcher to identify those items within the instrument which are not providing useful information about the subjects or which are actually confusing the data. The researcher can address troublesome items to increase overall reliability of the instrument.

The researcher, in this study, did not make use of the test-retest technique nor the equivalent-form reliability technique. The test-retest techniques were not used because it was thought not to be feasible given the large number of possible respondents distributed throughout the nine provinces of South Africa. Further, it was the opinion of the researcher that the possible respondents would not accord the researcher their time to complete a questionnaire more than once. The researcher did make every attempt to ensure that there was internal consistency in the instrument, that is, all that the items meant the same to all the possible respondents. This was done by conducting

pretests and a pilot study. The pilot study was conducted to also ensure that the instrument could be administered electronically. The pretests and pilot study are discussed earlier in this chapter.

Every attempt was made to ensure that the instrument achieved a high level of reliability. However, an instrument with very high reliability is useless if it has poor validity. The converse is also true and that is, an instrument with very low reliability should not be used merely because it has very high validity. In asking the questions “what does this instrument actually measure?” and “what do the results actually mean?”, the researcher determines the validity of the instrument (Bless and Higson-Smith 2000: 130).

In this study, the researcher began with an in-depth review of the literature to determine the theoretical background to the study. Such a review enabled the researcher to determine information that the instrument was required to uncover and then design questions to secure that information. By following this process the researcher was able to link the items in the questionnaire (and thus the instrument as a whole) to the theoretical components of the research, thereby contributing to validity of the study.

The researcher suggests that the survey could be replicated with very similar results as every effort was made to ensure high levels of reliability and validity.

6.3.5.3 Problems related to using electronically delivered questionnaires

The questionnaire method of gathering data is tried and tested. However, the electronic method of delivering the questionnaire and soliciting responses electronically, especially in South Africa, is still in its infancy. This method of delivery, although successful in the opinion of the researcher, had certain limitations. For example, the period between November 2003 and May 2004 (when the survey was conducted) proved to be problematic as a number of different computer viruses were active at the international and national level. The tertiary institutions in South Africa were also affected by these computer viruses. The prevalence of these viruses was exacerbated by problems

with computer servers. Some respondents E-mailed the researcher stating that they were not able to return the completed questionnaires as their computer systems would not allow them to submit the completed questionnaire. The inability of the respondents to return the completed questionnaire electronically was attributed to problems with the servers of these institutions, including the host institution (University of KwaZulu-Natal).

Respondents also complained that:

- they were 'timed out' while completing the questionnaire; and
- they were busy at work and could not take the questionnaire home and have it completed.

Other negatives regarding the use of the electronic method of gathering data included:

- a large number of respondents were still not comfortable with computer technology; and
- while the researcher had acquired E-mail addresses of all staff within the library environment in the tertiary education sector, not all staff had their own desktop computers.

However, on the positive side was the fact that the method did offer a cost effective way of gathering data. As stated above, this method of distributing the questionnaire electronically accorded the researcher the privilege of sending three reminders to almost 1500 potential respondents at the press of a button. The researcher had created four groups of E-mail addresses and needed to send only four messages to reach 1500 potential respondents. Further, the method of delivering the questionnaire electronically kept the researcher informed as to whether the message was being delivered as the system would inform the researcher of 'undelivered mail'. This allowed the researcher to use contingency plans to ensure that the questionnaire was delivered to potential respondents. The researcher is of the opinion that this electronic method of delivering the questionnaire and reviewing completed questionnaires electronically was a significant contributor to the 20.98 percent response rate.

The data that was generated using electronically delivered questionnaires was analysed using descriptive statistical analysis as well as content analysis. Both methods of data analysis were appropriate and adequate for the study.

6.4 SUMMARY

As stated earlier in this chapter, Leedy (1993: 114) discusses the importance of the researcher bringing all the research components together and creating a link, as advised by Durrheim (1999a: 29), between the research objectives and questions and the implementation of the research. This chapter has described the research methodology and data collection techniques employed in the study. A substantial section has been devoted to discussing the online method of administering the questionnaire and the impact of that decision (that is, the decision to deliver the research instrument electronically) on the format of delivery, method of collecting data and the proposed method of analysis. The next chapter will present the empirical data collected.

CHAPTER SEVEN: PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Brause (2000: 127) points out that, “as the researcher, it is your responsibility to explain what you have found, what you discovered from your data...”. The primary focus of this chapter is to explain what the researcher has found, that is, presenting the findings based on the analysis of the data collected for the study via the two questionnaires. The two questionnaires referred to are: (1) the questionnaire for employees within the LIS sector (refer to **Appendix 1**), and (2) the questionnaire for union officials of the three national unions servicing the tertiary education sector (refer to **Appendix 2**). The previous chapter sets out the research design that was adopted to achieve the objectives of the study and discussed the method of data analysis used in this study. Detailed discussion with respect to issues relating to the research questions and objectives of the study is provided in the following chapter. The next chapter is the ‘discussion chapter’ where the researcher brings together the findings in the survey of the relevant literature and the findings in the survey of the relevant research populations.

In the previous chapter the researcher pointed out that the questionnaires for LIS employees and trade union officials were pre-coded. All the information or data supplied by the respondents were coded automatically. Given the fact that the data was pre-coded and that it was automatically captured, a simple data processing package was written to analyse the data and to generate the tables and graphs in this chapter. This simple package was used in reducing large amounts of quantitative data through frequency distributions. The frequency distributions are presented in the text, tables and graphs. These show the number or proportion of respondents who gave particular responses or values to a specific item in the questionnaire. It should be noted that where percentage distributions are presented in the findings these have been rounded off to one point after the decimal point where necessary which means at times total percentages would be a point or two under or over 100 percent. However, this rounding off does not apply to the *Figures*. The open-ended items were subjected to content analysis.

The researcher has administered two questionnaires to the two different research populations. The findings from the survey of the LIS tertiary education sector population are grouped together to address the relevant research objective/s and the corresponding research question/s. Similarly, the findings from the survey of trade union officials are clustered to address the relevant research objective/s and the corresponding research question/s.

The questionnaire that was administered to the LIS tertiary education sector employees addressed the following research objectives:

- To identify the factors that have influenced the growth of unionism in the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa (which is the second research objective of the study – refer to sections 1.4 and 6.2);
- To investigate the need for an organisation to address the industrial needs of LIS employees in this sector (which is the fourth research objective of the study – refer to sections 1.4 and 6.2); and
- To investigate the feasibility of combining the industrial objectives of a trade union and the professional objectives of a professional association into a single organisation that will represent the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa (which is the sixth research objective of the study – refer to sections 1.4 and 6.2).

and the following corresponding research questions:

- What are the factors that have influenced the growth of unions in the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa?;
- Do the employees of the sector need an organisation to address their industrial issues?;
~~and~~
- Is it feasible to combine the industrial objectives of a trade union and professional objectives of a professional association into a single organisation to represent the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa?

The questionnaire that was administered to the union officials addressed the research objective: 'to investigate the feasibility of unionising the tertiary education component of the LIS sector under a single employee representative body' and the corresponding research question: 'to what extent can the present union structure accommodate a sector specific organisation addressing the issues of that sector?' It should be noted that while the issue of women and the LIS profession is discussed in previous chapters as a factor negating the growth of unionism in the LIS sector, in this chapter the findings on this issue will be presented when the researcher examines the distribution of employees within the sector.

7.2.1 Survey of LIS tertiary education sector employees

The study surveyed all those employed in tertiary education libraries and the senior officials of the three national unions. The presentation of the results in this Chapter is split into two, namely, the presentation of (1) the findings of the LIS employees and (2) the findings of the national union officials.

7.2.1.1 Distribution of respondents

Tables 3 and 4 reflect the distribution of respondents from the various tertiary education libraries in South Africa. *Table 3* shows the technikon libraries that participated in the survey and *Table 4* presents the various university libraries that were participants.

Table 3: Distribution of technikon respondents

Institution (Technikons)	Number of questionnaires E-mailed	Number of E-mailed questionnaires returned undelivered	Responses from institutions	% of responses received
Border Technikon	14	1	2	15.4
Cape Technikon	56	4	6	11.5
DIT	77	6	32	45
Eastern Cape Technikon	11	0	0	0
Free State Technikon	25	1	2	8.3
Mangosuthu Technikon	18	1	8	47.1
Peninsula Technikon	19	0	7	36.8
Port Elizabeth Technikon	53	2	3	5.9
Pretoria Technikon	49	0	7	14.3
Technikon Northern Gauteng	13	2	0	0
Technikon South Africa	31	0	6	19.4
Vaal Triangle Technikon	33	0	3	9.1
Witwatersrand Technikon	21	1	1	5
Total	420	18	77	16.75 (average)

Table 4: Distribution of university respondents

Institution (Universities)	No. of questionnaires E-mailed	No. of E-mailed questionnaires returned undelivered	Responses from institutions	% of responses received
Cape Town	110	*	17	15.5
Fort Hare	29	0	4	13.8
Free State	39	2	6	16.2
KwaZulu-Natal	159	0	55	34.6
Medunsa	18	1	5	29.4
North	44	0	2	4.5
North West	20	0	2	10
Port Elizabeth	56	0	10	17.9
Potchefstroom	64	1	7	11.1
Pretoria	13	0	6	46.2
Rand Afrikaans	1	0	0	0
Rhodes	52	0	9	17.3
Stellenbosch	126	11	20	17.4
Transkei	20	0	3	15
Unisa	211	10	16	7.5
Venda	24	6	0	0
Vista	1	0	1	100
Western Cape	54	0	3	5.6
Witwatersrand	29	2	8	29.6
Zululand	24	0	10	41.6
Total	1094	33	184	21.66 (average)

* explained in the discussion below on the University of Cape Town

As stated in the previous chapter, the researcher had developed a database of E-mail addresses of staff employed in libraries within the tertiary education sector in South Africa. The primary sources of information for the development of this database were from the office of the directors or heads of libraries or the websites of the institutions. Further, there were directors or heads who did not provide a list of E-mail addresses but did commit to disseminating the questionnaire to the staff within their institutions. The last column in the above tables, that is, **% of responses received** is a percentage of the number of questionnaires that were E-mailed less the **Number of questionnaires returned undelivered**.

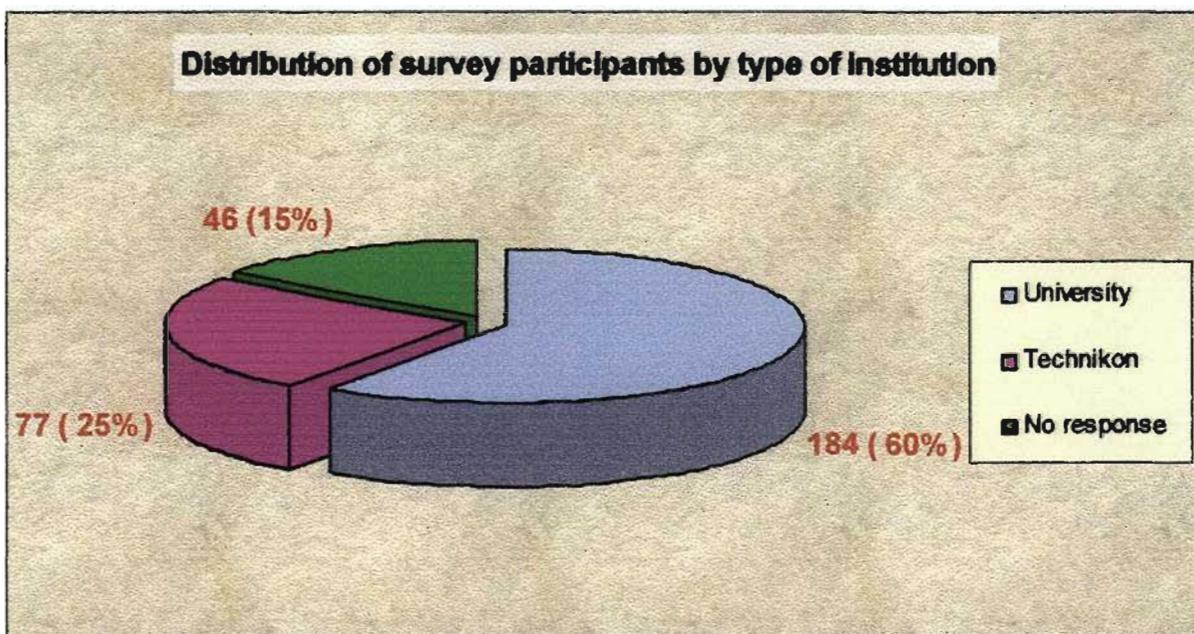
The first institution listed in *Table 4* is the University of Cape Town. The researcher extracted from this institution's website the names of the staff who were employed within the library. The institution's website did not have the E-mail addresses of the library staff. Further, there was no commitment from management to provide such a list of addresses. The researcher added to the name of the employee (from the library at the University of Cape Town) what was 'guessed' to be an extension that would complete the E-mail address. Unfortunately, only 110 of the E-mails were successfully delivered.

The researcher had similar problems with the Universities of Witwatersrand and Pretoria, hence the small number of questionnaires distributed at those institutions. The single E-mail to some of the institutions is essentially an E-mail to the office of the director or head of the library. The researcher has accepted the single E-mail as the total sum distributed at the given institution. Follow-ups with the said institutions indicated that the request to have the questionnaire distributed to all staff at the institution was not complied with.

The total number of questionnaires distributed electronically was 1 514 of which 51 were returned as undelivered. The researcher used the 1 463 questionnaires that were delivered as the sum total of the research population. The total number of responses received was 307 (refer to *Figure 1* below). One hundred and eighty-four (184) of the 307 respondents or 60 percent were from the universities and 77 respondents or 25 percent were from technikons. The other 46 respondents or 15 percent did not specify their institution as they did not select the institution

that they were employed at, for question 1 (see Appendix 1). The national response rate was 20.98 percent. There are a number of factors that could have affected this high number of 'not selected' responses. Firstly, one of the potential respondents sent the researcher an E-mail stating the she would not participate in the survey as she was not convinced that anonymity was guaranteed. Given such a response to a request to complete a questionnaire, it could be assumed that some respondents did not want to 'implicate' their institutions.

Figure 1 (N=307)



To add substance to this assumption was the pattern in the responses. For example, in the first week of the return of the questionnaires, all the respondents indicated their institution. In subsequent weeks the number of 'not selected' for the first item in the questionnaire increased remarkably leaving the researcher with the assumption that the respondents preferred not to divulge the names of their institutions. Secondly, the researcher used the names of the institutions as they stood as of the end of February 2004. It would seem that some of the respondents would have preferred to use the new titles of their institutions arising from mergers in the higher education sector that are currently taking place. Further, there were twelve

respondents who copied the questionnaire onto a package; they then E-mailed the completed questionnaire as an attachment. Unfortunately, the researcher was not able to use the data as the attachment was either blank or the responses was scrambled. The researcher categorised these responses as spoilt replies.

The response rate from the tertiary education libraries within the province of KwaZulu-Natal was high compared to the response rate from the rest of the country. The researcher is currently an employee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and therefore there was an expectation of a good response rate from this province (refer to **Tables 2 and 3**). The response rate for UKZN was 55 or 34.6 percent. The closest institution, in geographic proximity to UKZN, is the Durban Institute of Technology (DIT). The response rate from DIT was 32 or 45 percent. The other institute of technology in the province is Mangosuthu Technikon which had a response rate of eight (8) or 47.1 percent. The other university in the province is the University of Zululand which had a response rate of 10 or 41.6 percent. The average response rate from the four tertiary education libraries in the province of KwaZulu-Natal was 41.9 percent.

7.2.1.2 Age and gender distribution in the tertiary education LIS sector

As stated in Chapter 2, women make up a large proportion of the white collar labour force (Bain 1970: 40). The LIS sector, as a 'white collar' labour environment, is not exempt from this generalisation as Hovenden (1972: 186) confirmed when he noted that women constitute a majority within the library work force. The South African LIS sector today conforms to this generalisation as Gannon-Leary and Parker (2002: 19) state that "in South Africa ... most library workers [are] women". It was important for this survey to determine the gender composition of the LIS environment to probe the allegation that the large number of women in the LIS sector has negatively influenced the unionisation of the sector.

Of the 307 respondents, 202 or 65.8 percent of the respondents were women. Of the remaining 34.2 percent, 77 or 25 percent were males and the remaining 28 or 9.2 percent did not indicate their gender. It must be noted that a large proportion of the employees within the LIS sector are senior, in terms of age. Of the 202 women respondents, the largest proportion, that is, 79 or 39.1 percent, is in the age group 31 to 40. Sixty-two (62) respondents or 30.7 percent are in the age group 41 to 50 while the other 42 or 20.8 percent are older than 51 years. Nine point four (9.4) percent or 19 respondents are below the age of thirty. The large number of senior women within the LIS sector, that is 51.5 percent (30.7 and 20.8) are over the age of 41. The 77 male respondents are distributed as follows:

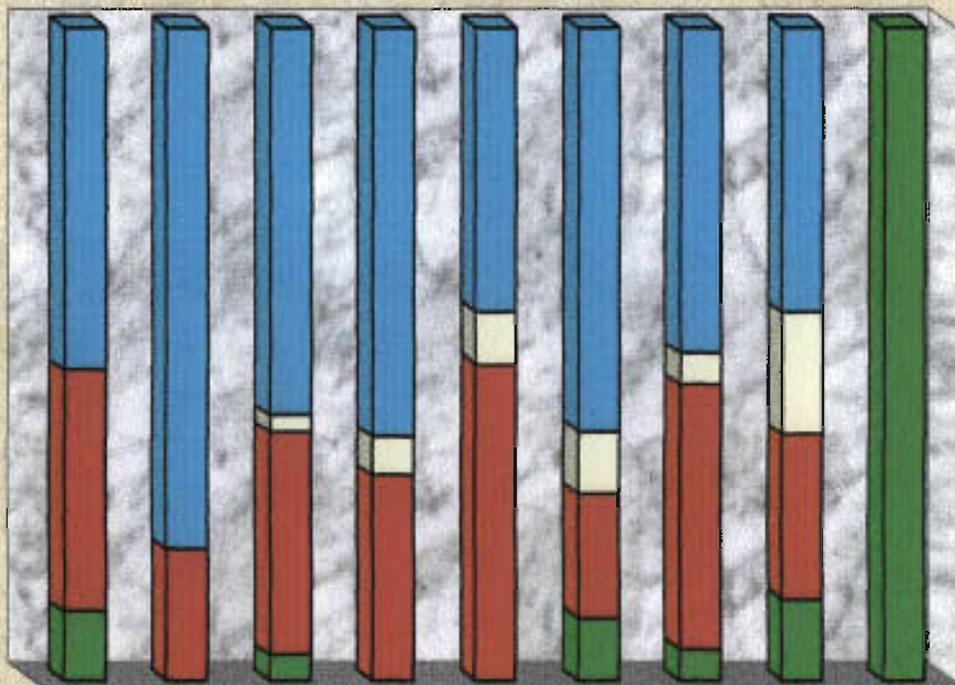
- age group 21 to 30: 5 (6.5%)
- age group 31 to 40: 35 (45.5%)
- age group 41 to 50: 21 (27.2%)
- age group 51 and older :16 (20.8%)

It could perhaps be accepted that senior staff, in terms of age, would have grown to accept their terms and conditions of employment and would not challenge management structures as many of them would be in senior levels of employment. Of the 281 respondents who did indicate their gender and age, 114 or 40.6 percent were in the age group 31 to 40. One hundred and forty-two (142) or 50.5 percent were older than 41 years. The remaining 8.9 percent or 25 respondents were between the ages of 21 to 30.

To interrogate the views of authors such as Bain (1970) and Hovenden (1972) the researcher cross tabulated gender and age with support for statutory status of the professional body, that is the professional body adopting some elements of trade unionism. *Figure 2* demonstrates the correlation between age, gender and support for the current professional body becoming a statutory body. It is interesting to note that, as reflected in *Figure 2*, there was substantial support by the senior staff, in terms of age, for statutory status and generally more support from men than from women. It is also very interesting to note that of the 105 women who said 'yes' to statutory status, 90.5 percent were over the age of 30.

Cross tabulation between age, gender and support for statutory status

Figure 2 (N=307)



	Female 21 to 30	Male 21 to 30	Female 31 to 40	Male 31 to 40	Female 41 to 50	Male 41 to 50	Female 51 and above	Male 51 and above	Not entered
Yes	10	4	47	22	27	13	21	7	
No			2	2	6	2	2	3	
Not sure	7	1	27	11	30	4	17	4	
Not entered	2		3			2	2	2	28

Not entered
 Not sure
 No
 Yes

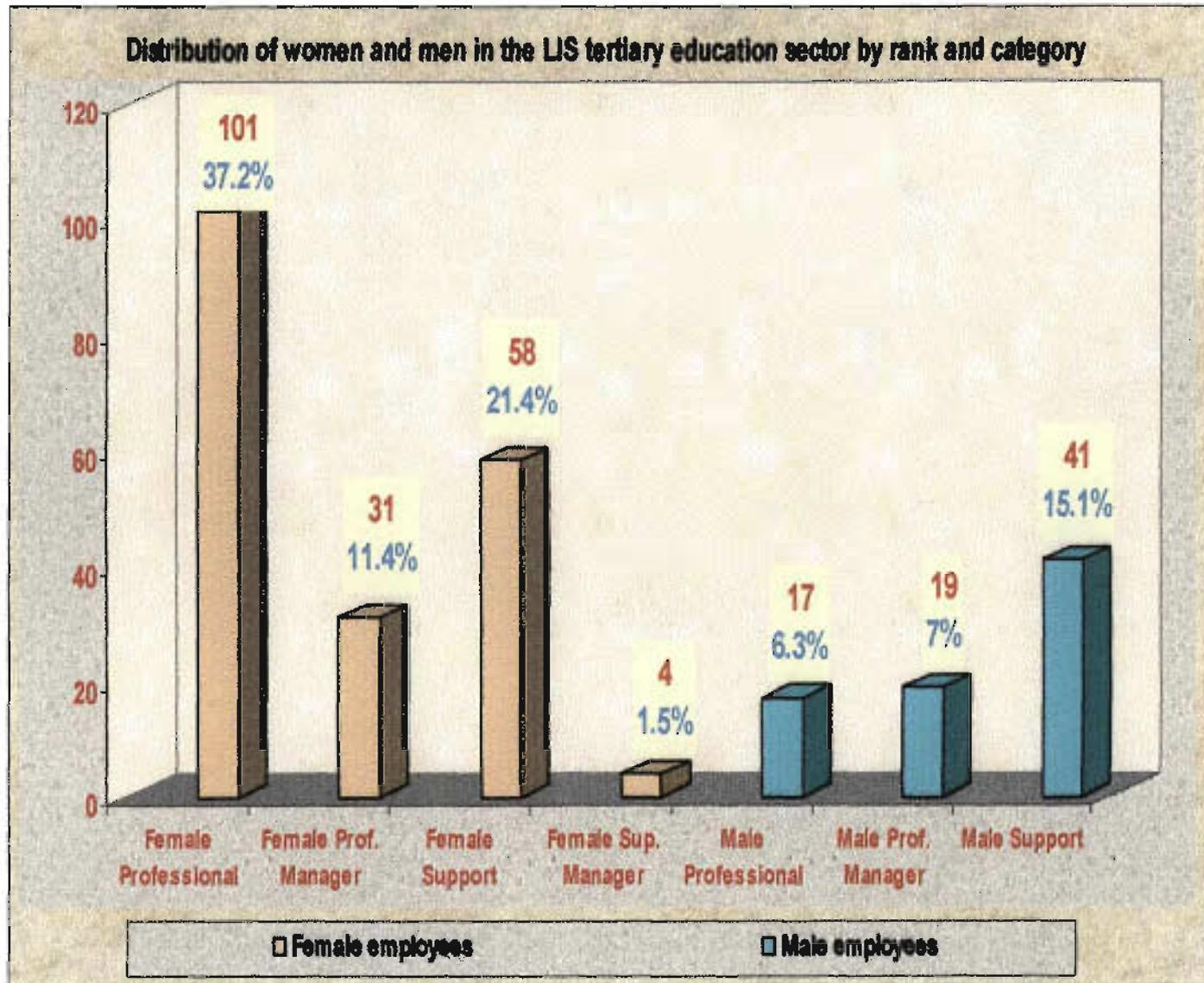
7.2.1.3 Designations of respondents

It was important for the LIS employee questionnaire to be completed by as wide a spectrum of people employed within tertiary education libraries as possible. The common perception is that the support staff gravitate towards trade unions while the professional staff gravitate towards the professional body. Therefore it was important to solicit the views of both the professional and the support staff on the roles of trade unions and the professional body.

The statistics derived from the survey of the LIS research population confirm that women employees are in the majority in a LIS environment. The researcher discusses in Chapter 4 the new labour dispensation and its possible impact on the LIS environment. One of the issues that is addressed in the new labour dispensation is that of discrimination and that would include discrimination against women in the workplace. The researcher has cross tabulated the designation of the respondent with three other items: (1) category of staff, that is, professional or support staff, (2) gender, and (3) whether the post was categorised as management or not.

It has been established, from the data received, that there is a wide range of titles given to both professional and support staff working in tertiary education libraries. The respondents range from Director or University Librarian to Librarian to Stack Attendant. Clerical or administrative personnel also responded to the survey. The full range of the titles of employees within the libraries is listed in Appendix 4. The cross tabulation of designation with the above mentioned factors produces interesting data which is reflected in *Figure 3*. It must be noted that eight (8) of the 202 women respondents did not indicate their job titles. *Figure 3* illustrates the distribution of women and men within the LIS tertiary education sector and the ratio of managers to the gender distribution. It is observed that the proportionate percentage of women managers is far lower than that of their male counterparts. An interesting finding is the fact that there are no male support managers among the respondents.

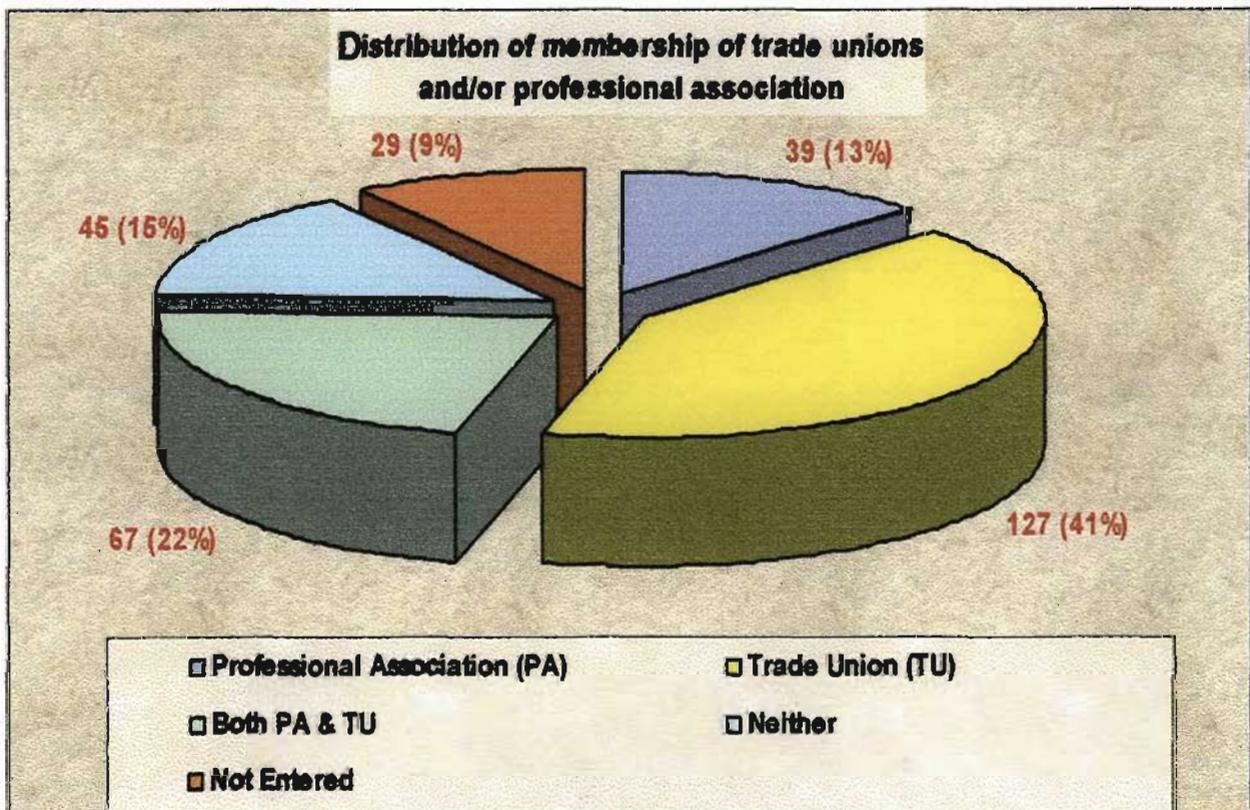
Figure 3 (N=271)



7.2.1.4 Support for the respective representative bodies

The researcher cross tabulated category of staff with membership of a professional body or trade union to ascertain the support by professional staff for a trade union and/or a professional body; and also to ascertain the support by the support staff for a trade union and/or a professional body. Before listing the results of this cross tabulation, *Figure 4* is presented to show membership of the professional body and/or trade union.

Figure 4 (N=307)



The results of the aforementioned cross tabulation reveal that 29 or 9.4 percent of the 307 respondents did not indicate their membership of either a professional association or a trade union. However, only one of the 29 was a member of the support staff. There was substantial support for trade unions with 127 or 41.4 percent of the respondents belonging only to trade unions. Forty-five (45) or 35.4 percent of the 127 are professional members of staff and the other 82 or 64.6 percent are support staff. Sixty-seven (67) or 21.8 percent of the respondents belong to both a trade union and a professional body. It is interesting to note that 24 of the 67 respondents were from the support staff category. The perception that professional staff only belong to the professional body is dispelled as only 32 or 19 percent of the 168 professional respondents, who responded to the items cross tabulated, had membership only of the professional body. Another interesting observation is that seven (7) or 2.3 percent of the support staff indicated membership of a professional body alone. Forty-five (45) or 14.7 percent of the respondents did not belong to any organisation.

7.2.1.5 Representative bodies within the LIS tertiary education sector

Employees of tertiary education libraries in South Africa have membership of different representative bodies. The researcher has identified three national trade unions that represent library and information services staff. The three national trade unions are:

- National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU);
- National Tertiary Education Staff Union (NTESU); and
- National Union of Technikon Employees of South Africa (NUTESA).

It was found that the South African Parastatal and Tertiary Institutions Union (SAPTU) serviced a number of institutions in less than half of the nine provinces in South Africa (Minnie 2004), and therefore does not categorise as a national union. It was also found that the Tertiary

Education National Union of South Africa (TENUSA), although the name suggests that it is a national union, is in fact a tertiary sector union that is based only at the DIT.

There are a number of in-house unions that represent library employees at campus level or what is usually referred to, in the labour statutes, as site level. These unions are:

- Combined Staff Association (COMSA) [formerly of University of Durban-Westville and now at UKZN];
- Peninsula Technikon Employees' Union (PTEU);
- Tertiary Education National Union of South Africa (TENUSA);
- University of Cape Town Employees' Union (UCTEU);
- University of Natal Staff Union (UNSU);
- University of Pretoria Employees' Organisation (UPWO); and
- Union of Personnel of the University of the Free State (UVPERSU).

A large number of tertiary education library employees belong to the national professional body, LIASA. Some of the staff have membership of other professional organisations or interest groups such as Associated Publishers' Association of South Africa (APSA), Association of South African Indexers and Bibliographers (ASAIB), Health Information Community of South Africa (HICSA), Museums Union of South Africa (MUSA), South African Museums Association (SAMA), South African National Health Information Partnership (SANHIP), South African Online User Group (SAOUG), Special Libraries and Information Services (SLIS), and South African Society of Archivists (SASA).

7.2.1.6 Factors that influence or negate the growth of unionism in the tertiary education sector in South Africa

The second research objective was to identify the factors that have influenced the growth of unionism in the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa. The researcher has identified, in the earlier chapters, factors that have influenced the growth of unionism. Simultaneously, the researcher has identified factors that have negated the growth of unionism. For ease of discussion, the researcher has separated the factors into those that have an industrial bias and those that have a professional bias. The responses to items up to and including item 7 of the questionnaire reveal a high percentage of LIS employees who belong to unions and/or professional associations. The researcher has applied these factors to the LIS tertiary education environment to ascertain the influence of these factors on the growth or retardation of unionism in the LIS tertiary education sector.

7.2.1.6.1 Industrial factors influencing the growth of unionism: collective bargaining

One of the key industrial factors influencing the growth of unionism is collective bargaining. Collective bargaining includes, *inter alia*, negotiation of salaries and conditions of service, and providing representation of employees during rationalisation processes.

7.2.1.6.1.1 Organisation/s that address industrial issues

In the introductory chapter, the researcher has indicated that generic trade unions play a parallel role to that of the professional associations, that is, professional associations address the professional concerns of the sector and unions address the industrial issues of the same sector. The data gathered substantiates the assertion that generic unions have been servicing the tertiary education sector and that would include the LIS component of the tertiary education sector. The

researcher, in the survey, enquired about the organisation that addresses respondents' industrial concerns.

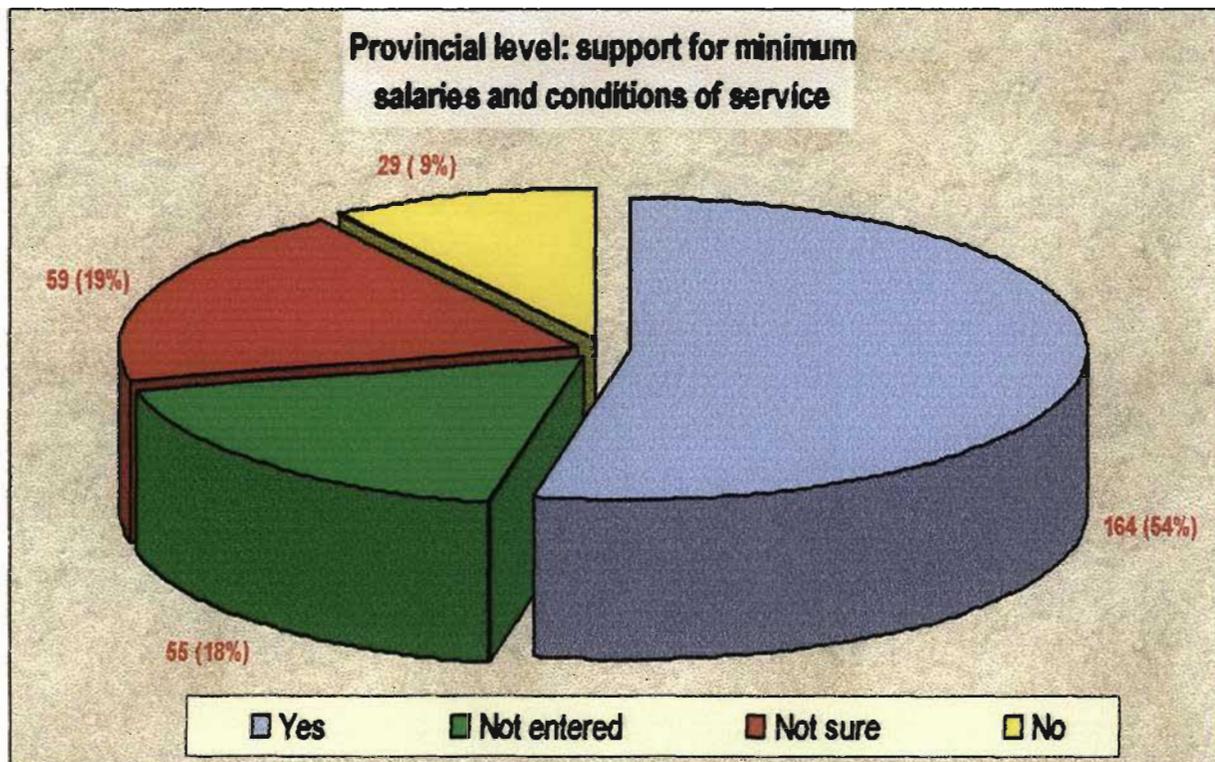
Item 8 of the LIS employee questionnaire explores the organisation that addresses three key industrial issues, namely, salaries, conditions of service and representation during rationalisation processes. Two hundred and eighteen (218) or 71 percent of the 307 respondents indicated that their unions negotiated for salaries at their particular institutions. Given the fact that staff, in the main, have their salaries reviewed annually, it is interesting that 44 or 14.3 percent had not responded to the first part of item 8. Thirty-six (36) or 11.7 percent indicated that both the professional body and the trade union negotiated salaries at their institutions. Only nine (9) or 2.9 percent indicated that the professional body negotiated salaries on their behalf

The second part of item 8, which addresses the issue of conditions of service, returned fairly similar results as that part of the item which dealt with the organisation negotiating salaries. The respondents confirm (215 or 70 percent) that the trade union negotiated conditions of service. Forty-six (46) or 15 percent did not respond to this part of item 8 and 36 or 11.7 percent indicated that both, a trade union and the professional association, negotiated conditions of service. Again, only 10 or 3.3 percent indicated that the professional body negotiated conditions of service.

The final component of item 8 dealt with another key industrial issue, namely, representation during restructuring processes. Two hundred and three (203) or 66.1 percent of the 307 respondents indicated that a trade union would engage in negotiation with their employers during restructuring processes. Of the remaining 104 (or 33.9 percent) of the 307 respondents, 49 or 16 percent (of the 307 respondents) did not respond to this component of the item and 43 or 14 percent indicated that a trade union and the professional body would represent their interest during restructuring exercises. Twelve (12) or 3.9 percent indicated that the professional body would represent the interests of the respondents during restructuring processes.

Item 9 of the questionnaire continues with the examination of the factors that influence the growth of unionism in the LIS sector. As stated, collective bargaining is a key factor impacting on the growth of unionism. Negotiation of salaries and conditions of service are central issues in collective bargaining processes. Item 9 of the questionnaire seeks to identify the support for minimum salaries and conditions of service for employees within the LIS tertiary education sector. It is clear from *Figure 5a* that there is support for minimum salaries and conditions of service at a provincial level. It can be assumed that it would be essential to have cooperation between employee representative bodies to ensure minimum salaries and conditions of service, or alternatively, to have a single representative body.

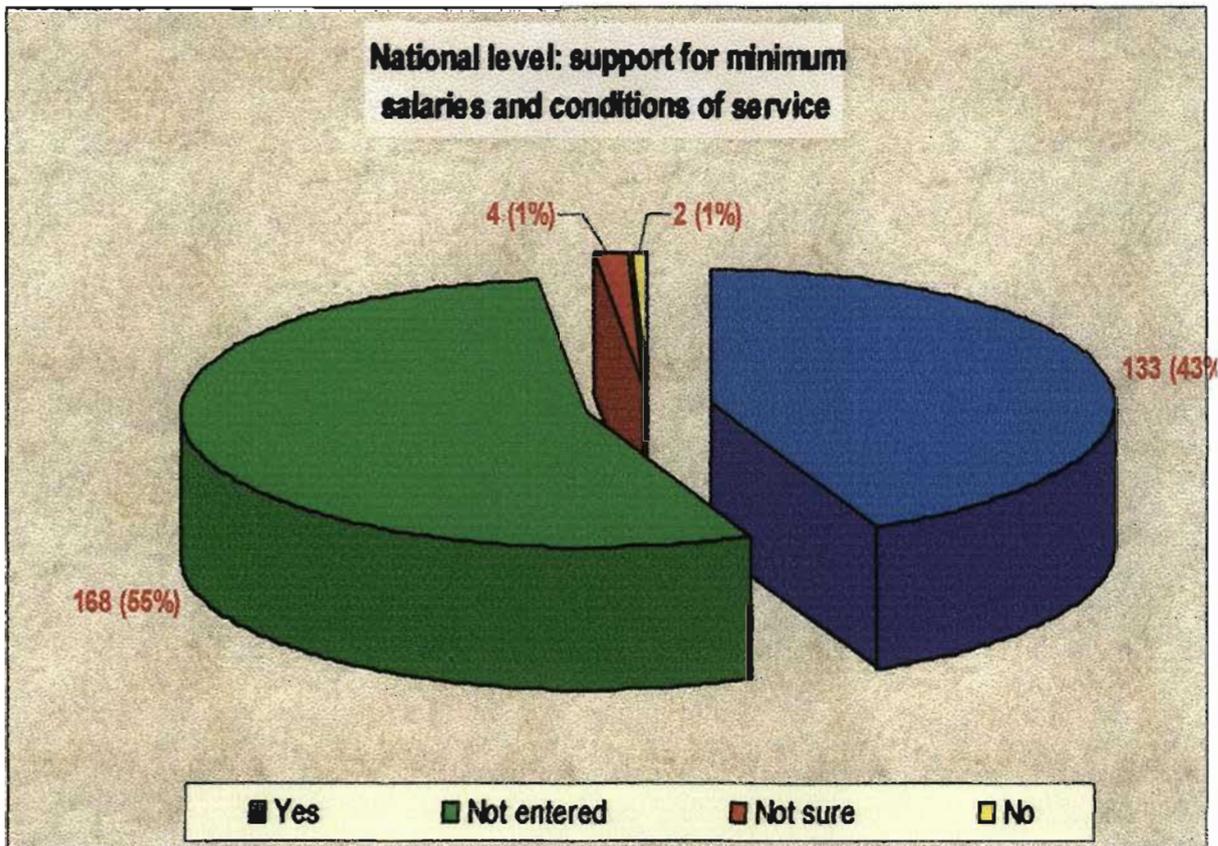
Figure 5a (N=307)



However, this support is not as evident (as illustrated in *Figure 5b*) when respondents were asked the question about minimum salaries and conditions of service at a national level as a large number of respondents did not respond to this particular item. The support for minimum salaries

and conditions of service at the national level could be considered as substantial if compared to those respondents who do not support minimum salaries and conditions of service: 133 respondents as opposed to the 2 respondents.

Figure 5b (N=307)



A large majority of the respondents thought that it was necessary to have an organisation to negotiate or address industrial issues in the LIS sector. In response to item 15.1, 201 or 65.5 percent of the 307 respondents were of the opinion that it was necessary to have an organisation to address the industrial concerns of the sector. Reasons for this support are discussed later. Twenty-one (21) or 6.8 percent indicated that it is not necessary while 51 or 16.6 percent were not sure. Thirty-four (34) or 11.1 percent did not respond to this item.

7.2.1.6.1.2 Other industrial factors that influence the growth of trade unionism

In item 8 the researcher tried to solicit, from the respondents, the influence of factors such as salaries, conditions of service and representation during rationalisation or restructuring processes on the unionisation of LIS employees. There are other factors that have been identified, in earlier chapters, as impacting on the growth of trade unions. Such factors include the pursuit of a common job grading system and the training and development of staff. The latter are enshrined in the new labour dispensation.

There are provisions in the labour statutes for the formation of workplace forums. It is at these workplace forums where it is mandatory that the employer consults on such issues as job grading and staff training and development. Unfortunately, it is only a registered trade union that can make application for the formation of a workplace forum.

7.2.1.6.1.2.1 Job grading

There is significant support for a standardised grading system for all library and information services staff at the provincial level. Seventy-six point nine (76.9) percent or 236 of the 307 respondents favoured a standardised grading system. Of the remaining 71 respondents, 39 or 12.7 percent disapproved of a standardised grading system at the provincial level while the other 32 or 10.4 percent did not respond to this item.

However, which employee organisation should take responsibility for negotiating such an implementation is open for debate. Eighty-eight (88) or 28.7 percent did not provide a response. However, 113 or 36.8 percent indicated that they would prefer both the employee organisations, that is, the trade union and the professional body to negotiate for the implementation of a standardised grading system at the provincial level. Seventy-eight (78) or 25.4 percent of the 307 respondents supported the option that the professional body negotiate the implementation of a standardised grading system. Despite the fact that there is a great deal of support for trade unions, only 28 or 9.1 percent expressed the opinion that the trade union should negotiate for a standardised grading system.

The support for a joint venture between the trade union and the professional body to negotiate a standardised grading system was confirmed when the respondents answered items 11.1 and 11.2. The said items requested responses as to whether the respondents supported a standardised grading system at the national level and which organisation, in their opinion, could best negotiate for such an implementation. There was substantial support for a standardised grading system at the national level, as was the case for a provincial system. Of the 307 respondents, 230 or 74.9 percent supported a standardised grading system at the national level. Forty-four (44) or 14.3 percent did not support a standardised grading system at the national level while 33 or 10.8 percent did not offer a response.

The responses to item 11.2 supported greater participation by the professional body in negotiations for the implementation of a standardised grading system at the national level. Thirty-four point eight (34.8) percent or 107 of the respondents supported collaboration between the professional body and their trade union to negotiate for the implementation of a standardised grading system at the national level. In the opinion of 84 (or 27.4 percent) of respondents, the professional body was most capable of negotiating the implementation of a standardised grading system at the national level. The support for representation by a trade union was reduced in item 11.2 as only 23 or 7.5 percent of the respondents preferred a trade union to negotiate for a standardised grading system at the national level. The number of 'not entered' responses increased drastically to 93 or 30.3 percent.

The substantial support for the professional body and for collaboration between the professional body and the respective trade unions illustrates the short-comings of a generic union in representing the needs of a specific group of white collar workers.

7.2.1.6.1.2.2 Staff training and development

There are a large number of institutions that are active in formal staff training and development. In fact, 151 or 49.2 percent of the respondents indicated that their institutions engaged in formal staff training and development. Seventy-eight (78) or 25.4 percent of the 307 respondents indicated that their institutions did not have formal staff training and development programme while 45 or 14.7 percent were not sure. The remaining 33 or 10.7 percent did not respond to this item.

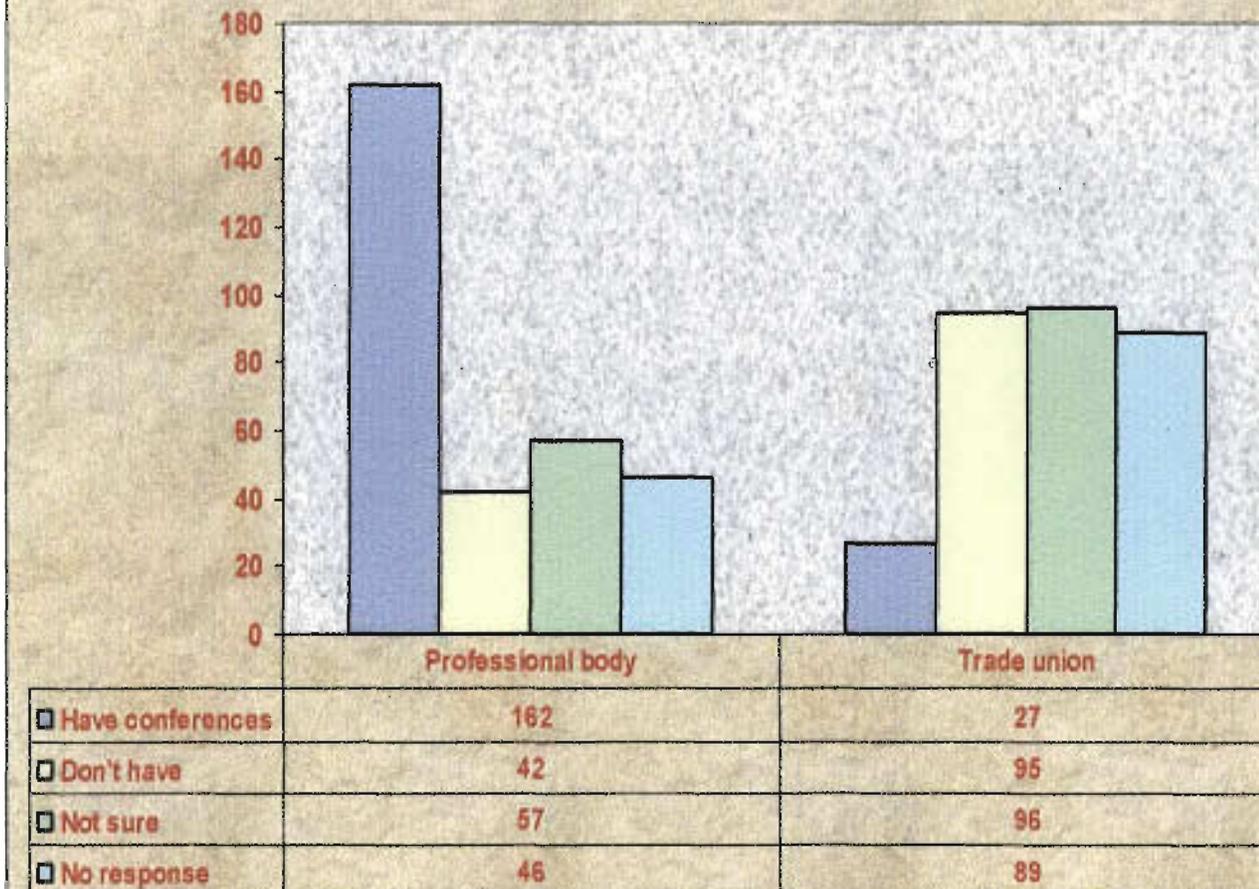
Despite the statutory provisions for trade unions to engage in staff training and development, the data generated did not show active participation, by the respective trade unions, in staff training and development. This neglect undermines attempts by the democratically elected government and the trade union movement of previous decades to train and develop the workforce to ensure the growth of the South African economy. Of the 307 respondents, 118 or 38.4 percent stated

that the union was not active in staff training and development. Ninety-six (96) or 31.3 percent were not sure and responded accordingly. Fifty-two (52) or 16.9 percent confirmed that their trade union was an active participant in the employer's staff training and development programme. The rest of the respondents (41 or 13.4 percent) did not reply to this item.

It is evident from the data gathered that the professional body is far more active, than trade unions, in developing staff through conferences, workshops and so on. *Figure 6* clearly shows the incidence of conferences and workshops held by the professional body in an effort to contribute to the development of those who are employed in the sector. Of the 307 respondents, 162 or 52.8 percent indicated that the professional association held conferences and workshops as compared to 27 respondents or 8.8 percent who revealed that the trade union held conferences and workshops. Forty-two (42) or 13.7 percent responded that the professional association did not organise conferences and workshops while 95 or 30.9 percent responded that the trade union did not organise conferences and workshops. Fifty-seven (57) or 18.5 percent of the respondents were not sure if the professional association organised conferences and workshops as compared to 96 or 31.3 percent who did not know if the trade union organised conferences or workshops. Of the 307 respondents, 46 or 15 percent did not respond to the issue of whether the professional association held conferences and workshops while 89 or 29 percent did not respond to the issue of whether the trade union held conferences and workshop. *Figure 6* below demonstrates the commitment of the professional body to contribute to the development of the LIS sector through the holding conferences and workshops.

Workshops and conferences organised by the representative employee bodies

Figure 6 (N=307)



Employee body

7.2.1.6.2 Industrial factors negating the growth of unionism

The researcher has identified, via the literature, that the fragmentation of the LIS profession and the employment of women within the profession as major obstacles to unionization.

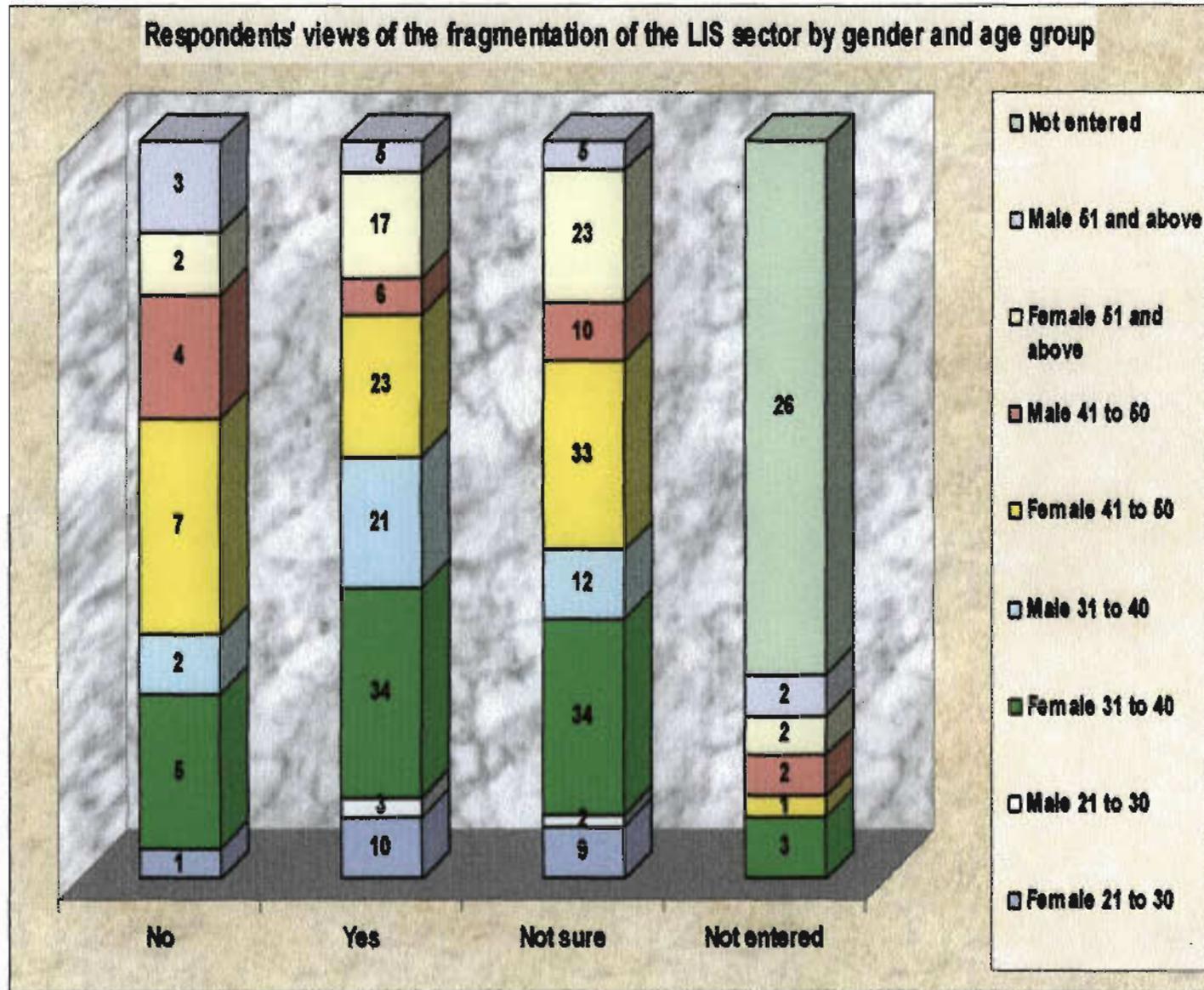
7.2.1.6.2.1 Fragmentation of the LIS profession

The respondents were asked if they considered the LIS sector to be fragmented; even it was just fragmentation in terms of the community of users they serviced. One hundred and nineteen (119) (refer to column 2 of *Figure 7*) or 38.8 percent of the 307 respondents indicated that they thought the LIS profession to be fragmented. Forty-one point seven percent or 128 (refer to column 3 of *Figure 7*) of the respondents were not sure. It must be noted that this uncertainty could be as a result of, (1) the respondents did not understand the question adequately to give a response, or (2) they did not know if the profession was fragmented. The researcher accepts that there is a possibility that the item was not articulated clearly enough to produce a truer result.

The researcher, nonetheless, interrogated the responses to determine if the 41.7 percent of the respondents who were 'not sure' were junior employees, in terms of years of service in the profession, and therefore were not sufficiently knowledgeable of the profession to respond adequately to the question posed.

In an effort to probe for possible reasons for the inconclusive response to the item that dealt with the fragmentation of the profession, the researcher cross tabulated the items that dealt with fragmentation with gender and age. The results of the cross tabulation are reflected in *Figure 7*. The researcher was of the opinion that if there were any factors that would influence the inconclusive response to the item on fragmentation, it would be gender and age (refer to section 7.2.1.2).

Figure 7 (N=307)



Of the remaining 60 respondents, 36 (refer to column 4 of *Figure 7*) or 11.7 percent of the 307 did not reply to the item and 24 (refer to column 1 of *Figure 7*) or 7.8 percent were of the opinion that the sector was not fragmented. In terms of what was stated in the second paragraph of this section (7.2.1.6.2.1), it was the senior employees, that is, those employees over the age of 30, who indicated that they were 'not sure'. One hundred and seventeen (117) or 91.4 percent of the 128 respondents were over the age of 30.

Given the fact that there was a high 'not sure' response (128) to item 18 which addressed the issue of fragmentation, the high number of non-responses or 'not entered' for the following two items would seem to represent accurately the state of mind of the respondents. When the respondents were asked to indicate if they thought that there should be one body that brings together the fragmented LIS sector, 196 or 63.9 percent did not reply to the item. Ninety-nine or 32.2 percent expressed the view that there should be one organisation that would bring together the fragmented LIS sector. A very small 3.9 percent or 12 respondents provided a negative response to the item.

When asked the question, "Which representative body is most capable of bringing the profession together to address both the professional and industrial issues?", 74 or 24.1 percent of the 307 respondents expressed the opinion that a professional association was most capable of bringing resolution to the issue. Twenty-two (22) or 7.2 percent thought that a trade union was most capable of unifying the LIS sector.

7.2.1.6.2.2 Women and trade unionism

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, there is a large a number of women who are employed within the LIS sector. When the researcher cross tabulated gender and age with support for the professional body becoming a statutory body, it was found that there was substantial support by the women employed within the sector for the professional body to attain statutory status (refer to section 7.2.1.2 **Age and gender distribution in the tertiary education LIS sector**).

It has also been established in the literature, that senior employees tend to stave-off unionisation (Garry, C.G. 1977: 504-507). The fact that there is a large contingent of mature staff employed within the LIS profession **should** reflect low levels of unionism (refer to section 7.2.1.1 **Age and gender distribution in the tertiary education LIS sector**). Recent research (Australian Council of Trade Unions: 2003) cites an increase in the number of women, in the European countries, who have become members of a trade union since the 1980s. The findings of this study reveal that the European trend (of an increasing number of women becoming trade union members) is also visible in the South African industrial system; again, most noticeable in the service sector. The substantial support (63.8% [37.1% plus 26.7%]) for trade unions by the women in the LIS profession is reflected in *Figure 8* below.

The cross tabulation between age, gender and membership revealed that, of the 202 women respondents,

- 19 or 9.4 percent were women between the ages of 21 and 30;
- 79 or 39.1 percent in the age group 31 to 40;
- 62 or 30.7 percent were in the age category 41 to 50; and
- 42 or 20.8 percent were over the age of 51.

In relation to the above mentioned cross tabulation and the numbers reflected in *Figure 8*,

- 10 (2 plus 8) or 52.6 percent of the 19 respondents between the ages of 21 and 30 were members of a registered trade union;
- 23 (14 plus 9) or 54.8 percent of the 42 respondents over the age of 51 were registered members of a trade union;

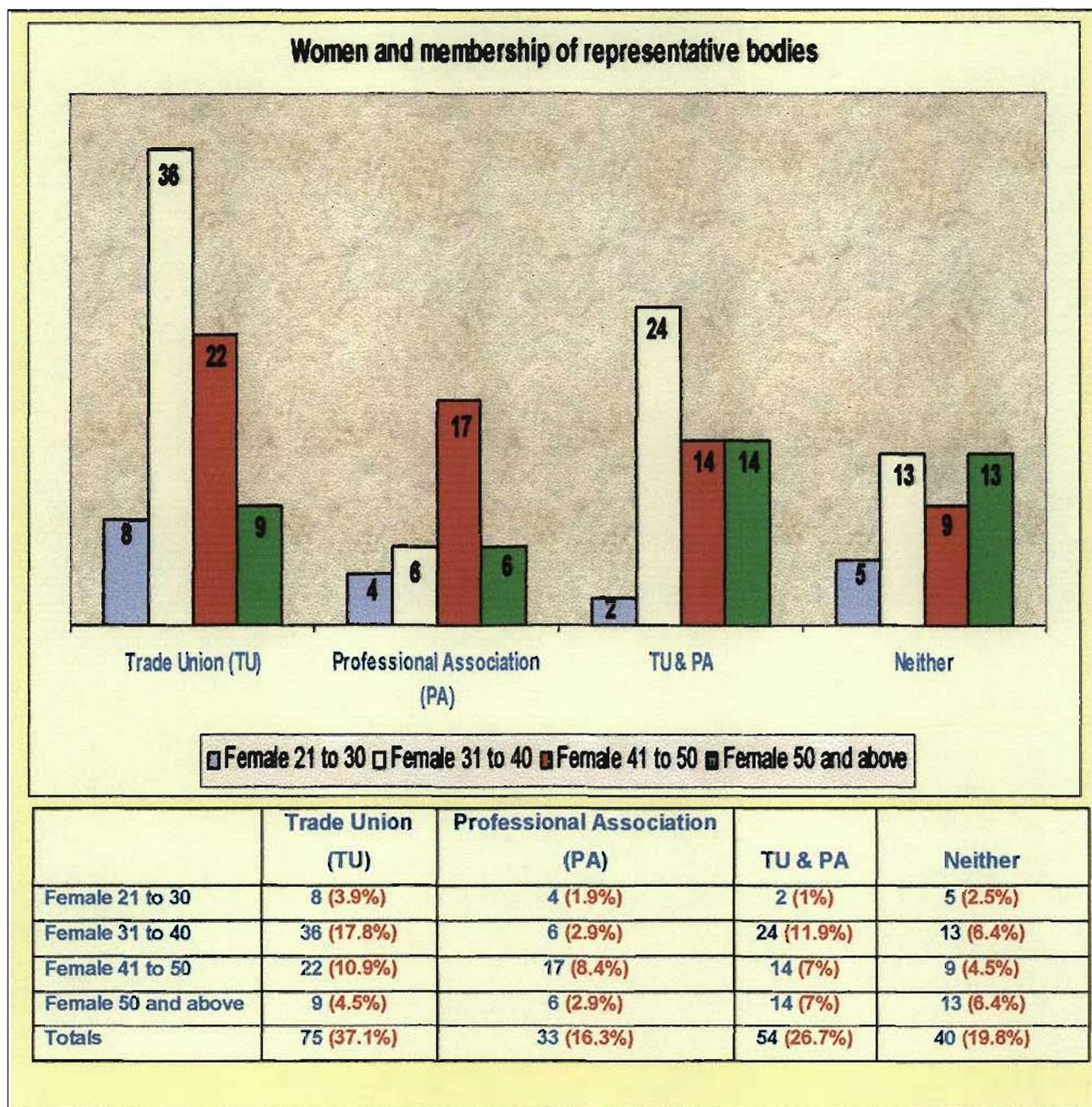
- 36 (14 plus 22) or 58 percent of the 62 respondents in the age category 41 to 50 belonged to a trade union; and
- 60 (24 plus 36) or 75.9 percent of the 79 respondents in the age group 31 to 40 were members of a trade union.

As stated above, there is substantial support (63.8%) for membership of a registered trade union. The greatest support (75.9 %) for membership of a trade union, by women, came from the age group 31 to 40.

Cunnison (2002: 168) and Lundy (1998: 73) point out the surge of women into trade unions took place in the latter half of the twentieth century. With the decline of the male dominated manufacturing sector, unions began to shift their focus to the women dominated service sector. Even more interesting is the fact that unions are now representing managers in the service sector.

The researcher interrogated this international trend to determine its applicability to the South African LIS environment. Gender and management by age group were cross tabulated with membership of the representative body. In *Figure 3*, it is reflected that there are 35 women managers together with a large number of women who belong to trade unions. When the above items were cross tabulated it was found that 16 of the 35 respondents or 45.7 percent were members of both a trade union and a professional body. Ten (10) or 28.6 percent of the respondents were members of a professional association only while seven (7) or 20 percent of the respondents were members of a trade union. The remainder (two respondents or 5.7 percent) did not have affiliation to any of the representative organisations. In effect, 64.7 percent of the managers belonged to a trade union.

Figure 8 (N=202)



7.2.1.6.3 Summary of factors influencing or negating the growth of unionism

One of the research objectives of this study is to identify the factors that have influenced, whether positively or negatively, the growth of unionism in the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa. The researcher has identified via the literature, and which has been discussed in the previous chapters, a number of factors that have impacted on the growth of trade unionism.

These factors were presented to the surveyed population to determine the influence of these factors on the unionisation of LIS employees. It has been established that trade unions have a membership in excess of 63 percent (refer to *Figure 4*) in the LIS tertiary education sector. The surveyed population indicated that trade unions play a significant role in the collective bargaining process. Between 65 and 75 percent of the respondents indicated that their respective unions negotiated for salaries and conditions of service and, represented them during restructuring exercises. An overwhelming majority of the respondents preferred a standardised job grading system cutting across the entire LIS sector. Such a preference would demand the attention of an over-arching statutory body. It is evident from the data gathered that the trade union has neglected the important function of staff training and development. However, the professional association has shown greater commitment, than the unions, to developing LIS personnel.

The two factors that have been identified as negating unionism were the fragmentation of the profession and the employment of a large number of women in the profession. However, less than 40 percent of the respondents perceive the LIS profession as being fragmented. It has been established that there are a large number of women within the sector. However, data gathered contradicts findings in the literature that women in the LIS sector negate the growth of trade unionism as a high percentage of the women surveyed in this study are members of a trade union.

7.2.1.7 The need for an organisation to address the industrial concerns of the LIS tertiary education sector employees

The fourth research objective of this study was to investigate the need for an organisation to address the industrial concerns of LIS employees in this sector. In pursuing this research objective, it was necessary to determine which organisation is most capable of satisfying that need and what factors influence active participation in the organisation that the respondents consider most capable of addressing their industrial concerns.

7.2.1.7.1 The necessity for an organisation to address the industrial issues of the sector

As stated earlier, in item 15.1 the respondents displayed some level of confidence in the fact that it was necessary to have an organisation to negotiate or address industrial issues. The respondents were requested, in item 15.2, to substantiate their response to item 15.1. There were respondents who were aware of the statutory provisions and the role that trade unions could play in South Africa's new democracy. For example, one of the respondents commented that the Constitution of South Africa guaranteed fair labour practices and that "all sectors should take advantage of this right." There were two respondents who cautioned about the wisdom of having one organisation addressing the industrial issues of the LIS sector as the "sector is too diverse for one set of salaries/conditions of service to apply. What may apply in one sector or in one geographical region may not apply to another, e.g. academic [libraries] vs public libraries."

However, most of the 170 or 55.4 percent of the 307 respondents who voiced their opinions maintained that there is a need for an organisation to address the industrial issues of the LIS sector as a whole. The respondents expressed the view that it was imperative that the profession had a clear set of guidelines to address industrial issues which only a unified organisation could do. Such a set of guidelines would assist in strategically tackling bread and butter issues as staff currently feel exploited in that they do not get a salary commensurate with their academic qualifications. One respondent stated that "a professional body would know the different

functions they perform. The level of qualification should be considered in the salary structure". The respondents also expressed the opinion that standardisation will curb exploitation.

There were 22 respondents who expressed the view that, at the time of the survey, negotiations were being conducted by organisations whose representatives had no idea as to what is going on in the LIS sector. A respondent sympathised with the fact that it "is not easy for the [generic] trade union to know exactly [what happens] in the library environment, therefore it becomes all that more important for a library organisation to negotiate on behalf of the sector." Two respondents assumed that this void in knowledge prejudices the membership that are located in libraries so much so that those members are not even made aware of their rights. A respondent suggested that there is a need for the "right tool for the right job: [the] right negotiator for the people he/she understands and [who has] the background information of the work environment...".

However, there was one respondent who stated, "generic employee unions seem to have done quite a good job already". There was support from eight other respondents on the role that generic employee unions have played. The unions' strength in numbers had played a significant role in addressing the industrial concerns of all workers including those that work in a library and information environment. Over and above generic unions having the necessary muscle in terms of numbers, they had "experts in their field of industrial relations." It was expressed that, "to have a library organisation to address the industrial issue could be counter productive as the library organisation and the generic union would be in conflict with each other." However, it was acknowledged that the "LIS section is one of a few profession[s] which does not have an organisation addressing industrial issues like doctors, nurses, teachers, etc."

The researcher extracted from the wealth of information provided by individual respondents from the LIS survey population, other benefits for having an organisation to address the industrial concerns of the LIS sector. Single responses concerning the benefits, *inter alia*, include the fact that a single body would:

- increase the credibility and status of the profession;
- be heard louder by government;

- be in a better position to defend job security especially in an environment where library compensation budgets are the first to be cut in times of economic difficulties;
- standardise the grading system which will eliminate “unequal grading and remuneration for employees doing similar job functions”;
- convince the powers that be that the profession is service orientated - salary satisfaction will positively impact on the delivery of service; and
- be able to secure equal opportunities for everyone in the sector.

In closing the presentation of the findings for item 15.2, the researcher quotes a response from a survey participant who laments that, “Because of poor representation, people in the profession are always marginalised and their role in academic activities is not recognised and valued, as the result they are not accorded the attention and respect they deserve.”

7.2.1.7.2 The organisation most capable of representing the industrial concerns of the sector

Despite the support for trade unions, respondents were of the opinion that the professional body is the organisation most capable of representing the industrial concerns of the LIS sector. The support is substantial as 143 or 46.6 percent of the 307 respondents support representation by the professional body to address their industrial concerns. Sixty-one (61) or 19.9 percent believe that the industrial concerns are best addressed by a registered trade union, albeit a generic trade union. Sixty-nine (69) or 22.5 percent were not sure as to which organisation will best address the industrial concerns of the sector. Thirty-four (34) or 11 percent of the 307 respondents did not respond to this particular item.

It was important to get the respondents to substantiate why they supported the organisation they believed would be most capable in representing the industrial interests of the LIS sector. There were 178 or 58 percent responses to item 16.2.

In analysing the data received for item 16.2, the researcher has identified core reasons for the support of the two different representative bodies, namely, the professional association and the respective trade unions. Respondents (41 or 23 percent of the 178 respondents) were of the opinion that the professional body has the knowledge and experience of the LIS profession. It was this knowledge and experience, according to the respondents, that gave the professional association the edge over the trade union in addressing the industrial issues of the LIS sector.

On the other hand, one of the core reasons, as proposed by 16 respondents, for the support for a trade union was that “trade unions have more experience in negotiating salary increases and conditions of service and generally have an infrastructure that will support such activities.” Furthermore, trade unions are statutory bodies and command greater respect from the employers and government. As indicated above, 46.6 percent of the respondents supported representation by the professional body to address industrial concerns of the sector while 19.9 percent supported trade unions. One respondent summarised a third option, to the above two, when she/he said that the “best scenario would be for the two organisations [professional association and the trade union] to work together.”

In supporting the professional association as the organisation most capable of representing the interest of the LIS sector, six (6) respondents expressed the view that the professional association was the only organisation that had the capacity to transform the LIS sector. An integral part of this transformation, according to a respondent, is the professional association’s contribution to the development of the sector through active participation in the development of the curricula of Information Studies programmes at tertiary education institutions. A respondent goes on to say, “let the professional bodies have a say about their profession.” Respondents seem to be supportive of an organisation that will be able to contribute more than just addressing industrial concerns relating to salaries and conditions of service.

Some of the respondents quoted specific examples that have influenced their decision as to which organisation will best represent their interests. One respondent stated that “the [professional association] LIASA should become more involved in trying to set standards of

equal qualification levels when applying for professional posts in the library and information profession (e.g. is the BTECH [sic] equivalent to the BINF [sic] from UNISA).”

However, there were respondents (11 or 6.2 percent of the 178 respondents) who indicated that they had not been impressed with the capabilities of either of the organisations on certain issues, stating that trade unions tended to engage in ‘politics’ at the expense of worker issues while the professional association is accused by a respondent of “having the tendency of acting professionally even in situations that require more assertiveness and aggressiveness. The professional association seems to restrict itself to playing an advisory role only.”

There were twelve (12) respondents who were of the view that both organisations have an equal but different role to play in the sector. It was suggested by one respondent that “whilst the professional body will be more interested in the ‘profession’, the union would be more adequate to handle the industrial or worker related problems/industrial issues.”

7.2.1.7.3 Participation in the activities of the trade union and/or the professional body

One of the cornerstones of a professional association, as discussed in Chapter 5, is its ability to keep its membership unified and share knowledge and experiences at such forums as workshops and conferences. The same principle holds true for trade unions. Given the fact that there are statutory provisions for the development of the workforce, trade unions are in an advantageous position to utilise workshops and conferences as a tool to develop the workforce.

It has been acknowledged that conferences provide the membership with the motivation to do research and an opportunity to discuss the results of the research at a forum of colleagues. Presenting a paper to a group of peers, listening to their comments and suggestions, and responding to their questions constitute several of the key elements of critical dialogue. Such participation tends to bring members of the profession closer together and presents the opportunity of developing the profession through research and engaging colleagues in discussion. However, there is a perception that there is a growing trend away from participation

at workshops and conferences. In item 17, respondents were asked to comment on how the scheduling of meetings, the holding of conferences and such, impact on their participation in the activities of their respective trade unions and/or professional association.

The researcher analysed the responses from the 158 or 51.5 percent of the 307 respondents to item 17. A strong theme running through a relatively high percentage (31 percent or 49 respondents) of the responses was that their active participation in the activities of their respective representative organisation/s was limited because of family commitments. Meetings, workshops and conferences held outside of normal working hours indirectly discriminated against many who had to rush home to give their children the necessary attention. Therefore, it was preferred that such gatherings be held during working hours and school vacations. There were some respondents who extended this 'family commitment' to include school holidays. They indicated that having workshops and conference was not convenient during "school holidays because our children need us when they are on holiday."

There were other respondents (11 respondents) who raised practical problems, which negatively impacted on their participation in the activities of their representative organisations, with the holding of meetings and workshops after office hours. At the top of the list of these practical problems was the lack of transport. Respondents indicated that support staff earned a lot less than professional staff and therefore could not afford their own motor vehicles and therefore the holding of meetings outside of office hours invariably negatively affected their attendance. The respondents assumed that if meetings, workshops and conferences were held during office hours and at venues that are easily accessible via public transport, there would be far greater support from support staff.

Another set of responses (2 responses) was that respondents' participation in the activities of their representative organisations was dependent on the "cooperation of the supervisor". One respondent went so far as to state that "the Directorate is supportive of staff taking part in LIASA activities [and would facilitate staff engaging in the activities of LIASA]... Not sure about the union because the union's demands are in most cases in conflict with Management...". This

prejudice is confirmed by other respondents who commented on the fact that their institution supported activities arranged by the professional body but placed restrictions on staff participation in trade union activities. Respondents also indicated that the demands of the job, especially in the current climate of rationalisations and mergers, had negatively affected active participation in the activities of their representative bodies.

The researcher was reminded by a respondent that attendance at meetings, workshops, conferences and such was of benefit to all, namely, the employee, the institution, the profession and the users of the facility, as it widened the knowledge and experience of the staff member. This comment relates to the need for the employer to play an active role in facilitating the participation of the employees in the activities of their representative bodies and to deliver papers at conferences.

Two (2) respondents acknowledged that they, in the words of one of them, “[were] loyal but very inactive members of their trade union and LIASA due to [them] being lax and not taking responsibility”. For them it was preferable to have time off during working hours for professional development and not to have to use their own time as this impacted on family commitments. One respondent summarised these views when she/he states, “I think such [gatherings] should of course be scheduled during working hours since the main aim is to develop the profession and to cater for the membership. If it [conferences, workshops and meetings] is held after hours/during holidays it will impact negatively on home life and relationships.”

7.2.1.7.4 Summary of findings: the necessity for an organisation to address the industrial concerns of tertiary education LIS employees

It has been established, in responses to item 15.1, that two-thirds of the respondents were of the opinion that it was necessary to have an organisation to address the industrial concerns of the sector. A unified organisation would provide a clear set of guidelines that would assist in strategically tackling bread and butter issues. Further, it was perceived by some of the

respondents that this unified organisation would increase the credibility and status of the profession. A substantial percentage of respondents (46.6%) believed that this unified organisation should be the professional association as opposed to the trade union. These respondents were of the opinion that the professional body had the knowledge and experience of the LIS sector to further the interests of the said sector. However, many respondents wanted to see the professional association and the trade union working together.

Given the fact that women employees are in the majority in the LIS sector and women generally still bear the primary responsibility for child care in South Africa (refer to section 8.2.3.6.2), active participation in the activities of the representative bodies was found to be limited because of family commitments. The negative impact of family commitments on active participation is discussed in section 8.2.3.6.2. It has been argued by respondents that meetings, workshops and conferences held outside of normal working hours indirectly discriminates against those that have family commitments.

7.2.1.8 Unionism versus professionalism

The researcher now discusses the second component of the second research objective, namely the issues of the LIS profession that impact on the growth of unionism in the sector. It is a commonly held view that professionalism is inherently incompatible with trade unionism and will therefore impact on the growth of unionism in the sector. For example, some respondents argue that the South African professional LIS association views the librarians' prime duty as serving library users whereas unions seek to reduce the amount of self sacrifice. The literature reveals a number of issues (listed below) that contribute to the unionism versus professionalism debate.

7.2.1.8.1 Compatibility of unionism and professionalism

It was important to ascertain in item 21.1, from those working in a LIS environment, whether professionalism and unionism were compatible or not. Support for the claim that professionalism and unionism were not compatible was relatively small, 43 or 14 percent of the 307 respondents. One hundred and fourteen (114) or 37.1 percent affirmed that they thought professionalism was in fact compatible with unionism and vice versa. The same number of respondents declared that they were not sure. Unfortunately, 36 or 11.7 percent of the survey participants did not respond to the item.

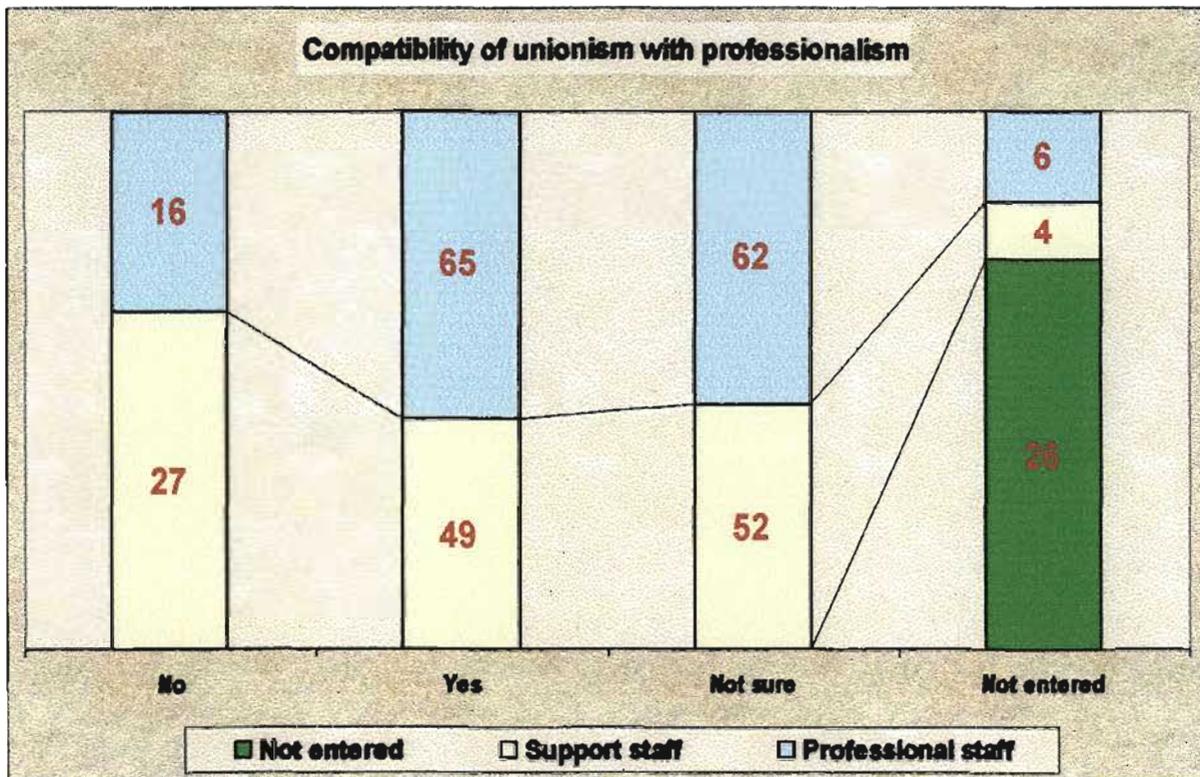
The researcher cross tabulated item 21.1 with item 5.1 (the category of the respondents) to investigate what percentage of those who responded were support staff and what percentage were professional staff. The cross tabulation also revealed the proportion split within the profession and support staff. *Figure 9* reflects the results of the cross tabulation. It is interesting to note that a higher percentage of professional staff is of the opinion that professionalism and unionism are compatible. The percentage distribution of the cross tabulation is as follows:

- Professionalism and unionism are compatible – professional staff 57% : 43% support staff;
- Professionalism and unionism are not compatible – professional staff 37% : 63% support staff; and
- Not sure if professionalism and unionism are compatible - professional staff 55% : 45% support staff

The cross tabulation exposed the fact that there were 149 professional staff, 132 support staff and 26 'not entered'. Of the 149, a substantial proportion (65 or 43.6%) of the professional staff indicated that professionalism and unionism are compatible. A small proportion (16 or 10.7%) indicated that professionalism and unionism are not compatible. There was an even smaller proportion (6 or 4%) of 'not entered'. However, there was a high proportion of professional staff (62 or 41.6%) who indicated that they were not sure. In terms of the 132 support staff, the greater

proportion (52 or 39.4%) indicated that they were not sure. Thirty-seven point one percent (49 or 37.1%) indicated that professionalism and unionism are compatible while 20.5 percent (or 27) of support staff respondents pointed out that professionalism and unionism are not compatible. The other three percent (3%) were 'not entered'.

Figure 9 (N=307)



The survey population was asked to substantiate their response to the question, “Do you think that unionism and professionalism are incompatible?”. There were 140 respondents who did substantiate their responses. The responses have been placed in two categories, (1) those who felt that unionism and professionalism were incompatible (31 or 22.1 percent of the 140 respondents) and, (2) those who felt that they were compatible (86 or 61.4 percent of the 140 respondents). The other responses (23 or 16.4 percent of the 140 respondents) were of little consequence to this study. Of the 31 respondents who believed that trade unionism and professionalism are incompatible, the following are some single responses indicating views on incompatibility:

- unionism and professionalism were incompatible as the union did not understand the professional issues specific to the LIS profession. Unions were clueless of the job itself;
- trade unions tended to be more concerned with workers' rights than the development of the profession – the aims of both the organisations were very different;
- unions were mostly concerned about living wage for the lowest paid and always saw professionals as being highly paid. This divide would always present itself as a barrier to both the organisations working for the benefit of all in the sector; and
- unions were associated with aggressive conduct while professional associations were much more conservative and gentle. This difference in conduct would be fertile ground for conflict which will make them incompatible.

Eighty-six (86) respondents were in favour and substantiated their response to the issue of unionism and professionalism being compatible. One of the respondents argued that the issue of incompatibility was based on an “old fashioned premise.” Some of the single responses indicating the compatibility of unionism and professionalism included:

- “unions and professional associations work towards the same goal but from different angles”;
- “they [unionism and professionalism] complement each other as professionalism is more to do with a service being offered and unionism is to do with things to please the staff”, and;
- “there are a number of professionals such as teachers, nurses and accountants that have their own unions. These unions are well organised and address more than just industrial issues”.

There was one respondent who presented the argument that

“the professional association has done nothing to confirm the status of professional librarians. Given the fact that we are not seen as professionals anyway, so what would be wrong in having a body that would listen to our concerns and act upon it.”

Thirty-three (33) of the 86 respondents indicated that the LIS sector could only benefit from a trade union and a professional association working together which affirmed the view that they could be compatible. For example, one respondent interestingly pointed out that the union

does not have the necessary background information [of the profession], the professional body can provide that information. At the same time the professional body does not have the expertise of the union but together they could form a powerful negotiating and representative body.

Thus, these respondents believe that should both the organisations work together, the sector could have the best of both worlds.

7.2.1.8.2 Unionism undermining professionalism

Another issue in the debate 'unionism versus professionalism' is the issue of whether unionism undermines professionalism. A substantial percentage of the respondents (139 or 45.3 percent of the 307 respondents) supported the view that unionism did not undermine professionalism. Only 27 or 8.8 percent were convinced that unionism did undermine professionalism. One hundred and two (102) or 33.2 percent were not sure and 39 or 12.7 percent did not respond to this item in the questionnaire. However, only 123 or 40 percent of the respondents substantiated their response to item 22.1.

A large number of the respondents (43 or 34.9 percent of the 123 respondents), in one way or another, maintained that unions complement the South African professional association. Therefore, for them, unionism cannot undermine professionalism. Respondents also maintained that both the organisations were equal partners in any work environment and therefore should work hand in hand: "The union between the two [that is, the union and the professional association] can only work for the good of the LIS sector." A respondent, who supported the above view, posed the question, "How can unionism undermine professionalism? ... working together can only benefit us all."

Another common theme in the responses was that the “fight for one’s rights does not necessarily mean that it will undermine professionalism. You can fight for your rights while at the same time serving your clients.” In affirming the above, a respondent states, “these organisations fulfil two separate areas in the life of a library employee. One develops the member and the other negotiates for his/her salary and conditions of employment.”

In the words of one of the respondents:

“Unionism strengthens professionalism as it would support and encourage the rights of the professionals. One of the fundamental principles governing unionism is to ensure fairness and that would include treating a professional member of staff of the sector with the respect and dignity that is given to any professional rather than treating the professional member of staff as a highly educated ‘book shelver’ or ‘book stamper’.”

In essence, the respondent argues that professional employees of the LIS sector are not accorded the respect and dignity of a professional. Another respondent goes on to say “unions ‘fight’ for basic rights for all professions, the very basic foundation that professionalism stands on.”

Other single comments, quoted directly from the responses, in support of the fact that unionism does not undermine professionalism include:

- “The merits of this position have been debated at length - a social profession such as librarianship can accommodate both unionism and professionalism without one impacting negatively on the other”;
- “We have seen professionals like educators, nurses and accountants having competent trade unions that address professional and industrial issues”; and
- “Working for the benefit of a strong LIS sector, each should ideally spur the other on to new heights of strength and excellence.”

However, there were those who believed that unionism did undermine professionalism. Of the 18 respondents who did provide reasons for their support of the fact unionism did undermine professionalism, one respondent argued that “it is my experience that trade union requirements undermine the profession as more often than not that it is the semi-professional staff i.e. shelvers who belong to trade unions and they have no regard for the LIS sector.” There is further support

for this position as another respondent argues that “the union can expect you to abide by their rules and do things which can be against your principles and free will - professionals should be allowed to exercise their own minds.” It is further argued that “professional training is based on academic qualifications, intellectual and theoretical knowledge whereas unionised environments rely on work background and manual skills and labour, therefore, unionism can only undermine professionalism.” A response, which seems to encapsulate the fundamental reason for supporting the perception that unionism undermines professionalism, was that “[union] members tend to lose sight of their professional duties when addressing union matters and that unions tend to politicise issues that should be addressed by the professional in a professional way.”

There was a significant number of responses (62 respondents or 50.4 percent) that were of little consequence to the study. For example, one respondent stated, “unfortunately my knowledge of trade unions is very limited.” The lack of knowledge was the theme to a many of the 62 responses.

There was one respondent, whom the researcher deduces from the response has spent some time in Canada, who argued that unions could work to the advantage of the profession as they have and still work well for library staff in Canada.

7.2.1.8.3 Unionism being detrimental to the image of the LIS profession

One hundred and eighty-six (186) or 60.5 percent of the 307 respondents believed that belonging to a trade union would not be detrimental to the image of the LIS profession. Eighteen (18) or 5.8 percent indicated that it would be detrimental while 66 or 21.6 percent were not sure and 37 or 12 percent did not respond to the item. Of the 270 respondents who did respond to item 23.1, 115 or 42.6 percent substantiated their responses.

The responses to this item (115) followed a similar pattern to the responses to item 22.2 in that the respondents largely maintained that unions and professional bodies complement each other. Therefore, for these respondents, belonging to a trade union would not be detrimental to the

image of the LIS profession, as a respondent stated, "In the current political and economic climate, belonging to a trade union is a necessity irrespective of the occupation."

However, there was a "general feeling that if you belong to a union, you are an unskilled worker and you are not seen in a 'professional' light. Perhaps if the library professional body could work with the unions, this will alleviate this misconception." One respondent reports that, "I am a professional librarian and belong to a union; it in no way interferes with my ability to act professionally. However my institution does not regard me as a professional but rather as a member of the support staff." The view, "the low salaries paid is testimony to the status of 'non-professionals'" was submitted by another respondent.

One seemingly frustrated respondent remarked that "it is high time that society takes LIS professionals seriously. Forming a union will give [the LIS profession] the bargaining power, the status and a voice that society can listen to." Another respondent claimed that the perception that unionism negatively affects the image of a profession "may be true of years gone by when professional people were unlikely to belong to unions. I am sure that has now changed or is changing" because "an employee is a worker before he is a professional."

One of the respondents quoted first hand experience which illustrated that belonging to a profession specific union did not negatively affect the image of the LIS profession. The respondent declared, "I was member of a union in Canada where the union supported the workers well. I never had the feeling that management perceived us as not professional."

Another respondent felt that item 23.2 seems to imply that trade unions were a negative force, but believed that unions protected their members from exploitation and at the same time they set minimum standards for their members. Unionism basically trains professionals to be assertive in the work environment without compromising professionalism.

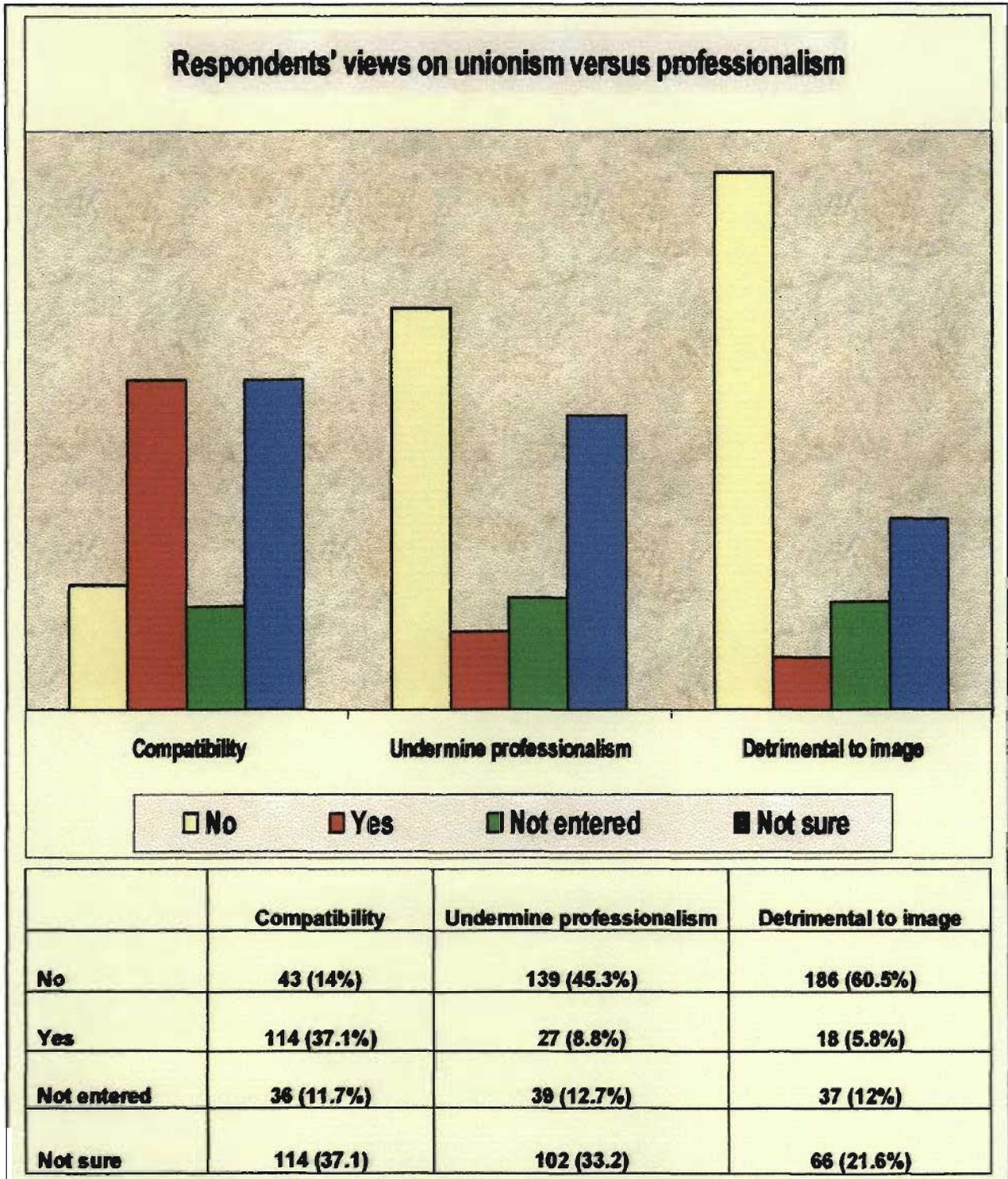
It must be noted that there was only one respondent who substantiated the claim that belonging to a trade union would be detrimental to the image of the LIS profession. The respondent argued that belonging to a trade union would cause a loss of credibility and this loss of credibility would have a negative affect on the image of the profession.

7.2.1.8.4 Summary of findings: LIS issues impacting on the growth of unionism in the sector

There was no conclusive response as to whether professionalism was incompatible with trade unionism as 43 (14%) of the 307 respondents said that professionalism was incompatible with unionism, 114 (37.1%) respondents said that they were compatible, 114 (37.1%) said they were not sure and 36 (11.7%) did not respond to the item. The fact that trade union officials lack the necessary LIS knowledge seems to be the factor underpinning the negative response from respondents. Those that believe that the two organisations are compatible base their argument on the fact that there was capacity for the professional association and a trade union to work together.

A substantial percentage of the respondents support the view that unionism does not undermine professionalism. A small percentage, less than nine, argues that unionism does undermine professionalism. As stated above, the support for unionism not undermining professionalism is based largely on the fact that there is scope for both the organisations to work together. Furthermore, when the respondents were asked if belonging to a trade union would be detrimental to the image of the profession, more than 60 percent disagreed. Again, this response is largely based on the fact that the organisations could work together for the benefit of the profession as a whole. *Figure 10* graphically summarises these responses from the 307 respondents.

Figure 10 (N=307)



7.2.1.9 The way forward for the LIS sector

The sixth research objective of this study was to investigate the feasibility of combining the industrial objectives of a trade union and the professional objectives of a professional association into a single organisation that will represent the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa. Essentially, the researcher was searching for a way forward for the sector. In investigating a way forward, the researcher probes four options, namely, (1) the professional association should become a statutory body, (2) the current status should remain, (3) a sector specific union should be formed and, (4) the professional association should broaden its constitution and act as a quasi union. The third option will be part of the discussion of the fourth research objective, that is, to investigate the need for an organisation to address the industrial needs of the LIS employees in the sector.

7.2.1.9.1 The professional association and statutory status

One of the benefits of belonging to a trade union is that the organisation has statutory status. As an institute with a legal persona, unions command some level of respect and attention from the different stakeholders.

There was a high percentage of respondents who indicated that they thought that the South African LIS professional association should become a statutory body. Of the 307 respondents, 49.2 percent or 151 expressed their support for the South African professional association becoming a statutory body. There was a small percentage (5.5 percent or 17 respondents) who did not support statutory status of the professional association. One hundred and two (102) or 33.2 percent were not sure and the other 37 or 12 percent of the respondents did not respond to the item. The following item, that is, item 24.2, requested that respondents substantiate their responses to the previous item (item 24.1). One hundred and seven (107) responded to this item.

Of the 107 responses, the most frequent response (23 or 21.5%) was that statutory status would ensure that the professional association be taken more seriously by all concerned, which is, employers, government, users and other professions. As an organisation, the association would have a greater impact on the above mentioned stakeholders. The increase in respect and recognition by the different stakeholders would ensure that the profession will transform into a more forceful and assertive profession. Further, two respondents shared the view that it could lead to an increase in funding to sustain the library as an efficient information provider. An efficient information provider would be of benefit to the country as a whole and would assist in improving the rate of literacy in the country. These were some of the positive spin-offs put forwarded by respondents as resulting from the professional body having statutory status.

Six respondents or 5.6 percent (of the 107 respondents) pointed out that statutory status would increase the bargaining power of those employed within the LIS environment. Arguments put forward were that a single statutory body would ensure that salaries and conditions of service would be regulated ensuring consistency, in remuneration and conditions of service, and equity for all employed within the LIS sector. Consistency and equity would ensure a more focused profession and a focused profession would command an increase in credibility. The fact that the organisation has legal status would also add credibility. The researcher was reminded that the size of the membership was one of the primary factors contributing to credibility. This respondent stated that, “the South African LIS professional association needs to increase its membership before it becomes a statutory body.”

It was further submitted by four respondents that the professional association, as a statutory body, would aid in addressing labour issues. As a statutory body registered with the Registrar of Labour Relations, the professional body would be able to represent its members at disciplinary and grievance hearings at the institutional level. Further, the professional association would be able to represent its members at the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA). This representation is over and above representing members' interest when addressing issues such as salaries and conditions of service. Statutory status accords the organisation the right to engage in this level of representation.

One of the respondents argued that “there are several pieces of [labour] legislation which can only be utilised by a statutory body. If the professional association becomes a statutory body it could utilise the provisions of the legislation which will have a positive impact on the profession.” Another respondent furthered this argument by suggesting that the professional association could engage in training and development and that would include conducting workshops for the benefit of the staff employed in the sector.

Some of the other issues raised by single respondents include:

- A statutory organisation would be able to effectively address such issues as copyright, value added tax (VAT) and support of local booksellers;
- Statutory status would give the professional association international recognition and make it easier for it to participate in debates with government on a number of issues such as funding, provision of physical facilities and such;
- A professional association with legal status will give the organisation more backbone;
- Statutory status will make certain that the LIS sector could occupy a more substantive role in educating our people. Government, however, must provide the resources for this to materialise; and
- The professional association should have the necessary statutory teeth to set standards, minimum salaries, conditions of service, and so on.

7.2.1.9.2 Retention of the status quo and support for one union

In item 25 the respondents were asked if they thought that the LIS profession should retain the status quo, which is, professional issues be addressed by a professional body and the industrial issues by a trade union. One hundred and fourteen (114) or 37.1 percent of the 307 respondents said yes, that is, the status quo should remain. Eighty-five (85) or 27.7 percent replied no, while 63 or 20.5 percent were not sure and 45 or 14.6 percent did not respond to this item.

There was substantial support, in item 26, for the employees of the LIS sector to form one union that would address industrial issues as well as professional issues. In fact 148 or 48.2 percent of

the 307 respondents supported the notion of one union. Of the remaining 159 respondents, the responses were distributed as follows:

- Not sure: 59 or 19.2%;
- Not entered: 41 or 13.4%; and
- Did not support: 59 or 19.2%.

7.2.1.9.3 Broadening of the constitution of the professional association

In a follow-up to item 25, respondents were asked in item 27.1 if they thought that the LIS professional association should broaden its constitution and act as a quasi union, that is, for the professional body to address both professional and industrial issues of all who are employed in a LIS environment. There was substantial support (137 or 44.6 percent of the 307 respondents) for the professional association broadening its constitution. Of the remaining 170 respondents, the responses were distributed as follows:

- Not sure: 82 or 26.7%;
- Not entered: 39 or 12.7%; and
- Did not support: 49 or 16%.

Respondents were asked to substantiate their response to item 27.1. Unfortunately, the responses (to item 27.2), in the main, were not adequately substantiated. Of the 49 respondents who indicated that they did not support the broadening of the constitution of the professional association, 14 of the respondents substantiated their responses. The core reason for not supporting the broadening of the constitution was the fact that each body, which is, the trade union and the professional association are independent entities and each has specific roles to play. Therefore broadening the constitution of the professional association would blur the independent identities of both the organisations. Supporting this view, a respondent argued that if the constitution was broadened the “roles [of the organisations] may be diluted in a broader ineffective organisation.” It was also proposed that effective unionism was dependent on large

numbers which the LIS sector does not have and therefore broadening the constitution might have a negative effective, and that is, it will create an organisation that would achieve very little.

There was firm belief that the professional association and trade unions were essential in a LIS environment and that they should “find ways and means of working together to ensure the best of both worlds.” However, it was also argued that there were “a number of trade unions in South Africa to which a person can belong and the LIS professional association should rather restrict itself to concentrating on the professional development of all its members.” One respondent also indicated that “the current association can barely cope with the professional issues. I do not believe they have the capacity to take on more.”

Other meaningful single responses not supporting the broadening of the constitution include:

- “I do not see why library workers have different needs to the rest of staff in an institution”;
- “The professional association must just focus on professional issues and let unions deal with day-to-day employees’ issues”; and
- “It is better for each to do what they do best - professional issues for the LIS body, industrial issues for the unions”.

Of the 137 respondents who did support the broadening of the constitution, 95 substantiated their responses. There was one respondent whose response sums up most of what was submitted in support of broadening the constitution of the professional association. The respondent argued that the broadening of the constitution would help remove the artificial divide between the trade unions and the professional association and allow the organisation to take full advantage of rights contained in the Constitution of South Africa.

A strong reason for supporting the broadening the constitution of the professional association was that personnel from the profession would be “looking after the interests of the profession.” A recurring response was that the people from the profession had a “sound knowledge of libraries which would ensure fairness, promote growth and development of all including external

stakeholders.” Another theme that was common amongst the responses was the increase in capacity of the organisation to represent the profession to external stakeholders, especially in soliciting funding and changes to laws impacting on libraries, and to represent the interest of the staff when interacting with management.

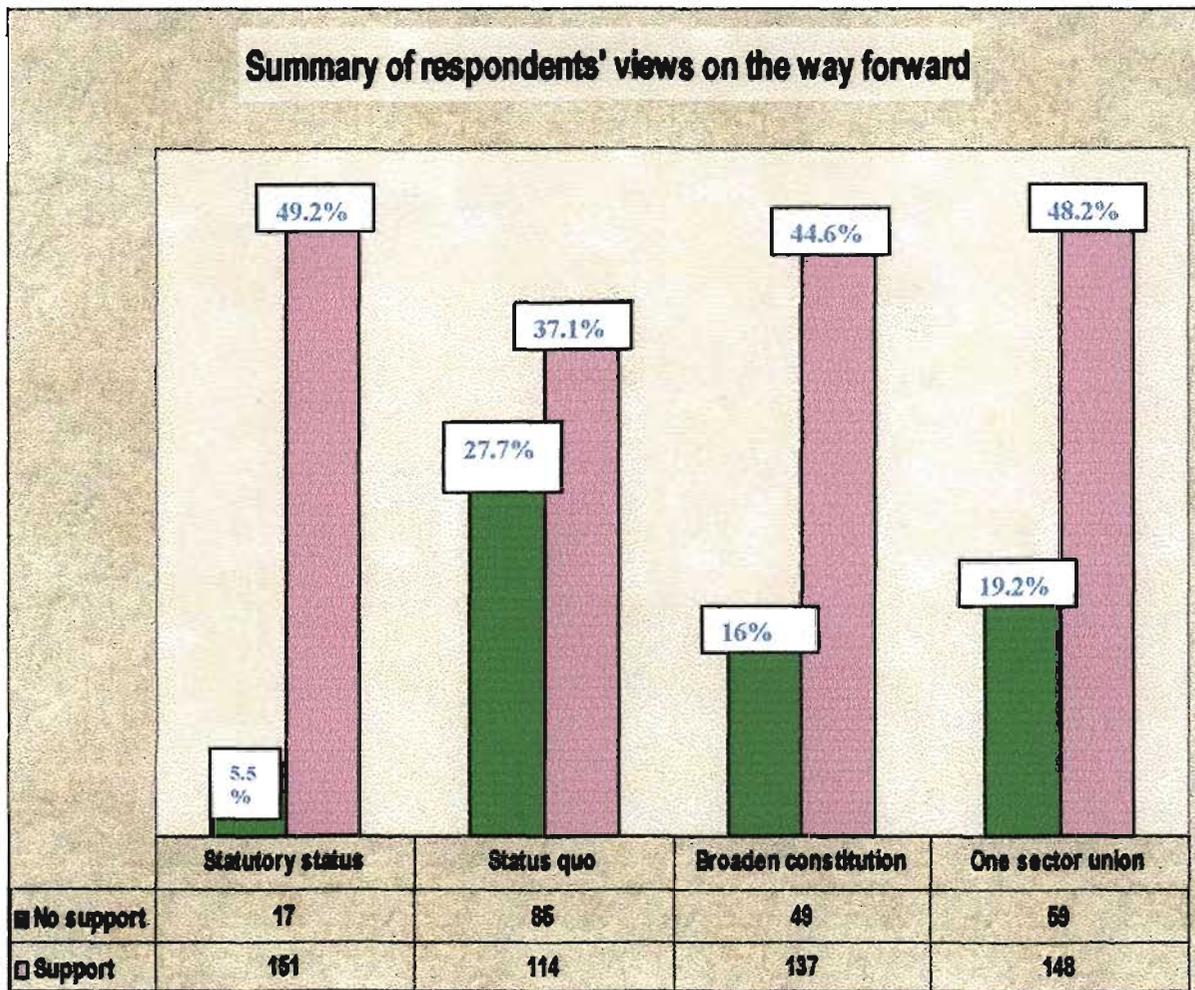
Other meaningful single responses supporting the broadening of the constitution included:

- “Sounds like a good compromise without starting a new organisation”;
- “Professional and industrial sectors work together in an institution for the institution to function so why shouldn't they be represented by the same body and be included in one constitution?”;
- “The present system is not very successful. The proposed arrangement can only be an improvement”;
- “Professional and industrial issues cannot be separated. Its time that something positive is done”;
- “This will eliminate the need to belong to different organisations which supplement each other”; and
- “In many instances the same senior faces are seen repeatedly in similar roles. A quick check of photographs of publications of both LIASA and SAILIS will support this statement. At present the body needs new blood to revitalise the present paralysis.”

7.2.1.9.4 Summary of findings on the way forward

The analysis of the data gathered on the way forward reflects a high level of uncertainty and seem contradictory in some instances. These findings will be discussed in the next chapter. A summary of the findings on the way forward for the LIS sector is graphically represented in *Figure 11* which shows respondent support or lack thereof for the various options.

Figure 11 (N=307)

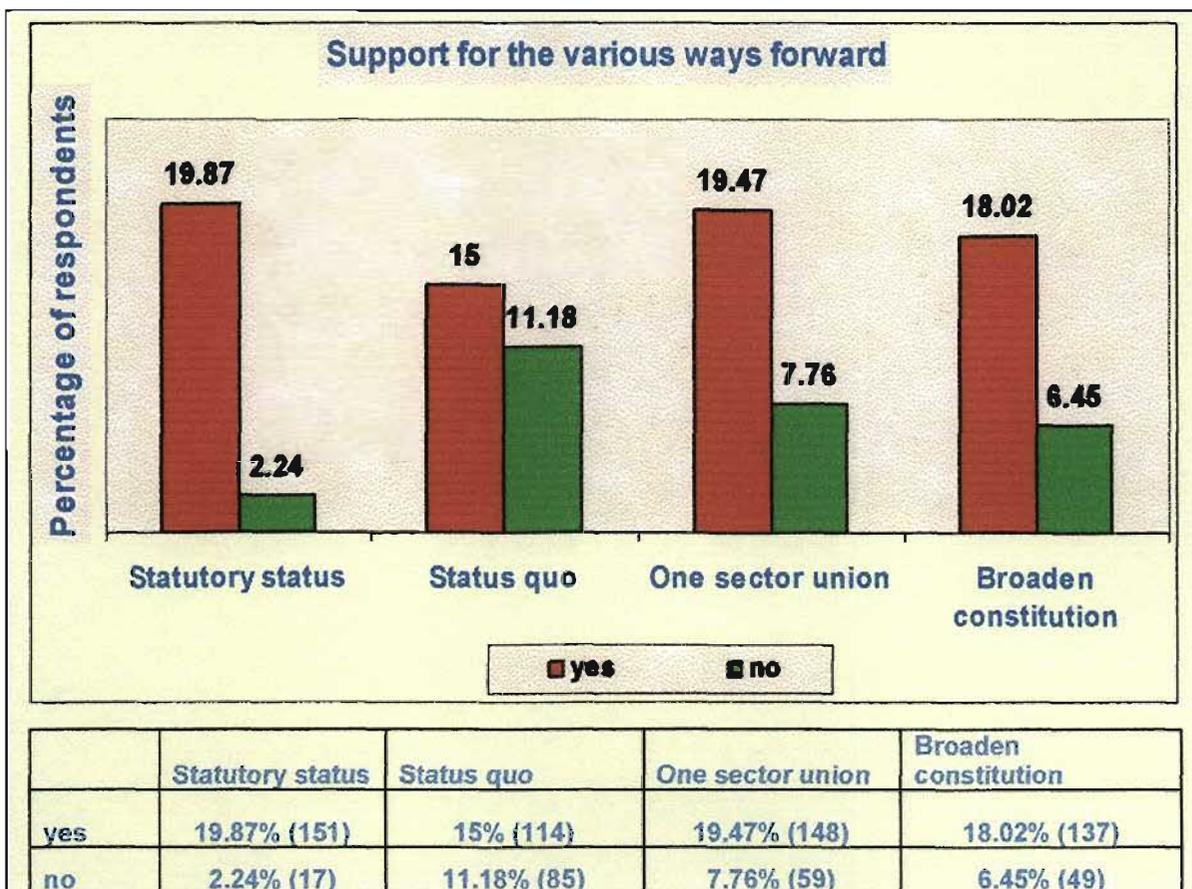


The strongest support, although only marginally, is for the current professional association to acquire statutory status (151 or 49.2% of the responses). Second on the hierarchy of support is for one union to represent the LIS tertiary education sector as a whole (148 or 48.2% of the responses). The broadening of the constitution was also well supported with 137 or 44.6% of the responses. The retention of the status quo drew the least support (114 or 37.1% of the responses).

Closer examination of the above mentioned uncertainty about the way forward was undertaken. The researcher took the aggregate of the definitive responses, that is, all the yes's and the no's to be 760. The percentage support for each of the definitive responses was calculated. The results of the calculation are reflected in *Figure 12*. Eighty five (85) respondents (or 11.18 percent of the

aggregate respondents) expressed the view that there should be a change in the status quo. Fifteen percent of the aggregate 760 responses indicated that the LIS profession should retain the status quo, that is, professional issues be addressed by a professional association and the industrial issues be addressed by a trade union. The greater support (19.87 percent), though marginally, was for the professional association to acquire statutory status, followed closely by one sector union and broaden constitution.

Figure 12 (N=760)



7.2.1.10 General comments

The respondents were asked to comment generally on the South African LIS professional association and on the trade unions they belong to.

The researcher recorded 104 responses to item 28 which requested that the respondents comment generally on the professional association. Twenty-six (26) or 25 percent that responded to this item (refer to *Figure 3* for the distribution of managers – 54 manager respondents) were from those that were categorised as managers. The researcher notes, with surprise, that the responses from this category of LIS staff, in the main, highlight their dissatisfaction with the professional association and support for the unionisation of the LIS sector. The indications are that there is a need, as one respondent put it, for a “break away from the past in a meaningful way” as the professional association is “not relevant in meeting all the needs of all LIS organizations”. One of the core reasons for this feeling of dissatisfaction is that the professional association is viewed as an organisation which was “only active for conferences, workshops, meetings and trainings [and] no attempts [are made] to negotiate or further the wellness of its members”. There are “other LIS organisations such as SLIS and SOUG which compete with LIASA” for this ‘focus’ on conferences and workshops.

One could assume that the professional association would market LIS as a profession and a service provider to all of South Africa and the rest of the world. However, the professional association has not done this marketing. Besides the problem of poor marketing, the professional association has failed to “liaise with the [respective] union[s] on issues which are common to all that work in the sector – there are no partnerships between the professional association and union/s.” There is also the perception among manager respondents that not all sectors of the LIS environment are treated fairly, the public sector being the preferred sector or the ‘blue eyed’ sector of the professional association.

One of the manager respondents is quoted as saying, “I pray for the day the LIS association trains the staff in union skills, because LIS staff turned unionist understand LIS matters better than a unionist who has no LIS background.”

However, there were three (of the 26) manager respondents who were supportive of the South African professional association. One respondent argued that cognisance must be taken of the “fact that LIS employees are part of a bigger workforce at the various institutions and these

workforces are represented in its totality by the respective trade unions". The LIS professional association "needs to find ways of increasing its membership however, which will not be done by becoming a union." Another respondent argued that "LIASA is growing and improving all the time, and is uniting LIS workers. Industrial issues are...between the employee and the institution, and are well handled by unions."

There were 32 or 30.77 percent of professional staff, not categorised as management, whose views were similar to those of their managers. Some of the single responses here include:

- "Continuing education should be formalised by the professional association";
- "The professional association must expand or cast its net wider to become more representative";
- "I would be quite enthusiastic about becoming a member of the professional association if the association became a statutory body";
- "At the moment I find myself far more interested in the goings on of LIS bodies in other parts of the world";
- "LIASA just doesn't speak to me"; and
- "LIASA is a developing association and is in a difficult situation trying to persuade government to increase funding for library and information services".

There were 40 or 38.46 percent support staff who responded to the item. Responses from 17 support staff centred on the lack of support from the professional association on professional and industrial issues. Some of the respondents argued that the professional association had chosen to take the easy road by not committing to the status of the qualifications from the technikons. They claimed that after four years of study and more through a technikon, support staff were now asked to acquire university qualifications for mobility within the organisation. One respondent argued that, "there is still so much it [the professional association] needs to do to promote South African LIS internationally – the American Library Association currently lists Australian and United Kingdom qualifications as recognised by them for positions in the United Stateswhat about South African qualifications?".

The professional association was accused by support staff respondents of not engaging in discussions on 'bread and butter' issues as the bulk of the "membership is professional staff and therefore are not in desperate need of equitable salaries, job security and such". Further, the people holding positions of leadership within the professional association were professional staff and more often than not they were managers. The fact that the leadership were managers "explains the professional association's policy of staying away from labour related issues." The lack of conviction by the professional association to address the standardisation of salaries, conditions of service, fair employment practices and staff training and development were mentioned by support staff respondents in item 28.

Item 29 of the questionnaire asked respondents to comment on trade unions. There were 68 or 22.1 percent of the 307 respondents who replied to this item. Eighteen (18 or 26.5 percent) of the 68 respondents were supportive of the activities of the trade unions they belonged to and of the contributions of trade unions. However, there were six (or 8.8 percent) respondents who were of the opinion that the current trade unions did not have the capacity to address the professional aspects of a vocation as they are too focussed on industrial action. Further, two respondents commented on the unions' commitment to politics at the expense of addressing industrial issues. One respondent claimed that unions are "too committed to COSATU and hence to the ANC and the government. Trade unions need to be more independent."

The comments supporting trade unions were restricted to the trade union's contribution to improving industrial concerns such as salaries and conditions of service. It was assumed that this contribution of the trade unions has "played a positive role in lives of the workers thereby improving their level of production in the workplace." There was a suggestion from one of the respondents that trade unions had to be "more active in training and development, and selection and recruitment issues." Despite the trade unions' 'success' in addressing industrial concerns, there is concern about the "capacity of the unions to cope with the implementation of the proposed mergers of the different institutions."

The last item in the LIS employee questionnaire asked respondents for any additional comments they wished to contribute to the research. There were 86 responses. Again, there was a wide range of single comments covering issues such as:

- “The SA professional association and unions have failed in addressing certain issues and have had great success with others. Not till you try something new will you know if it works. So why not try to merge the professional association with a trade union?”;
- “Unions and professional associations have the democratic right to exist as individual entities without competing. They should complement each other”;
- “The LIS sector is very fragmented and something should be done to consolidate it. Even the Ministry responsible for LIS in the country is not easily identifiable”;
- “There is a need for an organisation to take charge of the profession, shying away from pertinent issues such as accreditation of LIS teaching departments and the qualifications they put out is eroding the status of the profession”;
- “LIS should worry about isolating itself from other workers. We should coexist. I don't suppose there are clear lines drawn between unions and professional bodies representing LIS hence some of us don't see the need for being members of these bodies”;
- “I have not aligned myself to a trade union because of their focus on political party membership - membership of a union assumes signing up as a member of a political party”; and
- “Unfortunately my knowledge of trade unions is very limited, but I get the general idea that they accomplish more than the LIS professional association”.

The researcher was pleased to note the positive responses to the research and the potential role the research could play in contributing to the future of the LIS profession. One respondent commented that the “project is long overdue. I will be eagerly awaiting the results and hopefully [the researcher will] take the recommendations to another level besides for degree purposes.”

Other comments include, *inter alia*:

- “A most interesting topic”;
- “A tough topic to tackle”;
- “An extremely relevant study”;

- “Thanks for the opportunity to take part in something useful. Please send us a copy of the results”; and
- “Your research has enlightened me, that is, if we can form a trade union for LIS only, like other industries, backed by LIASA everybody in South Africa will see the importance and value of our profession. We will be taken seriously”.

7.2.2 Survey of trade union officials

The fifth research objective of the study was to investigate the feasibility of unionising the sector under a single employee representative body. To achieve this research objective, a questionnaire was administered to the trade union officials of the three national unions that are currently servicing the tertiary education sector. The fourth research objective investigated the various ways forward for the sector. One of the possible options of a way forward is the formation of a sector specific union. In discussing this, the fourth research objective, the researcher will also address the formation of a sector specific union.

7.2.2.1 Response rate

The questionnaire was electronically delivered to the national offices of the three national unions currently servicing the tertiary education sector with a request that the questionnaire be completed by the senior officials of the trade union (refer to **Appendix 2**). Two of the three unions indicated that the response was in fact the view of the organisation and not the views’ of individuals within the organisation. Therefore, they argued that it was not necessary to have more than one response from the organisation. The researcher accepted the views of the trade unions and treated each response as a representative view of the organisation as a whole. All three unions responded to the questionnaire. Therefore the designation of the respondent, which is item 2 of the questionnaire, became irrelevant.

7.2.2.2 Representation

Only one of the three respondents indicated, in response to item 3, that their organisation was restricted to representing employees of the tertiary education sector **only**. Of the other two unions, one union represented employees from the tertiary, health and public sectors and the second union represented employees from the “Tertiary education sector, Research Sector [and] Public Sector (Department of Education)”. Given that all three unions had membership in the tertiary education sector, the obvious response to item 4 was that all three trade unions were open to white collar workers. The respondents confirmed that all three unions had an open membership policy to white collar workers.

In item 5.1 the respondents were asked if their unions currently represented employees working in the library and information environment. Again, all three indicated that they were currently representing employees in the LIS environment. In representing the employees of the LIS sector, the unions expressed, in response to item 5.2, that they represented both the professional and industrial issues of the LIS sector. However, none of the unions indicated, as requested in item 5.3, the core issues that their unions addressed.

7.2.2.3 Knowledge of the sector

One of the issues raised by the employee respondents in the study was that the current unions representing their interests lack the knowledge of the sector. This issue was presented to the trade union officials in item 6.1.1 where the researcher asked respondents if their unions had knowledge of the LIS sector to address the professional and industrial issues of the sector. All three respondents stated that they did have the knowledge of the sector. In responding positively to this item, the next item (item 6.1.2) should become irrelevant. However, one of the unions stated that their shop steward structures would ensure that there would be a shop steward from the sector to represent the interests of that sector. The respondent went further to state that if the sector had significant numbers, then there would be representation of the sector at the regional, provincial and national forums. It was also expressed that it was not necessary for the office

bearers of the union to have the knowledge of the sector as long as the shop stewards had the necessary knowledge of the sector.

7.2.2.4 Training and development

Another issue raised by the employee respondents of the study was that the unions are not active in the training and development of the staff working in the LIS environment. This lack of knowledge and inactivity of the trade union to train and develop LIS personnel stifled the growth of trade unionism in the sector. In item 6.2.1, the trade union officials were asked if their union did engage in training and development of its membership. All three unions did indicate that their union did engage in training and development. However, only one substantiated their response as requested in item 6.2.2. This respondent stated that their union had a national policy on training and development, however, they lacked the financial resources to implement the programme. The respondent went on to state that whatever training and development was being conducted would be conducted via the shop steward structures.

7.2.2.5 Sector specific union

One of the core issues in the questionnaire for trade union officials was the view of the respondents on a library and information services specific union representing all staff within the sector as opposed to representation by a generic union. There was unanimous response that a sector specific union would not provide better representation than a generic union. The essence of the responses were similar. One of the respondents stated the unionism is about numbers and the sector does not have substantial numbers. Therefore, a sector specific union would not be viable as it would not have the necessary numbers. The second respondent stated that “we believe in a unitary sector union, rather than having to service different sector of staff within an institution. Workers must be united in furthering their interests and fighting for their rights”. The third union stated that the ‘mother body’, Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU¹⁴), has a policy of one union for one sector. The respondent went on to state that it does not make sense for more than one union to negotiate with the same employer for a range of different

¹⁴ COSATU is the largest federation of trade unions in South Africa.

employees. For example, “it does not make sense for the health workers, municipal workers and the educators to negotiate separately with the same employer, [that is], the government”. Since all the unions answered in the affirmative to item 7.1, item 7.3 became irrelevant.

One of the respondents indicated that it was not possible for a sector specific union to fit into the structure of their national union; this was in response to items 8.1 and 8.3. The respondent argued “I don’t see how a ‘sector specific union’ can fit into our national structures.” The second respondent expressed the view that their union structures could accommodate a sector specific union but unfortunately, the respondent did not substantiate the response. The third respondent also expressed the view that their national union structures could accommodate a sector specific union. The respondent went further to state that their “union represents workers through skilled negotiators drawn from all the sectors, including the LIS sector”. Therefore, according to the respondent, it was feasible to have a sector specific union within the structures of their national union. In terms of the current structure of the national union, it was proposed by this respondent that the LIS sector have an independent shop steward structure. This shop steward structure of LIS employees from the different libraries could then come together and feed into the branch, regional, provincial and national structures of the national union.

7.2.2.6 Advantages and disadvantages of the different representative bodies

The trade union officials were asked, in items 9.1 and 9.2, to outline the advantages and disadvantages of belonging to a registered trade union. In outlining the advantages, one respondent stated that “registered trade unions have greater bargaining power and easier access to the necessary labour courts.” Further, the trade union official brought into the debate the issue of power play and the role of the trade unions’ large numbers in that power play. Another respondent expressed the opinion that a registered union “is able to bargain at all levels without restrictions and it is also the only recognised worker representative body within the workplace.” Further, as a collective representative, the union uses the strength of some of the workers for the benefit of all who work within that environment. The last respondent pointed out that “you have officials and skilled negotiators on your side.” Two of the respondents indicated that there were

no disadvantages of belonging to a trade union. The third respondent said that “sometimes when you belong to a minor or small sector you tend to get forgotten.”

When asked about the advantages and disadvantages of a professional association, one of the respondents stated, that “[I] don’t have experience or knowledge of professional associations and therefore cannot comment. I usually regard a professional association as just a get together of a few individuals, and as such they do not have worker representation rights in terms of the Labour Relations Act.” The second respondent took a similar view and stated that the only advantage could be a group of individuals coming together to discuss social issues. The professional association did not have the capacity to address labour issues. The last respondent indicated that their union was not in a position to comment on the advantages or the disadvantages of a professional association.

7.2.2.7 Workplace forums

Workplace forums are fundamental to the democratisation of the workplace (Araujo 1996: 47). The respondents were asked, in item 11.1, if their unions supported the formation of workplace forums at the institutional level. All three respondents again answered in the affirmative. In responding to item 11.2 (substantiate the response to item 11.1), one of the respondents pointed out that “we have established a workplace forum.” The second respondent expressed the view that “unions are able to discuss issues of mutual interest with the employer” at workplace forums. The third respondent indicated that their union “has been fighting for their establishment. [Workplace forums] are the link between the employees and the employers and they prevent minor problems becoming major issues.” A comment made by one of the respondents, and which has significant implications (in the opinion of the researcher), is that if workplace forums were successful then there would be no need for trade unions. This comment is discussed in the following chapter.

The respondents did not attempt to provide responses to items 12 and 13 concerning commenting on issues raised in the questionnaire that was completed by staff employed in library and information services in the tertiary education sector, and any further comments that the respondents may wish to make (refer to **Appendix 2**).

7.2.2.8 Summary of findings

There was a hundred percent response rate from trade union officials. There was unanimous support for the fact that LIS employees would be better represented by a generic union with large numbers and skilled negotiators as opposed to a sector specific union with indepth knowledge of the sector. With regard to the feasibility of having a sector specific union fitting into the structures of the national union, there was a difference of opinion with two unions indicating that it was not feasible. The third union proposed a possible way forward with the development of a shop steward structure to represent the sector and feed into the branch, regional, provincial and national structures.

7.3 SOME TRENDS IN THE RESPONSES FROM BOTH SURVEY POPULATIONS

This section presents the findings with regard to the distribution of membership, knowledge of the sector and, staff training and development.

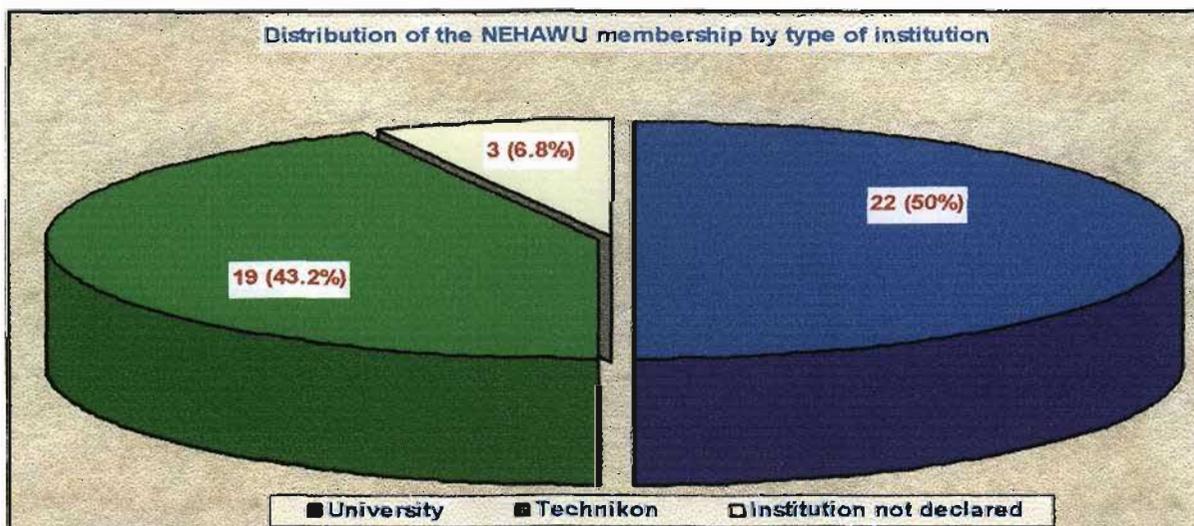
7.3.1 Distribution of membership

The researcher interrogated the responses of the two survey populations in an attempt to identify relationships that might exist between the two survey populations. Initially, the LIS employees were surveyed. The researcher identified, from the findings of the employee respondents, three national unions servicing the LIS sector. The three national unions were subsequently surveyed. Given the fact that there were three national unions servicing the tertiary education sector, the proportion of respondents who had sole membership of any one of the three national trade unions was relatively small. There were 44 or 14.33 percent of the 307 LIS employee respondents who

were members of NEHAWU of which 11 or 25 percent also had membership of the professional association (LIASA). Of the 307 LIS employee respondents, 35 or 11.4 percent were members of NUTESA. Twelve or 34.28 percent of the 35 respondents were also members of LIASA. There were five (5) or 1.62 percent of the 307 LIS employee respondents who had membership of NTESU. Of the five respondents, two or 40 percent were also members of the professional association.

A close examination of the findings reveal that NEHAWU is a trade union that has membership at both the universities and technikons while NUTESA's membership is restricted to the technikons and, NTESU's membership is restricted to the universities. There were 77 employee respondents from the technikons and 184 respondents from the universities, and 46 employee respondents did not indicate who they were employed by (refer to *Figure 1*). Of those respondents who did indicate the institution that they were employed at, 35 or 45.45 percent of the 77 technikon respondents were members of NUTESA. Five (5) or 2.72 percent of the 184 university employee respondents were members of NTESU. Of the 261 respondents (77 plus 184), 44 or 16.86 percent (refer to *Figure 13*) were members of NEHAWU. It would seem that the technikon respondent community showed allegiance to the smaller national trade union, NUTESA.

Figure 13 (N=44)



Three national unions have been servicing the tertiary education sector for a number of years. However, these national unions, as evident from the above statistics, have not done much to lure the membership away from the small in-house unions. In 1997¹⁵ there was a meeting, called by the national trade unions, between the trade union movement servicing the tertiary education sector and the employers in the tertiary education sector. This meeting was facilitated by the National Economic Development and Labour Council¹⁶ (NEDLAC). One of the resolutions of that meeting was the formation a national bargaining council for the tertiary education sector. The formation of a national bargaining council would effectively mean that in-house unions would become redundant. However, the threat of forming the national bargaining council for the tertiary education sector and ‘closing down’ in-house unions has not yet materialized. Further, the threat of ‘closing down’ the in-house unions has not negatively affected the growth of in-house trade unions. The aggregate number of LIS employee respondents that are members of a national trade union is 84 or 43.3 percent of the 194 respondents (refer to *Figure 4*). However, the aggregate number employee respondents that are members of in-house unions is 110 or 56.7 percent.

Despite the threat of being declared redundant, in-houses trade unions continue to play a significant role in representing the interests of the majority of the employee respondents in the tertiary education sector. It is argued by the researcher that the services provided by in-house unions are more than adequate as they are holding off the national unions in terms of retaining their membership numbers. The researcher also suggested that the more grass roots the representative body is, the greater the potential for unionisation and the retention of the membership. In October 2000, the in-house union at the then University of Natal (UNSU) merged¹⁷ with a national union. However, by November 2001 the membership resurrected UNSU as there was no support from the national union. The membership accused the national

¹⁵ The researcher was a representative of an in-house union at the NEDLAC meeting.

¹⁶ NEDLAC is a vehicle used for, through dialogue and negotiation, the co-ordination of the interests of the state, unions and employees at a centralised level (Finnemore 1999: 12).

¹⁷ The researcher was the Chairperson of UNSU when it merged with the national union and became the Chairperson again when it reverted to an in-house union.

union of being interested in numbers only and was not prepared to provide any support at the grass roots or institutional level.

The researcher discusses in section 8.2.6.1 the negativity associated with the competition to represent the interests of those working in the LIS sector. It is the opinion of the researcher that the majority of employee respondents were oblivious of this competition from the national unions as the in-house unions are competently meeting their industrial needs. However, it must be accepted that the split membership contributes to the fragmentation of the profession.

7.3.2 Knowledge of the sector

All three trade union respondents indicated that they had knowledge of the LIS sector. One of the respondents went further to state that their shop steward structures would ensure that there would be a shop steward from the sector to represent the interests of that sector. There was no support from the employee respondents to the effect that the trade union officials displayed any knowledge of the LIS sector.

In fact, there were employee respondents who, in response to a number of items in the employee questionnaire, expressed the view that trade unions, which are currently representing their industrial interests, lacked knowledge of the LIS sector. For example, in response to item 15.2 of the employee questionnaire, twenty-two respondents alluded to unions' lack of knowledge of the sector as one of the factors negating their support for a trade union to negotiate or address the industrial issues of the sector. The issue of the unions' lack of knowledge of the LIS sector is evident in presentation of findings from section 7.2.1.7.2 to section 7.2.1.8.3.

7.3.3 Staff training and development

Again, all three national trade unions pointed out that they did engage in staff training and development. The findings from the survey of employee respondents are not supportive of the assertions of the trade unions. Of the 52 employee respondents that did indicate that their unions were active participants in employers' staff training and development programmes, nine (9) or

17.3 percent of the 52 respondents had affiliation to NEHAWU and six (6) or 11.53 percent of the 52 respondents had affiliation to NUTESA. The other 37 or 71.53 percent of the respondents were members of in-house unions. With regards to the nine NEHAWU respondents, seven (7) indicated that they were employed by the University of Cape Town.

It is the view of the researcher that the commitment to staff training and development by NEHAWU at the University of Cape Town is an isolated case and not a reflection of the commitment by the national office of NEHAWU.

The researcher believes that there is very little synergy in the responses from the two survey populations. The perceptions, of the national trade union officials, of the service provided by the national unions are not commensurate with the level of service expected by the membership on the ground. This lack of synergy between employee respondents and trade union officials is further demonstrated when both groups responded to the items on a sector specific union. The trade unions officials were unanimous that a sector specific union will not provide better representation than a generic union. The employee respondents indicate differently as reflected in *Table 5*. The aggregate response to the item by the employee respondents that have affiliation to a national trade union is 79. Of the 79 respondents, just over 40 respondents (50 percent) were of the opinion that there was a need for the LIS sector to form one union to address the industrial issues as well as the professional issues.

Table 5: National trade union employee members' responses to a one sector union (N=79)

	NEHAWU				NUTESA				NTESU			
	N	NS	NE	Y	N	NS	NE	Y	N	NS	NE	Y
One Union	10(3)	7	2	21(5)	8(3)	10(4)	1	15(5)	0	1	0	4(1)

Key: The number in brackets represents those employee respondents who also have membership to LIASA – N=no; NS=not sure; NE=not entered and Y=yes.

7.4 TOWARDS A MODEL OF THE WAY FORWARD

The findings of the study reveal that the professional association has been relatively successful in addressing the professional concerns of the LIS sector but have done very little to address the industrial concerns. On the other hand, the trade unions have been successful in addressing the industrial issues of the sector but not the professional concerns. As discussed in section 7.2.1.9.4, by a small margin, the greatest support among LIS employee respondents was for the professional association to acquire statutory status. However, the trade union officials were of the view that LIS employees would be better represented by a generic union with large numbers and skilled negotiators as opposed to a sector specific union with indepth knowledge of the sector.

The above mentioned and other findings discussed in this chapter demonstrate the need for a new structure to address the sector's industrial and professional concerns. A proposed model for this structure will be presented in the next chapter.

7.5 SUMMARY

Chapter Seven of this study presents findings from the survey of the two research populations, that is, LIS employees and senior trade unions officials. The factors that have been identified, via the survey of the literature, as influencing the growth of unionism in the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa were presented to the LIS survey population.

Some of the findings from the survey of the LIS employees reveal that trade unions:

- have a membership in excess of 63 percent in the LIS tertiary education sector;
- play a significant role in the collective bargaining process;
- negotiate for salaries and conditions of service; and
- represent LIS employees during restructuring exercises.

An overwhelming majority of the respondents preferred a standardised job grading system cutting-across the entire LIS sector. The study recognises that the trade union has neglected the important function of staff training and development. However, the professional association has shown commitment to developing LIS personnel.

The survey of the literature exposed the fact that the LIS sector is fragmented. However, the findings of the survey of LIS employees were not conclusive on this issue to support the findings of the survey of the literature. The study has also found that there were a large number of women within the sector. However, data gathered contradicts findings in the literature that women negate the growth of trade unionism as a high percentage of the women surveyed in this study are members of a trade union.

This chapter has also presented the findings that two-thirds of the LIS employee respondents are of the opinion that it is necessary to have an organisation to address the industrial concerns of the sector. The respondents also indicated that a unified organisation would:

- provide a clear set of guidelines that would assist in strategically tackling bread and butter issues; and**
- increase the credibility and status of the profession.**

However, the preference was for the professional association to address the professional as well as the industrial issues of the sector because the professional association had the knowledge and experience of the sector. Some respondents stated that they would like to see a closer working relationship between the professional association and the trade union.

The study has revealed that a professional association and a number of trade unions currently represent the LIS sector. The senior officials of the three national unions expressed the view that LIS employees were better represented by a generic union which had skilled negotiators to negotiate on behalf of the employees of the sector. The majority view, of the trade union

officials, was that it is not feasible to have a sector specific union to fit into the structures of the national union.

The researcher engages in a discussion of these findings in the next chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Eight, the researcher discusses the findings of the survey population of employees and trade union officials against the backdrop of the discussion of the literature. There are certain fundamental concepts that have been discussed in the previous chapters that guided the discussion in this chapter. The researcher uses the broader definition of a trade union in the ensuing discussion. A trade union, by acting in a collective manner, strives to defend and advance the rights and interests of its members. The primary purpose of this collective body of employees is to regulate relations between employers and employees.

The LIS sector is a professional sector with a predominantly white collar workforce. The researcher associates white collar unions with the organisation or unionisation of employees of a profession where the employees are required to perform intellectual or non-manual job functions. This distinction between white and blue collar workers is not, however, endorsed by South Africa's new labour dispensation. It has been argued that the growth of unionism is influenced by factors such as employment concentration or the bureaucratic nature of the employment structure, the recognition of the union and government policy and, collective bargaining (refer to section 7.2.1.6.1). The bureaucratisation inherent in large libraries tends to create a structural barrier between management and library employees which limits the degree of personal contact and communication between management and library employees. There is a high positive relationship between the existence of legislation granting public employees the right to organise and bargain collectively, and the formation of unions but the legislation alone cannot guarantee worker rights. Here the union plays a key role. However, a professional association whose fundamental purpose is to organise, defend and advance the interests of the profession and its members is considered, by Lumley (1973), to be a trade union, albeit, a union of white collar workers.

As much as there are factors influencing the growth of unionism, there are factors that negate unionism. The factors that have been identified, in the earlier chapters, as potentially negating unionisation are the employment of a large number of women in the sector (refer to section 7.2.1.6.2.2), fragmentation of the LIS profession (refer to section 7.2.1.6.2.1) and the 'professionalism versus unionism' debate (refer to section 7.2.1.8).

The primary focus of this chapter is to discuss the main findings of the study in relation to the research questions and the objectives of the study, while the next chapter will draw conclusions and make recommendations.

8.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

There were six core research objectives guiding this study. Two of the six objectives, namely the examination of the factors that have influenced trade unions in South Africa and the investigation of the role of legislation in influencing unionisation in the tertiary education LIS sector in South Africa, were achieved through a thorough survey of the relevant literature. The findings of the first objective, that is, the factors influencing trade unionism, serve as the basis for the investigation of the other four research objectives. The factors that had been identified as influencing trade unionism were then investigated to establish their influence on white collar unionism. Once their influence on white collar unionism had been established, the factors were then applied to the LIS sector. Having established the factors that influenced trade unionism, and in particular trade unionism in the LIS sector, the researcher then presented most of these factors to the survey population of employees to solicit their views on these factors and the possible influence these factors may have or had on trade unionism in the tertiary education LIS sector in South Africa. The factors that were presented to the survey population of employees were those that were relevant to the South African LIS environment and those that were considered to have the greatest influence in determining the growth of unionism.

The data solicited from the LIS employees assisted in meeting three other objectives of this study, namely:

- identifying the factors that have influenced the growth of unionism in the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa;
- investigating the need for an organisation to address the industrial needs of LIS employees;
- investigating the feasibility of unionising the sector under a single employee representative body; and
- depending of the findings, to propose a model that would address the industrial and professional concerns of the sector.

The penultimate research objective was to solicit the views of trade union officials to determine the feasibility of combining the industrial objectives of a trade union and the professional objectives of a professional association into a single organisation that will represent the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa.

In this chapter, the researcher presents the research objectives and the corresponding research questions and then engages in discussion of the main findings incorporating the findings of the literature with the data collected in terms of each objective. To ensure that there is a flow in the discussion, the researcher discusses research objective three before discussing the second research objective.

8.2.1 First research objective: factors influencing trade unionism

The acceptance of any contract of employment has the making of an industrial relationship. This industrial relationship began, in the early days of the history of South Africa, when there was acceptance by one party to work for another. Those simple contracts of employment between settler and domestic servant or agricultural worker in an agricultural economy transformed into complicated contracts of employment when South Africa began to develop its manufacturing sector. The discovery of diamonds and gold catapulted South Africa into an era of mining, manufacture and business. The relationship between employer and employee became

increasingly complex and it became necessary for the large concentration of employees to come together and elect representatives to negotiate on their behalf (Nel and Van Rooyen 1989: 54-55). The coming together of workers to negotiate for adequate compensation for their labour was extended to defending their rights to fair treatment at the workplace. This coming together of workers to act collectively and to unite in their actions was the beginning of the trade union movement in South Africa (Finnemore and Van der Merwe 1986: 33). The industrialisation of South Africa resulted in the growth of the tertiary or service sector of the economy.

The growth of the service sector saw an increase in the concentration of workers in the sector. The growth in the concentration of white collar workers to service the sector influenced the growth of white collar unionism (Bain 1970). Both blue collar unionism and white collar unionism in South Africa were shaped by the constant intervention of the government of the day. White unions benefited from this intervention while black unions, as a result of government's attempt to curb the growth of black trade unionism in South Africa, were disadvantaged. During the apartheid era black trade unions were used as a political tool in the fight for freedom and democracy (Nel and Van Rooyen 1989; Baskin 1996; Von Holdt 2000; Slabbert and Swanepoel 2002).

The researcher has discussed in depth, in Chapter Two, the factors that have influenced the growth unionism in general. Despite the fact that there is no distinction between white and blue collar workers in the South African legal system, there was an indepth review of the international literature on one type of union, namely, the white collar union. The factors that were identified to have positively contributed to the growth of unionism are employment concentration, legislation and economic factors such as collective bargaining and job security (Bain 1970: 14-40; White 1971: 80; Adams 1975: 20). It is interesting to note that unions, in particular, white collar unions, in addition to protecting and furthering the interests of labour, also sought to assist their members in professional activities and services (Blackburn 1967; Lumley 1973). It has also been established that white collar unions were active in improving the professional status of an occupation by maintaining standards of professional conduct. This intervention was achieved by serving on bodies that had an impact on the future of the profession and by making representation to government for funding for the growth and development of the profession

(Lumley 1973). Further, unions have also been active in campaigning for the lengthening of the period of training for the professional activity and for ensuring that unqualified persons are not employed in the professional ranks. Given the fact that the LIS sector is considered to be a professional sector, the ability of the white collar union to address the professional concerns makes the white collar union an attractive proposition to represent the LIS sector as a whole.

Factors such as the employment of a large number of women and the claim that unionism undermines professionalism have been identified, in the international literature, as factors negating the growth of unionism in the LIS sector (refer to section 3.5).

Guyton (1975: 156) argued that the growing concentration of employees within the LIS sector has increased bureaucratisation and diminished the interaction between management and employee. This diminished interaction has tended to alienate the LIS employee from the decision making process. In the international literature, unions are assumed to have the power to force library management to share the professional decision making with the professional staff. As an organisation with legal status, librarians in other countries believed that the union is the medium for participation in decision making and a conduit for increasing communication with management (Kleingartner and Kennelly 1975; Lilore 1984). Unionisation would ensure that management talks to union representatives on matters of mutual interest. However, the converse is also true in that unionisation would mean that communication between individual employees and management would be restricted and individual librarians would lose their ability to communicate with management on their own behalf. Ballard (1982: 508) pointed out that contact with management would then have to filter through a union bureaucracy that had neither the knowledge nor the experience of the profession.

In the current climate of rationalisation in South African tertiary education, libraries within the tertiary education sector are forced to combine staffing complements thereby increasing the concentration of LIS employees within the merged institution. This increased concentration of staff and the possibility of branches of the library being in different towns or provinces creates a further barrier between senior management and the LIS staff. Representation to articulate the views of the staff, to senior management, becomes a necessity.

Another factor that has been identified as influencing the growth of trade unionism is relevant legislation (Bain 1970). Legislation has played a significant role in shaping trade unionism in South Africa. In the days of apartheid, legislation was introduced to curb the growth of black unions and at the same time supporting the growth of white trade unions (Riekert 1983; Ncube 1985; Nel and Van Rooyen 1989). In the new democracy, government and legislation continue to play a significant role in trade unionism. Legislation (which has been discussed in Chapter Four) as a factor influencing the growth of trade unionism will be revisited when the researcher addresses the second research objective.

The discussions in the literature reveal (refer to sections 2.4.4.5.1 and 3.4.3.1) that the most significant contributor to the growth of trade unionism is the economic factor. At the top of the economic factor list is collective bargaining which includes negotiation for salaries and conditions of service.

The literature (for example, Hovenden 1972; Guyton 1975; Kleingartner and Kennelly 1975) reveals that salaries, hours of work, and other terms and conditions of employment for LIS employees have increasingly been established through negotiations between the employer and employees' representative organisation, that is, a registered trade union. However, bargaining for the LIS sector as a whole is extremely difficult given the fragmentation of the profession (Hovenden 1972). For example, in the South African LIS environment, school librarians find themselves in the same bargaining unit with teachers, where they constitute a small minority. Similarly, LIS staff employed in the tertiary education sector find themselves in the same bargaining unit as academic staff, clerical staff, maintenance staff, computer technology specialists and so forth, where again they constitute a small percentage of the unit. Nonetheless, LIS employees have relied on generic trade unions to negotiate for salaries and conditions of service on their behalf.

In the current climate of mergers and rationalisation, job losses are inevitable. Therefore, it becomes extremely important that employees' representatives make the best possible representation to minimise the negative impact of rationalisation and retrenchments. There are

mandatory provisions in the new labour dispensation for consultation with statutory bodies. Representation by the trade union will also be revisited when the researcher addresses the other research objectives.

The researcher has discussed in detail in Chapter Three, from sections 3.4.1 to 3.4.3.3, the factors that have had a positive influence on the growth of trade unionism. The factors that have negated the growth of trade unionism are discussed in sections 3.5.1 to 3.5.3. Another major contributor to the growth (or the lack of it) of unionism is the perception that professionalism and unionism are not compatible. In fact, there is the view that unionism undermines professionalism. The 'professionalism versus unionism' debate is discussed extensively in Chapter Three in the different sections within section 3.6. These factors will be probed later in this chapter when the researcher discusses the relevant research objectives.

8.2.2 Third research objective: the role of legislation in influencing unionisation in the tertiary education LIS sector in South Africa

It has been established, in the earlier chapters, that legislation has played a significant role in the growth of trade unionism at the international level. Legislation has also played a significant role in the growth of trade unionism in South Africa. However, prior to 1994 the attempts by the apartheid governments to curb the growth of black trade unions through legislation presented the black trade unions with the motivation to incorporate a political role into the normal worker protection role of a trade union (Riekert 1983; Ncube 1985; Nel and Van Rooyen 1989). The black trade union movement mobilised its large membership to assist in dismantling apartheid. As an important contributor to the dismantling of apartheid, the trade union movement had negotiated with the newly elected democratic government concessions that have been unprecedented in South African industrial relations (Baskin 1996). It is argued that these concessions make the South African labour dispensation, which is discussed in Chapter Four, one of the most progressive in the world. This progressive labour dispensation provides the opportunities for progressive trade unions to redress past inequities in the workplace and to make significant contributions to the growth of the South African economy.

The supreme law of the country, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, lays the foundation for a labour dispensation that guarantees fair labour practices and promotes the formation of trade unions. A quartet of statutes builds on these guarantees and forms the core of the new labour dispensation. The quartet comprises the Labour Relations Act (LRA) 66 of 1995, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) 75 of 1997, the Employment Equity Act (EEA) 55 of 1998 and the Skills Development Act (SDA) 97 of 1998.

The general purpose of the LRA is to advance economic development, social justice, labour peace and the democratisation of the workplace. The intention of government, in introducing the new statutes, was to re-define the roles of the major players in the industrial relationship. The fundamental principal, in the wide scope of the LRA with an emphasis on conciliation and co-determination, is for labour and management to maintain a close working relationship. This indicates government's overt support for trade unions (Du Toit *et al.* 2000: 514; Nel 2001; Benjamin 2002: BB1-1).

A clear indicator of the support, by government, of trade unions is the inclusion in the LRA of agency shop agreements. Essentially, unions have the potential of forcing those that do not have an affiliation to a union to pay subscriptions to the union. The inclusion of the closed shop agreement, in the opinion of the researcher, has the potential of violating the constitutional right of freedom of association. However, government is committed to creating a climate that will foster workplace democracy and industrial peace. This could be accelerated if the trade union movement grew and began to play the progressive role envisaged in the labour dispensation.

To reiterate, the newly elected democratic government has played an active role in influencing the growth of trade unions as government views a cordial partnership between the trade union movement and business as a necessity for the accelerated development of the economy and an early elimination of the inequities of the past. The government has introduced statutes to add to the development of this cordial partnership.

8.2.2.1 Summary of the first and third objectives

As stated, the first two objectives are achieved through a thorough investigation of the literature. The research question guiding the first research objective is: **What are the factors that have influenced the growth of unions in South Africa?** The factors that have been identified as influencing unionism are: employment concentration, the role of legislation and economic factors. One of the primary issues affecting the growth of unionism in the LIS sector are the factors contributing to the 'professionalism versus unionism debate'.

What role has legislation played in influencing unionisation in the tertiary component of the LIS sector in South Africa? is the research question guiding the second research objective. From the turn of the twentieth century, legislation has influenced the growth of white trade unions and has attempted to retard the growth of black unions. In the last ten years, the South African government has passed laws to redress the inequities in the workplace and to foster cordial partnerships between trade unionism and business. There is a clear indication that the present government is partial to trade unions and this is reflected in the legislation that has been promulgated.

8.2.3 Second objective: to identify the factors that have influenced the growth of unionism in the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa

The researcher relied on the data solicited from the survey of LIS employees to corroborate the findings of the literature, that is, the factors that have influenced the growth of unionism in the tertiary education component of the LIS sector. Before engaging in discussion of these findings from the survey of LIS employees, the researcher would like to comment on some issues that fall outside the third research objective but have a bearing on the findings: (1) the co-operation by the heads of the tertiary education sector libraries when a database of E-mail addresses was being generated; (2) the response rate from LIS employees; (3) the distribution and designation of respondents; (4) the 'glass ceiling' and women in the LIS tertiary education sector, and (5) representative bodies within the LIS tertiary education sector. These issues provide some

indication of the sector's commitment or support for research activities and current trends in the sector with regard to gender issues.

8.2.3.1 Co-operation by the heads of tertiary education sector libraries

The first communication with University/Technikon Librarians or Directors was a request for a list of E-mail addresses of their staff. It must be stated at the outset that most of the University/Technikon Librarians or Directors were very supportive and supplied the requested information. Further, there were those who actively encouraged their staff to participate in the research. However, there were those University/Technikon Librarians that were not supportive and their actions could be interpreted as obstructionist.

The researcher has discussed in Chapter Five librarians' and professional associations' role in protecting intellectual freedom. It has been argued that in a democratic society unfettered access to information is important. The librarian must make every effort to ensure that obstacles to the access to information are kept to a minimum. One of the criticisms of the South African LIS professional association, as reflected by employee respondents, is that LIS managers, rather than the general LIS staff, play a dominant role in the professional association. What happens to the image of the professional association when these very managers, who are also very active in the professional association, practise censorship?

Before administering the questionnaire for LIS employees, the researcher wrote to all University/Technikon Librarians or Directors in South Africa outlining the aims of the research and, as stated, requested E-mail addresses of possible participants in the survey. Of the 33 University/Technikon Librarians or Directors, six or 17.1 percent indicated their unwillingness to contribute to the research and did not supply the requested information. Three of the six respondents stated that they did not think that unionism in libraries worked. One of the three respondents indicated that she has no time for trade unions, was very familiar with the international trade union scenario and advised the researcher to do more reading on the topic before implementing the questionnaire. Another of the three respondents stated that neither she nor her staff were supporters of trade unionism and therefore she would not make available E-

mail addresses as she did not want to waste the time of the researcher and her staff. One of the six respondents requested that the questionnaire be E-mailed to her. She indicated that she would “evaluate the contents of the questionnaire” and if she was happy with the questionnaire, it would be forwarded to the staff.

According Sullivan (1976: 149) and Oppenheim and Pollecutt (2000: 197) support for intellectual freedom augurs well for the growth and retention of the membership of professional associations. It is the opinion of the researcher that the contradiction, that is, promoting the LIS profession for whom intellectual freedom should be a core concern on the one hand and ‘practising censorship’ on the other, does not bode well for the growth of the LIS profession in South Africa.

The researcher is also of the opinion that the low response rate from institutions outside the province of KwaZulu-Natal mentioned in Chapter Seven, may also be attributed to these negative attitudes of some of the senior LIS managers in South Africa. This area could provide a fruitful area for further research investigations or perhaps even a panel discussion at a LIASA conference.

8.2.3.2 Response rate from employees

As stated in Chapter Seven, the national response rate was 20.98 percent (refer to section 7.2.1.1 -Distribution of respondents). The response rate from the tertiary education libraries within the province of KwaZulu-Natal was 41.9 percent.

8.2.3.3 Distribution and designation of respondents

The researcher anticipated a higher response rate from support staff given the fact that it is support staff that are fighting for a sense of belonging in the LIS profession. This sense of belonging, according to authors such as Sullivan (1976: 137), Garry, L.S. (1977: 317) and Frank (1997: 314), is essential for the unification of the profession. Unfortunately, the researcher was wrong as there was a higher response rate from professional staff. There were 281 respondents

who indicated their category, that is, whether they were support or professional staff. Of the 281 respondents, 151 (or 29.49% of the total population of 1463) were professional staff and the other 130 (or 13.67% of the total population of 1463) were support staff.

When the researcher was preparing the database of E-mail addresses, it was found that the average split between professional and support staff was a 35 : 65 split. Given that support staff make-up almost two-thirds of those employed in the sector, there was a legitimate expectation by the researcher of a better response rate from support staff. Thapisa (1992) has shown, for example, that there are a considerable array of issues that support staff could raise in terms of improving their work situations. Many of these are comparable to those that favour professional staff. The researcher is tempted to argue that professional staff have easier access to computers, hence the higher response rate from them. Unfortunately, the researcher will have to concede that this may be an excuse rather a rational explanation for the poor response rate from the support staff as poor response rate from the support staff cannot be attributed solely to the lack of access to computers as most of the staff in tertiary education libraries have their own E-mail addresses. Further, in the tertiary education environment, E-mail is one of the official forms of communication. One could speculate about apathy being a major contributor to the relatively low response rate from support staff.

In analysing the affiliation of respondents, the data revealed that the trade union movement had the majority support. Trade unions had in excess of 63 percent (refer to *Figure 4*: 127 plus 67) support in the LIS tertiary education sector. The professional association had 34.5 percent support (refer to *Figure 4*: 39 plus 67) with 63.2 percent of the 106 respondents also having affiliation to a trade union. The researcher assumes that the respondents were aware, from the covering letter, that an important objective of the questionnaire was to determine the support for the different representative bodies. The researcher is of the opinion that 'clicking' on a response to indicate membership of a representative body was not intellectually challenging and therefore can presume that those who did not respond to the item were in fact not members of any one of the representative bodies. If one assumes the above to be true, then the number of respondents not having affiliation to a representative body increases to 74 (refer to *Figure 4*: 45 plus 29) or 24.1 percent. This would constitute an alarming number of respondents who are not members of

a representative body but are reaping the benefits of the contributions made by the representative bodies and being financially supported, through subscriptions, by their fellow colleagues. The problem of employees not being members of a trade union but reaping the benefits of trade union activities as 'free riders' is an international one (Booth 1985).

The researcher pointed out in the previous chapter that there is a wide range of titles given to both professional and support staff working in tertiary education libraries. This finding concurs with the study conducted by Raju (2002: 292) where it was found that there is much inconsistency in the use of terminology in the job titles assigned to individuals. This inconsistency illustrates a lack of cohesiveness and a high level of confusion which does not augur well for the growth of the profession. In fact it contributes to the erosion of the profession. Over the last decade or so there has been a steady decline in the number of academic institutions in South Africa that are training and educating personnel for the LIS environment.

There is a desperate need for an organisation to take the lead and provide guidance which hopefully will enhance the status of the profession. Such leadership and guidance can only come from a national body which has statutory status. Statutory status will ensure that decisions taken by the national organisation will be implemented by the employers; a non-statutory organisation can only make recommendations which employers do not have to abide by. It is proposed that consistency in job titles will assist in resolving other issues that plague the profession such as equal pay for equal work, the standardisation of minimum requirements for the different job functions and the consistent recognition of the different qualifications for the different job functions.

Both Garry, L.S. (1977: 326-327) and Frank (1997: 313) state that a national library association has displayed the potential of creating cohesiveness within the LIS profession. It is this cohesiveness that has significantly contributed to the growth of the profession.

8.2.3.4 The 'glass ceiling' and women in the LIS tertiary education sector

The researcher unearthed two interesting findings when the designation of respondents was cross tabulated with category of staff, gender and whether the post was categorised management or not. The first finding is the percentage of women managers as a proportion of 132 as compared to the percentage of male managers as a proportion of 36. In terms of *Figure 3*, there are 132 professional women of which 31 or 23.5 percent are managers. There are 36 professional males of which 19 or 52.8 percent are managers. It would seem that the 'glass ceiling' is difficult to break-through for the professional women in the sector. From the above data, the male in the LIS sector has a 50 percent greater chance of moving into a position of management. One needs to question the issue of equity which is a statutory requirement in terms of the new labour dispensation. The issue of equity is noted by Gannon-Leary and Parker (2002: 19) who point out that "in South Africa, most library directors were men ... in spite of strong efforts towards equal opportunities". One also needs to question the role of the representative body in ensuring that the laws of the country are applied to all sectors of the South African economy. This brings into question the need for a statutory body to look after the interests of the LIS profession.

The second finding is the apparent 'glass ceiling' for male support staff to reach positions of management. Again, in terms of *Figure 3*, there are 62 women support staff of which four (4) or 6.5 percent are managers. Of the 42 male support staff respondents there are no managers. The researcher is pleased to report that the LIS profession is acknowledging the role of the 'non-professional' by developing a career path for 'non-professional' or support staff. This, in the opinion of the researcher, is long overdue. However, it would seem, at this point in time, there is a 'glass ceiling' for male support staff to break-through. What constitutes this ceiling or why would be a worthwhile area for further research exploration.

8.2.3.5 Representative bodies within the LIS tertiary education sector

The lack of cohesiveness in job titles is matched by the lack of cohesiveness in representation. There are three national unions, two regional unions and a range of in-house unions representing the interests of those employed in the LIS tertiary education sector. Further, there are members

profession and address both the professional and industrial concerns of the profession. It does not necessarily have to be a trade union. However, it has to have statutory status to exploit the progressive labour dispensation for the benefit of the employees within the profession, the profession itself and for the country as a whole. There is sound legislative support to pursue the feasibility of launching such an organisation, accepting that there are logistical barriers.

The discussion, in this chapter, on the factors that influence the growth of trade unionism is split between 'industrial factors' and 'professional factors', that is, the unionism versus professionalism debate. It is Lumley (1973: 30) who argued that prestige and status serves as a basis for a discussion on the unionisation of white collar workers. The researcher has probed with the respondents what Blackburn (1967) and Lumley (1973) considered a fairly common view and that is the effect of social status on white collar unionism. They argued that white collar employees see themselves as of a higher status than blue collar employees, and that this 'snobbish' outlook makes them avoid patterns of behaviour which might identify them with blue collar employees, for example, joining a trade union. The researcher finds it important to reiterate that there is no evidence in South African law that suggests a distinction between white and blue collar workers. The distinction between white and blue collar workers has greater sociological significance than it has in terms of South African legislation (Giddens 1997: 256-258).

In an attempt to meet the second research objective, the researcher has broken down the discussion on the 'industrial factors' influencing or negating the growth of unionism into a discussion of the factors that have influenced the growth of unionism and the factors that have negated the growth of unionism. The discussion on the factors contributing to the 'unionism versus professionalism' debate is discussed as a separate item. The researcher attempts to link this discussion with the fifth research objective which is to investigate the feasibility of unionising the sector under a single employee representative body. It is argued that if unionism is not in conflict with professionalism, then the objectives of both the organisations can be merged to create unitary representation; it then becomes feasible to have a single employee representative body.

8.2.3.6.1 Factors influencing the growth of trade unionism in the LIS tertiary education sector

The researcher is of the opinion that collective bargaining is one of the most influential factors in the growth of trade unionism. Collective bargaining includes negotiations for salaries and conditions of service, and providing representation during periods of restructuring and rationalisation.

It is internationally accepted that a function of a trade union is to negotiate salaries. In the South African LIS environment, it is a fact that the professional association does not participate in the negotiation of salaries. Therefore, it is argued that those respondents who indicated that the professional body negotiated salaries, may not have understood the item or are confused about the roles played by the different organisations. However, the researcher did not expect to find such a large number (44 of the 307 respondents) who would not respond to the item. The researcher cross tabulated item 8.1 (the organisation that negotiated for salaries) with item 6.1 (membership of their representative body) to establish what percentage of the 44 did not have affiliation to either a trade union or a professional association. It was established that of the 44, 29 of the respondents (this is reflected in *Figure 4*) did not respond to item 6.1, and 13 indicated that they do not have affiliation to any one of the representative bodies and hence were not in a good position to know what role the body performed. Two respondents were members of a trade union.

Generally people belong to trade unions because unions negotiate for salaries on behalf of the member. The fact that 29 of the 44 who did not respond to the item, also did not respond to item 6.1 could be interpreted by the researcher as meaning that they (the 29 respondents) were unlikely to have affiliation to any one of the representative bodies. If this interpretation is correct, then the number of respondents who do not have affiliation to any one of the representative bodies becomes 74 (45 plus 29 refer to *Figure 4*; also refer to the discussion above) which is higher than the results suggest. The researcher is of the opinion that the inclusion of 'agency shop agreements' (whereby employees who do not belong to a registered trade union pay subscriptions to the majority union) in the LRA is an attempt by government to

reduce the number of 'free riders', that is, employees who are not members of a trade union but benefit from the activities of the trade union. Furthermore, it is argued that the government is justified in including 'agency shop agreements' in the legislation. The researcher also argues that this large number of 'free riders' undermines the attempt by government, through the labour legislation, to consolidate the labour force to ensure that workers participate in determining the above discussed 'road map' (refer to section 4.4.1).

The employees of the LIS sector belong to a profession; therefore it is interesting to note that there are almost equal numbers of respondents that have sole membership of either the professional association or a trade union.

Kleingartner and Kennelly (1975: 15) argued that salaries and terms and conditions of employment for LIS employees will increasingly be established through negotiations between the employer and a recognised union. In terms of the South African labour dispensation, the BCEA prescribes minimum conditions of employment. It is evident from the findings for item 8 that the trade union is active in improving on the minimum conditions of employment as prescribed in the BCEA and in addressing other industrial concerns of those employed in the LIS sector at the institutional level, irrespective of whether the employee of the sector is a member of the union or not. It has been established that the union negotiates salaries and conditions of service for employees at the different institutions and also represents them during periods of restructuring and rationalisation. This was an expected finding.

The respondents expressed the opinion that they felt exploited as there were often differentials in salaries for employees doing the same work. They recommended the need for standardisation in salaries and conditions of service. This opinion is not unique to the South African LIS sector as Alema (1991: 291) suggests that inconsistent conditions of service and differentials in salaries of LIS employees have contributed negatively to the growth of the profession at the international level. He quotes an example of an institution which grants its professional employees academic status which qualifies them for sabbatical leave while other institutions are caught between granting study leave and not granting any leave for staff to further their studies in information studies. The employee survey population of this study were asked to indicate their support for

minimum salaries and conditions of service. The findings reveal that there is substantial support for minimum salaries and conditions of service at the provincial level. However, the support for minimum salaries and conditions of service at the national level is not as evident.

The literature provides evidence that legislation does influence the growth of a trade union. In Chapter Four the researcher discusses government's attempt to reshape industrial relations by making provisions for mandatory consultation between employer and the representative body, that is, the trade union on issues such as job grading systems and staff training and development.

Given the professional association has not displayed any interest in addressing the industrial concerns of the profession, a viable proposition may be for the trade unions to take-up the challenge to establish minimum salaries and conditions of service for all employees within the LIS sector.

Raju (1995) reveals that library staff performing similar functions at different institutions are on different grades despite the fact that the institutions are using the same grading system which is supposed to produce similar grades for jobs of equal levels of responsibility. Some of the respondents in the present study expressed the opinion that they were peeved about inconsistency in the grading of employees performing the same job functions. The respondents were requested to indicate their support for a standardised grading system for all employees in the LIS sector at the provincial and national levels. The support for a unitary grading system at both levels is substantial. The researcher pursued the issue of which organisation should take responsibility for the implementation of such a unitary system. Given the active role that the trade unions have played in addressing the industrial concerns of the sector and the 'non-involvement' attitude of the professional association to industrial issues, the researcher was surprised at the lack of support, by the respondents, for the trade union to take responsibility for negotiating the implementation of a unitary grading system. In fact, there is substantial support for the professional body on this issue and for collaboration between the professional body and the respective trade unions to negotiate the implementation of a unitary grading system. This demonstrates the short-comings in the respondents' perceptions of a generic union in representing all the needs of the LIS sector.

When the researcher views the responses from the surveyed population from a macro level, the support for collaboration between the trade union and the professional association to negotiate a unitary grading system, is understandable. It is unfortunate that the researcher did not request the survey population to substantiate their response to the items that investigate the grading system but this could be addressed in future investigations. Taking the macro view of the responses from the surveyed population, the respondents seem to be of the mind that the professional association has the expertise of the profession and knowledge of the job functions while the trade union's expertise is restricted to negotiating. Combining the strengths of both the organisations appears to be a logical way forward to ensuring a successful negotiation. However, the researcher argues that one organisation with both types of expertise would be more efficient.

Trade unions are often considered to be reactionary organisations reacting to situations of conflict. The one area in which LIS trade unions, at the international level, have played a proactive role is through staff training and development. Authors such as Nyren (1967), Marsh (1980) and Akers (1985) argued that formal education and training influences the growth of unionism as it is linked to pay, grading, recruitment and the status within the occupation. Given the positive spin-offs of education and training, the union must ensure that the opportunities are available to all its members, especially for those who were not free to undertake full-time study to qualify as professional librarians. Buller (1995) goes on to point out that as unions become a force in libraries, programmes to engage in staff education are becoming more common, especially in academic libraries where the proximity to resources for such programmes may be conveniently at hand.

The South African government has not shirked its responsibility in making provision in the legislation for the development of the labour force. In its effort to strengthen the provisions in the LRA and to support its employment equity programmes, government legislated the Skills Development Act (SDA). The Act seeks to develop the skills of the workforce and thereby increase the quality of working life for workers, improve the productivity of the workplace, promote self-employment and the delivery of social services. The Act seeks to encourage employers to use the workplace as an active learning environment and to provide opportunities

for new entrants to the labour market to gain work experience. The focus is to improve the employment prospects of previously disadvantaged persons through education and training.

International trends demonstrate a commitment by LIS trade unions to engage or facilitate training and development of its membership. The South African government has thrown its weight beyond the development of the workforce. Unfortunately, according to employee respondents, trade unions have not accepted the challenge. The findings reveal that less than half of the institutions engage in training and development and almost 40 percent of the respondents indicated that their unions were not active in staff training and development. The findings also demonstrate the commitment by NEHAWU at the University of Cape Town to staff training and development. With the exception of the above mentioned example, the researcher views this neglect as a major breach on the part of the unions to adequately look after the interest of their fee paying membership.

The professional association, on the other hand, should be commended for its contribution to the development of members of the profession. Given the fact that it is not a statutory body and does not enjoy the potential financial support from government for the development of the labour force, there have been attempts to develop labour. *Figure 6* in the previous chapter shows the commitment by the professional association to holding conferences and workshops in an effort to contribute to the development of those that are employed in the LIS sector.

8.2.3.6.2 Factors negating the growth of trade unionism in the LIS tertiary education sector

The literature reveals that the LIS profession is fragmented. It is fragmented by the type of clientele it serves, by size, by source of financial support, and by a range of occupational groups working within the library. Hovenden (1972) stated that each of these occupational groups within the library, for example, the professional librarian, the para-professional, clerical and maintenance staff, could conceivably form an autonomous group. Kleingartner and Kennelly (1975), Kusack (1984) and Coleman (1988) point out that the above fragmentation is exacerbated by the fragmented representation of the LIS employees as they belong to different

bargaining units or they have their own independent library union or they may be lumped into larger, more generic unions. It is argued that this fragmentation, if allowed to continue, will severely retard the possibility of unifying the profession under a single viable representative body.

However, the data generated from the respondents did not conclusively reveal that the respondents thought that the profession was fragmented. The researcher accepts that one of the reasons for such an inconclusive response is that the item may not have been articulated sufficiently clearly. In an effort to probe for possible reasons for the inconclusive response to the item that dealt with the fragmentation of the profession, the researcher cross tabulated the items that dealt with fragmentation with gender and age as it was falsely assumed by the researcher that women who have been long in the profession would focus on their retirement and not pay too much attention to the development of the profession. The results of the cross tabulation are reflected in *Figure 7*. The researcher was of the opinion that if there were any factors that would influence the inconclusive response to the item on fragmentation, it would be gender and age. However, only 8.5 percent of the 128 respondents were below the age of 30. The bulk of the 'not sure' respondents were in the age bracket 31 to 50 which in the opinion of the researcher are employees that are confirmed to stay in the profession. Further, the researcher is also of the opinion that it is this group that would be seeking mobility and rotation within the profession and therefore should be more acquainted with the profession.

Gender also seems to have had little influence on the possible reasons for the inconclusive response. The researcher suggests that a major contributor to the inconclusive response to the item is that the item was not adequately articulated. Another possibility could be that the employees of the profession are not paying enough attention to the development of the profession to have responded to the item on fragmentation more precisely.

The researcher has to rely on the 38.8 percent of the respondents that were of the view that the profession is fragmented and the 7.8 percent of the respondents that were of the view that the sector was not fragmented. For this reason, the researcher cannot state with any degree of conviction that the findings of the study support or did not support the view that the profession is

fragmented and that the fragmentation of the profession has negatively contributed to the growth of the respective representative body.

The literature reveals that in the first half of the twentieth century, the feminisation of a profession tended to negate the growth of trade unionism. The focus of unions generally during this era was to unionise the manufacturing sector which was dominated by males. However, when union growth in the manufacturing sector began to reach saturation point, unions began to search for other options. There was a shift of focus to the service sector which was dominated by women. Lundy (1998: 73) purports that trade unions began to “view women as a viable source of increasing membership.” The factors that have influenced the growth of unions during the period of dominance by men were also applicable to the ‘new sector’. Lundy (1998: 73) goes on to say that “women are interested in trade unions because they [the trade unions] are potential sources of increased earning power.”

In section 7.2.1.2 of Chapter Seven it was pointed out that 65.8 percent of the respondents were women. *Figure 8* reflects the affiliation of women to the different representative bodies. Of the 202 women respondents, 63.9 percent belonged to a trade union. It must be stated that less than 20 percent of the women do not have affiliation to any one of the representative bodies. Drawing on *Figure 8*, the researcher believes that this is a clear indication from the women that they want representation and if there is an organisation that could address their professional issues in tandem with their industrial issues, more than 80 percent (162 of the 202 respondents) of the women in the LIS sector would possibly want to be represented by an organisation that would address both professional and labour issues.

The respondents were asked to comment, in item 17, on how the scheduling of meetings, the holding of conferences and such, influences their participation in the activities of their respective trade unions. Many of the women respondents in this study pointed out that family responsibilities hindered their participation in the activities of their trade union. This finding is not restricted to South Africa. In a survey conducted by International Labour Organisation (ILO)-International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) (2002) it was found that “women still burden the bulk of family responsibility.”

The ILO survey identified a number of factors preventing women from becoming union members. One of the most commonly cited factors is that “women do not have time to join unions because of conflicting family responsibilities. They often also face objections from their spouses or families...”. At an International Labour Organisation (1999) symposium, it was recommended that measures be introduced to assist women who wish to attend trade union meetings and activities:

This could include: scheduling meetings at times that are most convenient for women who have to combine trade union activities with family responsibilities; and making available childcare facilities and meals for children of women attending union meetings.

The discussions above lend support to the view that the large number of women in the LIS profession need not necessarily contribute to the negative growth of trade unionism. In fact, the study has demonstrated that the majority of the women are members of a registered trade union.

8.2.3.6.3 Unionism versus professionalism

It has been argued that unionism and professionalism are not compatible and that unionism undermines professionalism. It has also been argued that unionism is detrimental to the image of the LIS profession. However, there is another school of thought that believes that unionism and professionalism are compatible and that unionising the LIS sector is unlikely to undermine the LIS sector as a profession. If the former arguments are true then it would not be possible to merge the objectives of a professional association with that of a trade union. Therefore, it was necessary to pose questions to LIS employee respondents to ascertain their views on the feasibility of combining the industrial objectives of a trade union and professional objectives of a professional association into a single organisation to represent the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa. If the respondents indicated that unionism and professionalism were not compatible and that unionism did undermine professionalism, then these factors would have been seen to negate the growth of trade unionism. However, if there was confirmation by the respondents that the unionism and professionalism were compatible and that unionism was

not detrimental to the image of the LIS profession, then these factors were likely to contribute to the growth of trade unionism.

The surveyed population was first asked if they thought that unionism was compatible with professionalism. Thirty seven point one (37.1) percent expressed the opinion that unionism was compatible with professionalism. One of the employee respondents stated that, "irrespective of the level of seniority, every employee is in need of representation at the workplace and because both organisations are working in the best interests of the workers, unionism and professionalism must be considered to be compatible". However, the same percentage declared that they were not sure. The researcher cross tabulated this item with the designation to try to determine if the designation (that is, professional or support staff) of the respondents influenced their views. Again, no conclusive comment could be made as the difference between the number of professional staff that expressed the view that unionism is not compatible with professionalism and the number of professional staff that were not sure was small. The only conclusive comment that could be made was that only a small percentage (14 percent: refer to section 7.2.1.8.1) was convinced that unionism was not compatible with professionalism.

It is argued by the researcher that if the divide between unionism and professionalism were great, the percentage of 'not sure' would have been a lot smaller. It is therefore assumed that the divide, if there is one, is so small that it has not made a negative impact on the respondents. With the divide being small, one could assume that that if the respondents were forced to choose, the number of 'not compatible' would still be in the minority, therefore the view that unionism and professionalism are compatible would be a majority viewpoint.

The second issue that the respondents were asked to comment on was whether unionism undermines professionalism. Again, the percentage of 'not sure' was relatively high - 33.2 percent. A very small percentage (8.8 percent) indicated that unionism does undermine professionalism. As indicated in section 7.2.1.8, there is support for the view that the trade union complements the professional association in the LIS environment as one organisation addresses the industrial concerns and the other addresses the professional concerns. An employee respondent who expressed the opinion that

the main focus of a union is on employees' working environment whilst the professional body focuses mainly on developmental aspects of librarianship and therefore there is substantial scope for them to complement each other illustrates this view. Each organisation focuses their attention on their expertise and experience and working in tandem can only benefit the LIS sector.

The third question that was put to the respondents was whether they considered unionism to detrimentally affect the image of the LIS profession. The majority of the respondents (60.5 percent) expressed the view that unionism does not detrimentally affect the image of the LIS profession.

Figure 10 (in section 7.2.1.8.4) graphically summarises the views of the respondents on unionism versus professionalism. The respondents indicated that the objectives of the union are not in conflict with the objectives of the professional association. Therefore, it would be feasible to have a single organisation with dual objectives. Should this single organisation be a trade union, then the merging of the objectives of a professional organisation with that of a trade union could see a growth of trade unionism.

Having established, in the discussion, that it is possible to fuse the objectives of a trade union and a professional association, it is then necessary to investigate which unitary organisation will best represent the LIS sector. This issue is taken up in section 8.2.6.

8.2.3.6.4 Summary of factors influencing or negating trade unionism

The researcher has identified, via the literature, factors that have influenced the growth of unionism at the international level. These factors were then applied to the employee survey population to ascertain from them their views on the factors that have influenced the growth of unionism in the tertiary education LIS sector in South Africa. There is a high proportion of LIS employees who are members of a trade union. Unfortunately, there is also a high proportion of 'free riders'.

Collective bargaining has been identified as a serious contender for the primary reason for employees joining trade unions. The respondents in the survey of employees have indicated that the trade union is a significant party in the collective bargaining process. The union, not only negotiates for salaries and conditions of service for the paid up members, but also for those that are not paid up members. Further, it has been established that trade unions represent the majority of the LIS employees during periods of rationalisation and restructuring.

Respondents have indicated their support for minimum salaries and conditions of service at provincial and national levels. They also indicated their support for a standardised job grading system. Despite the active role that trade unions have played in the collective bargaining process, LIS employees surveyed have indicated their lack of confidence in the trade union to negotiate for minimum salaries and conditions of service and a standardised job grading system for the sector as a whole. The findings reveal that the professional association is far more active than the union in staff training and development. To add support to this finding, it should be noted that, the professional association (LIASA) has secured a large grant (US\$499 500) from the Carnegie Corporation of New York for use over a period of three years. This grant is in support of a Continuing Education and Professional Development (CEPD) project:

The goals of the project are to:

- Address the training and skills development needs of library personnel within existing Library & Information Services (LIS) in South Africa
- Contribute towards the capacity building...
- Facilitate leadership training and development of personnel from ... libraries in South Africa... (Library and Information Association of South Africa 2004).

The objectives of the project are commensurate with the spirit of the new labour dispensation, that is, the development of the workforce for the benefit of the employee, employer and the country as a whole.

The literature reveals that there are factors such as the fragmentation of the profession and the employment of a large number of women in the profession which have negated the growth of trade unionism. The respondents are not convinced that the sector is fragmented, in fact, a large

number are not sure of the status of the profession in terms of it being fragmented. The view that the large number of women in the sector negates unionism is called into question as there is a large number of women, including managers, who are members of trade unions in the South African LIS environment.

8.2.4 Fourth research objective: to investigate the need for an organisation to address the industrial needs of LIS employees

The research question guiding the fourth research objective is: **Do the employees of the sector need an organisation to address their industrial issues?** There are a number of sub-questions that the researcher needed to ask to meet the fourth research objective. The study investigated the necessity for an organisation to address the industrial issues of the sector and, if it was necessary, which organisation would be most capable of addressing the industrial concerns of the sector.

The majority of the respondents expressed the view that there is a need for an organisation to address the industrial issues of the LIS sector as a whole. Some of the respondents argued that it is a statutory right for them to be represented by a trade union to ensure that they are could benefit from the provisions of the legislation. One of the employee respondents pointed out that “the LRA states that the employer has a duty to bargain, however, we [the LIS sector] don’t have an organisation that will use the Act to the best benefit of the profession”. As stated earlier in the chapter and in previous chapters, legislation has had an influence on the growth of trade unionism in South Africa. This is confirmed by some of the respondents.

Despite the statutory right to belong to a trade union, it would seem that the views of the majority are guided by the need for uniformity in representation as such uniformity would provide clear guidelines and direction for the profession as a whole. Such a view would imply that there is representation by a single body. However, there are respondents who highlight the fact that the profession is fragmented and that the diversity of the profession makes it extremely difficult to have standardised salaries and conditions of service. Employees from the different sectors within the LIS environment, for example, the public library sector and the academic library sector, have different needs and therefore should have different conditions of service.

The researcher would argue that the fundamental function of personnel working in a LIS environment is to make information available or to engage in activities that will assist in making information available. Therefore, it is essential that LIS personnel get similar levels of pay and are subjected to similar conditions of service. The Bill of Rights within the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa guarantees fair labour practices which entails equal pay for equal work. Further, the personnel should be subjected to similar conditions of service to eliminate discrimination and to uphold the constitutional guarantee of fair labour practices.

Having made the case for an organisation to address the industrial concerns of the LIS sector, it has to be established which organisation is most capable of addressing that need. The trade union movement has accomplished the task of addressing the industrial concerns of the LIS sector, albeit via generic unions. However, one of the respondents sums up the position by suggesting that there is a need for the “right tool for the right job: [the] right negotiator for the people he/she understands and [who has] the background information of the work environment...”. Essentially, the respondent argues that generic unions do not have relevant knowledge of the sector to adequately represent the sector. Another respondent points out that there are other professions such as medicine, nursing, teaching, law and such that have statutory bodies to represent the interests of the profession.

The findings reveal that 46.6 percent of the respondents supported the professional association as the organisation most capable of representing the industrial needs of the profession while only 19.9 percent supported a trade union to represent their industrial needs. The respondents recognised that each organisation had its own strengths and weaknesses: the strength of the professional association is the depth of the knowledge and experience of the sector and the strength of the union is the depth of its experience in negotiating salaries and conditions of service for its members. The respondents valued the knowledge and experience of the sector as opposed to experience in negotiation. They seemed more comfortable with the professional association as they believed that the professional association could articulate their needs far better than an experienced trade union official who lacks the knowledge of the sector.

Thus far the discussion has centred on representation by one or the other body. There were a number of respondents who tabled a third alternative and that is for both organisations (the trade union and the professional association) to work together. It would seem to the researcher that this suggestion is a modification of the current status with the trade unions addressing the industrial concerns while the professional association addresses the professional concerns but in a more formalised context. It is assumed that there would be a formalised agreement between a **single** union and a **single** professional association: some sort of memorandum of agreement. In pursuing such a proposal, both organisations must have statutory status. The researcher poses the question, why not one professional organisation with statutory status? If the strength of the trade union is in its experience in industrial matters, sooner or later the necessary negotiation skills will be acquired by the LIS employees within the professional association. The researcher is aware of branches or the national office of national unions being headed by LIS personnel. It is being suggested that the sector does not lack the experience or the capacity to pursue the option of the professional association seeking statutory status to represent all aspects of the profession, that is, professional and industrial aspects.

The fundamental purpose of having representation by a single organisation is to unify the profession to project a consolidated profession, with certain levels of diversity but with a single representative body. The literature reveals that a unified profession fosters closer working relationships between individuals within the profession (Stockham 1979). Unity in the profession also provides a single platform for the sharing of knowledge and experience through workshops and conferences. Staff training and development becomes much easier if it is implemented and supported by personnel who have the relevant knowledge and experience of the profession. Raju (2001) argues that staff must take the responsibility for training and development away from management and that if staff want to develop themselves they must be party to the initiating, if not the initiators themselves, of the training and development programmes and that their unions must dredge a path for such training and development.

The findings of the survey of the research population of employees reveal that trade unions have seriously neglected this responsibility in the LIS sector. The researcher does not believe that trade unions have the capacity to conduct training and development programmes for LIS

employees. This lack of capacity contributes to the argument that the generic trade union is not the organisation to represent the interest of a specialised white collar worker.

The respondents were critical of the roles played by the different representative organisations. However, they were also not active participants in the activities of their respective organisations. It would seem that the respondents choose to limit their actions to critical comments rather than active participation in an organisation to ensure that it (the organisation) meets its obligations to the membership. One of the common reasons for not participating in the activities of the respective organisations was that meetings, workshops and conferences were held at times that negatively impacted on their family commitments. Given the fact that women dominate the profession and as established by the International Labour Organisation (2002) that women are the primary child carers, the holding of meetings, workshops and such does create a barrier to active participation in the activities of a professional association. However, the same cannot be said for active participation in the activities of a trade union because there are provisions in the LRA for reasonable time off to participate in the activities of a trade union.

The statutory provisions in the labour dispensation are biased towards trade unions. Therefore, it becomes even more compelling for representative organisations to become statutory bodies to reap the benefits of a progressive labour dispensation. Maximum utilisation of the dispensation can only contribute to the growth of the organisation and the profession.

8.2.4.1 Summary of the need for an organisation to address the industrial needs of LIS employees

LIS employee respondents indicated that there is a need to have a single organisation to address their industrial needs. However, they place their faith in an organisation that has the knowledge of the profession rather than a generic trade union which has the experience in negotiations.

The fifth research objective which is the investigation into the feasibility of unionising the sector under a single employee representative body will be discussed later under section 8.2.6.

8.2.5 Sixth research objective: to determine the feasibility of combining the industrial objectives of a trade union and the professional objectives of a professional association into a single organisation that will represent the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa.

It has been established, via employee respondents, in Chapter Seven that the industrial objectives of a trade union and the professional objectives of a professional association are not in conflict with one another and therefore, it is possible to have a single organisation that represents the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa - it is possible to merge the industrial objectives of a trade union with the professional objectives of a professional association in forming a single representative organisation. This viewpoint was tested with the surveyed LIS employee population. The sixth research objective essentially guided the study in terms of finding a way forward; in identifying which organisation would best represent the interest of the employees of the LIS sector. The surveyed population was presented with four options, namely, (1) the professional association should become a statutory body; (2) the retention of the status quo; (3) the formation of a sector specific union; and (4) the professional association should broaden its constitution and act as a quasi union. The discussion of the third option has been integrated into the discussion of the fifth research objective, which is, investigating the feasibility of unionising the sector under a single employee representative body (to be discussed in section 8.2.6).

These options were presented to the surveyed population with the expectation that one of the options would dominate. The dominant option would be pursued, by the researcher, as a way forward for the LIS sector. Unfortunately, there was much confusion and contradiction in the responses. In analysing the findings, it would seem that the same respondents, possibly because of the aforementioned uncertainty, were supporting different 'best ways forward'. The researcher revisited the survey instrument and, in hindsight, realised that the respondents should have been asked to rate the four options in order of preference. Again, this is an area for further investigation.

In taking a closer examination of the 'best way forward' (refer to *Figure 12*), the researcher found that the support for the current professional association becoming a statutory body was marginally greater than the support for the formation of one LIS sector union to address industrial issues as well as professional issues. In the context of the response rate, there was a great deal of support for a change of the status quo. In the context of the small percentages, it is surprising that the difference, in terms of support, between option one (statutory status) and option four (quasi union) is relatively large given the options are fairly similar.

The respondents, through the survey instrument, expressed the view that the trade union has performed well in addressing the industrial issues of the sector. However, they have their reservations about the trade union representing their professional interests. It is assumed that the respondents' support for the professional association becoming a statutory body is based on the trade union's success in addressing the industrial concerns of the sector and the professional association's success in meeting the professional issues of the sector. In expressing their support for a change in statutory status, the respondents distributed their reasons between their professional and industrial concerns illustrating there was sufficient concern or attention for both professional issues and their industrial demands. Further, the respondents were aware of their constitutional rights and their rights as employees. They expressed the view that only a statutory body could utilise the provisions of the legislations to the benefit of the employees, the profession and the country.

The reasons forwarded for supporting the broadening of the constitution of the current professional association so that it could act as a quasi union are, in the main, not very different from those reasons forwarded in substantiating their support for statutory status. It is also argued by the same respondents that the professional association and the trade union are essential in a LIS environment and that these organisations should find ways of working together. Given that the organisations have demonstrated the ability to cohabitate, it is argued by the same respondents that it would be better to have the professional association broaden its constitution to take on the functions of a trade union.

The support for the unionisation of the sector, as stated above, will be discussed in collaboration with the next research objective. The discussion of the sixth research objective leads into the discussion of the fifth research objective. To enhance the flow in the discussion and to minimise repetition, the researcher has opted to discuss the sixth research objective before the fifth. In section 8.2.6, the researcher encapsulates the various ways forward before embarking on a more detailed discussion of one of the ways forward, namely, the option of a sector specific union.

8.2.6 Fifth research objective: to investigate the feasibility of unionising the sector under a single employee representative body

The sixth research objective of the study, which has been discussed in section 8.2.5, investigated the various ways forward such as, the professional association becoming a statutory body, the retention of the status quo and, the professional association broadening its constitution to act as a quasi union. The other possible way forward is the formation of a sector specific union. When this option of a sector specific union was presented to the employee respondents, 48.2 percent of the 307 respondents supported the notion of a sector specific union and only 19.2 percent were opposed to a sector specific union. However, in investigating the feasibility of this option, the research question that needed to be addressed was: **To what extent the present union structures can accommodate a sector specific organisation to address the professional and industrial issues specific to the LIS sector?**

A questionnaire was administered to trade union officials to address the fifth research objective and the corresponding research question mentioned above. The industrial interest of the LIS sector is currently addressed by a myriad of national and in-house generic trade unions (refer to section 7.2.1.5) which has resulted in fragmented representation. This fragmented representation has contributed to the fragmentation of the LIS sector. The researcher is of the view that representation of the LIS sector as a whole would most likely be through a national union. Therefore, the questionnaire was administered among the three national trade unions only. The intention was to solicit, at the least, three responses from each of the national unions currently servicing the tertiary education sector. As stated in the previous chapter, the argument from the union officials was that the researcher was investigating the structures of the union and its

capacity to accommodate an 'affiliate'. Therefore, individual views were not relevant but rather the view of the organisation. The responses received were views representative of the organisation.

8.2.6.1 Representation

It was confirmed by all three unions that they were active in the tertiary education sector. One of the three unions seemed to 'specialise' in tertiary education while the other two had vested interests in other sectors as well. It is argued that having three unions representing the interests of the same membership defeats the purpose of a union, that is, unifying the workers and to bargain on their behalf as a collective. This issue was raised earlier in the chapter (section 8.2.3.5). This competition among unions, in the view of the researcher, is not in the best interest of the workers. The impression created is that unionism is like big business, the 'profits and prestige' is in the numbers; however, at the expense of the consumer - the membership. This thesis suggests that it is time that the unions considered some level of 'specialisation' with an element of federalism. This would pave the way for a sector specific union for LIS workers.

8.2.6.2 Knowledge of the sector

One of the key factors influencing the respondents' choice of which organisation would best represent their professional and industrial interest was the knowledge of the sector by the leadership of the organisation. The researcher is not convinced that the office bearers of the national unions have the level of knowledge of the sector to adequately represent the interests of the members within the LIS sector. However, as stated by one of the trade union respondents, if there are significant numbers then the union could develop a shop steward structure to 'look after' the sector and have the sector represented by shop stewards from the LIS sector at the branch, regional, provincial and national levels. If one unpacks this comment, the respondent was stating that the structure of the national union is able to accommodate an 'affiliate'. The shop steward structure at the different institutions could represent a library which could then elect shop stewards to represent their interests at the different levels. Ultimately, there would be representation at the national level to effect the necessary change and/or protection that the

employees of the sector are demanding. Experts from the sector representing the sector make sense rather than experts in negotiation who lack the knowledge of the sector.

Given that almost two-thirds of the employees of the sector were members of a trade union (refer to *Figure 4*) at the time of the survey, the researcher could argue that the numbers are substantial for such a shop steward structure to be put into place in the different libraries in the tertiary education sector - assuming that all the employees belong to one union rather than a myriad of different unions.

8.2.6.3 Staff training and development

In item 29 of the questionnaire for employee respondents, one of the respondents provided clear guidance as to what must be achieved by the 'new organisation'. The respondent stated that there was a need for an organisation to take charge of the profession and put an end to the eroding of the status of the profession. In the view of the researcher, such an organisation should focus on democratising the workplace and engaging in the training and development of those in the profession so that the profession can contribute to a far greater extent to the development of the country.

The researcher expected more detailed responses from trade union officials when they were asked to comment on training and development given the government's stance on the training and development of the workforce (refer to Chapter Four). The new labour dispensation emphasises training and development of the workforce. Although all three respondents indicated that they did engage in training and development, there seemed to be very little evidence of such commitment to the development of the workforce. The response to item 6.2.1 (the item on training and development) suggests a lack of commitment to training and development. To state that the union has a national policy for training and development but lacks the finances to implement a programme of training and development, is not acceptable for an organisation whose primary purpose is to further the interests of its members. It is the view of the researcher that the commitment by NEHAWU at the University of Cape Town is a reflection of the

commitment of unions officials at that institution rather than national commitment by NEHAWU.

The researcher is of the opinion that it is not in the spirit of the new labour dispensation to give such an important issue such low priority. This suggests that the trade union movement is still stuck in the confrontation paradigm of the apartheid era and has not moved to the next level of co-existence. Employees generally complain that the employer is not committed to their development despite the fact that the employer is currently compelled to contribute a skills development levy. But, at the same time, from the researcher's observation members of trade unions seem quite complacent about the inactivity of their unions regarding staff training and development despite the fact that they are paying their union officials to look after their interests. It would seem that there is far more commitment from the LIS professional association to the training and development of people that work in the LIS environment (refer to section 7.2.1.6.1.2.2 on training and development).

8.2.6.4 Workplace forums

The primary conduit for the democratisation of the workplace is the workplace forum. It was anticipated that there would be greater commitment, by the national unions, to workplace forums. While responses from the trade union officials indicated their support for the principle of workplace forums, there seems to be a lack of commitment to the formation of workplace forums. A comment made by a trade union respondent relating to workplace forums is regarded by the researcher as being significant as it reflects the views of some trade unions on workplace forums. The respondent stated that if workplace forums are successful then there would be no need for trade unions. This statement suggests a concern, at least on the part of this union official, to protect his/her own employment rather than working in the best interests of the membership of the union. However, another respondent did indicate that their union had formed one workplace forum.

8.2.6.5 Sector specific union

Trade union officials were unanimous in stating that a sector specific union would not provide better representation than a generic union. The employee respondents had expressed the opposite view as they were not satisfied with the level of representation by the generic unions. When the employee respondents were surveyed, they expressed their lack of confidence in the trade union to negotiate for minimum salaries and conditions of service and a standardised job grading system for the sector as a whole. It would seem that personnel within the LIS sector possibly continue to belong to trade unions because there is no alternative. These generic unions have been representing the LIS sector for many years now and should have established themselves as the organisation to represent their interests.

Here again is another indication of the trade union movement being stuck in the confrontation paradigm of the past. One trade union respondent reminded the researcher about unionism being a numbers game and that “the [LIS] sector does not have substantial numbers” to warrant a sector specific union. The researcher expected the unions to be more proactive; for example, as demonstrated by the suggestion relating to the shop steward structure which is discussed in section 8.2.6.2.

It would seem that the national policy of COSATU will prevail, that is, the policy of one union for one sector. Most of the so called progressive trade unions are members of COSATU and therefore having an affiliate would go against the policy of COSATU. It would seem reasonable to conclude that it would not be feasible for the current national unions to accommodate a sector specific union.

8.3 SEVENTH RESEARCH OBJECTIVE: TO PROPOSE A MODEL THAT WILL ADDRESS THE INDUSTRIAL AND PROFESSIONAL CONCERNS OF THE SECTOR

This study has established that the factors that have influenced the growth of white collar unionism at the national and international level are evident in the LIS tertiary education sector.

Further, LIS employee respondents have expressed their desire for an organisation that is knowledgeable about the sector to represent their industrial and professional concerns. Currently, the profession is represented by the professional association which addresses professional issues, and generic unions which address the industrial concerns of the sector. The professional association is not a statutory body and therefore cannot adequately represent the industrial concerns of the sector. The generic trade unions represent a number of different sectors and do not have the knowledge of the LIS sector to adequately represent their professional concerns. Further, the trade union respondents indicated that their trade union structures could not accommodate a sector specific union. What then is the way forward?

Before suggesting a way forward, the researcher would like to present an example of a local institution where the LIS staff had a body that addressed, to a limited extent, both their professional and industrial concerns. The example is presented to demonstrate that an organisation from the sector can address both the industrial and professional concerns of the LIS sector. In the late 1980s and 1990s, the then University of Natal, Durban Libraries formed the Library Workers' Organisation¹⁸ (LWO). This organisation was formed as result of the staff feeling alienated from the decision making processes of the Library. After much negotiation between LWO representatives and management, library management recognised the organisation as representing the interests of employees of the Library. The senior representative of LWO at the time served as a member of the executive structure of the registered trade union active at the University of Natal.

During its existence, LWO addressed a number of staffing issues such as:

- selection and recruitment processes;
- staff training and development; and
- proactively representing staff during restructuring exercises.

¹⁸ The researcher was the chairperson of LWO.

With regard to selection and recruitment, representatives negotiated with management alternative selection criteria for support posts within the Library. Recognition of prior learning was accepted as a criterion for support staff posts long before this was incorporated into the statute books.

For purposes of staff training and development, LIS employees offered their professional services to the community at reduced costs. The income generated from consultations, setting-up libraries and such were used to support staff-initiated and sustained training and development programmes.

Concerning representation of staff during the restructuring exercise, in the late 1990s, the University of Natal engaged in a major restructuring exercise. The University recommended that the Library reduce its staff compensation budget by one point six million rands. The University proposed the forced retrenchment of thirteen individuals to achieve the one point six million rands saving on the staff compensation budget. LWO engaged in protest action demanding a say in the restructuring process. The University acceded to the demands of LWO which developed a proposal that realised a reduction in the compensation budget by one point six-nine million rands. This saving was achieved through voluntary retrenchments and disestablishment of unfilled posts. It should be noted that there were ten promotions at the end of the exercise.

To reiterate, the findings of the survey of LIS employees revealed the need for a single organisation to address the industrial and professional concerns of the sector. Their preference is for an organisation that is knowledgeable about the sector as opposed to representatives whose skills are restricted to negotiation. The above example demonstrates the potential of a sector specific organisation in addressing the professional and industrial concerns of the sector.

Drawing on the study thus far, the researcher offers the following model as a way forward for the LIS tertiary education sector in South Africa. The structure is based on the premise that a federal system is acceptable to a national union that services the tertiary education sector. The researcher uses the concept of a 'federal system' to mean that the LIS sector will act independently but will have affiliation to a national union. However, the LIS sector union will function within the broad framework of the national union.

The proposed model entails:

- the professional association acquiring statutory status in terms of the relevant statutes – the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995; and
- the statutory body affiliating to a national generic union servicing the tertiary education sector.

8.3.1 The structure of a LIS sector union at site level

The researcher makes the following assumptions in proposing the structure of a LIS tertiary education sector union at the site level:

- that all staff of the library or resource centre will belong to the sector specific union – that there are no ‘free riders’;
- that the staffing complement should be more than one hundred per institution – if the staffing complement is less than one hundred then two or more institutions that are in close geographic proximity should be combined for the purposes of organising themselves;
- that there will be branches of libraries in different geographical areas but they should still be considered as one library;
- that institutional representatives will feed into the provincial structures and the provincial structure will feed into the national structure (refer to *Figures 14, 15 and 16*); and
- that both, support and professional staff, must be represented at all levels in the structure.

Figure 14 shows the structure at the institutional level while *Figure 15* illustrates the provincial and national structure. There will be representation from the institution at the provincial level.

Figure 14

Proposed institutional structure for a LIS tertiary education sector union

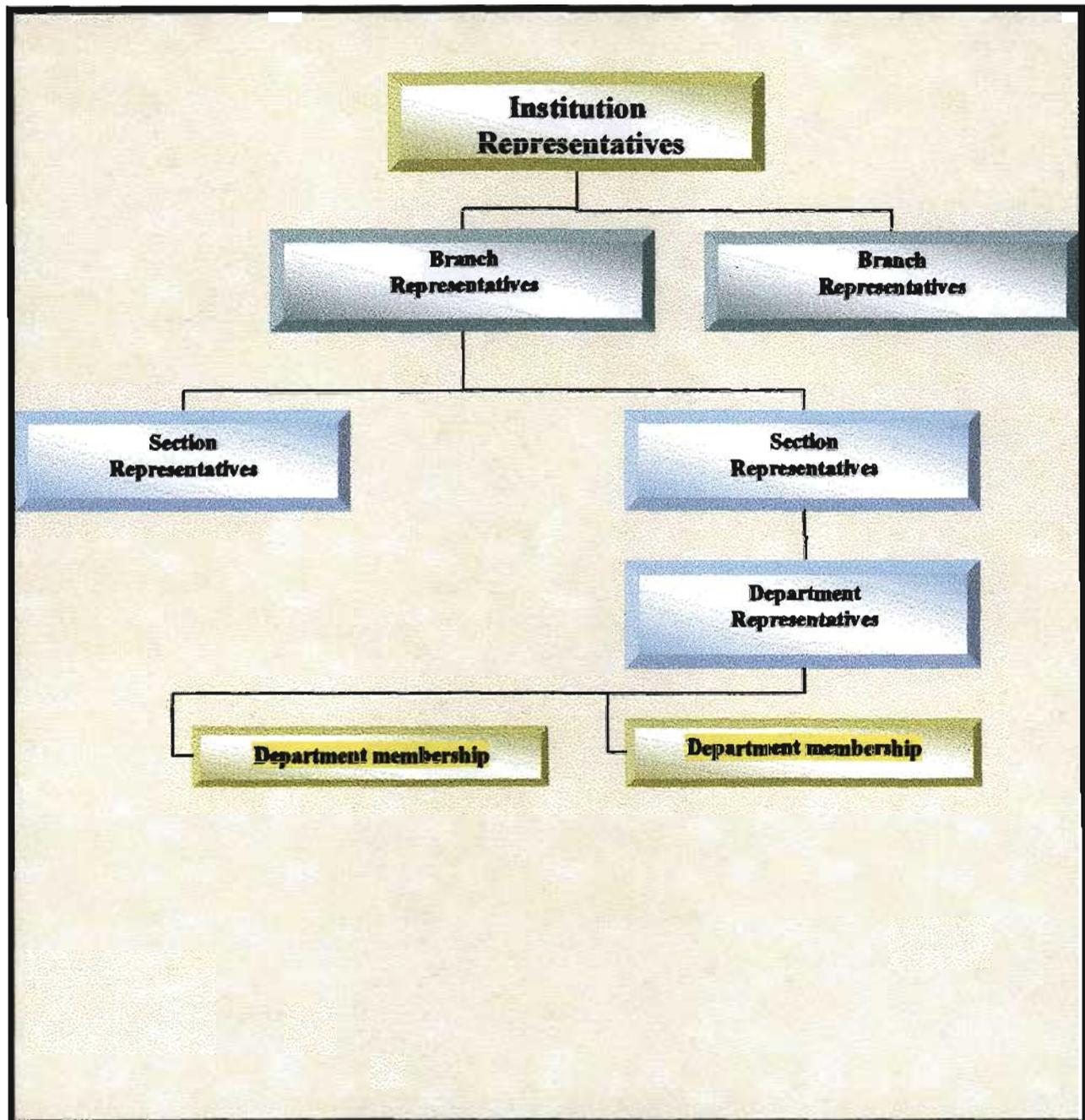
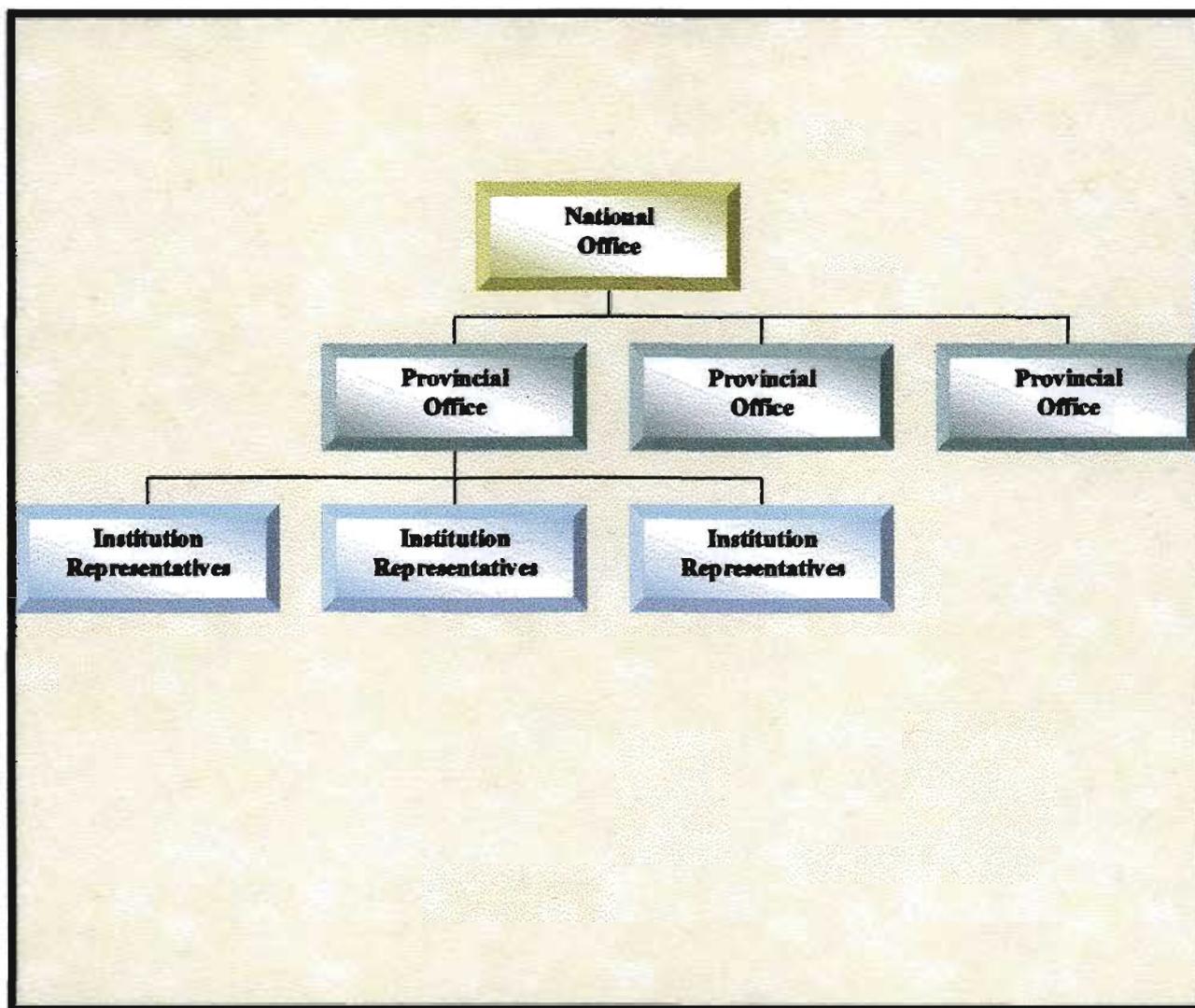


Figure 15

Provincial and national structure for a LIS tertiary education sector union



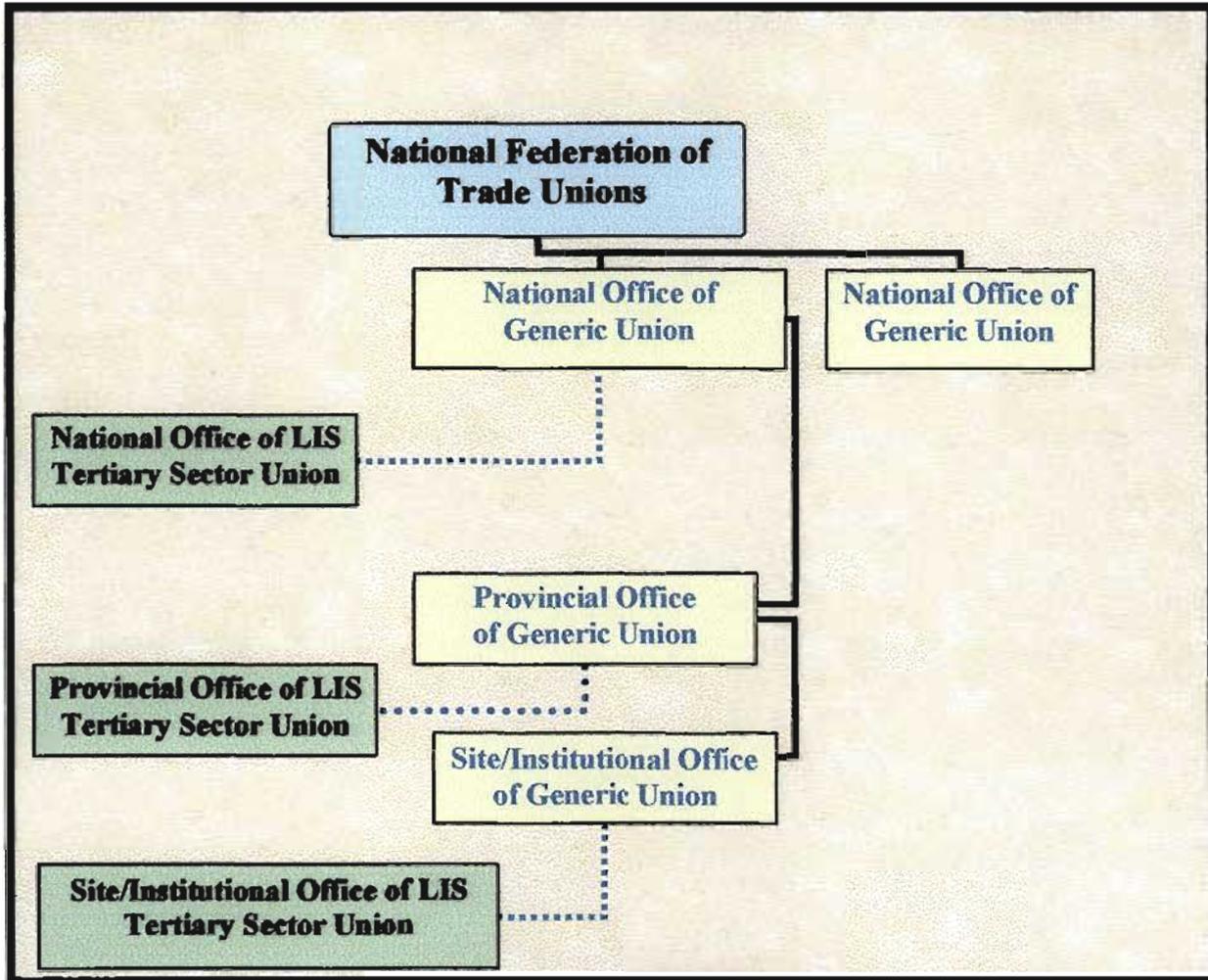
8.3.2 Federal structure: the integration of a LIS sector union with the national union

In proposing a federal structure which will ensure that the LIS sector will function at a national level, the researcher assumes that the

- institutional representatives (refer to *Figure 14*) of the LIS sector union will serve as office bearers on the site structure of the national union;
- provincial representatives (refer to *Figure 15*) of the LIS sector union will serve as office bearers on the provincial structure of the national union; and
- national representatives (refer to *Figure 16*) of the LIS sector union will serve as office bearers on the national structure of the national union.

The national office of the LIS sector union will pay an affiliation fee to the national office of the national union. *Figure 16* below shows how the national office of the LIS tertiary education sector union will interact with the national office of the federation of national trade unions.

Figure 16
Federal structure



With reference to *Figure 16*, it is proposed that

- elected members of the LIS sector, at the institutional level, will serve as shop stewards representing the sector on the institution's shop stewards structure of the generic union;
- elected representatives of the different LIS institutions serving on their institution's shop stewards structure will form a LIS sector shop steward structure for the province;
- the provincial LIS shop stewards structure will elect officials to serve on the provincial shop stewards structure of the generic union;
- elected officials of the provincial LIS shop stewards structure will form a LIS sector office bearers structure for the country;
- the LIS office bearers will elect representatives to serve on the national office of the generic union; and
- the national office of the generic union will elect LIS national office representative/s to serve on the national federation structures.

The findings of the survey of LIS employees revealed the need for a single organisation, with the relevant knowledge of the sector, to address their professional and industrial concerns. The findings from the survey of trade union officials showed that current trade union structures cannot accommodate a sector specific union. Therefore, it was necessary to develop a model that will meet the preferences of the LIS employees accepting that the current trade union structures could not accommodate a sector specific union, hence the proposed federal model. This model could serve to alert trade union officials of the fact that there is a sector that needs unionising as a sector.

The findings of the survey of LIS employees and the subsequent proposed model could initiate discussion on the way forward for the sector in terms of representation of both their industrial and profession concerns. Given that only a segment of the LIS sector has been examined in this study, it is recommended that further studies be conducted to establish the needs of all segments of the LIS sector. Such a study will provide a broader perspective of the needs of the sector and would contribute to the development of a model that will be representative of the sector as a whole. The model proposed in this study could possibly be presented as a working document for the development of a model for the LIS sector as a whole.

8.4 SUMMARY

The first two objectives guiding this study were achieved through a thorough survey of the literature. The remaining five objectives were achieved through the survey of the two research populations and is presented and discussed in Chapters Seven and Eight.

Chapter Eight engaged in the discussion of the findings of the surveyed populations in relation to the literature. It is clear that the factors that have influenced the growth of trade unions at the international level are evident in the South African LIS sector. The researcher has established, via the survey of the literature, that the fragmentation of the profession and the employment of a large number of women have contributed to the negative growth of trade unionism. Three national unions, regional unions, a range of in-house unions and a professional association currently represent the LIS sector. This multi-representation adds to the fragmentation of the sector and provides fertile ground for manipulation by management. However, the findings from the survey of LIS employees do not always corroborate the findings in the survey of the literature. For example, on the issue of women the findings of the survey of the LIS employees contradict the findings via the literature on unionisation of the LIS sector at the international level.

Employee respondents generally were of the view that the objectives of trade unions are not in conflict with the objectives of the professional association. The synergy in the objectives would thus allow for a single organisation to fulfill the industrial as well as the professional objectives of the LIS sector. However, the survey of the national union officials reflect that the officials do not support a sector specific union. Nonetheless, the researcher proposes a model for a way forward. Chapter Nine draws conclusions and makes recommendations.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The professional issues of the LIS sector in South Africa are currently addressed by a professional association and the industrial issues by a number of different generic unions. The purpose of this study was to determine the feasibility of unionising the staff of the LIS sector. In determining the feasibility of unionising the sector, the researcher surveyed the literature to determine international and national trends.

This study has examined the historical development of trade unionism in South Africa. An important factor influencing the historical development of unionism has been the role played by government through the introduction of a multitude of legislation. A common thread throughout this study has been the examination of the role that legislation has played in unionisation, including unionisation in the library and information environment. It is evident, from the discussion in this study, that legislation has played a significant role in industrial relations in South Africa.

The growth in the size of libraries, and the consequential growth in employee concentration, has resulted in high levels of bureaucratisation which has reduced employee participation in decision making. It has been argued that unions would assist in ensuring that employees are active participants in the decision making process. The study has established that the current South African labour dispensation makes provision for a close working relationship between employees and employers. It has also been established that collective bargaining is a significant factor in the growth of unions - central to collective bargaining is representation for better salaries and conditions of service.

Library associations have been for decades the co-ordinating body within the LIS sector. The study has examined the roles and characteristics of professional library associations with particular reference to such associations in two African countries, Ghana and Botswana. Garry, L.S. (1977) and Frank (1997) express the view that a national library association has the

potential of creating cohesiveness within the LIS sector. They argue that this cohesiveness contributes significantly to the growth of the profession. The study has examined the factors that have influenced the continuance of professional associations amidst competition from trade unions for the same membership.

This study has also established, via the literature, the factors that have influenced the growth of trade unionism. Given that the LIS sector is considered, by the researcher, to be a professional sector and would be categorised in the international context as a white collar union sector, the factors identified as influencing the growth of such trade unions were applied to the LIS sector to determine their influence on the growth of unionism in the LIS sector. The findings from the survey of LIS employees confirm the findings in the literature with regard to the factors that have influenced trade unionism.

The researcher has presented, in Chapter Seven, the findings from the survey of the employees and trade union officials. As stated above, the findings generally confirm the findings in the literature. In Chapter Eight, the researcher engaged in a discussion of the findings from the survey populations. This final chapter will draw conclusions based on the findings in the literature (which have been discussed from Chapters Two to Five) and the findings of the survey populations (which have been presented and discussed in Chapters Seven and Eight respectively), in terms of the research objectives that guided the study. The researcher will not engage in detailed repetition of the discussions of the findings when presenting the conclusions.

9.2 THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

The objectives of study are stated once again to facilitate discussion in this concluding chapter. The objectives of the study were to:

1. Examine the factors that have influenced trade unionism in South Africa;
2. Identify the factors that have influenced the growth of unionism in the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa;
3. Investigate the role of legislation in influencing unionisation in the tertiary education LIS sector in South Africa;

4. Investigate the need for an organisation to address the industrial needs of LIS employee in this sector;
5. Investigate the feasibility of unionising the sector under a single employee representative body;
6. Investigate the feasibility of combining the industrial objectives of a trade union and the professional objectives of a professional association into a single organisation that will represent the tertiary education component of the LIS sector in South Africa; and
7. Depending on the findings, propose a model that will address the industrial and professional concerns of the sector.

The first objective of the study was to examine the factors that have influenced the growth of trade unionism in South Africa. The factors were identified and presented to the surveyed employee population to determine the influence of these factors on the unionisation of LIS employees. It has been established that trade unions have a membership in excess of 63 percent in the LIS tertiary education sector. The researcher concludes that the factors that have influenced the growth of trade unionism at the national and international levels are evident in the LIS tertiary education environment, hence the high degree of unionisation among LIS workers in the South African tertiary education sector.

Research in the 1970s and 1980s, at the international level, indicated that the large number of women employed in the LIS sector contributed to the slow growth of unionism in the sector (Hovenden 1972; Guyton 1975; Beresford 1983). The findings from the survey of LIS employees, however, are commensurate with the findings of more recent research conducted at the international level with regard to the contribution of women and their numbers to the growth of unionism. Based on the findings of the survey of LIS employees, it is concluded that the large number of women employed in the South African LIS tertiary education sector has significantly contributed to the growth of unionism in the sector.

The findings from the survey of the literature reveal that the LIS sector is very fragmented, however, the findings from the survey of LIS employees are not conclusive on this issue. Given the fact that the findings from the survey of the employees are inconclusive, the researcher is guided by the literature. The researcher argues that the fragmentation of the profession will not only retard the growth of trade unionism, but it will also make it extremely difficult to unify the sector. The researcher argues that there is a desperate need for an organisation to give the profession direction and guidance which will enhance the status of the profession. Currently, the profession is represented by a myriad of trade unions and a professional association which has a number of interest groups. There is evidence to indicate that there is a preference by a substantial number of members of the profession to belong to interest groups and not to the 'mother body'. It is the view of the researcher that the interest groups are competing with the 'mother body' in terms of convening workshops and conferences and it is this competition that is exacerbating the high level of fragmentation. The 'scramble' for membership by the different trade unions servicing the sector has also added to the fragmentation and this 'scramble' must come to an end. There is a need, the researcher believes, for earnest discussions between ALL the trade unions currently servicing the tertiary education sector and ALL other stakeholders as to how the LIS sector can best be represented.

The literature reveals that there is debate about professionalism and unionism not being compatible with each other and that unionism undermines professionalism. Another component to the debate is that unionism is detrimental to the image of professionalism. The findings from the survey of the LIS employees generally reveal that:

- unionism does not undermine professionalism; and
- unionism does not negatively affect the image of professionalism.

However, with regard to the issue of unionism and professionalism being incompatible, the findings from the survey of LIS employees are inconclusive.

The study has revealed that the objectives of trade unions and professional associations are not in conflict with each other. It can therefore be assumed that the objectives of both the organisations can be merged. The researcher concludes that there is no real impediment to a professional association and a trade union coming together to form a single representative body to address the

professional and industrial concerns of the LIS sector. Further, two-thirds of the employee respondents are of the opinion that it is necessary to have an organisation to address the industrial concerns of the sector. However, the majority of respondents believe that the single representative organisation should be the professional association as it has the knowledge and experience of the LIS sector. The researcher submits that a single representative organisation, as envisaged by the employee respondents, will provide a clear set of guidelines that will assist in strategically tackling bread and butter issues. It will also increase the credibility and status of the profession.

Another objective of this study was to investigate the role of legislation in influencing unionisation in the tertiary education LIS sector in South Africa. It is beyond debate that legislation has been a significant contributor to the growth of unionism in South Africa. In the last decade, there have been phenomenal changes in the South African labour dispensation. The watershed was the enacting of the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995. This Act ushered in a democratic and equality based industrial relations system which actively promoted the formation of trade unions. This system created an environment so conducive to collective bargaining that some staff associations transformed into trade unions to reap the benefits of an act that openly advocated the growth of unionism. However, the benefits of this new labour dispensation have eluded the employees of the LIS sector and the researcher attributes this primarily to inadequate representation of the sector. This is confirmed by the employee respondents as discussed in sections 7.2.1.8 and 7.2.1.9.

The single most important research question guiding this study has been: **Is it feasible to unionise the LIS tertiary education sector under a single employee representative body?** This study has shown that all the elements that have influenced trade unionism, at the international level, are evident in the South African LIS sector. Further, the factors that have contributed to the growth of professional associations are also evident in the South African LIS sector. Also, the objectives of professional associations and trade unions are not in conflict with each other. In fact, in the South African LIS environment, LIS employees surveyed claim that the objectives of the two organisations complement each other. The new South African labour

dispensation actively promotes the formation of trade unions. And, the employees of the sector want a sector specific union to represent their industrial and professional needs.

The researcher argues that it is feasible to unionise the LIS sector under a single representative body. However, trade union respondents hint that it is difficult for such a union to fit into the present national union structures. This should not detract from the profession's quest for adequate representation. The researcher, in the previous chapter, has proposed a federal model that will ensure that the industrial and professional issues of the LIS sector will be adequately represented.

9.3 THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY FOR THEORY

Brause (2000: 98) states that a doctoral dissertation must make a contribution to on-going professional discussions and advance new perspectives to such discussions. This study makes a contribution to on-going discussions about the profession and as such should add to the body of knowledge in the discipline. Brewer (2003: 324) is of the opinion that "theory means ideas, propositions and explanations that get to the essential 'truth' behind something that is often hidden." This study has examined the feasibility of unionizing library and information staff in the tertiary sector. There are a number of findings or 'truths' that have been brought to the fore. The research has revealed that a large percentage of those working in a LIS environment in the tertiary sector belong to generic trade unions. Further, a large number of LIS staff, predominantly professional, belong to the professional association. Historically, both organisations served different interests of the same population, that is, the unions addressed the industrial interests of the sector while the professional association focused on the professional interests of the sector. The survey of the literature has revealed that the new labour dispensation supports the trade union movement at the expense of professional associations.

Further, given the fact that the findings in this research reveal that the current trade union structures cannot accommodate a sector specific union, the researcher proposes a model to generate discussion for a way forward for the LIS profession in South Africa. The development of such a federal model to initiate discussion and to add a new perspective to bringing the entire

sector under the auspices of a single organisation to address the industrial and professional concerns of the sector as a whole, is also a contribution that this study makes to the body of knowledge in the discipline.

9.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The intention of this study was to examine the feasibility of unionising the tertiary education component of the LIS sector. It is evident from the study that the current level of representation of the sector, by the different bodies, is inadequate; hence the proposed model. The divide between the professional staff and the support staff in the LIS sector must not be allowed to continue in a labour dispensation that actively promotes workers unifying to play a meaningful role in the development of a 'road map' for the institution. Good governance of different institutions will ultimately benefit the country as a whole. It would be extremely useful for a study to look at the LIS profession as a whole and develop a structure that will discourage fragmentation. Such a study will not only benefit the LIS sector but also provide some guidance in resolving the growing divide between white collar workers and blue collar workers in general.

The model for a way forward proposed by the researcher is in no way definitive but is intended to provide a base for further interrogation. It would be useful for the respective employee representative organisations to interrogate the proposed model with a view to developing a model that will ensure adequate representation of the sector's industrial and professional concerns.

There are a large number of white collar workers that do not belong to trade unions. The 'non-unionisation' of workers goes against basic principles of co-determination and government's vision to ensure labour peace. As stated by Baskin (1996: 21), the current trade union movement lacks the capacity to exploit the progressive labour dispensation. The researcher recommends that the trade union movement makes serious attempts to research ways and means of unionising the large number of 'non-unionised' white collar workers to ensure the recruitment and retention of these white collar workers to strengthen the capacity of trade unions.

In Chapter Two, the researcher discusses the influence of social status as a factor negating the growth of trade unionism. Unfortunately, there is very little empirical evidence supporting such a claim. Noting that there is no distinction in South African law between white and blue collar workers, the researcher would like to recommend that a study be undertaken to investigate the claim that certain categories of workers generally do not engage in strike action as they fear their professions will lose prestige.

9.5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This final chapter drew conclusions and made recommendations for future study based on discussions of the findings of the literature and the survey of LIS employees and trade union officials. The primary research question guiding this study has been: **Is it feasible to unionise the LIS sector under a single employee representative body?** The researcher concludes, based on the findings of the study, that it is feasible to unionise the LIS sector under a single statutory body as all the elements that have influenced trade unionism at the international level, are evident in the South African LIS sector. Further, the employees of the sector have expressed the need for a sector specific union to address their professional and industrial concerns. However, the current structures governing the trade union movement do not make provision for a LIS tertiary education sector specific union. The researcher offers, as a way forward, a federal system with the LIS sector union being an affiliate to a national union. It is hoped that the proposed model will be used, by relevant stakeholders, as a basis for further investigation with a view to ensuring adequate representation of South Africa's LIS sector's industrial and professional concerns.

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APPENDIX 1:

Questionnaire for library and information services employees

Survey of Library and Information Services (LIS) employees

Unionising library and information staff in the tertiary sector: a feasibility study

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. It should take no more than fifteen minutes of your time.

Please note:

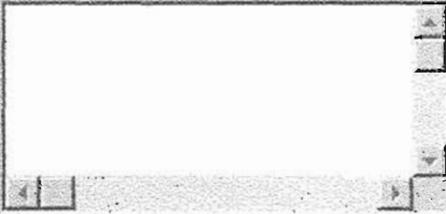
1. Responses to certain questions are determined by your response to a previous question. In such instances questions not applicable to you are automatically made inactive or greyed out (like this).

2. 'Text boxes' for typed responses are not confined to the visible space provided continue typing and they will automatically extend themselves to accommodate your response.

3. This survey is intended to run using the Internet Explorer Browser.

1. Please select the institution where you are currently employed		Select an institution <input type="text"/>
2. Gender	Male Female	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
3. Please select your age group	Under 20 21 to 30 31 to 40 41 to 50 51 and above	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
4. What is your current designation at the above institution? (e.g. Library Assistant, Librarian, etc.)		<input type="text"/>
5.1. How is your designation categorised?	Professional Support	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
5.2. Are you categorised as management?	Yes No	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
6.1 Are you currently a paid up member of a	Professional body (e.g. LIASA) Trade union Both of the above None of the above	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
6.2 Please indicate the name of the union and/or professional body that you are a member of?		<input type="text"/>

7. If you belong to a trade union, is the union	In-house (that is, a union that operates at a specific institution ONLY) National (e.g., NEHAWU, NTESU, NUTESA)	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
8. Which organisation at your institution		
8.1. bargains or makes representation on behalf of its members, for salaries?	Trade union Professional body Both	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
8.2. bargains or makes representation on behalf of its members, for conditions of service?	Trade union Professional body Both	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
8.3. bargains or makes representation on behalf of its members, when the institution is restructuring or retrenching?	Trade union Professional body Both	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
9. Do you think that there should be minimum salaries and conditions of service for all staff working in the LIS environment at a	9.1. Provincial level? Yes No Not Sure 9.2. National level? Yes No Not Sure	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
10.1. Do you think that there should be a standardised grading system for all library staff at the provincial level?	Yes No	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
10.2. If your response to question 10.1. is 'yes', which employee organisation do you think should negotiate for such an implementation?	Trade union Professional body Both	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
11.1. Do you think that there should be a standardised grading system for all library staff at the national level?	Yes No	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
11.2. If your response to question 11.1. is 'yes', which employee organisation do you think should negotiate for such an implementation?	Trade union Professional body Both	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>

		<input type="radio"/>
12. Does your institution engage in/support formal staff training and development (that is, does it have training and development programmes that lead to some form of certification and/or financial remuneration for the acquisition of the certificate)?	Yes No Not Sure	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
13. Is your union an active participant in any staff training and development programme?	Yes No Not Sure	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
14. Does your employee representative body (that is, the professional body, e.g. LIASA or trade union) hold conferences, workshops and such to develop staff?	14.1. Professional body Yes No Not Sure 14.2. Trade union Yes No Not Sure	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
15.1. In your opinion, is it necessary to have an organisation to negotiate or address industrial issues in the LIS sector (e.g., salaries, conditions of service, etc.)	Yes No Not Sure	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
15.2. Please substantiate your response to 15.1.		
16.1. Which organisation do you believe is most capable of making such representation in the LIS sector?	Trade union Professional body Not Sure	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
16.2. Please substantiate your response to 16.1.		

<p>17. Please comment on how the scheduling of meetings (e.g. during/after working hours), the holding of conferences (e.g. during/outside of school holidays) and such can impact on your active participation in the trade union and/or LLASA.</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 97px; width: 100%;"></div>	
<p>18. It has been argued that the LIS profession is fragmented by type of service. Do you agree that the profession and its representation is fragmented?</p>	<p>Yes No Not Sure</p>	<p><input type="radio"/></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>
<p>19. If your response to question 18 is 'yes', do you think there should be one body that brings this fragmented profession together to address both professional and industrial issues?</p>	<p>Yes No</p>	<p><input type="radio"/></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>
<p>20. If your response to question 19 is 'yes', which representative body do you think is most capable of bringing the profession together to address both professional and industrial issues?</p>	<p>Professional body Trade union</p>	<p><input type="radio"/></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>
<p>21.1. Do you think that unionism and professionalism are incompatible?</p>	<p>Yes No Not Sure</p>	<p><input type="radio"/></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>
<p>21.2. Please substantiate your response to 21.1.</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 97px; width: 100%;"></div>	
<p>22.1. Do you think that unionism undermines professionalism?</p>	<p>Yes No Not Sure</p>	<p><input type="radio"/></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>
<p>22.2. Please substantiate your response to 22.1.</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 97px; width: 100%;"></div>	
<p>23.1. Do you think belonging to a union will be detrimental to the prestige of the profession?</p>	<p>Yes No Not Sure</p>	<p><input type="radio"/></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p> <p><input type="radio"/></p>

23.2. Please substantiate your response to 23.1.		
24.1. Do you think that the South African LIS professional association should become a statutory body (meaning that it should have legal status)?	Yes No Not Sure	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
24.2. Please substantiate your response to 24.1.		
25. Do you think that the profession should retain the status quo, that is, professional issues be addressed by a professional body and industrial issues by a trade union?	Yes No Not Sure	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
26. Do you think that all employees of the LIS sector should form one union that will address industrial issues as well as professional issues?	Yes No Not Sure	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
27.1. Do you think that the LIS professional association should broaden its constitution and act as a quasi union, that is, for the professional body to address both professional and industrial issues of all staff of the LIS sector?	Yes No Not Sure	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
27.2. Please substantiate your response to 27.1.		
28. Do you have any further comments to make on the South African LIS professional association?		

29. Do you have any further comments to make on the trade union you belong to?

A large rectangular text input area with a vertical scrollbar on the right side and horizontal scrollbars at the top and bottom.

30. Are there any other general comments you would like to add?

A large rectangular text input area with a vertical scrollbar on the right side and horizontal scrollbars at the top and bottom.

*If you are satisfied with your responses, please click on the button **Submit survey answers** below, to submit your responses.*

*If you are dissatisfied with your responses you can either go back and change them individually, or you can click on the button **Reset the survey and start again** below, which will reset all the information in the survey back to its original state.*

Submit survey answers

Reset the survey and start again

APPENDIX 2:

Questionnaire for trade union officials

Survey of Senior Officials of National Trade Unions

Unionising library and information staff in the tertiary sector: a feasibility study.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. It should take no more than fifteen minutes of your time.

Please note:

1. Responses to certain questions are determined by your response to a previous question. In such instances questions not applicable to you are automatically made inactive or greyed out

2. 'Text boxes' for typed responses are not confined to the visible space provided-continue typing and they will automatically extend themselves to accommodate your response.

3. This survey is intended to run using the Internet Explorer Browser.

1. Please select your union.	NEHAWU NTESU NUTESA SAPTU TENUSA	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
2. Please indicate your designation in the trade union.		
3. Please list the sectors that fall within your union's bargaining unit. For example, public sector, health sector, tertiary sector, etc.		
4. Is membership of your union open to white collar workers, that is, workers who perform intellectual or non-manual job functions?	Yes No	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
5.1 Does your union currently represent employees working in a library and information environment?	Yes No	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
5.2 If your response to 5.1 is 'yes', does the union address.	Professional issues only Industrial issues only Both professional and industrial issues	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>

<p>5.3 If you have responded to 5.2, please list the core issues that the union addresses.</p>	
<p>6.1.1 Does your union have the knowledge of the LIS sector to address the professional and industrial issues of the sector?</p>	<p>Yes No</p>
<p>6.1.2 If your response to 6.1.1 is 'no', please indicate how this lack of knowledge could be overcome.</p>	
<p>6.2.1 Does your union engage in training and development of the membership?</p>	<p>Yes No</p>
<p>6.2.2 Please substantiate your response.</p>	
<p>7.1 Do you think that a library and information services specific union representing all staff within a library and information environment would provide better representation than a generic union?</p>	<p>Yes No</p>
<p>7.2 If your response to 7.1 is 'yes', please substantiate.</p>	
<p>7.3 If your response to 7.1 is 'no', please substantiate.</p>	
<p>8.1 Do you think that it is feasible for a sector specific union (for example a union for library and information services employees only) to fit into the structure of your national union?</p>	<p>Yes No</p>

8.2 If your response to 8.1 is 'yes', please substantiate.	
8.3 If your response to 8.1 is 'no', please substantiate.	
9.1 In your opinion, what are the advantages of belonging to a registered trade union?	
9.2 In your opinion, what are the disadvantages of belonging to a registered trade union?	
10.1 In your opinion, what are the advantages of belonging to a professional association?	
10.2 In your opinion, what are the disadvantages of belonging to a professional association?	
11.1 Does your union support the formation of workplace forums at the institutional level?	Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/>
11.2 Please substantiate your response to 11.1.	

12. It would be appreciated if you could comment on the issues raised in the questionnaire that was completed by staff employed in library and information services in the tertiary sector. [Click here](#) to view the questionnaire. It will open in a new browser window.



13. Please add any further comments that you may wish to make.



*When you have finished and are satisfied with your responses, please click on the button **Submit Survey Answers** below, to submit your responses.*

*If you are dissatisfied with your responses you can either go back and change them individually, or you can click on the button **Reset the Survey and Start Again** below, which will reset all the information in the survey back to its original state.*

Submit Survey Answers

Reset the Survey and Start Again

APPENDIX 3:
Covering letters and reminders to the survey populations

Dear University/Technikon Librarian

Re: Request for email addresses of staff

I am a doctoral student in the School of Humanities and Social Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. I am researching the feasibility of the library and information sector (LIS) having a single representative body addressing both industrial and professional issues. Professor C. Stilwell is supervising the research and Mr A. Leach is the co-supervisor.

The title of the research is, "*Unionizing library and information staff in the tertiary sector: a feasibility study.*"

It is my intention to administer a questionnaire to all employees in tertiary libraries in order to gather data regarding employee views about having a body that will negotiate salaries and conditions of service as well as address professional issues.

It would be greatly appreciated if you could assist by providing a list of members of staff and their email addresses. The questionnaire is short and should not take, your staff, more than fifteen minutes to complete as most of the questions are closed-ended. The questionnaire will be administered electronically.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

R. Raju
Principal Librarian
G.M.J Sweeney Law Library
University of Natal
Durban
Tel : (031) 260 1387
email : rajur@nu.ac.za

R. Raju
Principal Librarian
G.M.J Sweeney Law Library
University of Natal
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Tel : (031) 260 1387
email.: rajur@nu.ac.za

Dear University/Technikon Librarian

23 September 2003

Re: Request for email addresses of staff

I am a doctoral student in the School of Humanities and Social Studies at the University of Natal. I am researching the feasibility of the library and information sector (LIS) having a single representative body addressing both industrial and professional issues. Prof. C. Stilwell is supervising the research.

It is my intention to administer a questionnaire to all employees in tertiary libraries in order to gather data regarding employee views about having a body that will negotiate salaries and conditions of service as well as address professional issues.

It would be greatly appreciated if you could assist by providing a list of members of staff and their email addresses. The questionnaire is short and should not take more than fifteen minutes to complete as most of the questions are closed-ended. The questionnaire will be administered electronically.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

.....
R. Raju

Dear Colleague

Request for information for doctoral study

I am a doctoral student in the School of Humanities and Social Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. I am researching the feasibility of the library and information sector (LIS) having a single representative body addressing both industrial and professional issues. Professor C. Stilwell is supervising the research and Mr A. Leach is the co-supervisor.

The title of the research is, "*Unionizing library and information staff in the tertiary sector: a feasibility study.*"

This questionnaire is being sent to all employees of libraries within the tertiary sector in order to gather data regarding employee views about having a body that will negotiate salaries and conditions of service as well as address professional issues.

It would be appreciated if you could spare some time to complete this questionnaire. The email addresses, in the main, have been made available via the office of the Director/University/Technikon Librarian. Further, the information provided in this survey will be treated in strict confidence and will be used for academic purposes only. To maintain this confidentiality, the responses will get captured automatically onto a database without reflecting the identity of the individual respondent. However, it will reflect the institution.

I will be most grateful if you could complete the questionnaire and return it preferably by 7 May 2004. To view and respond to the questionnaire, please click on the hyperlink below. However, if your client browser does not allow you link into the site, please type the above address in the 'address bar'.

<http://www.nu.ac.za/lissurvey/lissurvey.html>

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

R. Raju
Principal Librarian
G.M.J Sweeney Law Library
University of KwaZulu-Natal Libraries, Durban
Tel. : (031) 260 1387
email : rajur@nu.ac.za

Dear Colleague

Request for information for doctoral study

Last week I sent a request for your participation in a survey. Unfortunately, the response rate was extremely low. It would be **greatly appreciated** if you could take 15 minutes of your time to complete the questionnaire. Your participation is critical to completing this research and, hopefully, adding to the body of knowledge in our discipline of library and information work.

Below is the original message. If you have completed the questionnaire, **please** ignore this reminder.

I am a doctoral student in the School of Humanities and Social Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. I am researching the feasibility of the library and information sector (LIS) having a single representative body addressing both industrial and professional issues. Professor C. Stilwell is supervising the research and Mr A. Leach is the co-supervisor.

The title of the research is, "*Unionizing library and information staff in the tertiary sector: a feasibility study.*"

This questionnaire is being sent to all employees of libraries within the tertiary sector in order to gather data regarding employee views about having a body that will negotiate salaries and conditions of service as well as address professional issues.

It would be appreciated if you could spare some time to complete this questionnaire. The email addresses, in the main, have been made available via the office of the Director/University/Technikon Librarian. Further, the information provided in this survey will be treated in strict confidence and will be used for academic purposes only. To maintain this confidentiality, the responses will get captured automatically onto a database without reflecting the identity of the individual respondent. However, it will reflect the institution.

I will be most grateful if you could complete the questionnaire and return it preferably by 14 May 2004. To view and respond to the questionnaire, please click on the hyperlink below. However, if your client browser does not allow you link into the site, please type the above address in the 'address bar'.

<http://www.nu.ac.za/lissurvey/lissurvey.html>

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

R. Raju
Principal Librarian
G.M.J Sweeney Law Library
University of KwaZulu-Natal Libraries
Durban
Tel : (031) 260 1387
email: rajur@nu.ac.za

Dear Colleague

Request for information for doctoral study

I do **sincerely apologise** for repeatedly sending out this request to complete a questionnaire. As stated in the previous email, the response rate was very low. This low response rate makes analysis of the data received meaningless. I therefore **PLEAD** with you to complete the questionnaire. The original message is below.

I would like to thank those that have responded. For reasons of confidentiality, I cannot determine those who have responded. My apologies for the inconvenience caused by sending this message out again.

Original message

I am a doctoral student in the School of Humanities and Social Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. I am researching the feasibility of the library and information sector (LIS) having a single representative body addressing both industrial and professional issues. Professor C. Stilwell is supervising the research and Mr A. Leach is the co-supervisor.

The title of the research is, "*Unionizing library and information staff in the tertiary sector: a feasibility study.*"

This questionnaire is being sent to all employees of libraries within the tertiary sector in order to gather data regarding employee views about having a body that will negotiate salaries and conditions of service as well as address professional issues.

It would be appreciated if you could spare some time to complete this questionnaire. The email addresses, in the main, have been made available via the office of the Director/University/Technikon Librarian. Further, the information provided in this survey will be treated in strict confidence and will be used for academic purposes only. To maintain this confidentiality, the responses will get captured automatically onto a database without reflecting the identity of the individual respondent. However, it will reflect the institution.

I will be most grateful if you could complete the questionnaire and return it preferably by 21 May 2004. To view and respond to the questionnaire, please click on the hyperlink below. However, if your client browser does not allow you link into the site, please type the above address in the 'address bar'.

<http://www.nu.ac.za/lissurvey/lissurvey.html>

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

R. Raju
Principal Librarian
G.M.J Sweeney Law Library
University of KwaZulu-Natal Libraries
Durban
Tel : (031) 260 1387
email : rajur@nu.ac.za

Dear Colleague

Request for information for doctoral study

I promise not to hassle you again as this will definitely be the last reminder. As stated in previous email messages, for reasons of confidentiality, I cannot determine individuals that have responded and those that have not. Forgive me if you have and if you have not, **PLEASE** can I request that you try to complete the questionnaire.

The original message is below.

Regards
Reggie

Original message

I am a doctoral student in the School of Humanities and Social Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. I am researching the feasibility of the library and information sector (LIS) having a single representative body addressing both industrial and professional issues. Professor C. Stilwell is supervising the research and Mr A. Leach is the co-supervisor.

The title of the research is, "*Unionizing library and information staff in the tertiary sector: a feasibility study.*"

This questionnaire is being sent to all employees of libraries within the tertiary sector in order to gather data regarding employee views about having a body that will negotiate salaries and conditions of service as well as address professional issues.

It would be appreciated if you could spare some time to complete this questionnaire. The email addresses, in the main, have been made available via the office of the Director/University/Technikon Librarian. Further, the information provided in this survey will be treated in strict confidence and will be used for academic purposes only. To maintain this confidentiality, the responses will get captured automatically onto a database without reflecting the identity of the individual respondent. However, it will reflect the institution.

I will be most grateful if you could complete the questionnaire and return it preferably by 4 June 2004. To view and respond to the questionnaire, please click on the hyperlink below. However, if your client browser does not allow you link into the site, please type the above address in the 'address bar'.

<http://www.nu.ac.za/lissurvey/lissurvey.html>

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

R. Raju
Principal Librarian
G.M.J Sweeney Law Library
University of KwaZulu-Natal Libraries
Durban
Tel : (031) 260 1387
email : rajur@nu.ac.za

Request for assistance to facilitate a doctoral study

Dear Colleague

I am a doctoral student in the School of Humanities and Social Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. I am researching the feasibility of the library and information sector (LIS) having a single representative body addressing both industrial and professional issues. Professor C. Stilwell is supervising the research and Mr A. Leach is the co-supervisor.

The title of the research is, "*Unionizing library and information staff in the tertiary sector: a feasibility study.*"

It is my intention to survey all employees of libraries within the tertiary sector. The survey is going to be conducted electronically. Over the last month I have been testing the ability of different institutions to gain access to the site and to submit a completed questionnaire, hence this mail message to randomly selected representatives from different institutions. It would be appreciated if you could assist by clicking on the link below, answer the **first question only** and submit the response. However, if your client browser does not allow you link into the site, please type the above address in the 'address bar'.

If you do come-up with error messages, **please** forward them to me. I assure you this request will not take more than two minutes of your time.

<http://www.nu.ac.za/lissurvey/lissurvey.html>

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

R. Raju
Principal Librarian
G.M.J Sweeney Law Library
University of KwaZulu-Natal Libraries
Durban
Tel : (031) 260 1387
email: rajur@nu.ac.za

Dear Trade Union Official

Request for assistance in accumulating data for doctoral study

I am a doctoral student in the School of Humanities and Social Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. I am researching the feasibility of the library and information sector (LIS) having a single representative body addressing both industrial and professional issues. Professor C. Stilwell is supervising the research and Mr A. Leach is the co-supervisor.

The title of the research is, "*Unionizing library and information staff in the tertiary sector: a feasibility study.*"

This questionnaire is being sent to senior officials of national trade unions that have membership in libraries within the tertiary sector. The purpose of the survey is to gather data on the impact of a white collar library and information specific union on the present trade union structures. The researcher has identified three national unions that are currently servicing the tertiary sector and senior representatives from all three national unions will be surveyed.

It would be appreciated if you could spare some time to complete this questionnaire. The information provided in this survey will be treated in strict confidence and will be used for academic purposes only. To maintain this confidentiality, the responses will get captured automatically onto a database without reflecting the identity of the individual respondent. However, it will reflect the institution, that is, your trade union.

I will be most grateful if you could complete the questionnaire and return it preferably by 6 August 2004. To view and respond to the questionnaire, please click on the hyperlink below. However, if your client browser does not allow you link into the site, please type the above address in the 'address bar'.

<http://www.nu.ac.za/lissurvey/LISSurvey1.html>

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

R. Raju
Principal Librarian
G.M.J Sweeney Law Library
University of KwaZulu-Natal Libraries, Durban
Tel : (031) 260 1387
email: rajur@ukzn.ac.za

Dear Trade Union Official

Request for assistance in accumulating data for doctoral study

Last week I sent a request for your participation in a survey. Unfortunately, the response rate was extremely low. **It would be greatly appreciated if you could take** 15 minutes of your time to complete the questionnaire. Your participation is critical to completing this research and, hopefully, adding to the body of knowledge in our discipline of library and information work.

Below is the original message. If you have completed the questionnaire, please ignore this reminder.

I am a doctoral student in the School of Humanities and Social Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. I am researching the feasibility of the library and information sector (LIS) having a single representative body addressing both industrial and professional issues. Professor C. Stilwell is supervising the research and Mr A. Leach is the co-supervisor.

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I will be most grateful if you could complete the questionnaire and return it preferably **by 13 August 2004**. To view and respond to the questionnaire, please click on the hyperlink below. However, if your client browser does not allow you link into the site, please type the above address in the 'address bar'.

<http://www.nu.ac.za/lissurvey/LISSurvey1.html>

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

R. Raju
Principal Librarian
G.M.J Sweeney Law Library
University of KwaZulu-Natal Libraries
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APPENDIX 4:
Job designations

Professional males

Designation	Manager: No	Manager: Yes
Acting Chief Director		1
Assistant Librarian	1	
Chief Librarian		1
Deputy Director		1
Deputy University Librarian		1
Director		1
Librarian	7	3
Librarian-in-charge		1
Library Assistant	3	
Manager: Client Services		1
Manager		2
Principal Librarian		1
Research Support Librarian	1	
Senior Assistant Librarian	1	
Senior Librarian		2
Subdivision Head		1
Subject Librarian	4	1
Systems Librarian		1
University Librarian		1
	17	19

Professional females

Designation	Manager: No	Manager: Yes
Acting University Librarian		1
Archivist	2	
Assistant Director		3
Assistant Librarian	9	
Coordinating Librarian	2	
Deputy Librarian		1
Deputy University Librarian		1
Deputy Director: Resource Centre		1
Director		1
Faculty Librarian	1	1
First Librarian	1	
Head: Health Sciences Library		1
Information Librarian	2	
Information Specialist	1	1
Junior Librarian	1	
Leader: Info. Systems and Technology		1
Librarian	49	10
Library Administrator	1	
Library Assistant	6	
Manuscript Librarian	1	
Medical Librarian		1
Project Management		1
Reference Librarian	1	
Researcher		1
Senior Information Librarian	1	
Senior Librarian	10	5
Senior Librarian - Electronic Resources	1	
Senior Librarian/Head of Library		1
Subject Librarian	9	
Systems Librarian	1	
	99	31

Support staff females

Designation	Manager: no	Manager: yes
Administrative Officer	3	
Administrative Assistant		1
Assistant Cataloguer	1	
Assistant Librarian	4	
Clerical Assistant	3	
Data Operator	1	
Database Content Administrator	1	
Information Officer	1	
Library Assistant	21	1
Library Manager: Materials Organisation		1
Library Administrative Officer	1	
Library Assistant - Junior	1	
Library Administrative Assistant	1	
Library Officer	2	
Manager		1
Office Administrator	1	
Operations Officer	1	
Personal Secretary	1	
Principal Library Assistant	1	
Secretary	1	
Senior Library Assistant	8	
Stack Attendant	2	
System Administrator	1	
	56	4

Support staff males

Designation	Manager: No	Manager: Yes
Assistant Cataloguer	1	
Assistant Librarian	3	
Departmental Assistant	2	
Information Officer	2	
Library Administrative Officer	1	
Library Assistant	20	
Periodicals Assistant	1	
Principal Library Officer Acquisitions	1	
Principal Library Officer	1	
Principal Library Assistant	3	
Senior Library Assistant	4	
Senior Library Officer	1	
Stack Attended	1	
	41	